A MASTER'S LEVEL OVERVIEW
• IN ONE VOLUME •

THE PORTABLE SEMINARY

SECOND EDITION

DAVID HORTON

GENERAL EDITOR

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Introduction

By bringing together an outstanding international "faculty" of evangelical Christian scholars and practitioners, *The Portable Seminary* offers an introduction to a full range of subjects: Theology, Biblical Languages and Interpretation, Background and Survey of both the Old and New Testaments, Christian History, Apologetics and World Religions, Missions, Christian Education, Leadership, Christian Ethics, and Homiletics.

But here there are no hallowed halls, bricks and ivy, or stained-glass windows. The schedule is up to you; study as much or as little, as quickly or as thoroughly as you choose. Focus on a subject or two, or devour the entire book. Location, too, is subject to your circumstances or your preferences; at the beach or on a mountain retreat, on a commuter train or in the quiet of your own study. If you desire to take theological and biblical understanding to the next level, you are readily admitted.

Can one volume replace a seminary education? Absolutely not. There is no way to replace the depth of teaching or the personal interaction one receives in seminary or graduate school. Again, what *The Portable Seminary* offers is an introduction—an overview—to a graduate-level education.

Who will benefit from it? Readers contemplating seminary will gain a taste of what lies ahead. Those in ministry who have had neither time nor opportunity for a formal graduate program will likely deepen their biblical and theological knowledge. Some may discover a great refresher course and a handy reference tool. For laypersons who aspire to ministry—as a full-time calling or as a volunteer—*The Portable Seminary* is designed to expand knowledge as well as vocabulary, to stimulate thinking, and to provide resources for further study.

As with any learning experience, what you put into the study of these chapters will have a direct bearing on what you take out. The content that follows is not dumbed down for convenience. Some of it may be challenging—Biblical Languages, the Doctrine of God the Father, or

Apologetics, for example—though anyone with adult reading skills should be up to the task. The glossary of specialized vocabulary (in the back of the book) is intended to assist in keeping the challenge manageable.

The Christian life calls for more than mere knowledge. We can be highly educated and still lack the faith, the courage, and the humility God desires. But the more we understand about God and about the life to which he calls us, the less likely we are to be tossed about on the seas of popular opinion, dubious doctrine, or self-indulgent living.

So, welcome to *The Portable Seminary*! May what you experience in these pages stimulate your mind, engage your heart, and enrich your soul.

Why Study Theology?

> [If] you do not listen to Theology that will not mean that you have no ideas about God. It will mean that you have a lot of wrong ones—bad, muddled, out-of-date ideas.[1]
>
> C. S. Lewis

Mention the words *theology* or *doctrine* in almost any gathering of Christian believers and you'll get a variety of reactions, some quite negative. Some Christians glibly—almost proudly—confess ignorance of the subject. Few, it seems, want to be seen as "theologians." Aren't theologians, after all, given to fussing over Bible trivia, engaging in doctrinal hair-splitting, and writing on obscure topics? While these specialists are wasting precious time on things that matter little—if at all, so the thinking goes—the rest of us are busy trying to live out our Christian faith in a sometimes hostile environment.

If you have harbored such thoughts, Bruce Milne's claim that "every Christian is a theologian"[2] may surprise you. But think about it for a moment. Theology is the study or science of God. We all know something about God, yet we rarely think of what we know as "theology."

> By virtue of being born again we have all begun to know God and therefore have a certain understanding of his nature and actions. That is, we all have a theology of sorts, whether or not we have ever sat down and pieced it together. So, properly understood, theology is *not* for a few religious eggheads with a flair for abstract debate—it is everybody's business. Once we have grasped this, our duty is to become the best theologians we can be to the glory of God as

our understanding of God and his ways is clarified and deepened through studying the book he has given for that very purpose, the Bible.[3] (See 2 Timothy 3:16.)

As children of God it only makes sense that we should strive to know all we can about our heavenly Father, his ways, and his will for our lives. Taking a casual approach to our beliefs nearly guarantees frustration and misunderstanding in our relationship with God.

Given the choice between "theology" and "practical faith," most Christians opt for the latter. But is it truly possible to grow in faith without growing in knowledge of God? How are we to know we are acting rightly, making wise choices, living in a manner pleasing to him, without some basis for such knowledge? Alister McGrath asserts that for anyone interested in doing the right thing, "it is necessary to have a set of values concerning human life. Those values are determined by beliefs, and those beliefs are stated as doctrines. Christian doctrine thus provides a fundamental framework for Christian living."[4]

Where McGrath sees a framework, Philip Yancey speaks of a foundation:

> Jesus told a story of two men who built houses that, from the outside, looked alike. The true difference between them came to light when a storm hit. One house did not fall, even though rain poured down, streams rose, and winds beat against it, because its foundation rested on rock. The second house, foolishly built on sand, fell with a great crash. In theology, as well as in construction, foundations matter.[5]

A frequent complaint about theology is that it engenders argument more readily than spiritual progress. Wouldn't it be better, some reason, if we expended more energy on loving each other and less on proving ourselves right and others wrong? Promoting one's own "rightness" at the expense of "righteousness" is never to be commended. But to avoid the study of doctrine simply because some handle the subject badly is foolish. The apostle Paul admonished that knowledge can make us arrogant (1 Corinthians 8:1), yet he chastised those who were sinning, having "no knowledge of God" (15:34 NASB). We must find a balance between knowledge and love, between knowledge and faith.

> The modern Christian tends to ignore or decry the importance of right doctrine. Tired of endless disputes, Christians today embrace the idea that what really matters is right relationships, not right doctrine. The idea that one is more important than the other is a faulty premise; both right relationships and right doctrine matter.[6]

At the same time,

> Correct doctrine in itself is not enough; it is tragically possible to fail to work God's truth out in practical obedience. That is one reason why doctrine often gets a bad press. If correct doctrine does not lead to holy, loving, mature lives, something has gone terribly wrong. But that is no reason for neglecting or discounting it.[7]

The greatest commandment, Jesus said, is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). He did not give categorical options, as if we could love God with heart *or* soul *or* mind; the command requires all of the above. Loving him with our minds will naturally entail finding out as much as possible about him. Just as in any relationship, love compels us to know and understand what he is like, how he works in the world and in us, what he loves, what he desires, what offends him, what delights him. Doing so requires our full attention and our diligent study.

Humility is critical, helping us keep our relationship with God and others in perspective. We will never—in this life, at least—understand God fully; Isaiah reminds us that his ways are higher than ours (55:9). Nevertheless, prayerful study followed by obedient, humble living can lead us to understand him better today than we did yesterday. An attitude of prayer and humility will facilitate attentiveness to what the Spirit is telling us as we examine the Scriptures and hear God's voice through his human servants. This attitude will also serve to keep us mindful that no person, school of thought, institution, church, or denomination has all the answers.

Neither do this book, its editors, or its many contributors have all the answers; even so, in the pages that follow, we offer you introductory thoughts to start you on your way to a more thorough understanding of biblical doctrine. As you study God's attributes, or read about the atoning work of Jesus Christ, or contemplate the ministry of the Holy Spirit, you will begin to lay the groundwork—the theological foundation—for a life of faith that will please God and make a difference in your corner of the world.

chapter 1
The Doctrine of Scripture

The Word of God can be in the mind without being in the heart; but it cannot be in the heart without first being in the mind.[1]

—R. C. Sproul

Introduction

In the pages that follow, you will be introduced to three key Christian claims regarding the Scriptures:

1. That God has revealed himself by communicating directly to humankind, and that this communication has been collected and preserved in the Bible. It is not the only means of divine revelation, since God also reveals himself through people, nature, and even through history. But it is a primary means and the most conducive to examination.
2. That the Scriptures are the result of divine inspiration. Not that God wrote the words directly, but that he communicated his message through the agency of human writers. His message to us is inspired, or "God-breathed," and that inspiration extends to more than merely the themes and ideas it contains.
3. That the Bible carries divine authority. If it is divinely inspired, and is a revelation of God, it is not only reliable, but it has a divine authority over us, an authority not ascribed to any other book.

It would be disingenuous to claim that all Christians believe each of the foregoing statements to the same degree, and in exactly the same way. The

following articles will address many of the differences people have over these issues, but among evangelical Christians, revelation, inspiration, and authority are foundational beliefs upon which the theology of Scripture is built.

Revelation

Christian theology asserts, on the basis of the scriptural text and the confirming mighty acts of God, that divine revelation is the first, last, and only source for the theological task; that without such a firm base all theological discussion becomes aimless, indeed futile. People have knowledge of God because of God's initiative and activity. God is always the initiator and author of revelation; people are the recipients. God discloses what otherwise would be unknown; he uncovers what would otherwise be hidden (Deuteronomy 29:29; Galatians 1:12; Ephesians 3:3).

General Revelation

God draws back the veil in a twofold manner. There is first of all what has come to be called general revelation. God reveals himself in nature, in history, and in all people as made in his image. The association of God's revelation with nature, by which people have an intuitive knowledge of God's existence, is long-standing and is a truth supported throughout Scripture, Old Testament (Psalm 14:1; 19:1) and New Testament (Acts 14:17; 17:22–29; Romans 1:19–21). That there is a God, that God is the Creator with almighty power, that God deals justly as the supreme Judge, or rules as the "Wholly Other" over his creatures—these things are known and recognized by all people. Thus the fact of God, that God is, is undeniable. When people do deny him, as is the case with the atheist, it is a forced effort against an inner conviction worked by nature itself. Paul could expect concurrence from the Athenians when he asserted that it is in God, the one and only true God, that all people live and move and have their being (Acts 17:28). Because of the natural knowledge of God (Scholastics, like Thomas Aquinas, termed it *natural theology* to distinguish from that which was revealed by God directly), which confronts humanity on every side in the sum of created things and created laws of nature, Paul can say that people

are "very religious" (v. 22). It is not a case of identifying God and nature, but rather of recognizing that the natural knowledge of God is deeply ingrained in humanity's own nature and in the natural realm.

Natural knowledge of God, however, has its limitations and is inadequate. Because it confronts the individual with the fact of God's existence, the individual consequently engages in religious practice and asks some of the ultimate questions concerning the source, reason, and end of his or her own existence. But the tragic thing is, as Paul writes (Romans 1:18–2:16), that since the fall, people turn knowledge of God into perverse practices, worshiping not him, but images, creatures, or created things. Thus sinners drift further from God and satisfy themselves with foolish answers for the ultimate questions of existence. Because of a tendency to distort and twist this natural knowledge, some theologians denied that this should be called revelation at all. According to this idea, revelation effects a confrontation with God within the individual. But this explanation was widely disputed on the grounds that if general revelation were denied, people could no longer be held accountable or responsible before God.

Martin Luther recognized the validity of a natural knowledge of God. For Luther, God is not sought behind his creation or merely inferred in an abstract way from the creation, but rather the wonders in the natural realm are among the "veils" or "masks" of God whereby he has made himself known. They are not mere starting points to forming ideas about God, but represent God on the stage where he himself has the principal part or plays the chief role. Distortions of these natural evidences, Luther held, do not negate the validity of God's revelation. Although fragmentary, incomplete, and often distorted, general or natural revelation is a genuinely valid disclosure by God of his majesty and power in the created realm (Romans 1:18–32).

Special Revelation

To know God from his revelation in nature, however, still leaves him and his gracious purposes completely unknown. The gracious, loving heart of God intends the salvation of all people. By special revelation, God purposes to share this with humankind in various ways. Humankind would know nothing at all of God's messianic purposes in Christ had God not revealed his heart and purposes throughout Scripture. Before the fall, this

communion between the Creator and man was direct and apparently uninterrupted. With the earliest patriarchs, such as Adam, Noah, and others, God's revelation came by means of articulate language used in a supernatural way, thus directly spoken (Genesis 3:14–19; 6:13–21; 7:1–4; 12:1–3). At other times, his revelation came through various means, as the Angel of the Lord appeared at Abram's tent (18:1–15), in the burning bush (Exodus 3:1–22), in the cloud (34:6–7), or the fire and cloud over Mount Sinai for Moses and the people of Israel (v. 19). On the holy mountain, God spoke and made known his mind and heart through his special servant Moses. At times, dreams and visions, either waking or sleeping (e.g., the case of young Samuel—1 Samuel 3:1–14), were used by God with his chosen prophets. Through inner prompting, God moved his prophets, later also the apostles, to speak and write his thoughts and words to humanity. Mighty acts of God on behalf of his people, like the exodus, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the forty years in the wilderness with the accompanying miraculous sustaining of the people there, were carefully and rightly interpreted by God through his prophets. By inner, immediate illumination of their hearts and minds by God, the prophets and apostles spoke his Word as he gave them utterance (Jeremiah 1:4–19; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:16–21). The zenith of God's revelation was the coming in flesh of his beloved Son, Jesus Christ (John 1:14–18; Galatians 4:4–5; Hebrews 1–2). Jesus' revelation of the Father and the Father's gracious will toward all people was direct, accurate, and preeminent (John 14).

God did not merely illuminate the hearts and minds of his prophets and apostles to speak his Word, but in specific instances he also inspired them to record in writing the thoughts, words, and promises that he wanted revealed and retained for all time. The sacred collection of writings forms a remarkably harmonious and unified whole by which God reveals his thoughts and purposes toward humanity. For this writing, the prophets and apostles were prompted not only to recount certain historical events and happenings but also what God revealed for special communication. Revelation and inspiration are necessary companions in God's disclosing of himself and his will, and at some places they simply coalesce into his gracious giving of his Word. They may differ in that while revelation has to do with the divine illumination (given by God in various ways), whereby prophets and apostles knew God and the things of God, inspiration is that

divine agency employed by God in the recording of his Word. Thus inspiration's focal point is first of all the written text; revelation's focal point is the information or disclosure God gives of himself and his purposes. By virtue of its inspiration by God, Scripture is rightly known and respected as God's revelation for people today, proclaiming the two great doctrines of law (his will) and gospel (his saving promises in Christ—John 20:21).

There is grave inconsistency when liberal theologians speak, on the one hand, of God's mighty acts and, on the other hand, reject God's mighty act in entrusting humankind with his Word.

MODERN **T**HEOLOGY**.** According to liberal theology, there is no need for special revelation, since God can be comprehended and apprehended through inner illumination. To some, the Bible was merely a record where we confront the human attempts to repeat and reproduce God's mighty acts by recounting them in human words and thoughts, according to human situations. The Bible, its propositional truths, and its doctrines are rejected as revelation, while the personal encounter of the believer with God is viewed as the only genuine revelation or revelatory happening prompted by God. This also implied that there could be no revelation where it is not received or where people fail to encounter God.

Needless to say, this is a strange bifurcation of God's gracious purposes in his revelation, particularly as recorded in the inspired prophetic and apostolic Word. God took the initiative to make himself, his judgments against sin and unrighteousness, his mercy and grace in Christ, known in this way. This Word remains his sacred revelation, whether received by people or not. But God's loving purpose is that all people shall hear him as he discloses himself in his Word, embrace him in faith and trust, and finally be saved by faith in the Savior.

Modern theologians express such narrow obsession with revelation as pertaining only to an individual's personal encounter with God, and such denigrating of revelatory truths and the Bible itself because they maintain the presuppositional stance against the Bible as the truly inspired Word of God. The Bible accounts for itself as the product of human authors who

wrote under divine inspiration. Modern theology, however, admits only that it is a thoroughly human record of God's mighty acts. There is grave inconsistency when liberal theologians speak, on the one hand, of God's mighty acts and, on the other hand, reject God's mighty act in entrusting humankind with his Word, the Bible. There is no other Christ save the Christ of Scripture, and no other Scripture than that which the Lord Jesus Christ gave and attests. To him all Scripture gives witness (John 5:39; Acts 10:43; 18:28; 1 Corinthians 15:3).

Walter A. Elwell

The Inspiration of Scripture

For the early church, two factors were significant in their total acceptance of the Old Testament as divinely inspired. One was the constant assertion throughout its pages that "God spoke" or "God said" this or that. Also, many Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming Messiah had been fulfilled in Jesus, and to Christians it seemed clear that such prophecies must have been directly communicated by God himself. The second factor was Jesus' attitude toward Scripture. He declared that the Old Testament "cannot be broken" (John 10:35 KJV; cf. Luke 16:17). Jesus loved the Old Testament and lived out its essential message, demonstrating his acceptance of it as the Word of God. For the early church, his recognition of its inspiration (Matthew 22:43) validated its divine origin and verified its historical accuracy.

Christ's view of the Old Testament became the view expressed in the New Testament, which is saturated with quotations from the Old and allusions to it. Constant use of formulas, such as "the Scripture says," "it is written," "God said," or "the Holy Spirit said" shows that in the New Testament, Scripture is equated with the written Word of God.

But what about the inspiration of the New Testament? The first preachers of the gospel were sure they had received divinely communicated "gospel" (Romans 1:16). The gospel message, given in oral form to the apostles "through the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:2), was later embodied in writing by the action of that Spirit. When the New Testament eventually took its place alongside the Old Testament as Scripture, it was with awareness of the

specific and established meaning of the term: *Scripture* connoted "God's Word written."

The two Testaments consequently belong together and are regarded by Christians as constituting a single utterance of God. Inscripturation is the process by which God's self-disclosure was committed to writing so that the resulting product could be accurately designated the Word of God. God's revelation is said to be inscripturated in the biblical record. Certain New Testament passages specifically refer to the supernatural inspiration of Scripture, but to Christians, the evidence of that reality is seen throughout the entire Bible.

The Nature of Inspiration

Before the middle of the nineteenth century, the church was unanimous in its view of inspiration: God gave the actual words of Scripture to its human authors so as to perpetuate unerringly his special self-disclosure. In the second century, Justin Martyr called the Bible "the very language of God." In the fourth century, Gregory of Nyssa said it was "the voice of the Holy Spirit." In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Protestant reformers echoed those assertions. But in the second half of the nineteenth century, the pervasiveness of evolutionary ideas and the rise of "higher criticism" in biblical studies led certain theologians to question the historic concept of verbal inspiration. Attempts were made to modify the concept or to replace it altogether with a new doctrine of inspiration allowing for a theory of religious development and a patchwork Old Testament. Some theologians shifted the locale of inspiration from the objective word to subjective experience. The experience might be that of a religious genius or of a prophet whose insights and glimpses of truth are preserved in the Bible. It might also be the experience of a person today who, gripped by a biblical word or message, avows the Bible to be an inspiring book.

Such drastically altered views do not satisfy the Bible's concept of its own inspiration: "For it was not through any human whim that men prophesied of old; men they were, but, impelled by the Holy Spirit, they spoke the words of God" (2 Peter 1:21 NEB). Thus, according to the New Testament, the Old Testament prophets proclaimed a word initiated and controlled by the Holy Spirit. What they spoke was not merely their own thoughts, or divine thoughts in their own words, but "the words of God," as

they were impelled (Greek, "borne along") by the Holy Spirit. Although the passage deals specifically with spoken prophecy, the apostle Peter seems to have been using the action of the Spirit in the prophets to emphasize the divine origin of Scripture as a whole (cf. 1 Peter 1:3–25). The same Spirit of God also impelled Paul to write (cf. 2 Peter 3:15–16). For both the spoken and the written Word, the Holy Spirit enlightened the mind and superintended the work.

According to Paul, the very language of Scripture is "God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16). The Greek word, as Paul used it, means more than that the Scriptures are an ordinary type of writing, simply "breathed into by God." Paul also meant more than that the Bible is a book that "breathes out the Spirit," but rather that Scripture is the product of God's creative breath and hence is a divine product.

In the Old Testament, Hebrew words for "breath" are frequently translated *Spirit* in English versions (e.g., Genesis 1:2; 6:3; Judges 3:10; 6:34). God's "breath" is an expression for his Spirit going forth in creative power (Genesis 1:2; 2:7; Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30). That creative power is the source of those special human activities and skills required by God for the fulfillment of his purposes (Exodus 35:30–35; Numbers 24:2ff; Judges 6:34). Throughout the Old Testament, the breath or spirit of God is specifically associated with prophecy (Numbers 24:2ff; Isaiah 48:16; Joel 2:28; Micah 3:8). Such observations provide a background for understanding Paul's word, "God-breathed." By "the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth" (Psalm 33:6); likewise, by God's breath the Scriptures were produced. By sending forth his Spirit (104:30), God performed his creative works at the beginning. "God . . . breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7). Similarly, God breathed through man the words that make up the Scriptures, which carry God's image and which alone are able to instruct for salvation and train in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:15–16).

Also significant throughout the Old Testament is an association of *Spirit* and *word*, the distinction between the two being comparable to that between God's *breath* and *voice*. The voice is the articulate expression of a thought, whereas the breath is the force through which words are made actual.

In the New Testament, the divine breath, the agent of God's Word, is the Holy Spirit. The relationship between the Spirit and the Scriptures is thus so

close that to assert "the Holy Spirit says" is the same as saying "Scripture says" (cf. Hebrews 3:7). Paul asserted that what he set forth in writing to the Corinthian church was imparted "in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit." Paul added that through his Spirit-taught words he was "interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:13 RSV). Theologians generally refer to the process by which the Spirit makes the Scriptures understood (by a reader) as *illumination* rather than *inspiration*.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE BIBLICAL VIEW. Two corollaries follow from accepting the Bible's own account of its inspiration:

Inspiration Is Plenary. First, the inspiration of the Scriptures can be said to be *plenary*, a word meaning "full; entire; complete." That is, Scripture is God-breathed in all its parts. To say that inspiration is plenary is to reject an illumination theory in which inspiration is held to be only partial, or a matter of degree. The Spirit's activity is not limited to a few texts or special passages of Scripture, but belongs to the written Word as a whole. Plenary inspiration also stands in opposition to any "insight theory" that views inspiration as merely a natural activity.

Yet plenary inspiration does not require that every statement in the Bible is necessarily true. The mistaken view of Job's friends (cf. Job 42:7–9), the falsehoods told by Peter (Mark 14:66–72), and the letters of heathen kings (Ezra 4:7–24), although quoted in the Scriptures, were not Spirit-inspired. Whether they are actually true or false must be discovered by reference to the context. The recording of such words by the writers of Scripture, however, was subject to the Spirit's inspiration; God wanted them to be part of his revelation.

Inspiration Is Verbal. A second corollary of the Bible's affirmation is that inspiration applies to the biblical words. God-breathed Scripture consists of God-given words. The Scriptures are "sacred writings." Inspiration functioned in the inner connection between the thought and the word, influencing them both. That understanding of inspiration historically has been referred to as "verbal." The term directs attention to the products of the divine outbreathing, the actual words. Because the Spirit was concerned with the words of Scripture, there is no limit to the trust and reliance a believer may place in them.

Yet to say that inspiration is verbal is not the same as declaring that the process was dictational or mechanical. That early church fathers held such views shows their high regard for the biblical Word, but this hardly serves as a basis for an adequate theory of inspiration. Objectors to the historic doctrine of inspiration often associate verbal inspiration with that mechanical view, however, and consequently reject it out of hand as materialistic. To them, the term *verbal* indicates that the writers of Scripture were like stenographers taking down words they scarcely understood.

When evangelical theologians today speak of verbal inspiration they are not specifying a method; rather, they are emphasizing that the Spirit's activity was concerned with the very words of Scripture. The precise nature of inspiration cannot be given an exact definition. The process should be considered God's secret—a mystery or miracle with no explanation outside of God himself.

The term *verbal* does lend itself to ambiguity, as some conservative scholars readily admit. Most evangelical theologians agree that any statement of inspiration that regards the words of Scripture as "dictated" by the Holy Spirit to machinelike writers should be rejected. Yet they retain the word *verbal* as best able to convey that the Holy Spirit so influenced the writers of Scripture that their words are to be taken in the fullest sense as the Spirit's words (e.g., cf. 1 Kings 22:8–16; Nehemiah 8; Psalm 119; Jeremiah 25:1–13; Romans 1:2; 3:2, 21; 16:26).

The words of Scripture, however, are at the same time fully human words. Scripture can be said to have dual authorship: it is the joint production of God and of individual human beings. Evidence of human authorship is obvious in stylistic features, historical outlook, cultural context, and so forth. From a psychological viewpoint, each biblical book is a distinctive literary creation of its author. From the theological viewpoint, its content is God's creation. Moses, the prophets, Jesus Christ, and the apostles all considered their words to be, in a literal sense, from God himself. The prophets spoke God's words (Jeremiah 1:7; Ezekiel 2:7); Jesus spoke the words of his Father (John 7:16; 12:49–50). The apostles issued commands in Christ's name (2 Thessalonians 3:6) and claimed divine authority for them (1 Corinthians 14:37); their doctrines came from the Holy Spirit (2:9–13).

The doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration thus asserts that in a unique and absolute way the Holy Spirit acted in relationship with the biblical

writers so as to render them infallible revealers of God's truth; hence, the Bible may be spoken of as God's infallible Word. In Scripture, as in the person of Jesus Christ, the divine and human elements are regarded as forming one indissoluble whole, dynamically united. The language is human; the message is divine. The human writers were not passive in the process. They were God's penmen, not merely his pens. The result assures that God is the primary author of Scripture, so that the whole biblical account is rightly designated the Word of God.

CONCLUSION. Inspiration has been defined as that direct influence of God on the writers of the Bible by which, while they did not cease to be themselves, they were so moved, guarded, and guided by the Holy Spirit that their resulting productions constitute the written Word of God. Augustine called the Bible a letter of God Almighty addressed to his creatures. Martin Luther asked, "Where do we find God's Word except in the Scriptures?" The Westminster Catechism affirms that since God is the author of Scripture, "it ought to be received, because it is the Word of God." Evangelical Christians continue to regard the Bible as absolutely trustworthy and wholly reliable because of its divine inspiration.

Hugh Dermot McDonald

The Authority of Scripture

Civilization is in a severe "authority crisis" that is not confined solely to the realm of religious faith, nor is it specially or uniquely threatening to Bible believers. Parental authority, marital authority, political authority, academic authority, and ecclesiastical authority are all being deeply questioned. Not only particular authorities—the Scripture, the pope, political rulers, and so on—but the concept of authority itself is vigorously challenged. Today's crisis of biblical authority thus reflects the uncertainties of civilizational consensus: Who has the power and the right to receive and to require submission?

Revolt Against Biblical Authority

The widespread questioning of authority is condoned and promoted in many academic circles. Philosophers with a radically secular outlook have affirmed that God and the supernatural are mythical conceptions, that natural processes and events comprise the only ultimate reality. All existence is said to be temporal and changing, all beliefs and ideals are declared to be relative to the age and culture in which they appear. Biblical religion, therefore, like all others, is asserted to be merely a cultural phenomenon. The Bible's claim to divine authority is dismissed by such thinkers; transcendent revelation, fixed truths, and unchanging commandments are set aside as pious fiction.

In the name of humanity's supposed "coming of age," radical secularism champions human autonomy and creative individuality. Human beings are lords of their own destiny and inventors of their own ideals and values, it is said. They live in a supposedly purposeless universe that has itself presumably been engendered by a cosmic accident. Therefore, human beings are declared to be wholly free to impose upon nature and history whatever moral criteria they prefer. In such a view, to insist on divinely given truths and values, on transcendent principles, would be to repress self-fulfillment and retard creative personal development. Hence, the radically secular view goes beyond opposing particular external authorities whose claims are considered arbitrary or immoral; this view is aggressively hostile to all external authority, viewing it as intrinsically restrictive of the autonomous human spirit.

The inspired Scriptures, revealing God's transcendent will in objective written form, are the rule of faith and conduct through which Christ exercises his divine authority in the lives of Christians.

Any reader of the Bible will recognize rejection of divine authority and definitive revelation of what is right and good as an age-old phenomenon. It is not at all peculiar to the contemporary person who is "come of age"; it was found already in Eden. Adam and Eve revolted against the will of God in pursuit of individual preference and supposed self-interest. But then revolt was recognized to be sin, not rationalized as philosophical "gnosis" at the frontiers of evolutionary advance.

If one takes a strictly developmental view, which considers all reality contingent and changing, where is the basis for humanity's decisively creative role in the universe? How could a purposeless cosmos cater to individual self-fulfillment? Only the biblical alternative of the Creator-Redeemer God, who fashioned human beings for moral obedience and a high spiritual destiny, truly preserves the permanent, universal dignity of the human species. The Bible does so, however, by demanding a call for personal spiritual decision. It sets forth the superiority of humans to the animals, their high dignity ("little less than God"—Psalm 8:5 RSV) because of the divine rational and moral image that all bear by reason of creation. In the context of universal human involvement in Adamic sin, the Bible utters a merciful divine call to redemptive renewal through the mediatorial person and work of Christ. Fallen humanity is invited to experience the Holy Spirit's renewing work, to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, and to anticipate a final destiny in the eternal presence of the God of justice and justification.

Contemporary rejection of biblical tenets does not rest on any logical demonstration that the case for biblical theism is false; it turns rather on a subjective preference for alternative views of "the good life."

The Bible is not the only significant reminder that human beings stand daily in responsible relationship to the sovereign God. He reveals his authority in the cosmos, in history, and in inner conscience, a disclosure of the living God that penetrates into the mind of every person (Romans 1:18–20; 2:12–15). Rebellious suppression of that "general divine revelation" does not wholly succeed in suspending a fearsome sense of final divine accountability (1:32).

Yet it is the Bible as "special revelation" that most clearly confronts our spiritually rebellious race with the reality and authority of God. In the Scriptures, the character and will of God, the meaning of human existence, the nature of the spiritual realm, and the purposes of God for humankind in all ages are stated in propositionally intelligible form that all can understand. The Bible publishes in objective form the criteria by which God judges individuals and nations, and the means of moral recovery and restoration to personal fellowship with him.

Regard for the Bible is therefore decisive for the course of human civilization. Intelligible divine revelation, the basis for belief in the sovereign authority of the Creator-Redeemer God over all human life, rests

on the reliability of what Scripture says about God and his purposes. Modern naturalism impugns biblical authority and assails the claim that the Bible is the written Word of God, that is, a transcendently given revelation of his mind and will. Attack upon scriptural authority is the storm center both in the controversy over revealed religion and in the modern conflict over civilizational values.

The Bible's View of Itself

The presupposition that God's will is made known in the form of valid truths is central to the authority of the Bible. For evangelical orthodoxy, if God's revelation to chosen prophets and apostles is to be considered meaningful and true, it must be given not merely in isolated concepts capable of diverse meanings, but in sentences or propositions. A proposition—that is, a subject, predicate, and connecting verb (or "copula")—constitutes the minimal logical unit of intelligible communication. The Old Testament prophetic formula "thus saith the Lord" characteristically introduced propositionally disclosed truth. Jesus Christ employed the distinctive formula "But I say unto you" to introduce logically formed sentences that he represented as the veritable word or doctrine of God.

The Bible is authoritative because it is divinely authorized; in its own terms, "all Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16). According to this passage, the whole Old Testament (or any element of it) is divinely inspired. Extension of the same claim to the New Testament is not expressly stated, though it is more than merely implied. The New Testament contains indications that its content was to be viewed, and was in fact viewed, as no less authoritative than the Old Testament. Paul's writings are catalogued with "other Scriptures" (2 Peter 3:15–16). Under the heading of Scripture, 1 Timothy 5:18 cites Luke 10:7 alongside Deuteronomy 25:4 (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:9). The book of Revelation, moreover, claims divine origin (1:1–3) and employs the term *prophecy* in the Old Testament meaning (22:9–10, 18). The apostles did not distinguish their spoken and written teaching, but expressly declared their inspired proclamation to be the Word of God (1 Corinthians 4:1; 2 Corinthians 5:20; 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

The Inerrancy Question

The doctrine of biblical authority has been subverted by attacks on its historical and scientific reliability and by allegedly tracing its teaching to fallible human sources. On the other hand, the doctrine has sometimes been unnecessarily clouded by extremely conservative apologists who have overstated what biblical authority presupposes and implies. Some conservative scholars have repudiated all historical criticism as inimical to biblical authority and distinguished "true" from "false" Christians on the basis of subscription to biblical inerrancy.

If one accepts plenary divine inspiration of Scripture—that is, God's superintendence of the whole—the doctrine of biblical authority doubtless implies inerrancy of the content. But the Christian faith can hardly hope to advance its claims through a repudiation of historical criticism. To do so would imply that to support its position it must resort to uncritical views of history. To "higher criticism," which is so often pursued on arbitrary presuppositions that promote unjustifiable conclusions, the evangelical must reply with sound criticism that proceeds on legitimate assumptions and yields defensible verdicts.

Evangelical Christianity should champion the inerrancy of Scripture as a sound theological commitment, one that is consistent with what the Bible says about itself. But it need not repudiate the Christian integrity of all who do not share that commitment, nor regard them as hopelessly apostate. Still, those who claim to honor the authority of Jesus Christ rather than the authority of Scripture contradict Jesus' teaching, since Jesus held a high view of Scripture. Moreover, the full explanation of Jesus' life and work depended on his crucifixion, resurrection, and heavenly ministry, and derived from the Spirit's inspiration of the apostles. It is illogical to pick and choose from the teaching of Jesus during his earthly ministry only those elements that serve one's own presuppositions. Rejection of the full trustworthiness of Scripture may finally lead one to ascribe to Jesus a life purpose different from the biblical one: that Christ died and rose bodily to be the ground of divine forgiveness of sinners.

The historic evangelical position is summed up in the words of Frank E. Gaebelein, general editor of *The Expositors' Bible Commentary*: "The divine inspiration, complete trustworthiness, and full authority of the Bible." Scripture is authoritative and fully trustworthy because it is divinely inspired. Lutheran theologian Francis Pieper directly connected the authority of the Bible with its inspiration: "The divine authority of Scripture

rests solely on its nature, on its theopneusty—that is, its character as 'God breathed.'" J.I. Packer commented that every compromise of the Bible's truthfulness must at the same time be regarded as a compromise of its authority: "To assert biblical inerrancy and infallibility is just to confess faith in (1) the *divine origin* of the Bible and (2) the *truthfulness* and *trustworthiness* of God. The value of these terms is that they conserve the principles of biblical authority, for statements that are not absolutely true and reliable could not be absolutely authoritative." Packer reinforced that argument by demonstrating that Christ, the apostles, and the early church all agreed that the Old Testament was both absolutely trustworthy and authoritative. Being a fulfillment of the Old Testament, the New Testament is no less authoritative. Christ entrusted his disciples with his own authority in their teaching, so the early church accepted their teaching. As God's revelation, Scripture stands above the limitations of human assertion.

RECENT CHALLENGES. Some scholars have compromised the authority of Scripture through their willingness to grant the infiltration of culturally dependent teaching. Some of Paul's statements about women, or his views about a regathering of Israel in Palestine, are dismissed as reflective of the rabbinic teaching of the time and hence as evidence of Paul's culturally limited perspective. On some points biblical teaching obviously coincides with Jewish tradition. But where Hebrew tradition was elevated to a norm considered superior to or modifying and contravening Scripture, Jesus was critical of that tradition. That Paul may on some points have taught what was also taught by tradition, historically rooted in the Old Testament, proves nothing; on other points he was sharply critical of the rabbinical tradition.

The evangelical view has always been that what the inspired biblical writers teach they teach, not as derived from mere tradition, but as God-breathed; in their proclamation they had the mind of the Spirit to distinguish what was divinely approved and disapproved in current tradition. It is a sounder perspective therefore to speak of elements in which the Jewish tradition reflected prophetic revelation and of elements in which it departed from it. Once the principle of "culture dependency" is introduced into the content of scriptural teaching, it is difficult to establish objective criteria for distinguishing between what is supposedly authoritative and unauthoritative

in apostolic doctrine. Paul's views on homosexuality could then be considered as culturally prejudiced as his views of hierarchical authority—or for that matter, of Scripture's authority.

Other scholars have sought to ascribe to Scripture only a "functional" authority as an inner life-transforming stimulant, setting aside its conceptual-propositional authority. The supposed authoritative aspect of Scripture is identified in radically divergent and even contradictory elements—none considered final, all considered equal. Claims for external authority are subordinated into a supposed internal authority that dynamically alters the life of the community of faith. In spite of its profession of nondiscrimination toward divergent views, such a theory must of course explicitly exclude the traditional evangelical emphasis on the Bible's objective truth. But once the validity of the biblical teaching in whole and part is forfeited, no persuasive reason remains why one's personal life ought to be transformed at all.

The issue of biblical authority can hardly be divorced from interest in the rational validity and historical factuality of the Scriptures. But evangelicals hold that the authority of the Bible is a divine authority; not all truths and historically accurate statements fall into that category. Scripture is authoritative because it is God's Word. The chosen prophets and apostles, some of them called by God in spite of their own indifference or even hostility—for example, the prophet Jeremiah and the apostle Paul—testify that the truth of God became theirs by divine inspiration. Judeo-Christian religion is based on historical revelation and redemption; instead of indifference to the concerns of history, the Bible asserts a distinctive view of linear history alien to that of ancient religions and philosophies.

THE **P**OWER OF **G**OD'S **W**ORD. The Bible remains the most extensively printed, widely translated, and frequently read book in the world. Its words have been treasured in the hearts of multitudes like none other. All who have received its gifts of wisdom and promises of new life and power were at first strangers to its redemptive message, and many were hostile to its teaching and spiritual demands. In every generation its power to challenge persons of all races and lands has been demonstrated. Those who cherish the Book because it sustains future hope, brings meaning and power to the present, and correlates a misused past with God's forgiving grace would not long experience such inner rewards if Scripture were not known to them as

the authoritative, divinely revealed truth. To the evangelical Christian, Scripture is God's Word, given in the objective form of propositional truths through divinely inspired prophets and apostles, and the Holy Spirit is the giver of faith through that Word.

<div align="right">Carl F. H. Henry</div>

The Canon of Scripture

After the fourth century AD, the Christian church found itself with sixty-six books that constituted its Scripture, twenty-seven in the New Testament and thirty-nine in the Old Testament. Just as Plato, Aristotle, and Homer form a canon of Greek literature, so the New Testament books became the canon of Christian literature. The criteria for selecting the books in the Jewish canon (the Old Testament) are not known, but clearly had to do with their worth in the ongoing life and religion of the worshiping nation. The criteria of the selection of New Testament books revolved around their "apostolicity," according to early church writers. Like those of the Old Testament, these books were collected and preserved by local churches in the continuing process of their worship and need for authoritative guidance for Christian living. The formation of the canon was a process rather than an event, which took several hundred years to reach finality in all parts of the Roman Empire. Local canons were the basis for comparison, and out of them eventually emerged the general canon that exists in Christendom today, although some of the Eastern churches have a New Testament slightly smaller than that accepted in the West. Judaism, as well as Christianity as a whole, believes that the Spirit of God was operative in some providential way in the production and preservation of his Word.

Old Testament Canon

The *Old Testament* is a name that does not appear in Jewish literature. Jews prefer to call their thirty-nine books of Scripture the Tanak—an acronym formed from the first letters of Torah (Law), Naviim (Prophets), and Kethubim (Writings). These are called the "Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms" (the first book of the Writings in the Hebrew Bible) in Luke 24:44. Christians called their writings the New Testament, or

covenant, the latter term being a designation earlier used of the agreement God made with Abraham and the patriarchs that was repeated by Christ to his apostles (Matthew 26:28). First-century Christians considered their new covenant (1 Corinthians 11:25) from Christ to be a continuation of the one made earlier with the patriarchs (Ephesians 2:12), spoken of by the prophets (Jeremiah 31:31–34), and which was therefore called a former covenant (Hebrews 8:7–13; 9:1, 15–22), or in later centuries the Old Testament.

The terms *Old* and *New* do not appear in the writings of the apostolic fathers of the first and second century or in the apologists of the early to mid-second century, but they do appear in the latter half of the second century in the writings of Justin Martyr (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 11:2), Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses* [*Against the Heresies*], 4.9.1), Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* [*Miscellanies*], 1:5), and in the early third century in Origen (*De Principiis* [*On First Principles*], 4.1.1). In these works the expression referred more to the covenant itself than to the books containing it, though the transfer was eventually made.

The "canon" generally refers to those books in the Jewish and Christian Bible considered to be Scripture and therefore authoritative in matters of faith and doctrine.

The term *canon* was not used in either Testament to refer to the Jewish Scriptures. The idea of limitation inherent in the Word was not appropriate to the nature of religious authority in Jewish religion during the thousand years when the Old Testament books were being written. Only the Torah was conceived as incapable of being added to or taken from (Deuteronomy 4:2). Jewish religion existed for a millennium, from Moses to Malachi, without a closed canon (i.e., an exclusive list of authoritative books). Never in their history did the people of the Old Testament have the entire thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. When their canon was closed is not known. Although some questions were being asked about religious authority by rabbis at Jamnia twenty years after the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, we have our first list of thirty-nine books produced by Melito of Sardis around 170. That list includes no books written after the time of Malachi, unless one is disposed to date Daniel to the second century BC.

The Prophets and the Writings were always considered secondary to the Law. Their composition and collection was a process rather than an event in the life of the people of Israel and functioned largely as a record of the nation's response to the Law, which was so sacred that it was kept (according to rabbinical tradition: Babylonian Talmud, Baba Bathra 14a; cf. also Cairo Damascus Document 5.2) in the ark of the covenant, which stood in the holy of holies in the tabernacle. In Deuteronomy 31:26, however, the Levites were commanded by Moses merely to put the book of the Law beside the ark. Nevertheless, its very presence in the holy of holies establishes its uniqueness in relation to other Old Testament books.

The thirty-nine books of our Old Testament were originally divided into only twenty-four, according to the uniform testimony of early Hebrew tradition. This arrangement included five books of the Law, eight Prophets, and eleven Writings. Modern Hebrew Bibles reflect this tripartite arrangement used in the first three printed editions (late fifteenth century). The Law contained the Pentateuch in our familiar order, Genesis to Deuteronomy. The nine Prophets were Joshua, Judges, Samuel (1, 2), Kings (1, 2), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel; and the Minor Prophets (twelve) were considered as one book and arranged in the same order as in English Bibles. The eleven books of Writings contained three of poetry (Psalms, Proverbs, Job), five of rolls (Song, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther), which were read at the important feasts and arranged in the chronological order of their observance, and three of narrative or historical (Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, 1–2 Chronicles).

Apart from authentic Jewish tradition, efforts were made to divide the books into twenty-one, combining Ruth with Judges and Lamentations with Jeremiah. All such efforts, however, are of Greek origin and have no support in Hebrew tradition.

The oldest extant manuscripts of the Old Testament in Hebrew are the Masoretic texts, which are no earlier than the eighth century AD. Only manuscripts of individual books have been found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Masoretic scribes apparently laid down no rules about arrangement of books because there is no uniform order of the Latter Prophets or the Writings in early Hebrew manuscripts. Nor is the situation any different in ancient Greek translations of the Hebrew. Modern Protestant Bibles follow the order of the Latin Vulgate and the content of the Hebrew. Both the Vulgate and the Septuagint (Greek translation) contained the Apocrypha,

which was never accepted by the Jews. The Roman Catholic Church includes the Apocrypha in its English translations because of the influence of the Vulgate on Catholic tradition. It is considered deuterocanonical.

Even though no uniformity of order was maintained, the Alexandrian order, reflected in the Greek manuscripts, generally arranged books according to their subject matter—narrative, history, poetry, and prophecy, with the apocryphal books appropriately interspersed into these categories. The Hebrew division was totally ignored.

Early Hebrew Bibles divided the text into small paragraphs and larger sections somewhat akin to our paragraphs. These were indicated by spaces left between them—three letters between the small sections and nine letters between the larger ones. The number of sections is not the same in all manuscripts. Jesus probably referred to such sections in his comment concerning the "passage about the burning bush" (Mark 12:26 NASB). Later, liturgical needs led to further divisions of the text for the complete reading of the Law in Babylonian synagogues in one year (fifty-four sections) and in Palestinian synagogues in three years (154 sections).

New Testament Canon

The formation of the New Testament canon is no less enigmatic than that of the Old Testament, also being a process rather than an event. Authority was inherent in the commission to the apostles (Matthew 28:18) but was not accepted without question by all (1 Corinthians 9:1–3). Not all the books written by apostles and those closely associated with them were eventually included in the canon. Paul's former letter to the Corinthians (cf. 5:9) and his letter to the church of Laodicea (cf. Colossians 4:16) have never been identified, although some argue that the Corinthian letter is redacted into the canonical epistles, and Marcion[2] thought Laodiceans were actually Ephesians. Polycarp, writing to the Philippians in the mid-second century, mentions a plurality of letters written by Paul to Philippi (see Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians,* 3:2). Of course, devout believers accepted any teaching by an apostle, whether oral or written, as authoritative. By the late second century, Irenaeus considered apostolicity to be the fundamental criterion of genuineness.

Just when the idea of gathering together all the important and authoritative works of these early writers was conceived is not known.

Second Peter (3:16) speaks of several letters known to be by Paul. Polycarp, again writing to the church in Philippi (mid-second century), sends at their request all the letters of Ignatius in his possession (Polycarp 13:2). The death of Ignatius about forty years earlier had not resulted in the destruction or loss of his letters by the various churches.

[Edgar] Goodspeed's hypothesis that the Pauline Letters had "fallen into obscurity as most old letters do," and were collected only after the publication of Acts prompted it, creates more problems than it solves. Letters were expensive to produce (on parchment or papyrus), and letters from apostles were rare blessings in a time when no New Testament existed and churches functioned largely through local charismatic leadership (1 Corinthians 14). The Colossian church was instructed to read the letter Paul wrote to Laodicea and vice versa (Colossians 4:16). Clearly such letters were deemed valuable and authoritative. They would not "fall into obscurity" by neglect. The failure of the Gospels or Acts to cite any of Paul's letters has no bearing on the question of when they may have been collected. Individual letters, if known, could have been cited had they been considered germane to the work being composed. Clement of Rome, for example, clearly referred to 1 Corinthians about AD 90 when he wrote: "Take up the epistle of the blessed Paul the Apostle. What did he first write to you at the beginning of his preaching? With true inspiration he charged you" (1 Clement 47:1–3). Clement then refers to matters in 1 Corinthians 1.

By the late second century, collections of early Christian documents would certainly have been well underway. Marcion was already making a limited collection of Paul and Luke (accepting only ten of Paul's works). Gnostics were amassing a huge library of apocryphal Christian documents (discovered in 1945 in Upper Egypt and published as *The Nag Hammadi Library* by James Robinson). Both Irenaeus and Tertullian show extensive knowledge of a wide assortment of New Testament books. If the Muratorian Canon is to be dated in the second century rather than the fourth, it provides clear evidence at this time of a canonical list (in Rome?) that contains many New Testament books, but also "several others which cannot be received into the Universal Church." A difference is further made between documents among the apostolic books that can be read in public services and those that cannot.

A papyrus manuscript commonly dated to about AD 200 and containing some of Paul's letters was found in 1931 in Egypt and subsequently

purchased by Chester Beatty. Although it is not an ecclesiastical list of approved books, it is evidence of a collection in the end of the second and beginning of the third century. The manuscript is fragmentary but contains portions of Romans, Hebrews, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1 Thessalonians, in that order. Another manuscript, among the twelve that were found, contains the Gospels (in the familiar order) and Acts. It dates to the first half of the third century. (No lists of authoritative books have yet been found in the third century of which I am aware.)

Eusebius of Caesarea (*Ecclesiastica Historia* [*Church History*], 6.25) mentions several third-century writings of Origen containing discussions of books that he calls (for the first time among early authors, I believe) "canonical." However, Origen gives us no authoritative list of such books.

The fourth century, on the other hand, contains several. Eusebius differentiates several categories of books. These are (1) accepted, (2) disputed, (3) rejected, and (4) heretical. The accepted books contain most of our present New Testament books. The disputed group contains James, Jude, 2 Peter, and 2 and 3 John. The only New Testament book listed in the rejected group is Revelation, but with a note that many put it in group one, where Eusebius himself had already placed it. The fourth group consists primarily of pseudepigraphical books (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastica Historia*, 3.25).

Two of our oldest and best manuscripts of the Bible in Greek come from the fourth century, Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus. The former contains all of the New Testament from Matthew to Hebrews, where it breaks off in chapter 9 with missing leaves. The order is: the four Gospels (in the familiar order), Acts, General Epistles, and Pauline Epistles. The latter contains the Gospels (in the familiar order), the Paulines, with Hebrews after 2 Thessalonians, followed by 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, then Acts followed by the General Epistles, Revelation, and the Books of Barnabas and Hermas. The last two indicate a broader local canon than might be found in some communities. Codex Alexandrinus in the fifth century also includes 1 and 2 Clement. These manuscripts seem to represent the locality of Egypt.

The first actual list of canonical books that contains our twenty-seven, exclusively, dates to AD 367, appearing in Athanasius of Alexandria's festal letter (#96). The order, however, is different. The Gospels are

followed by Acts and then the General Epistles. Next are the Pauline Letters with Hebrews after 2 Thessalonians, followed by 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and Revelation. In 380, we find our twenty-seven books in the familiar arrangement (taken from the Latin Vulgate) listed in the writings of Amphilocius of Iconium.

This means that no list containing just our twenty-seven books in their familiar order appeared until the end of the fourth century, which seems to be when the process of canon formation was reaching its conclusion in the West.

There is no "correct" order of books in the New Testament. The order we have is simply taken over from the Latin Vulgate, the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church, from which the earliest translations were made. The oldest Greek manuscripts have varying arrangements.

Our modern chapter divisions were introduced by Stephen Langdon for the Latin Vulgate New Testament as well as the Old Testament at the beginning of the thirteenth century (c. 1228). Modern verse division is the work of Robert Stephanus, who published a Latin edition of the New Testament in 1551 in Geneva with the text of the chapters divided into verses.

<div align="right">Walter A. Elwell</div>

For Further Reading and Study

F. F. Bruce, *Canon of Scripture*

David Ewert, *A General Introduction to the Bible*

Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology* (4 vols.)

Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *From God to Us: How We Got Our Bible*

Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*

H. D. McDonald, *What the Bible Teaches About the Bible*

J.I. Packer, *God Has Spoken*

Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey From Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible*

Biblical Languages

✦

> Each language that God ordained to transmit divine revelation had a personality that made it suitable for such a purpose.

Christians believe that God has revealed himself through a book. Hence, those who read the Bible can profit from learning as much as possible about the languages in which it was written. The two major languages of Scripture, Greek and Hebrew (a few passages are written in Aramaic), represent two major language families, Indo-European and Semitic. Their contrasting linguistic traits combine to produce a thorough, progressive, propositional revelation of God. That revelation is characterized by simplicity, variety, and power.

The connection between language and thought is not a loose one; language is a product and reflection of the human soul. Language is not just a dress for thought to put on or off at pleasure, but the body, of which thought is the soul. Each language that God ordained to transmit divine revelation had a personality that made it suitable for such a purpose.

No translation can replace the original languages of the Bible in primary importance for conveying and perpetuating divine revelation. Those languages should be learned not merely from the outside, with grammar and lexicon, but also from the inside, with proper appreciation for the uniqueness of each one.

Hebrew

The name *Hebrew* is not applied by the Old Testament to its own language, although the New Testament does use the name that way. In the Old

Testament, Hebrew means the individual or people who used the language. The language itself is called "the language of Canaan" (Isaiah 19:18) or "the language of Judah" (Nehemiah 13:24). [Some modern translations render 2 Kings 18:26, 28 "the language of the Jews," some "Hebrew."]

ORIGIN AND HISTORY. In the Middle Ages, a common view was that Hebrew was the primitive language of humankind. Even in colonial America, Hebrew was still referred to as "the mother of all languages." Linguistic scholarship, however, has made any such theory untenable.

Hebrew is actually one of several Canaanite dialects, which included Phoenician, Ugaritic, and Moabite. Other Canaanite dialects (e.g., Ammonite) existed but have left insufficient inscriptions for scholarly analysis. Such dialects were already present in the land of Canaan before its conquest by the Israelites.

Until about 1974, the oldest witnesses to Canaanite language were found in the Ugarit and Amarna records, dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries BC. A few Canaanite words and expressions appeared in earlier Egyptian records, but the origin of Canaanite has been uncertain. Between 1974 and 1976, though, nearly seventeen thousand tablets were dug up at Tell Mardikh (ancient Ebla) in northern Syria, written in a previously unknown Semitic language. Because they date back to 2400 BC (perhaps even earlier), many scholars think that language may be the "Old Canaanite" that gave rise to Hebrew. By 1977, when another one thousand tablets were unearthed, only about one hundred inscriptions from Ebla had been reported on.

Languages change over a long period. The English used in the time of Alfred the Great (ninth century AD) seems almost like a foreign language to contemporary English speakers. Although Hebrew was no exception to that general principle, like other Semitic languages it remained remarkably stable over many centuries. Poems such as the Song of Deborah (Judges 5) tend to preserve the language's oldest form. Changes that took place later in the long history of the language are shown in the presence of archaic words (often preserved in poetic language) and a general difference in style. For example, to a linguistic scholar, the book of Job clearly shows a more archaic style than the book of Esther.

Various Hebrew dialects probably existed side by side even in Bible times. Variations in pronunciation, as with the word *shibboleth*, seem to have

developed during the period of the judges (Judges 12:4–6). Some features of the language seem to indicate dialect differences between the northern and southern sections of the land.

FAMILY. Hebrew belongs to the Semitic family of languages used throughout southwestern Asia. Semitic languages were spoken from the Mediterranean Sea to the mountains east of the Euphrates River Valley and from Armenia in the north to the southern extremity of the Arabian Peninsula. Semitic languages are classified as *Southern*: Arabic and Ethiopic; *Eastern*: Akkadian; and *Northwestern*: Aramaic-Syriac and Canaanite (Hebrew, Phoenician, Ugaritic, and Moabite).

CHARACTER. Hebrew, like the other early Semitic languages, concentrates on observation more than reflection. That is, things are generally observed according to their appearance as phenomena, not analyzed as to their inward being or essence. Effects are observed but not traced through a series of causes.

Hebrew's vividness and simplicity make the language difficult to translate fully. It is amazingly concise and direct. For example, Psalm 23 contains fifty-five words; most translations require about twice that many to translate it. The first two lines (with slashes dividing the Hebrew words) read:

> The Lord/(is) my shepherd/
> I shall want/nothing. (NEB)

Thus nine English words are required to translate four Hebrew words. Hebrew does not use separate, distinct expressions for every nuance of thought. Someone has said, "The Semites have been the quarries whose great rough blocks the Greeks have trimmed, polished, and fitted together. The former gave religion; the latter philosophy."

Hebrew is a pictorial language in which the past is not merely described but verbally painted. Not just a landscape is presented but a moving panorama. The course of events is reenacted in the mind's sight. (Note the frequent use of *behold,* a Hebraism carried over to the New Testament.) Such common expressions as "he arose and went," "he opened his lips and spoke," "he lifted up his eyes and saw," and "he lifted up his voice and wept" illustrate the pictorial strength of the language.

Many profound theological expressions of the Old Testament are tightly bound up with Hebrew language and grammar. Even the most sacred name of God himself, "the Lord" (Jehovah or Yahweh), is directly related to the Hebrew verb "to be" (or perhaps "to cause to be"). Many other names of Old Testament persons and places can be best understood only with a working knowledge of Hebrew.

Grammar. Many figures of speech and rhetorical devices in the Old Testament are more intelligible if one is familiar with the structure of Hebrew.

(1) Alphabet and Script. The Hebrew alphabet consists of twenty-two consonants; signs for vowels were devised and added late in the language's history. The origin of the alphabet is unknown, although until the discoveries at Ebla the oldest examples of a Canaanite alphabet were preserved in the Ugaritic cuneiform alphabet of the fourteenth century BC.

Brief remains of a linear (non-cuneiform) alphabet appear from time to time in the excavations at Ugarit (Ras Shamra, near Antioch), the oldest possibly dating from the era between Abraham and Moses. The oldest linear alphabetic remains from Canaan date from about the period of the judges (thirteenth to eleventh century BC). The old style of writing was usually called the Phoenician script, predecessor of the Greek and other Western alphabets. The script used in Modern Hebrew Bibles (Aramaic or square script) came into vogue after the exile (sixth century BC). The older style was still used sporadically in the early Christian era on coins and for writing God's name (as in the Dead Sea Scrolls). Hebrew has always been written right to left.

(2) Consonants. The Canaanite alphabet of the Phoenician and Moabite languages had twenty-two consonants. The older Canaanite language seen in Ugaritic had fewer consonants. (Modern Arabic preserves some old Canaanite consonants found in Ugaritic but missing in Hebrew.) The older Canaanite letters were never used in either the square Aramaic script of the Hebrew Bible or the Old Hebrew or Phoenician script.

(3) Vowels. Originally, in the consonantal Hebrew script, vowels were simply understood by the writer or reader. On the basis of tradition and context, a reader would supply whatever vowels were needed—much as in English abbreviations ("bldg" for *building*; "blvd" for *boulevard*). After the Christian era began, the final dispersion of the Jews and the destruction of

Jerusalem led to Hebrew's becoming a "dead language," no longer widely spoken. Loss of traditional pronunciation and understanding then became more likely, so Jewish scribes felt a need for permanently establishing the vowel sounds.

Hebrew Alphabet

The following chart shows each Hebrew character followed by its name, and the approximate sound it represents.

א	**Aleph**	-	(usually silent[2])
בּ,ב	**Beth**	b, v	
גּ,ג	**Gimel**	g, gh	
דּ,ד	**Daleth**	d, th	
ה	**He**	h	
ו	**Vav**	v	
ז	**Zayin**	z	(voiced, gutteral)
ח	**Heth**	kh	
ט	**Teth**	t	
י	**Yod**	y	
ךּ,כּ,כ[1]	**Kaph**	k, kh	
ל	**Lamed**	l	(voiceless, gutteral)
ם,מ[1]	**Mem**	m	
ן,נ[1]	**Nun**	n	
ס	**Samek**	s	
ע	**Ayin**	-	
ףּ,פּ,פ[1]	**Pe**	p, f	(usually silent[2])
ץ,צ[1]	**Sade**	s	
ק	**Koph**	k	
ר	**Resh**	r	
שּׂ,שּׁ	**Sin, shin**	s, sh	(pronounced with back of tongue near the uvula)
ת,ת	**Tav**	t, th	

[1] The alternate form is used only at the ends of words.
[2] May be pronounced according to associated vowel points.

The first Hebrew vowel signs were devised in about the fifth century AD and were elaborated in following centuries before being permanently "fixed." At least three different systems of vowel signs were employed at different times and places. The text used today represents the system devised by Masoretic scribes who worked in the city of Tiberias. The vowels, each of which may be long or short, are indicated by dots or dashes placed above or below the consonants. Combinations of dots and dashes represent very short vowel sounds or half-vowels.

(4) Linkage. Hebrew joins together many words that in Western languages would be written separately. Some prepositions (*be-*, "in"; *le-*, "to"; *ke-*, "like") are prefixed directly to the noun or verb they introduce, as are the definite article *ha-*, "the," and the conjunction *wa-*, "and." Suffixes are used for pronouns, either in the possessive or accusative relationship. The same word may simultaneously have both a prefix and a suffix.

(5) Nouns. Hebrew has no neuter gender; everything is masculine or feminine. Inanimate objects may be either masculine or feminine, depending on the word's formation or character. Usually, abstract ideas or words indicating a group are feminine. Nouns are derived from roots and are formed in various ways, either by vowel modification or by adding prefixes or suffixes to the root. Contrary to Greek and many Western languages, compound nouns are not characteristic of Hebrew.

The Hebrew plural is formed by adding *-im* to masculine nouns (seraphim, cherubim), and modifying the feminine ending to *-oth*.

Three original case endings indicating nominative, genitive, and accusative have dropped away during the evolution of Hebrew. To compensate for the lack of case endings, Hebrew resorts to various indicators. Indirect objects are indicated by the preposition *le-*, "to"; direct objects by the objective sign *eth*; the genitive relationship by putting the word before the genitive in the "construct state," or shortened form.

(6) Adjectives. Hebrew is deficient in adjectives. "A double heart" is indicated in the original Hebrew by "a heart and a heart" (Psalm 12:2) and "two kinds of weights" is actually "a stone and a stone" (Deuteronomy 25:13); the "royal family" is "the seed of the kingdom" (2 Kings 11:1).[1]

Adjectives that do exist in Hebrew have no comparative or superlative forms. Relationship is indicated by the preposition "from." "Better than you" is thus "good from you." "The serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature" is literally "the serpent was subtle from every beast" (Genesis 3:1).

The superlative is expressed by several different constructions. The idea "very deep" is literally "deep, deep" (Ecclesiastes 7:24); the "best song" is literally "song of songs" (cf. "king of kings"); "holiest" is literally "holy, holy, holy" (Isaiah 6:3).

(7) Verbs. Hebrew verbs are formed from a root usually consisting of three letters (radicals). From such roots, verbal forms are developed by change of vowels or by adding prefixes or suffixes. The root consonants provide the semantic backbone of the language and give a stability of meaning not characteristic of Western languages. The vowels are quite flexible, giving Hebrew considerable elasticity.

Hebrew verb usage is not characterized by precise definition of tenses. Hebrew tenses, especially in poetry, are largely determined by context. The two tense formations are the perfect (completed action) and imperfect (incompleted action). The imperfect is ambiguous. It represents the indicative mood (present, past, future), but may also represent such moods as the imperative (a command, a request), optative (a wish, a desire), and jussive or cohortative (a mild command). A distinctive usage of the perfect tense is the "prophetic perfect," where the perfect form represents a future event considered so sure that it is expressed as past (e.g., Isaiah 5:13).

STYLE. Hebrew diction is characterized by a picturesque quality.

(1) Vocabulary. Most Hebrew roots originally expressed some physical action or denoted some natural object. The verb *to decide* originally meant "to cut"; *to be true* meant "to be firmly fixed"; *to be right* meant "to be straight"; *to be honorable* meant "to be heavy."

Abstract terms are alien to the character of Hebrew; for example, biblical Hebrew has no specific words for *theology, philosophy,* or *religion*. Intellectual or theological concepts are expressed by concrete terms. The abstract idea of sin is represented by such words as *to miss the mark* or *crooked* or *rebellion* or *trespass* ("to cross over"). Mind or intellect is expressed by *heart* or *reins* (kidneys), emotion or compassion by *bowels* (see Isaiah 63:15 KJV). Other concrete terms in Hebrew are *horn* for strength or vigor, *bones* for self, and *seed* for descendants. A mental quality is often depicted by the part of the body thought of as its most appropriate embodiment. Strength can be represented by *arm* or *hand*, anger by *nostril*, displeasure by *falling face*, acceptance by *shining face*, thinking by *head*.

Some translators have attempted to consistently represent a Hebrew word by the same English word, but that leads to serious problems. Sometimes there is considerable disagreement on the exact shade of meaning of a Hebrew word in a given passage. A single root frequently represents a variety of meanings, depending on usage and context. The word for *bless* can also mean "curse," "greet," "favor," "praise." The word for *judgment* is used also for "justice," "verdict," "penalty," "ordinance," "duty," "custom," "manner." The word for *strength* or *power* also means "army," "virtue," "worth," "courage."

Further ambiguity arises from some Hebrew consonants standing for two different original consonants that have coalesced in the evolution of the language. For this reason, two roots that appear to be identical may be traced back to different roots—for an English example, compare "bass" (a fish) with "bass" (musical term).

(2) Syntax. Hebrew syntax is relatively uncomplicated. Few subordinating conjunctions (if, when, because, etc.) are used; sentences are usually coordinated by using the word *and*. English translations of biblical texts generally try to show the logical connection between successive sentences even though it is not always clear. In Genesis 1:2–3:1, all but three of the fifty-six verses begin with *and*. Yet the RSV translates that pattern as "and" (1:3), "so" (1:27), "thus" (2:1), "but" (2:6), and "now" (3:1).

Its style is enlivened by use of direct discourse. The narrator does not simply state that "such and such a person said that . . ." (indirect discourse). Instead, the parties speak for themselves (direct discourse), creating a freshness that remains even after repeated reading. Hebrew is an emotional language, with feeling often overwhelming or projecting the thought.

(3) Poetry. Hebrew poetry uses a variety of rhetorical devices. Some of them—such as assonance, alliteration, and acrostics—can be appreciated only in the original Hebrew. But parallelism, the most important characteristic of Hebrew poetry, is evident even in English translation. Among many forms of parallelism, four basic categories exist: *synonymous*, a repeating style where parallel lines say the same thing in different words; *antithetic*, a contrasting style where contrary thoughts are expressed; *constructive*, with a completing parallel line filling out the thought of the first; *climactic*, in which an ascending parallel line picks up something from the first line and repeats it. Hebrew literature contains a rich variety of poetic forms, including lyrics, elegies, and odes.

(4) Figures of speech. Hebrew abounds in expressive figures of speech based on the Hebrew people's character and way of life. Even certain odd expressions influenced by Hebrew style, like "apple of the eye" (Deuteronomy 32:10; Psalm 17:8; Proverbs 7:2; Zechariah 2:8) and "skin of my teeth" (Job 19:20), are familiar in English literature. Some of the more striking Hebrew modes of expression are hard to transfer into English, such as "to uncover the ear" meaning "to disclose, reveal." Others are more familiar, like "to stiffen the neck" for "to be stubborn, rebellious"; "to bend or incline the ear" for "to listen closely."

LEGACY. English and a number of other modern languages have been enriched by Hebrew.

(1) Words. English contains a few Hebrew loan words. Some have had great influence, like "amen," "hallelujah," and "jubilee." Many Hebrew proper nouns are used in modern languages for persons and places, such as David, Jonathan/John, Miriam/Mary, Bethlehem (the name of several U.S. towns and cities), Bethel, and Zion.

(2) Expressions. Many common Hebrew expressions have been unconsciously accepted into English figures of speech, as in "mouth of the cave" and "face of the earth." Some figures, such as "grapes of wrath" and "east of Eden," have been used as titles for books and movies.

Aramaic

A secondary Old Testament language is Aramaic, found in sections of Daniel (2:4–7:28) and Ezra (4:8–6:18; 7:12–26). Aramaic phrases and expressions also appear in Genesis (31:47), Jeremiah (10:11), and the New Testament.

OLD TESTAMENT USE. Genesis 31:47 reflects usage of Hebrew and Aramaic by two individuals who were contemporaries: Jacob, the father of the Israelites, referred to a certain memorial or "witness heap" by the Hebrew term; his father-in-law, Laban, called it by its Aramaic counterpart.

Aramaic is linguistically very close to Hebrew. Aramaic texts in the Bible are written in the same script as Hebrew. The two languages are quite similar

in the way they formulate their verb, noun, and pronoun constructions. In contrast to Hebrew, Aramaic uses a larger vocabulary, including many loan words and a greater variety of connectives. It also contains an elaborate system of tenses, developed through the use of participles with pronouns or with various forms of the verb *to be*. Although Aramaic is less euphonious and poetical than Hebrew, it is probably superior as a vehicle of exact expression.

Aramaic has perhaps the longest continuous living history of any known language. It was used during the Bible's patriarchal period and is still spoken by a few people today. Aramaic and its cognate, Syriac, evolved into many dialects in different places and periods. Characterized by simplicity, clarity, and precision, it adapted easily to the various needs of everyday life. It could serve equally as a language for scholars, pupils, lawyers, or merchants. Some have described it as the Semitic equivalent of English.

The origin of Aramaic is unknown, but it seems to have been closely related to Amorite and possibly to other ancient Northwest Semitic dialects barely known to scholars. Although an Aramaean kingdom as such never really existed, various Aramaean "states" developed into influential centers. A few brief Aramaean inscriptions from that era (tenth to eighth centuries BC) have been found and studied.

In the eighth century BC, King Hezekiah's representatives requested the spokesman of the Assyrian king Sennacherib to "speak to your servants in Aramaic, since we understand it. Don't speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall" (2 Kings 18:26 NIV).

By the Persian period, Aramaic had become the language of international trade. During their captivity, the Jews probably adopted it for convenience— certainly in commerce—while Hebrew became confined to the learned and to religious leaders.

Gradually, especially after the exile, Aramaic influence pervaded the land of Palestine. Nehemiah complained that children from mixed marriages were unable to speak Hebrew (Nehemiah 13:24). The Jews seem to have continued using Aramaic widely during the Persian, Greek, and Roman periods. Eventually the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Aramaic paraphrases, called Targums. Some Targum manuscripts have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

NEW TESTAMENT USE. In popular thought, Aramaic was the common language of Palestine during the time of Jesus. Yet that is by no means certain and

probably oversimplifies the linguistic situation of that time. Names used in the New Testament reflect Aramaic (Bartholomew, Bar-jonah, Barnabas), Greek (Andrew, Philip), and Latin (Mark), as well as Hebrew. There is no question that Aramaic was widely used, as were Greek and Hebrew. Latin was probably limited to military and governmental circles. Tradition also reflects Mishnaic Hebrew, a kind of everyday Hebrew dialect used in Jesus' day. Mishnaic Hebrew documents have also been discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

What was the Hebrew referred to in certain New Testament passages (John 5:2; 19:13, 17, 20; 20:16; Revelation 9:11; 16:16)? The languages used on Jesus' cross were Hebrew, Greek, and Latin (John 19:19–20). Later, the apostle Paul was said to speak Hebrew (Acts 22:2; 26:14). The exact dialect he spoke may be debated, but as a Pharisee he was undoubtedly able to read the Old Testament Hebrew. The Greek word for *Hebrew* is sometimes translated "Aramaic" and may be a general term for Semitic or for a blend of Hebrew-Aramaic (as Yiddish is German-Hebrew). At any rate, Aramaic served as a transition from Hebrew to Greek as the language spoken by Jews in Jesus' day. In that sense, Aramaic connects Old Testament Hebrew with New Testament Greek.

Greek

The Greek language is beautiful, rich, and harmonious as an instrument of communication. It is a fitting tool both for vigorous thought and for religious devotion. During its classic period, Greek was the language of one of the world's greatest civilizations. In that cultural period, language, literature, and art flourished more than war. The Greek mind was preoccupied with ideals of beauty. The Greek language reflected artistry in its philosophical dialogues, its poetry, and its stately orations.

Greek was also characterized by strength and vigor. It was capable of variety and striking effects. Greek was a language of argument, with a vocabulary and style that could penetrate and clarify phenomena rather than simply tell stories. Classical Greek elaborately developed many forms from a few word roots. Its complex syntax allowed intricate word arrangements to express fine nuances of meaning.

ANCIENT HISTORY. Although the antecedents of Greek are obscure, the first traces of what could be called ancient Greek appear in Mycenaean and Minoan documents. They contain three different scripts: Minoan hieroglyphic (the earliest), Linear A, and Linear B (the latest). Linear B is generally considered "pre-Greek." The syllabic script of Linear B is found on clay tablets discovered on the Greek mainland (1400–1200 BC).

Mycenaean civilization and script ended suddenly with the Dorian invasions (1200 BC). Writing seems to have disappeared for several centuries. Later, about the eighth century BC, Greek writing appeared in a different script, one based on an alphabet presumably borrowed from the Phoenicians and then adapted to Greek speech sounds and direction of writing. Greek was first written from right to left like the Western Semitic languages, then in a back-and-forth pattern, and finally from left to right. Several dialects appeared during the archaic period (eighth to sixth centuries BC): Dorian, Ionian, Achaean, and Aeolic.

During the classical period (fifth to fourth centuries BC), Greek culture reached its literary and artistic zenith. Classical (or Attic) Greek was characterized by subtlety of syntax, flexibility, and an expressive use of particles (short, uninflected parts of speech, often untranslatable). As the city of Athens attained cultural and political control, the Attic dialect also gained in prestige. With the Macedonian conquests, Attic Greek, combined with influences from other dialects (especially Ionic), became the international language of the eastern Mediterranean area.

HELLENISM AND THE KOINE DIALECT. The conquests of Alexander the Great encouraged the spread of Greek language and culture. Regional dialects were largely replaced by Hellenistic or *Koine* (everyday) Greek. That language is known through thousands of inscriptions reflecting all aspects of daily life. The Koine dialect added many vernacular expressions to Attic Greek, thus making it more cosmopolitan. Simplifying the grammar also better adapted it to a worldwide culture. The new language, reflecting simple, popular speech, became the common language of commerce and diplomacy. The Greek language lost much of its elegance and finely shaded nuance as a result of its evolution from classical to Koine. Nevertheless, it retained its distinguishing characteristics of strength, beauty, clarity, and logical rhetorical power.

It is significant that Paul wrote his letter to Christians in Rome in Greek rather than in Latin. The Roman Empire of that time was culturally a Greek world, except for governmental transactions.

Sᴇᴘᴛᴜᴀɢɪɴᴛ. During the centuries immediately before Christ, the eastern Mediterranean had been undergoing not only Hellenization but also Semitization. Both influences can be observed in the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

Translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek was an epochal event. The Septuagint (earliest Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) later had a strong influence on Christian thought. A necessary consequence of Hebrew writers using the Greek language was that a Greek spirit and Greek forms of thought influenced Jewish culture. The Jews soon appropriated from the rich Greek vocabulary expressions for ideas that were beyond the scope of Hebrew terminology. Also, old Greek expressions acquired new meanings corresponding to Jewish conceptions.

The Greek Old Testament has been very significant in the development of Christian thought. Often the usage of a Greek word in the Septuagint provides a key to its meaning in the New Testament. The Old Testament dialect of "Jewish-Greek" is at times seen in New Testament passages translated very literally; at other times, New Testament translation of Old Testament texts is very loose.

Nᴇᴡ Tᴇsᴛᴀᴍᴇɴᴛ Gʀᴇᴇᴋ. Although most New Testament authors were Jewish, they wrote in Greek, the universal language of their time. In addition, the apostle John seems to have been acquainted with some Greek philosophy. John used *Word* (Greek *logos*) in reference to Christ (John 1:1), and several other abstract expressions; John may have been influenced by the Egyptian center of Alexandria, where Greek philosophy and Hebrew learning had merged in a unique way.

Paul also was acquainted with Greek authors (Acts 17:28; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Titus 1:12). Thus Greek orators and philosophers, as well as Hebrew prophets and scholars, influenced Paul's language.

Exactly which dialect of Hebrew or Aramaic Jesus spoke is debated, but the fact remains that the Holy Spirit inspired the Gospels as Greek texts. The

records in Greek of Jesus' teaching and accomplishments prepared the way for the gospel to spread throughout a Greek-speaking culture.

The dignity and restraint of Koine Greek used by Christian writers was neither as artificial and pedantic as some classical writings, nor so trivial and vulgar as spoken Koine at times could be. Greek words took on richer, more spiritual meaning in the context of Scripture, influenced by the simplicity and rich vividness of Semitic style. The New Testament was not written in a peculiar "Holy Ghost" language (as some medieval scholars believed). Tens of thousands of papyri unearthed in Egypt in the twentieth century furnish lexical and grammatical parallels to biblical language and reveal that it was part of the linguistic warp and woof of that era. Yet New Testament Greek was nevertheless "free," often creating its own idiom. Christian writers influenced Greek thought by introducing new expressions in order to convey their message about Jesus Christ.

SEMITIC INFLUENCE. Because New Testament Greek combines the directness of Hebrew thought with the precision of Greek expression, Greek's subtle delicacy often interprets Hebrew concepts. The Semitic influence is strongest in the Gospels, Revelation, and James. Luke and Hebrews exhibit a more typical Greek style. The epistles blend the wisdom of Hebrew and the dialectic philosophy of Greek. Sermons recorded in the New Testament combine the Hebrew prophetic message with Greek oratorical force.

In addition to direct quotes and allusions from the Septuagint, a pervasive Semitic influence on New Testament Greek has been noted in many areas. For example, the syntax contains many examples of Semitic style.

VOCABULARY. The Greek New Testament vocabulary is abundant and sufficient to convey just the shade of meaning the author desires. For example, the New Testament uses two different words for "love" (for two kinds of love), two words for "another" (another of the same, or another of a different kind), and several words for various kinds of knowledge. Significantly, some words are omitted, such as *eros* (third kind of love) and other words commonly employed in the Hellenistic culture of that time.

Moreover, Greek words often took on new meanings in the context of the gospel, arising from a combination of new teachings with an exalted morality. The writers did not hesitate to use such words as *life*, *death*, *glory*,

and *wrath* in new ways to express new thoughts. Sometimes the literal meaning of a word almost disappears, as when the authors use *water, washing,* and *baptism* for Christ's spiritually purifying power. New Testament vocabulary also contains words found elsewhere only in the Greek Old Testament, such as *circumcision, idolatry, anathema, diaspora,* and *Pentecost.* Loan words include *alleluia* and *amen* (Hebrew), and *abba, mammon,* and *corban* (Aramaic).

For understanding the meaning of a New Testament word, then, a lexicon of classical Greek is essential but not sufficient. One must also know how the word is used in the Greek Old Testament, in Hellenistic writings, and in the inscriptions and documents representing the language of everyday life. Papyrus documents provide many illustrations of the meaning of New Testament words. For example, the Greek word for "contribution" ("collection," 1 Corinthians 16:1), at one time thought limited to the New Testament, is commonly used with the same meaning in the papyri. Many Greek words once defined on the basis of classical Greek have been given sharper meaning in the light of their use in the papyri.

Alpha	ἄλφα	*a*	Α	α	a as in f<u>a</u>ther
Beta	βῆτα	*b*	Β	β	b as in <u>B</u>ible
Gamma	γάμμα	*g*	Γ	γ	g as in <u>g</u>one
Delta	δέλτα	*d*	Δ	δ	d as in <u>d</u>og
Epsilon	ἒ ψιλόν	*e*	Ε	ε	e as in m<u>e</u>t
Zeta	ζῆτα	*z*	Ζ	ζ	z as in da<u>z</u>e
Eta	ἦτα	*ē*	Η	η	e as in ob<u>ey</u>
Theta	θῆτα	*th*	Θ	θ	th as in <u>th</u>ing
Iota	ἰῶτα	*i*	Ι	ι	i as in <u>i</u>ntrigue
Kappa	κάππα	*k*	Κ	κ	k as in <u>k</u>itchen
Lambda	λάμβδα	*l*	Λ	λ	l as in <u>l</u>aw
Mu	μῦ	*m*	Μ	μ	m as in <u>m</u>other
Nu	νῦ	*n*	Ν	ν	n as in <u>n</u>ew
Xi	ξῖ	*x*	Ξ	ξ	x as in a<u>x</u>iom
Omicron	ὂ μικρόν	*o*	Ο	ο	o as in n<u>o</u>t
Pi	πῖ	*p*	Π	π	p as in <u>p</u>each
Rho	ῥῶ	*r*	Ρ	ρ	r as in <u>r</u>od
Sigma	σίγμα	*s*	Σ	σ/ς	s as in <u>s</u>tudy
Tau	ταῦ	*t*	Τ	τ	t as in <u>t</u>alk
Upsilon	ῦ ψιλόν	*u/y*	Υ	υ	u as the German <u>ü</u>
Phi	φῖ	*ph*	Φ	φ	ph as in <u>ph</u>one
Chi	χῖ	*ch*	Χ	χ	ch as in lo<u>ch</u>
Psi	ψῖ	*ps*	Ψ	ψ	ps as in li<u>ps</u>
Omega	ὦ μέγα	*ō*	Ω	ω	o as in t<u>o</u>ne

GRAMMAR. As in other Indo-European languages, the meaning of Greek words is affected by the addition and alteration of various prefixes and suffixes (the process known as "inflection"). Although its system of inflection was simplified compared to classical Greek, New Testament Greek was more inflected than many languages. Greek meaning is thus much less susceptible to ambiguity than English.

In contrast to Hebrew, Greek has a neuter gender as well as masculine and feminine. The many and precise Greek prepositions are subtle, having various meanings depending on their context. New Testament Greek uses only about half of the particles used in classical Greek.

The Greek verb system, much more complicated than Hebrew's, is capable of nuances of meaning difficult to express even in English. Each Greek verb has five aspects, which grammarians call tense, mood, voice, person, and number.

(1) Tense. Greek verb tense deals primarily with kind of action, rather than time of action as in English. In Greek there are three basic kinds of action: *durative*, expressed by the present, imperfect, and (sometimes) future tenses; *simple* or punctiliar, expressed by the aorist and (often) future tenses (aorist refers to uncompleted past action); and *completed*, expressed by the perfect tense (results of past action continue into the present) and pluperfect tense (results are confined to the past). Greek tenses are often hard to translate into English; the time of action as well as the verb stem's basic meaning (e.g., whether it takes an object) must be subtly blended with the kind of action into a single idea.

(2) Mood. The mood shows how a verb's action should be understood. Is the action real? (Use the indicative mood.) Is the action demanded by someone? (Use the imperative mood.) Does the action depend on other conditions? (Use the subjunctive or optative mood.) Is the action basically descriptive of another substantive? (Use a participle.) Is the action basically substantive? (Use an infinitive.) In grammar, a substantive is a word or group of words functioning as a noun; the last two examples are not strictly

moods, but they are used that way by grammarians. Moods give Greek writers a rich choice of verbal expression.

(3) Voice. A verb's voice describes whether action is directed outward (active), inward (middle), or back upon the sentence's subject (passive).

(4) Person. The person of a verb tells who is doing the acting, whether I (first person), you (second person), or another (third person).

(5) Number. Verb number shows whether the action is performed by one person (singular) or more than one (plural).

Style. The New Testament contains a variety of writing styles in its use of Greek. The Gospels especially exhibit Semitic features. Matthew uses a style less picturesque than Mark's, and in some respects close to the style of Luke, Acts, Hebrews, James, and 1 Peter. Luke's style varies from both Mark and Matthew's in its elegance. The rather simple style of John contains many Semitisms.

Among Paul's letters, differences of style have been noted. The least literary and most direct in expression are his letters to the Thessalonians. The Pastorals (1, 2 Timothy; Titus) have a style nearer to the Koine than much New Testament writing, not so Jewish, and not so much influenced by the Septuagint as his other letters.

Hebrews combines elegance with Jewish-Greek style. James' letter, though high in cultural quality, is not as sensitive in style as Hebrews. Less elegant is 1 Peter, which is strongly influenced by the Septuagint and thus reflects Semitic style.

Jude contains elevated, somewhat ponderous diction and shows the influence of Jewish style. Resembling Jude in its high style, 2 Peter is even more influenced by the Septuagint.

Revelation has a generally simple style but shows considerable Semitic influence in its use of parallelism and redundance. Linguistic scholars have identified a number of apparent Greek grammatical mistakes in Revelation.

Conclusion

To Christians, the message conveyed by the Bible is simple and direct, yet capable of interacting with people in the most complex cultural circumstances. Although every human language has its limitations, the

biblical languages have proved to be remarkably adequate vehicles for conveying God's message in all its power and richness.

<div align="right">Larry Lee Walker</div>

For Further Reading and Study

Matthew S. DeMoss, *Pocket Dictionary for the Study of New Testament Greek*

John H. Dobson, *Learn New Testament Greek*

James Found, *Basic Greek in Thirty Minutes a Day*

Menahem Mansoor, *Biblical Hebrew Step by Step*

William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar*

Todd J. Murphy, *Pocket Dictionary for the Study of Biblical Hebrew*

Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar*

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Interpreting Scripture

✦

Three basic questions may be asked of any text: What does it say? What does it mean? How does it impact me?

—Edward L. Hayes

Hermeneutics

Most people are aware that "meaningful" communication is difficult even at the ordinary human level. Between two people who speak the same language or even live in the same household, the meaning of what is said can easily be lost or distorted. Language is quite flexible. A simple word like *early*, for example, can have a whole range of meanings depending on its context: early supper means at 5:30 instead of 6:30, but early retirement means at age sixty rather than sixty-five; Early American is a style of furniture, and Early Bronze is an archaeological period, with over four thousand years between them. Language is continually changing. In the English of Shakespeare's day, *physics* meant "laxatives or other medicines"; what is now called *physics* would then have been known as "natural philosophy."

Such linguistic problems are faced in biblical interpretation, where they have often been formidable. By its nature, the Bible stands out from all other literature, so its interpretation affords challenges beyond those of translating from one language to another and from an ancient cultural setting into a modern and rapidly changing one. The Bible is not one book but a whole library of books, written over a span of more than fifteen hundred years by many different writers with a variety of individual styles and immediate purposes. Yet its own claims and its remarkable unity demonstrate to Christians that the Bible is "God's Word in human

language." The interpreter, always a finite, fallible human creature, must try to see things from God's point of view—even though they are expressed from another human perspective.

Over the years, devoted scholars trained in the discipline called *hermeneutics* (from Greek for "interpretation") have worked out canons, or rules, for translating and interpreting Scripture. Bible students have access to their work through exegetical commentaries—*exegesis* (from Greek for "explanation") being yet another word for interpretation. The work of interpretation is never completed, partly because new data from archaeology continue to shed new light on difficult passages, and partly because new questions are asked as human understanding changes. Errors of interpretation from reading into Scripture a meaning not really there (a process called *eisegesis*) are thus discovered and corrected.

Interpretation

To interpret is to bring out the true meaning of something written or spoken, particularly by restating it in other words. One synonym is simply "to explain"; another is "to translate." A bilingual person who stands beside a speaker to translate the speaker's words into another language is called an interpreter. To evangelical Christians, biblical interpretation is a fundamentally important task because the Bible is considered to be God's spoken and written Word. The Creator's own revelation of himself and of his purpose for his creatures is the most significant communication human beings could possibly receive.

—A. Berkeley Mickelsen

In spite of much agreement about what the Bible means, trained biblical scholars at times disagree in their interpretations of a particular passage. In the church's long history, scholars have even disagreed over the basic principles of interpretation. The early church fathers in Alexandria (Egypt), influenced by Greek philosophical thought, began a whole school of biblical interpretation in which the text was largely allegorized—that is, the meaning of the text was sought not in the plain or literal meaning of the words; the words were thought to stand for spiritual ideas in the mind of God. The Alexandrians sought to understand Scripture by imagining what God would want to communicate. Imaginative interpretations piled on top of each other until they became bizarre or even fantastic, as the Alexandrian influence spread through the Western church in the Middle Ages. Another school of interpretation, not rejecting allegorizing entirely but generally paying more attention to actual words of the Bible, grew up among the

church fathers in Antioch (Syria). It had less influence than the Alexandrians on the medieval Scholastics, who for almost a thousand years obscured much literal, historical meaning with mystical interpretations.

The Protestant Reformation (sixteenth century) brought the church back to an appreciation of Scripture as a direct, straightforward message from God. The reformers laid emphasis on the study of Hebrew and Greek grammar and of ancient Near Eastern history as the most appropriate tools for understanding the Bible. Yet they also insisted that the Bible is perspicuous (from the Latin for "transparent"); that is, the meaning of Scripture is clear to any intelligent reader who reads it the way one would read an ordinary human document—if that person is humble enough to ask the Spirit for understanding of the inspired Word. This is the way Christians should approach the task of biblical interpretation today.

There are two basic steps in interpretation. One must ask: (1) What did the passage mean for the person who first spoke these words or wrote them and for the people who first heard or read them? (2) What should the passage mean to a reader today? The first task is to enter into the circumstances of the person who first wrote or heard or read the passage and then try to understand the meaning in the light of the whole Bible. The second is to try to make the meaning of the passage clear in the circumstances of the present century. Interpreters in every age have struggled to be faithful in these two steps.

Sometimes Christians are so eager to proclaim what the passage means to their contemporaries that they tend to miss what it meant in its original situation. Others have spent considerable time on the Old Testament situation but lost sight of the radical changes introduced by Jesus' life, death, and resurrection: "We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. . . . Where there is forgiveness of these [sins, lawless deeds], there is no longer any offering [that is, animal offerings] for sin" (Hebrews 10:10, 18 NASB).

Exegesis

Exegesis is the process of drawing out of a text its intended meaning. From the Greek word *exegeomai*, the word is used to describe the disclosure or description of a document, statement, or incident. Where found in the New Testament, it appears to be a term interchangeable with hermeneutics. In John 1:18, the word explains how God made himself known to human beings by exegesis or "declaration" of the Son of God. In Luke 24:35, the two disciples "exegeted" or told what had happened to them on the Emmaus road.

The relationship of exegesis to hermeneutics is one of kind and degree. Hermeneutics may best be viewed as the umbrella under which exegesis fits. Hermeneutics deals with broad principles or rules of interpretation governing biblical exegesis. The Word of God, properly understood in various cultural settings, prompts both teacher and learner to search for proper meanings employing historical, critical, linguistic, and cultural understandings. Both in hermeneutics and exegesis, evangelicals have relied upon what is now known as the literal-grammatical-historical method. Exegesis is the more exact science to unlock these meanings.

Exegesis, as contrasted with *eisegesis* ("to read into"), forms the heart of hermeneutical theory. Exegesis employs three approaches to the text: (1) understanding the grammar of a text, (2) understanding the meaning of individual words in a sentence, and (3) understanding the message as a whole in the context of a paragraph, chapter, individual book, and the entire text of Scripture. These are interdependent upon one another.

Exegesis may involve a Scripture translation, paraphrase, or commentary, its overall rules being governed by hermeneutics and a biblical theology. In other words, a text cannot stand alone in meaning but fits within the entire structure of revealed truth.

Exegesis involves a process: (1) examining the text itself, its origin and wording, (2) scrutiny of translation, (3) discovery of historical context—authorship, setting, and dating, (4) analysis of literary context, (5) determining the genre or literary type, (6) outlining and diagramming structure, (7) classification of grammar and syntax, (8) systematically studying a given truth in the setting of all revealed truth, and (9) applying the text.

In short, three basic questions may be asked of any text: What does it say? What does it mean? How does it impact me? Care must be given, however, not to shortchange all the steps of exegesis lest a learner rush to a personal application that is totally unwarranted from the biblical data.

There are two misapplications of the text to avoid: moralizing the Word and personalizing the Word. Moralizing the Word involves applying a particular moral framework to a truth viewed from a particular vantage point in time. Personalizing a text is similar in that an individualistic world and life view dictates meaning and application. Both moralizing and personalizing a text may be avoided by applying sound hermeneutics and exegesis theory.

First, it must be understood that the reading of any biblical text assumes that the present reader is not the original reader. Effort should be made to determine how the text may best have been understood by the original reader. Second, the interpretive community of believers (the *ekklesia*) constitutes the context of the reading. Third, since the original authors and hearers are no longer participants in the process, the interpretive interaction takes place between text and learner. Since the text is historical in its composition and presentation, every method must be used to understand its meaning in that light before a rush to application.

Finally, the witness of the Holy Spirit figures prominently in an evangelical understanding of biblical exegesis. Calvin and other reformers rejected external authority as the basis for understanding truth and substituted the witness of the Spirit (see John 14:26; 16:13–15). The Christian is not unaided in understanding and teaching God's Word. Ultimately, it is the Holy Spirit who sheds light upon divine truth. While unbelievers may gain understanding of a text, apart from the work of the Spirit who enlightens the mind, they may never come to truth that is "spiritually appraised" or examined (v. 14). The text of 1 Corinthians 2:6–16 is important in that essential wisdom comes from God.

—Edward L. Hayes

The context of the whole Bible shows the finality of Jesus' offering for sin. He brought into existence a "new people of God" (that is, both Jews and Gentiles who acknowledge Jesus as Messiah). Many Old Testament promises to Israel are thus interpreted in the New Testament as applying to God's new people, the church. Because of such developments within the Bible itself, it is important to place equal weight on steps one and two. Making the proper transition from Bible times to the present takes careful study, prayer, and dependence on the Holy Spirit. Christians are responsible not to add to or subtract from the meaning God intends.

Entering into the Past

The fifteen centuries over which the Bible was written spanned great changes in cultural and political situations. Sometimes change came quite

rapidly. Paul's situation in Athens (Acts 17:15–34), for example, was quite different from the situation he faced in Jerusalem only a few years later (21:17–23:30). Careful attention must be paid to the events of Near Eastern history.

HISTORY AND **C**ULTURE. Historical writings never tell everything that happened; they represent someone's selection of certain events out of all those that took place among a certain group of people over a period of time. That selection helps those who read the record see what made those people different from others around them. History can reveal the strengths and weaknesses of nations and why they have continued or why they have disappeared. But biblical history does not focus upon people alone. Its history is God-centered. Its writers saw God as revealing himself in history by choosing the Israelite people to work with in a special way. He communicated directly with individuals among them, designated as his servants, concerning the basis for his blessings and judgments upon them. Finally, God joined them on earth in the person of Jesus Christ, experiencing firsthand the full agonies of human history.

> On its human side, I assume that [the Bible] was produced and preserved by competent human beings who were at least as intelligent and devout as we are today. I assume that they were quite capable of accurately interpreting their own experience and of objectively presenting what they heard and experienced in the language of their historical community, which we today can understand with due diligence.
>
> On the divine side, I assume that God has been willing and competent to arrange for the Bible, including its record of Jesus, to emerge and be preserved in ways that will secure his purposes for it among human beings worldwide. Those who actually believe in God will be untroubled by this. I assume that he did not and would not leave his message to humankind in a form that can only be understood by a handful of late-twentieth-century professional scholars who cannot even agree among themselves on the theories that they assume to determine what the message is.
>
> The Bible is, after all, God's gift to the world through his church, not to the scholars. It comes through the life of his people and nourishes that life. Its purpose is practical, not academic. An intelligent, careful, intensive but straightforward reading—that is, one not governed by obscure and faddish theories or by a mindless orthodoxy—is what it requires to direct us into life in God's kingdom.[1]
>
> —Dallas Willard

The Bible's viewpoint is that there is *one* God, *one* people of God, and *one* history. God's servants could not conceive of writing history without seeing in history the sovereign hand of God. Modern secular historians ignore or deny God's role in human history, but to interpret the Bible one must try to view history as the biblical writers did: a time, a place, an event where God disclosed himself to humanity in history.

To understand the writer's meaning, we must also understand that writer's cultural patterns. Culture includes the habits, customs, tools, material things produced, institutions, arts, music, and literary outputs of any people—all the things they create and use. The culture of a particular time is a good barometer of what people consider important. The amount of money spent on amusements, liquor, and weapons shows the interests and emphases of any people. What any people do, what they actually produce, generally tells more about them than what they say.

Linguistic Structure. Language is a crucial part of the life of any people. The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew except for a few brief sections in Aramaic (Genesis 31:47; Ezra 4:8–6:18; 7:12–26; Jeremiah 10:11; Daniel 2:4–7:28). The New Testament was originally written in Greek. Each language has a particular structure, a grammar that must be mastered in order to understand what is written and to translate it accurately. All three languages are rich in vocabulary and nuances of meaning that can easily be lost in translation.

Many sentences in the Bible are long and complex. All translations break up the longer sentences of the original languages (especially the Greek) to make them read more easily in English. Paraphrases go even further in simplifying, with the results that some connections between ideas may be lost. What paraphrases show as independent sentences may in the original have been joined more closely together, revolving around only one verb form. Today a student of the Bible can make use of excellent translations that bring out the literal meanings of the original (such as the *New American Standard Bible* or the *Revised Standard Version*) and also a variety of carefully done paraphrases (such as *The Living Bible* or *Phillips' New Testament in Modern English*). Beyond that kind of comparison, commentaries can often help one understand why two translations differ on some passage.

When I read the Bible, I approach it differently from the way I approach other forms of literature. It is not that the critical apparatus in my mind shuts down. If anything, my penchant for analysis is

accentuated and sharpened when I read Scripture because I am motivated by a profound desire to understand Scripture. [2]
—R. C. Sproul

LITERARY CONTEXT. The context of a passage means more than merely the words or paragraph immediately surrounding it. To interpret a passage correctly, one must see what comes immediately before it and what comes after, but one should also think of the whole book as the context of the passage. In a book like Daniel, the broader context includes narration of events, dreams, and visions, plus materials taken from various times in Daniel's life and those of three or four kings. Familiarity with the whole book is necessary to understand a specific part. An obscure phrase can easily be taken out of context and given a meaning that makes sense today, but a careful look at that phrase in the light of all the rest of Daniel may show that such an up-to-date interpretation could not possibly be what Daniel meant. To ignore context increases the possibility of "discovering" a meaning that is not really there, that is, of practicing eisegesis. Scholars, teachers, and pastors can be as guilty of eisegesis as any ordinary reader—if they do their work too hastily or have an axe to grind in the form of a strongly held interpretative scheme.

Distinguishing Between Literal and Figurative Language

Although the Bible uses the ordinary language of people, its main theme is not all ordinary. It deals with the hostility of human beings toward God and with how those wandering away from him can come back into fellowship with him. The reality of God, the reality of sin, and the reality of redemption are themes that challenge the capacity of human language.

MEANING OF THE TERMS *LITERAL* AND *FIGURATIVE*. Language is said to be literal when it carries its customary, socially acknowledged meaning. To say, "The farmer plowed his field" is to use the verb *plow* literally. It means the farmer broke up the ground as one does to prepare a field for planting. But

to say, "The student plowed through a difficult course in physics" or "The executive plowed through a pile of paper work" is to use *plow* figuratively. The farmer, student, and executive all "advanced laboriously through a resistant material." Whether the word *plow* is used literally or figuratively has nothing to do with the reality of the experience. Plowing a field or plowing through paper work are both realities. Figurative language takes a common, ordinary meaning and moves it to another realm. An example from the Bible is the ordinary first-century human language of redeeming or buying a person from slavery to speak of God's redeeming his people from sin. Sin is personified: it holds human beings in slavery or bondage. God redeems them from that slavery, that is, he sets people free when by faith they turn their lives over to him.

Many disagreements over biblical interpretation boil down to a question of the degree of literalness intended in a passage. When John described the Holy Spirit at Jesus' baptism descending "from heaven as a dove" (John 1:32), did he mean simply that the Spirit "came down," like a flying dove would come down from the sky? Or did he mean that the Spirit took on the form of a literal bird that physically alighted on Jesus? Or did he mean something else entirely? Often the context provides enough clues to enable the reader to distinguish clearly; at other times the clues are missing or are themselves open to different interpretations.

Short Figures of Speech. Most of the literary devices recognized as figures of speech in ordinary literature are also found in the Bible. *Simile,* for example, is a comparison in which words such as *like* or *as* are used. A *metaphor* is a direct comparison: "He's a good sport," or (of Jesus) "Behold, the Lamb of God" (John 1:29 NASB). Both simile and metaphor are used in a familiar passage in Isaiah (40:6–7 NASB; see also James 1:10–11; 1 Peter 1:24–25 NASB):

> All flesh is grass,
> and all its loveliness is like the flower of
>   the field.
> The grass withers, the flower
> fades. . . .

The metaphorical statement that "the grass withers, the flower fades" shows the power of figures of speech. *Flesh* is the Hebrew way of referring to

ordinary, human life. No matter how vibrant and beautiful a person may be (like a flower), he or she will eventually show the effects of aging and finally die. No abstract statements about aging could have the penetrating, memorable quality of that combination of metaphor and simile.

Frequently the Bible pictures God with bodily members and physical movements (anthropomorphism) or with human emotions, feelings, and responses (anthropopathism). Metaphors used about God may refer to his "ear," "mouth," "arm," or "fingers" (Psalm 8:3; Isaiah 55:11; 59:1). God is described as "angry" (Deuteronomy 1:37; 4:21) and in the Ten Commandments as "jealous" (Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 5:9). Such metaphors do not imply that God's anger and jealousy are felt or expressed like human anger or jealousy. Human emotions are affected by human sinfulness, ignorance, and inability to maintain emotional balance.

God is free both from the physical limitations of human ears, arms, mouths, and fingers, and from the weaknesses of human emotions. Yet God can speak, hear, and act. The Bible states that he loves sinners, but also that he is angry with sin and sinners. God feels it keenly when his creatures turn away from him to idolatry and to self-destruction. Anthropomorphic metaphors seem essential for human understanding of God, but one must be careful not to literalize them. God does not literally breathe in and out. When he becomes angry, he does not lose emotional control.

When Jesus spoke of "blind guides" straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel (Matthew 23:24), he was clearly using *hyperbole*, an intentional, conscious exaggeration. Jesus wanted to show that the Pharisees and scribes were careful about trivial details but couldn't see important spiritual matters. Was Jesus using hyperbole when he said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (19:24 NASB)? Many wealthy Christians devoutly hope so! Was Jesus hyperbolically showing that those who have wealth usually trust in wealth rather than in God, in order to emphasize that genuine trust in God is necessary to enter into his kingdom? Or was he saying that it is literally impossible for the rich to enter the kingdom of God? The context shows that his disciples were so astonished at the literal meaning of his words that he softened them by adding, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (vv. 25–26).

EXTENDED FIGURES OF SPEECH. A *parable* is actually an extended simile; an *allegory* is an extended metaphor. In Luke 15:1–7, Jesus told a parable (about lost sheep) to Pharisees and scribes who were enraged because Jesus welcomed sinners and ate with them (v. 2). The joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, Jesus said, is like the joy of a shepherd who recovers a lost sheep. The good-shepherd figure of speech was also used in an allegory, the meaning of which Jesus had to explain (John 10:1–18). Unlike a parable, which in its pure form has only one main point, an allegory has several points of comparison. In the good-shepherd allegory, Jesus indicated at least four points of comparison: (1) the shepherd is Christ; (2) the door is Christ; (3) the sheep are those for whom Jesus lays down his life; (4) the flock represents the union of all believers under one shepherd.

An allegory is a story told so that certain elements can represent specific things. To allegorize illegitimately is to take a straight historical incident or narrative and make it mean something else. The tabernacle in the Old Testament has been a favorite subject for allegorizers. For example, a seven-branched candlestick attached to a lampstand of pure gold stood in the Holy Place (Exodus 25:31–40), providing light for the priest as he carried on his work. In the hands of a modern allegorizer, the seven burning lamps have been taken to represent the Holy Spirit and the shaft to represent Jesus Christ. The interpreter's motive was to point to Christ's work as the basis of the Spirit's manifestation in the church. Without stretching any meanings, however, one could simply say what each item of furniture was meant to do in the tabernacle and then point out how different and how effective Christ's finished work was under the new covenant. New Testament passages often make use of Old Testament imagery (including the tabernacle), but rarely by allegorizing it. Any allegorizing that ignores the Old Testament meanings does not do justice to the message of God in the Old Testament.

TYPOLOGY. New Testament *typology* draws attention to one point of similarity between a person, event, or thing in the Old Testament and a person, event, or thing in the New Testament. Occasionally one may find two points of similarity in a single example of typology. God told King David that his unborn offspring (Solomon) would build a house or temple for God (2 Samuel 7:12–13). God said of Solomon: "I will be his father,

and he will be my son" (v. 14). By typology the writer of Hebrews later applied those words to Jesus, pointing out that God never spoke such words to any angel (1:5). Sonship is the point of emphasis in the typology. Solomon was a son called by God to occupy his father David's throne; Jesus was God's Son in a unique sense—yet both were designated "son."

Typology is a kind of figurative language of comparison. A careful interpreter notes that the one point of comparison had historical reality both in the past and in the later time of application. Yet differences are also evident. God said of Solomon, "If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him" (2 Samuel 7:14 NKJV). In contrast, Jesus Christ "committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips" (1 Peter 2:22 RSV).

SYMBOLS, SYMBOLIC ACTIONS, APOCALYPTIC DESCRIPTION. Entire books, such as Daniel and Revelation, plus many Old Testament passages, particularly in the prophets, are rich in symbolism. A *symbol* is a "visual metaphor," an object or happening that suggests a certain meaning but does not explicitly state that meaning. Daniel described a vivid dream of King Nebuchadnezzar —an image with head, arms, belly, thighs, legs, and feet all made of different metals. The symbol made sense when Daniel interpreted the meaning of each part (chapter 2).

In Revelation, a beast comes out of the sea and another beast comes out of the earth (chapter 13). A harlot (prostitute) stands for the capital city of a world empire (Rome, in John's day; see 17:1–18, especially v. 18). The beast on which she rides stands both for rulers of a world empire and that empire itself. To use the Scriptures themselves to tell what symbols mean (as in Revelation 17) is spoken of as decoding. The symbolism may seem strange, but the fact that human governments can become beastly is certainly clear in the light of twentieth-century experience.

Revelation is also known as the Apocalypse of John. Apocalyptic writing was a form of literature produced by Jewish and early Christian writers between about 200 BC and AD 300, depicting symbolically the power of evil, the dark chaos that evil brings, and the splendor of God's power ultimately to overcome evil.

PROPHECY. The term *prophecy* has two meanings in the Bible. To prophesy means (1) to call people to a holy life—by leaving their idols and self-

centeredness and returning to obedience to God and fellowship with him; and (2) to predict blessing or judgment—blessing for those who obey God and calamity for those who disobey. Today many "experts" on prophecy seem to specialize in foretelling the future, neglecting the equally important prophetic role of forthtelling God's call to righteousness.

The first chapter of Isaiah begins with the prophet pleading with the people of Israel to depart from their sin and return to God. The passage also predicts judgment and promises blessing. Prophecy basically refers to that kind of prophetic preaching, often in quite figurative language. Nowhere in the Bible does prophecy take the form of satisfying people's natural curiosity about the future. Generally it does not give detailed predictions about the future. Just before Jesus' ascension the disciples asked him about a single detail: Would God now restore the kingdom to Israel? Jesus replied, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority" (Acts 1:7 RSV). Predictive prophecy has revealed enough to show that God is in control of all that happens in the future. He knows clearly where history is going because he is guiding and directing. But the rest is to remain hidden; the blueprint of future history belongs only to God.

LANGUAGE OF CREATION AND CLIMAX. What we know about the creation of the world is only what God has chosen to disclose. Not only in Genesis 1–3, but throughout the Old Testament and New Testament, the fact that God created all that exists is firmly stated. Yet the passages do not answer the "how" questions typical of modern scientific thinking. To think biblically about either the creation or climax of history is to limit oneself to what the passages say. Although figurative language (as well as literal) is used to describe both the beginning and the ending of history, the narratives describe real events. With so little detail given, no one should pretend to have a full picture. One should avoid trying to make an artist's conception of how it really was or how it will really be, yet one can thank God for the faithful (though partial) picture he has provided in Scripture.

POETRY. Large portions of the Old Testament are in poetry, a patterned, rhythmical form of literature characterized by a focused, figurative, and generally beautiful or powerful use of language. English poetry is usually recognizable by the pattern of its sound; sometimes it has lines that rhyme.

Hebrew poetry does not depend on a pattern of sound but rather on a balanced pattern of thought. Poetry is particularly difficult to translate from one language to another, for patterns must be conveyed along with the meanings of the words. Here is a Hebrew stanza (Isaiah 1:3 RSV) translated into English:

> The ox/knows/its owner,
> and the ass/its master's crib;
> but Israel/does not know,
> my people/does not understand.

The parallelism easily seen in those four lines is the major characteristic of Hebrew poetry. Of the two pairs of lines, the second line has the same idea as the first, called synonymous parallelism. An idea is presented, then repeated in different words. In the first pair, the verb is not repeated. With three stressed units in the first line and two stressed units in the second line, the meter is said to be 3/2. In the second pair of lines, the two stressed units in each line form a 2/2 meter. The third and fourth lines are also synonymous parallelism.

To a casual reader such detail may seem irrelevant to meaning, but it is part of the writer's poetic stance. The form itself conveys meaning and also alerts the reader to expect word pictures, rhythmic balance, and artistic imagery. Consequently, there is an advantage in using a translation that prints poetry as poetry in a typographical format that makes it easy to recognize. That format helps the reader make the needed shift from prose to a poetic framework.

It is good to read poetry aloud, trying to feel the balance of ideas and stressed units. By doing so, a reader gets more in touch with the style of the original writer—who was carefully framing ideas in beautiful poetic language. This is part of the important first step of interpretation: finding out what a passage meant to the original writer and reader.

Conclusion

The task of interpreting the Bible is never finished. Christians must continually strive to understand its meaning correctly and to rephrase it for today's world.

Theology endeavors to state in a condensed fashion what is taught on one subject in all parts of the Bible. Many Christians naïvely accept the

doctrines taught by their churches. Those who begin to study the Bible for themselves, carefully applying the two steps of sound interpretation, may come to a better understanding of Christianity's basic beliefs. If Bible study leads one to question some things one hears about the Bible, that is also a sign of healthy growth. No conscientious Christian should ever stop studying the Word of God; new ideas must be checked against its teachings. Weak or inaccurate statements of what God is saying today are revised on the basis of new insights into what God said to the people of biblical times.

A Christian's devotional interpretation can always be improved because personal needs keep changing. Suddenly one may see important things that were missed before, even in favorite passages studied many times. The two basic steps of interpretation are important even in devotional Bible study. Suppose one faces doubts; one can turn to the account of Thomas and his experience (John 20:24–29). The first step is to see how Thomas overcame his doubts; the second is creatively to apply the narrative to one's own situation. Recognition that people in the Bible had the same kinds of problems can in itself be encouraging.

The two-step approach to interpretation can also keep a group Bible study from declining into mere opinion-sharing without a true biblical basis. A person with skill in that approach can help others make their own contribution to the group's understanding of any particular passage.

A. Berkeley Mickelsen

For Further Reading and Study

Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*

A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*

Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules*

The Doctrine of God the Father

I am God, and there is no other.

—Isaiah 45:22

The most fundamental teaching of the Bible and Christian theology is that God exists and is ultimately in control of the universe. This is the foundation on which all Christian theology is built.

The Biblical Concept of God

GOD'S EXISTENCE. Questions concerning the reality of God are not discussed in the Scriptures; his existence is everywhere assumed. The opening passage that reveals God as Creator and Sovereign of heaven and earth sets the pattern for the remainder, in which God is considered foundational for a proper view of life and the world. The biblical question is therefore not does God exist, but who is God and how is he to be known?

The Scriptures do recognize the existence of a professed atheism. But such atheism is considered primarily a moral rather than an intellectual problem. The fool who denies God (Psalm 14:1) does so not from philosophical reasons (which are, in any case, incapable of disproving the absolute except by affirming such), but from the practical choice (sometimes tacit) to live without considering God (10:4). The Scriptures recognize a willful and therefore culpable suppressing of the knowledge of God (Romans 1:18).

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. According to the Scriptures, God is known only through his initiative in disclosing himself through revelation. Human attempts to reason with God by various means, including the so-called proofs of God, are inevitably limited to the realm of created existence. While providing strong evidence for the probable existence of a god, they do not yet attain to the knowledge of the transcendent God of Scripture (1 Corinthians 1:21). As a person is truly known only through self-disclosure, God, who alone knows himself, must disclose himself by his Spirit (2:10–11). In so doing, he makes himself the object of human knowledge.

Something of God's reality and power are revealed in his creation (especially in human beings) and in the preservation of the universe (Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20). To the extent that human reason yields a concept of a god, it is undoubtedly related to this general or natural revelation. But the entrance of sin and its alienating effect blinds people from truly seeing God through this means (Romans 1:18; Ephesians 4:18). Apart from faith, this natural knowledge of God inevitably results in false gods of idolatry (Romans 1:21–25). Moreover, the Bible indicates that even prior to the fall man's knowledge of God was derived not solely from the natural revelation surrounding him in creation, but from a direct personal communication with God.

Thus, while God communicates himself to humans through acts in creation and history, his primary means of revelation is through the Word, for human knowledge is fundamentally a conceptual matter. Even God's actions are not left as mute works but are accompanied by the interpretive Word to give their true meaning. The revelation of God climaxed in the person of Jesus Christ, who was not simply the bearer of the revelatory Word but the divine Word in person. In him "all the fullness of the Deity" dwells in bodily form (Colossians 2:9; cf. Hebrews 1:1–3). Thus, in his mighty acts as Creator and Redeemer and in his revealed words, God by his Spirit reveals himself to give a true knowledge of himself to those who in faith open themselves to this divine self-disclosure.

The revelation of God does not totally exhaust his being and activity. He remains the incomprehensible one whom humans cannot totally fathom, both in his essence and ways (Job 36:26; Isaiah 40:13, 28; cf. Deuteronomy 29:29). Finitude cannot comprehend infinity, nor can human thought

patterns, which are associated with the created environment, completely grasp the transcendent realm of God.

On the basis of this limitation of human reason, some strains of mystical theology have denied the possibility of knowing or defining God. He could be experienced, but this was only in a state of ecstasy that transcended conceptual thought. Modern rationalism has also argued for the unknowability of God. Such an equation of the incomprehensibility of God with unknowability is valid only on the premise that human knowledge of God is derived through human reason. But the incomprehensible God of the Scriptures is the God who reaches out to people with the revelation of himself. The knowledge thus derived, although limited according to his good pleasure, is nevertheless a true knowledge of his being and work.

In giving us knowledge of himself, God gives his Word a finite form compatible with human creatureliness. Despite this necessary accommodation to the limitations of human understanding, the revealed knowledge of God is nevertheless an authentic knowledge of God. Theories that use the difference between God and man to deny the possibility of a genuine communication of true knowledge do not do justice to at least two biblical facts: (1) that God created man in his own image, which certainly includes a likeness sufficient for communication; and (2) God's omnipotence, which implies that he can make a creature to whom he can truthfully reveal himself if he so wills. To be sure, there remains hiddenness in relation to the total comprehension of God. But God himself does not remain hidden, for he has given true though partial knowledge of himself through self-revelation understandable to man. And since this knowledge is divinely imparted truth and not merely human ideas arising out of experience, it can include knowledge of God in himself as well as knowledge of his relationships to creation.

The nature of our knowledge of God has been the subject of much discussion in Christian theology. Some have emphasized the negative character of our knowledge (e.g., God is infinite, nontemporal, incorporeal). Others, notably Aquinas, have advocated an analogical knowledge that is similar to God's knowledge and yet dissimilar because of his infinite greatness. Suffice it to say that even the negative (such as infinite) conveys a positive concept of greatness, and while the position of analogy may be used to acknowledge a distinction in depth and breadth of understanding, there is finally a sense in which man's knowledge of divine things is the

same as God's. Analogical or metaphorical language must bear some univocal point of knowledge with its referent for it to be considered appropriately analogous. Significantly, the Bible views the problem of a true knowledge of God as moral rather than noetic.

Definition of God

From the biblical viewpoint, it is generally agreed that it is impossible to give a strict definition of the idea of God. Defining, which means limiting, involves the inclusion of the object within a certain class and the indication of its distinguishing features from other objects in that same class. Since the biblical God is unique and incomparable (Isaiah 40:25), there is no universal abstract category of the divine. Studies in comparative religions reveal that "god" is, in fact, conceived in the most different ways. Attempts to provide a general definition that encompasses all concepts of the divine, such as Anselm's "that than which nothing greater is conceivable," or "the supreme Being," do not convey much of the specific characteristics of the God of Scripture. Instead of a general definition of God, therefore, the Bible presents descriptions of God as he has revealed himself. These are conveyed through express statements as well as through the many names by which God identifies himself. Fundamental to the nature of God, according to the biblical description, are the truths that he is personal, spiritual, and holy.

GOD IS PERSONAL. Over against any abstract neutral metaphysical concept, the God of Scripture is first and foremost a personal being. He reveals himself by names, especially the great personal name Yahweh, "I am who I am" (cf. Exodus 3:13–15; 6:3; Isaiah 42:8), and climactically in the person of Jesus, who is God in human flesh (John 1:14). He knows and wills self-consciously in accord with our concept of personality (1 Corinthians 2:10–11; Ephesians 1:11). The centrality of God's personality is seen in that while he is the Creator and Preserver of all nature, he is encountered in Scripture not primarily as the God of nature, as in pagan religions, but rather as the God of history, controlling and directing the affairs of humanity. The central place of the covenant by which he links himself in a personal relationship to humankind is further indication of the scriptural emphasis on God's personal nature. Nowhere is God's personhood more

evident than in his biblical description as Father. Jesus constantly spoke of God as "my Father," "your Father," and "your heavenly Father." Beyond the unique Trinitarian relationship of the divine Son with the Father, which certainly involves personal traits, the fatherhood of God speaks of him as the source and sustainer of his creatures who personally cares for them (Matthew 5:45; 6:26–32) and the one to whom people can turn in believing trust. His nature as the God of self-giving love is only meaningful if he is personal.

God's personhood is described by Scripture in both masculine and feminine (e.g., Isaiah 66:13) terms, although masculine terms predominate (e.g., "Father," "King," "Lord," along with the sole use of masculine personal pronouns). Scripture clearly teaches that God's person transcends both human maleness and femaleness. However, as there are no neuter personal pronouns, the masculine pronouns, along with the predominant masculine names and imagery, also manifest important biblical truths of God as the transcendent Creator and sovereign Lord.

God's personhood has been called into question on the basis of our use of the word *person* with respect to human beings. Human personhood involves limitation that allows relationship with another person or the world. To be a person means to be an individual among individuals. All of this cautions us against an erroneous anthropomorphizing of God. Biblically, it is more proper to see God's personhood as having priority over that of man and therefore to understand human personhood theomorphously, i.e., a finite replica of the infinite divine person (cf. Genesis 1:26–27). Historically, the concept of "person" stems largely from the theological attempt to understand the meaning of person in relation to the three members of the Trinity and the unified person of Christ as both God and man. Despite the final incomprehensibility of God's suprahuman personhood, the Scriptures portray him as a real person who gives himself in reciprocal relationship to us.

The biblical concept of God's personhood refutes all abstract philosophical ideas of God as merely First Cause or Prime Mover as well as all naturalistic and pantheistic concepts. Modern equations of God with immanent personal relations (e.g., love) are also denied as inadequate.

GOD IS SPIRITUAL. The Scriptures declare that God is "spirit," which basically denotes life and power (John 4:24). His spiritual nature, described in various ways, points to the reality of God as the absolute power and life-giver. The weakness of the forces of the world, including humans and beasts, which are but flesh, are contrasted to God, who is spirit (cf. Isaiah 31:3; 40:6–7).

As spirit, God is the living God. He is the possessor of an infinite life in himself (Psalm 36:9; John 5:26). Matter is activated by spirit, but God is pure spirit. He is fully life. As such, he is the source of all other life (Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30; 1 Timothy 6:13). The spiritual nature also prohibits any limitations of God derived from a materialistic conception. For this reason, images of God are prohibited (Exodus 20:4; Deuteronomy 4:12, 15–18). He cannot be restricted to any particular place or in any sense be brought under human control as a physical object. He is the invisible transcendent living power from whom all derive existence (Acts 17:28).

GOD IS HOLY. One of the most fundamental features of God's being is expressed by the word *holy*. He is the incomparable God, "the Holy One" (Isaiah 40:25; cf. Habakkuk 3:3). *Holy,* which in both Hebrew and Greek has the root meaning of separateness, is used predominantly in Scripture for separateness from sin. But this is only a secondary meaning derived from the primary application to God's separateness from all creation (i.e., his transcendence). "He is exalted over all the nations." Therefore, "he is holy" (Psalm 99:2–3). He is "the high and exalted One . . . whose name is holy," and he lives "in a high and holy place" (Isaiah 57:15). In his holiness God is the transcendent Deity.

God's transcendence expresses the truth that God in himself is infinitely exalted above all creation. The concept of revelation presupposes a transcendent God who must unveil himself to be known. Transcendence is further seen in God's position as Creator and Sovereign Lord of the universe. As the former he distinguishes himself from all creation (Romans 1:25), and as the latter he evidences his transcendent supremacy.

God's transcendence is frequently expressed biblically in terms of time and space. He exists before all creation (Psalm 90:2), and neither the earth nor the highest heavens can contain him (1 Kings 8:27). A certain

anthropomorphic sense must be recognized in such expressions lest God's transcendence be conceived in terms of our time and space, as though he lives in a time and space like ours, only beyond that of creation. On the other hand, it is biblically incorrect to conceive of God in his transcendence as existing in a realm of timeless nowhereness outside of creation. In a manner that exceeds our finite understanding, God exists in his own infinite realm as transcendent Lord over all creaturely time and space.

God's transcendent holiness is biblically balanced with the teaching of his immanence, which signifies that he is wholly present in his being and power in every part and moment of the created universe. He is "over all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:6). Not only does everything exist in him (Acts 17:28), but nowhere is his presence absent (Psalm 139:1–10). His immanence is seen especially in relation to humans. The Holy One who lives in a high and holy place also dwells with the "contrite and lowly in spirit" (Isaiah 57:15). This dual dimension of God is seen clearly in the description "the Holy One of Israel" as well as in the name *Yahweh*, which describes both his transcendent power and his personal presence with and for his people.

The biblical teaching of both God's transcendence and immanence counters the human tendency throughout history to emphasize one or the other. A one-sided transcendence is seen in the Greek philosophers' concept of the ultimate "ground of being" as well as the later deists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The various forms of pantheism throughout history give evidence of the opposite emphasis on immanence. The attractiveness of these exaggerations to sinful humanity is that in both no person stands before God in any practical sense as a responsible creature.

The Trinity

Crucial to the biblical doctrine of God is his Trinitarian nature. Although the term *trinity* is not a biblical word as such, Christian theology has used it to designate the threefold manifestation of the one God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The formulated doctrine of the Trinity asserts the truth that God is one in being or essence who exists eternally in three distinct coequal "persons." While the term *person* in relation to the Trinity does not signify

the limited individuality of human persons, it does affirm the personal relationship, particularly of love, within the triune Godhead.

The doctrine of the Trinity flows from the self-revelation of God in biblical salvation history. As the one God successively reveals himself in his saving action in the Son and the Spirit, each is recognized as God himself in personal manifestation. It is thus in the fullness of New Testament revelation that the doctrine of the Trinity is seen most clearly. God is one (Galatians 3:20; James 2:19), but the Son (John 1:1; 14:9; Colossians 2:9) and the Spirit (Acts 5:3–4; 1 Corinthians 3:16) are also fully God. Yet they are distinct from the Father and each other; the Father sends the Son and the Spirit (John 15:26; Galatians 4:4). This unified equality and yet distinctness is seen in the triadic references to the three persons. Christian baptism is in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). Likewise, all three are joined in the Pauline benediction in a different order suggesting the total equality of persons (2 Corinthians 13:14; cf. Ephesians 4:4–6; 1 Peter 1:2).

Although the Trinity finds its clearest evidence in the New Testament, suggestions of a fullness of plurality are already found in the Old Testament revelation of God. The plural form of God's name (*Elohim*) as well as the use of plural pronouns (Genesis 1:26; 11:7) point in this direction. So also do the identity of the Angel of the Lord as God (Exodus 3:2–6; Judges 13:21–22) and the hypostatization of the Word (Psalm 33:6; 107:20) and Spirit (Genesis 1:2; Isaiah 63:10). The Word is not simply communication about God, nor is the Spirit merely divine power. They are rather the acting God himself.

As the product of God's self-revelation, the Trinitarian formulation is not intended to exhaust his incomprehensible nature. Objections to the doctrine come from a rationalism that insists on dissolving this mystery into human understanding, i.e., by thinking of the oneness and threeness in mathematical terms and human personality. Attempts have been made to draw analogies of the Trinity from nature and the constitution of man; the most notable is Augustine's trinity of lover, the object of love, and the love that binds the two together. While this argues strongly for a plurality within God, if he is eternally a God of love apart from creation, it, along with all other suggestions from the creaturely realm, proves finally inadequate to explain the divine being.

The doctrine of the Trinity developed out of the church's desire to safeguard the biblical truths of the God who is the transcendent Lord over all history and yet who gives himself in person to act within history. The natural human tendencies toward either a *nonhistorical divine transcendence* or the *absorption of the divine into the historical process* are checked by orthodox Trinitarianism.

The first is the ultimate error of the primary distortions of the Trinity. Subordinationism, which understood Christ as less than God, and adoptionism, which viewed him only as a human endowed for a time with God's Spirit, both denied that God truly entered history to confront humanity in person.

Regarding the second, modalism or Sabellianism makes the persons of Christ and the Spirit to be only historical roles or modifications of the one God. This error likewise tends to separate humanity from God; he is encountered not directly as he is in person, but as a role player who remains hidden behind a mask.

The Trinitarian doctrine is thus central to the salvation kerygma of Scripture, according to which the transcendent God acts personally in history to redeem and share himself with his creatures. Origen rightly drew the conclusion that the believer "will not attain salvation if the Trinity is not complete."

The Doctrine of God in History

The history of Christian thought reveals persistent problems concerning the nature of God and his relation to the world. These involve the related issues of transcendence/immanence, personal/nonpersonal perspectives, and the knowability of God. The earliest Christian theologians, who attempted to interpret the Christian faith in terms of Greek philosophical categories, tended toward an emphasis on God's abstract transcendence. He was the timeless, changeless Absolute who was the final and adequate cause of the universe. Little could be predicated of him, and his attributes were defined primarily in the negative. He was the uncaused (possessing aseity, or self-existence), absolutely simple, infinite, immutable, omnipotent being, unlimited by time (eternal) and space (omnipresent).

Although Augustine's view was more balanced with a view of the personal, immanent, condescending God in the revelation of Christ, this

philosophical understanding of God dominated until the Reformation, reaching its climax in Thomas Aquinas and the medieval Scholastics. Aquinas held that philosophical human reason could attain to the knowledge of God's existence. His stress, however, was on the transcendence of God and how little he could be known.

With an emphasis on biblical rather than philosophical categories, the Reformers brought more recognition of God's immanence within human history but maintained a strong emphasis on his transcendence, as evidenced in the definition of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Reaction to the traditional Protestant and Catholic understanding of God, with its stress on his transcendence, came with the rise of liberal theology in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The combination of new philosophies (e.g., Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel) making the human mind supreme for true knowledge, scientific advances that seemed to substantiate human abilities, and a new historical perspective that tended to relativize all tradition, including the Scriptures, led to a new understanding of ultimate reality. Because, as Kant argued, human reason could no longer establish the existence of a transcendent God, God became increasingly identified with the ideals of human experience. Talk of religious dependency (Friedrich Schleiermacher) or ethical values (Kant, Albrecht Ritschl) became talk of God (or "God talk"). There was an almost exclusive emphasis on God's immanence, with a tendency to see an essential kinship between the human and divine spirit.

World events, including two world wars and the rise of totalitarian regimes, brought the collapse of old liberalism with its immanentistic understanding of God and the reassertion of divine transcendence. Led by Karl Barth, theology sought to return not to the earlier philosophical concepts of God but to the categories of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. Based upon a radical separation between eternity and time, God's transcendence was exaggerated to the point that a direct revelation of God in human history was denied. According to this neo-orthodox theology, God did not speak directly in Scripture. As a result of this denial of a direct cognitive communication, with the consequent skepticism of any knowledge of God in himself, the accent on transcendence was gradually lost. A transcendent God who did not reveal himself objectively in human history was too elusive. Consequently the religious experience of man, usually interpreted according to existential (experiential) philosophy,

became increasingly viewed as the key to theological knowledge. God was understood primarily as the meaning he holds for the "existential experiences" of man.

This movement can be traced from Barth, whose theology maintained a strong divine transcendence, to Rudolf Bultmann, who, while not denying God's transcendence, nevertheless focused almost entirely on God in the human existential experience, and finally to Paul Tillich, who denied entirely the traditional God "out there" in favor of an immanent God as the "ground" of all being. Thus, God's transcendence has been lost in much of contemporary thought that seeks to do theology in the existential philosophical framework. Divine transcendence is simply equated with the hidden self-transcendence of human existence.

Other theologians sought to reconstruct theology in terms of the modern scientific evolutionary understanding of the universe. Such process theology, based on the philosophy of A. N. Whitehead, sees the fundamental nature of all reality as process or becoming rather than being or unchanging substance. Although there is an abstract eternal dimension of God that provides the potential for the process, he also is understood to encompass all changing entities in his own life and therefore to be in the process of change himself. As the universe is dynamic and changing, actualizing its potentialities, so also is God.

The wide variety of contemporary formulations of God that tend to define him in ways in which he is no longer the personal Creator and Sovereign Lord of human history are the direct result of denying a knowledge of God through his cognitive self-revelation in the Scriptures and the sinful human propensity to autonomy.

Influenced by some of the same forces behind process theology (i.e., the modern understanding of reality as dynamic and relational, and the concern for human freedom), some contemporary evangelicals propose a so-called "open view" of God. While clearly denying his dependence on creation (as in process theology), God's relationship with his creatures is said to be more like a loving Father who works with human beings. The central emphases on: (1) the knowledge of God in his dynamic relatedness to the world rather than the knowledge of who he is in himself, and (2) human freedom, led the open view of God to reinterpret traditional divine attributes associated with his sovereign providence (e.g., immutability and omniscience), including his knowledge of the future. These changes run

into difficulty with certain scriptural data. Moreover, it is not at all evident that this view solves traditional theological problems, such as the existence of evil and the relationship of God, sovereignty, and human freedom, more adequately than the classic understanding of God.

<div align="right">Robert L. Saucy</div>

The Attributes of God

God is an invisible, personal, and living Spirit, distinguished from all other spirits by several kinds of attributes: metaphysically, God is self-existent, eternal, and unchanging; intellectually, God is omniscient, faithful, and wise; ethically, God is just, merciful, and loving; emotionally, God detests evil, is long-suffering, and is compassionate; existentially, God is free, authentic, and omnipotent; relationally, God is transcendent in being, immanent universally in providential activity, and immanent with his people in redemptive activity.

The essence of anything, simply put, equals its being (substance) plus its attributes. Since Kant's skepticism of knowing anything in itself or in its essence, many philosophers and theologians have limited their general ways of speaking to the phenomena of Jewish or Christian religious experience. Abandoning categories of essence, substance, and attribute, they have thought exclusively in terms of person-to-person encounters, mighty acts of God, divine functions, or divine processes in history. God is indeed active in all these and other ways but is not silent. Inscripturated revelation discloses some truth about God's essence in itself. Conceptual truth reveals not only what God does, but also who God is.

Does a definition of water limit the power of Niagara Falls?

Biblical revelation teaches the reality not only of physical entities but also of spiritual beings: angels, demons, Satan, and the triune God. The Bible also reveals information concerning attributes or characteristics of both material and spiritual realities. In speaking of the attributes of an entity, we refer to essential qualities that belong to or inhere in it. The being or substance is what stands under and unites the varied and multiple attributes in one unified entity. The attributes are essential to distinguish the

divine Spirit from all other spirits. The divine Spirit is necessary to unite all the attributes in one being. The attributes of God, then, are essential characteristics of the divine being. Without these qualities, God would not be what he is—God.

Some have imagined that by defining the essence of God, human thinkers confine God to their concepts. That reasoning, however, confuses words conveying concepts with their referents. Does a definition of water limit the power of Niagara Falls? The word *God* has been used in so many diverse ways that it is incumbent upon a writer or speaker to indicate which of those uses is in mind.

God Is an Invisible, Personal, Living, and Active Spirit

Jesus explained to the Samaritan woman why she should worship God in spirit and in truth. God is spirit (John 4:24). The noun *pneuma* occurs first in the sentence for emphasis. Although some theologies consider *spirit* an attribute, grammatically in Jesus' statement it is a substantive. In the pre-Kantian, first-century world of the biblical authors, spirits were not dismissed with an *a priori*, skeptical assumption.

As a spirit, God is invisible. No one has ever seen God or ever will (1 Timothy 6:16). A spirit does not have flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). As spirit, furthermore, God is personal. Although some thinkers use *spirit* to designate impersonal principles or an impersonal absolute, in the biblical context, the divine Spirit has personal capacities of intelligence, emotion, and volition. However, it is important to deny of the personal in God any vestiges of the physical and moral evil associated with fallen human persons.

In transcending the physical aspects of human personhood, God thus transcends the physical aspects of both maleness and femaleness. However, since both male and female are created in God's image, we may think of both as like God in their distinctively nonphysical, personal male and female qualities. In this context, the Bible's use of masculine personal pronouns for God conveys primarily the connotation of God's vital personal qualities and secondarily any distinctive functional responsibilities males may have.

Christ's unique emphasis upon God as Father in the Lord's Prayer and elsewhere becomes meaningless if God is not indeed personal. Similarly, the great doctrines of mercy, grace, forgiveness, imputation, and justification can only be meaningful if God is genuinely personal. God must be able to hear the sinner's cry for salvation, be moved by it, and then decide and act to recover the lost. In fact, God is superpersonal, tripersonal. The classical doctrine of the Trinity coherently synthesizes the Bible's teaching about God. To place the name of God upon a baptismal candidate is to place upon the candidate the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

The unity of the one divine essence and being emphasized in the New Testament concept of a personal spirit implies simplicity or indivisibility. Neither the Trinitarian personal distinctions nor the multiple attributes divide the essential unity of the divine being. And that essential, ontological oneness is not torn apart by the incarnation or even the death of Jesus. Relationally or functionally (but not essentially), Jesus on the cross was separated from the Father, who imputed to him the guilt and punishment of our sin.

In view of the indivisibility of the divine Spirit, how then are the attributes related to the divine being? The divine attributes are not mere names for human use with no referent in the divine Spirit (nominalism). Nor are the attributes separate from each other within the divine being so that they could conflict with each other (realism). The attributes all equally qualify the entirety of the divine being and each other (a modified realism). Preserving the divine simplicity or indivisibility, God's love is always holy love, and God's holiness is always loving holiness. Hence it is futile to argue for the superiority of one divine attribute over another. Every attribute is essential; one cannot be more essential than another in a simple, nonextended being.

God as spirit, furthermore, is *living and active*. In contrast to the passive ultimates of Greek philosophies, the God of the Bible actively creates, sustains, covenants with his people, preserves Israel and the Messiah's line of descent, calls prophet after prophet, sends his Son into the world, provides the atoning sacrifice to satisfy his own righteousness, raises Christ from the dead, builds the church, and judges all justly. Far from a passive entity like a warm house, the God of the Bible is an active architect, builder,

freedom fighter, advocate of the poor and oppressed, just judge, empathetic counselor, suffering servant, and triumphant deliverer.

As an invisible, personal, living spirit, God is no mere passive object of human investigation. Such writers as Blaise Pascal, Søren Kierkegaard, Karl Barth, and Emil Brunner have helpfully reminded Christians that knowing God is not like studying soils. However, they go too far in claiming that God is merely a revealing subject in ineffable personal encounters and that no objective, propositional truth can be known of God. Members of a creative artist's family may know him not only with passionate, personal subjectivity but also objectively through examination of his works, careful reading of his writings, and assessment of his résumé. Similarly, God may be known not only in passionate subjective commitment, but also by thought about his creative works (general revelation), his inspired Scripture (part of special revelation), and theological résumés of his nature and activity. Knowledge of God involves both objective, conceptual validity and subjective, personal fellowship.

We have considered the meaning of asserting that God is spirit: the divine being is one, invisible, personal, and thus capable of thinking, feeling, and willing, a living and active being. There are, however, many spirits. The subsequent discussion of the divine attributes is necessary to distinguish the divine Spirit from other spirit beings.

While considering the meaning of each attribute, it is good to be aware of the relation of the attributes to the being of God. In the Scriptures, the divine attributes are not above God, beside God, or beneath God; they are predicated of God. God *is* holy; God *is* love. These characteristics do not simply describe what God does, they define what God is. To claim that recipients of revelation can know the attributes of God but not the being of God leaves the attributes un-unified and belonging to nothing. The Scriptures do not endorse worship of an unknown God but make God known. The attributes are inseparable from the being of God, and the divine Spirit does not relate or act apart from the essential divine characteristics. In knowing the attributes, then, we know God as he has revealed himself to be.

This is not to say that through revelation we can know God fully as God knows himself. But it is to deny that all our knowledge of God is equivocal, something totally other than we understand by scripturally revealed concepts of holy love. Much of our knowledge of God's attributes is analogical or figurative, where Scripture uses figures of speech. Even then,

however, the point illustrated can be stated in nonfigurative language. So all our understanding of God is not exclusively analogical. The revealed, nonfigurative knowledge has at least one point of meaning the same for God's thought and revelationally informed human thought.

Some knowledge of God, then, is called univocal, because when we assert that God is holy love, we assert what the Bible (which originated not with the will of man but with God) asserts. We may be far from fully comprehending divine holiness and divine love, but insofar as our assertions about God coherently convey relevant conceptually revealed meanings, they are true of God and conform in part to God's understanding.

The divine attributes have been differently classified to help in relating and remembering them. Here we will distinguish God's characteristics metaphysically, intellectually, ethically, emotionally, existentially, and relationally.[1]

Metaphysically, God Is Self-Existent, Eternal, and Unchanging

Other spirits are invisible, personal, one, living, and active. How does the divine Spirit differ?

First, God is *self-existent*. All other spirits are created and so have a beginning. They owe their existence to another. God does not depend upon the world or anyone in it for his existence. The world depends on God for its existence. Contrary to those theologians who say we cannot know anything about God in himself, Jesus revealed that God has life in himself (John 5:26). The ground of God's being is not in others, for there is nothing more ultimate than himself. God is uncaused, the one who always is (Exodus 3:14). To ask who caused God is to ask a self-contradictory question in terms of Jesus' view of God. Another term conveying the concept of God's self-existence is *aseity*. It comes from the Latin *a*, meaning "from," and *se*, meaning "oneself." God is underived, necessary, nondependent existence. Understanding that God is noncontingent helps to understand how God is unlimited by anything, or infinite, free, self-determined, and not determined by anything other than himself contrary to his own sovereign purposes.

God is *eternal* and omnipresent (ubiquitous). God's life is from within himself, not anything that had a beginning in the space-time world. God has

no beginning, period of growth, old age, or end. The Lord is enthroned as King forever (Psalm 29:10). This God is our God forever and forever (48:14). Although not limited by space or time, or the succession of events in time, God created the world with space and time. God sustains the changing realm of succeeding events and is conscious of every movement in history. The observable, changing world is not unimportant or unreal[2] to the omnipresent Lord of all. No tribe, nation, city, family, or personal life is valueless, however brief or apparently insignificant. God's eternal nature is not totally other than time nor totally removed from everything in time and space. The space-time world is not foreign or unknown to him. History is the product of his eternally wise planning, creative purpose, providential preservation, and common grace. God fills space and time with his presence, sustains it, and gives it purpose and value. The omnipresent and ubiquitous one is Lord of time and history, not vice versa. God does not negate time but fulfills it. In it his purposes are accomplished.

In Christianity, then, eternity is not an abstract timelessness; the eternal is a characteristic of the living God who is present at all times and in all places, creating and sustaining the space-time world and accomplishing his redemptive purposes in the fullness of time.

God is *unchanging* in nature, desire, and purpose. To say that God is immutable is not to contradict the previous truth that God is living and active. It is to say that all the uses of divine power and vitality are consistent with his attributes such as wisdom, justice, and love. God's acts are never merely arbitrary, although some may be for reasons wholly within himself rather than conditioned upon human response. Underlying each judgment of the wicked and each pardon of the repentant is his changeless purpose concerning sin and conversion. Unlike the Stoic's concept of divine immutability, God is not indifferent to human activity and need. Rather, we can always count upon his concern for human righteousness. God changelessly answers prayer in accord with his desires and purposes of holy love. Hence, although speaking in terms of human experience God is sometimes said in Scripture to repent, it is in fact the unrepentant who have changed and become repentant or the faithful who have become unfaithful.

God is the same, though everything else in creation becomes old like a garment (Psalm 102:25–27). Jesus shared that same unchanging nature (Hebrews 1:10–12) and vividly exhibited it consistently throughout his active ministry in a variety of situations.

The immutability of God's character means that he never loses his own integrity or lets others down. He "does not change like shifting shadows" (James 1:17). God's unshakable nature and Word provide the strongest ground of faith and bring strong consolation (Hebrews 6:17–18). God is not a man, that he should lie (Numbers 23:19) or change his mind (1 Samuel 15:29). The counsel of the Lord stands forever (Psalm 33:11). Though heaven and earth pass away, God's words will not fail (Matthew 5:18; 24:35).

Intellectually, God Is Omniscient, Faithful, and Wise

God differs from other spirits not only in being but also in knowledge. His intellectual capabilities are unlimited, and he uses them fully and perfectly.

God is *omniscient*. God knows all things (1 John 3:20). Jesus has this attribute of deity also, for Peter says, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you" (John 21:17). God knows all inward thoughts and outward acts of humanity (Psalm 139). "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13). Isaiah distinguished the Lord of all from idols by the Lord's ability to predict the future (Isaiah 44:7–8, 25–28). Clearly the Lord's knowledge of the future was communicable in human concepts and words. In the context, Isaiah made predictions concerning Jerusalem, Judah, Cyrus, and the temple. These concepts were inspired in the original language and are translatable in the languages of the world.

How can God know the end from the beginning? In a way greater than illustrated in a person's knowledge of a memorized psalm, Augustine suggested. Before quoting Psalm 23, we have it all in mind. Then we quote the first half of it and we know the part that is past and the part that remains to be quoted. God knows the whole of history at once, simultaneously, because he is not limited by time and succession, but God also knows what part of history is past today and what is future, for time is not unreal or unimportant to him (*Confessions,* XI.31).

The belief that God knows everything—past, present, and future—is of little significance, however, if his knowledge is removed from human

knowledge by an infinite, qualitative distinction. The frequent claim that God's knowledge is totally other than ours implies that his truth may be contradictory of our truth. That is, what may be true for us is false for God or what is false for us may be true for God.

From a biblical perspective, however, the human mind has been created in the divine image to think God's thoughts after him, or to receive through both general and special revelation truth from him. Although the fall has affected the human mind, this has not been eradicated. The new birth involves the Spirit's renewal of the person in knowledge after the image of the Creator (Colossians 3:10). Contextually, the knowledge possible to the regenerate includes the present position and nature of the exalted Christ (1:15–20) and knowledge of God's will (1:9). With this knowledge, Christians can avoid being deceived by mere "fine-sounding arguments" (2:4). They are to strengthen the faith they were taught in concepts and words (2:7). And the content of the word of Christ can inform their teaching and worship (3:16).

In these and many other ways, the Scriptures presuppose an informative revelation from God, verbally inspired and Spirit-illumined, to minds created and renewed in the divine image for the reception of this divine truth. Insofar as we have grasped the contextual meaning given by the original writers of Scripture, our scripturally based assertions that God is spirit, God is holy, or God is love are true. They are true for God as he is in himself. They are true for the faith and life of Christians and churches.

The propositional truth that the Bible conveys in indicative sentences that affirm, deny, contend, maintain, assume, and infer is fully true for God and for humankind. Of course God's omniscience is not limited to the distinctions between subjects and predicates, logical sequence, exegetical research, or discursive reasoning. But God knows the difference between a subject and a predicate. He relates to logical sequence as much as to temporal sequence, encourages exegetical research and revelationally based discursive reasoning. Although God's mind is unlimited and knows everything, it is not totally different in every respect from human minds made in his image. As omniscient, then, God's judgments are formed in the awareness of all the relevant data. God knows everything that bears upon the truth concerning any person or event. Our judgments are true insofar as they conform to God's judgments by being coherent or faithful to all the relevant evidence.

God is *faithful* and true (Revelation 19:11); therefore, his judgments (19:2) and his words in human language are faithful and true (21:5; 22:6). There is no lack of fidelity in God's person, thought, or promise. God is not hypocritical and inconsistent.

We may hold unswervingly to our hope because he who promised is faithful (Hebrews 10:23). He is faithful to forgive our sins (1 John 1:9), sanctify believers until the return of Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24), strengthen and protect from the evil one (2 Thessalonians 3:3), and not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). Even if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself (2 Timothy 2:13).

Not one word of all the good promises God gave through Moses failed (1 Kings 8:56). Isaiah praises the name of God, for in perfect faithfulness God did marvelous things planned long ago (Isaiah 25:1). Passages like these convey a basic divine integrity in both life and thought. No contrast can be drawn between what God is in himself and what God is in relation to those who trust him. He does not contradict his promises in his works or in other teaching by dialectic, paradox, or mere complementarity. He knows everything, and nothing can come up that was not already taken into account before he revealed his purposes.

Because God is faithful and consistent, we ought to be faithful and consistent. Jesus said, "All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'" (Matthew 5:37). Paul exhibited this logical authenticity in his teaching. "As surely as God is faithful," he said, "our message to you is not 'Yes' and 'No'" (2 Corinthians 1:18). Those who imagine that talk about God in human language must affirm and deny the same thing at the same time and in the same respect (in dialectic or paradox) have a different view of the relation between the divine mind and the godly person's mind than did Paul. Because God is faithful, we must be faithful in our message about him. Since God cannot deny himself, we ought not to deny ourselves in speaking to God.

Knowing the connection between personal and conceptual faithfulness in God, we know that the idea that faithful persons ought not to contradict themselves did not originate with Aristotle. He may have formulated the law of noncontradiction in a way that has been quoted ever since, but the ultimate source of the challenge to human fidelity in person and word is

rooted in God himself. The universal demand for intellectual honesty reflects in the human heart the ultimate integrity of the Creator's heart.

The universal demand for intellectual honesty reflects in the human heart the ultimate integrity of the Creator's heart.

God is not only omniscient and consistent in person and word but also perfectly wise. In addition to knowing all relevant data on any subject, God selects ends with discernment and acts in harmony with his purposes of holy love. We may not always be able to see that events in our lives work together for a wise purpose, but we know that God chooses from among all possible alternatives the best ends and means for achieving them. God not only chooses the right ends but also for the right reasons, the good of his creatures and thus his glory.

Although we may not fully understand divine wisdom, we have good reason to trust it. After writing on the great gift of the righteousness that comes from God, Paul exclaims, "To the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen" (Romans 16:27). He had earlier alluded to the incomprehensible depth of the riches of God's wisdom and knowledge (11:33).

The interrelation of the attributes is already evident, as the divine omniscience is aware not only of what is but also of what ought to be (morally); divine faithfulness and consistency involve moral integrity and no hypocrisy; and wisdom makes decisions for action toward certain ends and means in terms of the highest values. It is not so strange then when we read that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7).

Ethically, God Is Holy, Righteous, and Loving

God is distinct from and transcendent to all his creatures, not only metaphysically and epistemologically but also morally. God is morally spotless in character and action, upright, pure, and untainted with evil desires, motives, thoughts, words, or acts. God is *holy*, and as such is the source and standard of what is right. God is free from all evil, loves all truth and goodness. He values purity and detests impurity and inauthenticity. God cannot approve of any evil, has no pleasure in evil (Psalm 5:4), and cannot tolerate evil (Habakkuk 1:13). God abhors evil and cannot encourage sin in

any way (James 1:13–14). Christians do not stand in awe of abstract holiness but of the Holy One (Isaiah 40:25), who is not merely an object of emotional fascination but of intellectual hearing and volitional obedience.

Holiness is not solely the product of God's will but a changeless characteristic of his eternal nature. The question Plato asked, therefore, needs to be reworded to apply to the Christian God: "Is the good good because God wills it? Or does God will it because it is good?" The question relates not to God's will or to some principle of goodness above him, but to his essence. The good, the just, the pure, the holy is holy, not by reason of an arbitrary act of the divine will, nor of a principle independent of God, but because it is an outflow of his nature. God always wills in accord with his nature. He wills the good because he is good. And because he is holy, he consistently hates sin and is repulsed by all evil without respect of persons. The Holy Spirit is called holy not only because as a member of the divine Trinity he shares the holiness of the divine nature but also because the Spirit's distinctive function is to produce holy love in God's redeemed people. We are to seek to be morally spotless in character and action, upright, and righteous like the God we worship.

God is just, or *righteous*. God's justice or righteousness is revealed in his moral law, expressing his moral nature, and in his judgment, granting to all, in matters of merit, exactly what they deserve. His judgment is not arbitrary or capricious but principled and without respect of persons. Old Testament writers frequently protest the injustice experienced by the poor, widows, orphans, strangers, and the godly. God, in contrast, has compassion on the poor and needy (Psalm 72:12–14). He answers, delivers, revives, acquits, and grants them the justice that is their due. In righteousness he delivers the needy from injustice and persecution. Eventually he will create a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness will dwell (Isaiah 65:17).

God's wrath is revealed as sinners, both Jews and Gentiles (Romans 2:1–3:20), suppress his truth and hold it down in unrighteousness (1:18–32). In the gospel, a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last (1:17; 3:21). Believers are justified freely by God's grace that came by Jesus Christ, who provided the sacrifice of atonement (3:25). Hence, like Abraham, those who are fully persuaded that God can do what he has promised (4:21) find their faith credited to them for righteousness (4:3, 24). God in his justice graciously provides for the just

status of believers in Christ. Righteousness in God is not unrelated to mercy, grace, and love.

In mercy God withholds or modifies deserved judgment, and in grace God freely gives undeserved benefits to whom he chooses. All of these moral characteristics flow from God's great, gracious, self-giving *agape* love. He who lives forever as holy, high, and lofty also lives with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit (Isaiah 57:15).

It is not that God is lacking something in himself (Acts 17:25), but that God desires to give of himself for the well-being of those loved, in spite of their being unlovely and undeserving. God not only loves but is in himself *love* (1 John 4:8). His love is like that of a husband toward his wife, a father toward his son, and a mother toward her unweaned baby. In love God chose Israel (Deuteronomy 7:7) and predestined believers—the church—to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:4–5). "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Love cares for the aged, the oppressed, the poor, the orphans, and others in need. The loving God of the Bible is not unmoved by (or impassible toward) people with real needs. The God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, Jeremiah, Jesus, Judas, Peter, and Paul suffered, indeed was long-suffering. In empathy God enters through imagination into the feelings of his creatures. Beyond that, God incarnate entered through participation into our temptations and sufferings. As H. W. Robinson has said, "The only way in which moral evil can enter into the consciousness of the morally good is as suffering." In all Israel's distress God was distressed (Isaiah 63:9). What meaning can there be, Robinson asks, in a love that is not costly to the lover? The biblical God is far from apathetic in regard to vast suffering. In love God sent his Son to die that ultimately suffering might be done away and righteousness restored throughout the earth as the waters cover the seas.

Since love involves commitment for the well-being of others, a responsible commitment, a faithful commitment, it is not classed as primarily emotional. Love is a settled purpose of will involving the whole person in seeking the well-being of others.

Emotionally, God Detests Evil, Is Long-Suffering, Is Compassionate

A. H. Strong says God is devoid of passion and caprice. Indeed, God is devoid of caprice, injustice, or emotions out of control. We have earlier sought to negate any passions unworthy of God. Strong rightly adds that there is in God no selfish anger. However, God is personal and ethical, and both senses call for healthy emotions or passions. One who delights in justice, righteousness, and holiness for the well-being of his creatures can only be repulsed by the injustice, unrighteousness, and corruption that destroy their bodies, minds, and spirits. Hence, the Bible frequently speaks of God's righteous indignation at evil. Righteous indignation is anger aroused not by being overcome by emotions selfishly but by injustice and all the works of fallen "flesh." God detests evil.

Jesus and the Scriptures in general speak more often of God's wrath at injustices such as persistent mistreatment of the poor and needy than of love and heaven. Although the Lord is slow to anger, he will in no way leave the guilty unpunished, but will pour out his fury upon them (Nahum 1:3). None can withstand his indignation, which is poured out like fire and shatters rocks before him (1:6). Apart from understanding God's wrath against evil, it is impossible to understand the extent of divine love in the incarnation, the extent of Christ's suffering on the cross, the propitiatory nature of his sacrifice, the prophetic Scriptures speaking of the great day of God's wrath, the great tribulation, or the book of Revelation.

God is patient and *long-suffering*. Properly jealous for the well-being of the objects of his love, God is angry at injustice done to them but suffers without losing heart. Long-suffering with evildoers, God, without condoning their sin, graciously provides them with undeserved temporal and spiritual benefits. God promised the land to Abraham, but the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full (Genesis 15:16). After over four centuries of long-suffering restraint, God in the fullness of time allowed the armies of Israel to bring just judgment upon the Amorites' wickedness. Later Israel worshiped the golden calf and deserved divine judgment like other idolaters. But God revealed himself at the second giving of the law as "the LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness" (Exodus 34:6). The psalmist could write, "You, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness" (Psalm 86:15). However, the day of God's grace has an end. Eventually, without respect of persons, God's just

judgment fell upon Israel for her pervasive evils. God's long-suffering is a remarkable virtue, but it does not exclude or contradict God's justice.

The Scriptures do not hesitate to call God compassionate.[3] Because of his great love, we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail (Lamentations 3:22). Even after Israel's captivity, God will again have compassion on Israel (Micah 7:19). The God of the Bible is not apathetic, but deeply cares when the sparrow falls. Jesus beautifully displayed this divine-human compassion for the hungry (Matthew 15:32), the blind (20:34), and the sorrowing (Luke 7:13). And Jesus taught the importance of compassion in the account of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:33) and that of the father's concern for his lost son (15:20).

The incarnate Christ felt what humans feel in all respects but did not yield to the temptations involved. As God in literal human experience, Jesus wept with those who wept and rejoiced with those who rejoiced. He remembered the joyful glory he had with the Father before the world's foundation (John 17:5, 13). The divine-human author of our salvation, however, was made perfect or complete through suffering in this life (Hebrews 2:10). Because he himself suffered, he can help those who suffer and are tempted (2:18). The God revealed in Jesus Christ is no uninvolved, impersonal first cause. The Father disclosed by Jesus is deeply moved by everything that hurts his children.

Existentially, God Is Free, Authentic, and Omnipotent

The modern concerns for freedom, authenticity, and fulfillment should not be limited to humankind. Biblical writers seem even more concerned that God be understood to be free, authentic, and fulfilled.

God is *free*. From all eternity God is not conditioned by anything other than himself contrary to his purposes. Good things, as we have seen, are purposed with divine pleasure and enduement. Evil things are permitted with divine displeasure. But God is self-determined either way. Self-determination is that concept of freedom emphasizing that personal thought, feeling, and volition are not determined by external factors but by one's self.

God is not free to approve sin, to be unloving, to be unwise, to ignore hard facts of reality, to be unfaithful to what is or ought to be, or to be

uncompassionate or unmerciful. God cannot deny himself. God is free to be himself—his personal, eternal, living, intellectual, ethical, emotional, volitional self.

God is *authentic*, authentically himself. The God who in Christ so unalterably opposed hypocrisy is himself no hypocrite. We have emphasized his intellectual integrity or faithfulness above. Here we emphasize his integrity ethically, emotionally, and existentially. God is self-conscious, knows who he is and what his purposes are (1 Corinthians 2:11). He has a keen sense of identity, meaning, and purpose.

God knows that he is the ultimate being, that there are in reality none to compare with him. In calling upon people to turn from idols, therefore, God in no way is asking something of us not in accord with reality. In steadfastly opposing idolatry he seeks to protect people from ultimate concerns destined to disillusion and disappoint. God desires our worship for our sakes so that we will not succumb eventually to despair as one after another of our finite gods lets us down.

In the next place, God is *omnipotent* (Mark 14:36; Luke 1:37), able to do whatever he wills in the way he wills it. God does not choose to do anything contrary to his nature of wisdom and holy love. He cannot deny himself, and he does not choose to do everything by his own immediate agency without intermediate angelic and human agents. Although he determines some things to come to pass unconditionally (Isaiah 14:24–27), most events in history are planned conditionally, through the obedience of people or their permitted disobedience to divine precepts (2 Chronicles 7:14; Luke 7:30; Romans 1:24). In any case, God's eternal purposes for history are not frustrated but fulfilled in the way he chose to accomplish them (Ephesians 1:11).

> It is said that there are accents in Paul which the church has hesitated to assume. Where the church has thus hesitated she has impoverished herself and blurred her outlook on God's activity. Hesitation where Paul was bold has caused the church often to make only a problem of God's rule and man's responsibility. She thus undermines either the providence of God or human responsibility. They do not exist together in the Scripture as something problematic. They both reveal the greatness of divine activity, in that it does not exclude human activity and responsibility, but embraces them and in them manifests God on the way to the accomplishment of His purposes.[4]

God has not only the strength to effect all his purposes in the way he purposes them but also the authority in the entire realm of his kingdom to

do what he will. God is not a subject of another's dominion, but is King or Lord of all. By virtue of all his other attributes—wisdom, justice, and love, for example—he is fit for the ruling of all that he created and sustains. He is a wise, holy, and gracious sovereign. As just, God cannot punish sinners more than they deserve. To whom much is given, of him much shall be required; to whom little is given, of him little shall be required. But in the bestowing of undeserved benefits and gifts God is free to dispense them as he pleases (Psalm 135:6). Having permitted sin, God is great enough to limit its furious passions and to overrule it for greater good, as at Calvary (Acts 4:24–28). God can defeat the nations and demonic hosts that rage against him. No one can exist independent of divine sovereignty. The attempt to go one's own way independent of God is sinful insolence on the part of creatures who in him live and move and have their being. Only a fool could say there is no God, when God sustains the breath the atheist uses to deny divine dominion over him.

Relationally, God Is Transcendent in Being, Immanent Universally in Providential Activity, and Immanent with His People in Redemptive Activity

As *transcendent*, God is uniquely other than everything in creation. God's distinctness from the being of the world has been implied in previous discussions of God's attributes metaphysically, intellectually, ethically, emotionally, and existentially. God's being is eternal; the world's is temporal. God's knowledge is total; human knowledge is incomplete. God's character is holy; humanity's character is fallen and sinful. God's desires are consistently against evil yet long-suffering and compassionate; human desires fluctuate inconsistently and often intermingle evil with the good. God's energy is untiring and inexhaustible; the world's energy is subject to depletion through entropy. Hence, God is over and above persons in the world in all these respects.

The incomparable divine transcendence involves a radical dualism between God and the world that ought not to be blurred by a resurgent monism and pantheism. Although made like God and in the divine image, humankind is not (like Christ) begotten of God, or an emanation from God

of the same divine nature. The ultimate goal of salvation is not reabsorption into the being of God but unbroken fellowship with God. The unity Christians seek is not a metaphysical unity with him but a relational unity, a oneness of mind, desire, and will. To seek to be as God in a biblical perspective is not deeper spirituality but rebellious idolatry or blasphemy. Christians may respect nature as a divine creation but not worship nature as divine. Christians may respect the founders of the world's religions but cannot bow to any guru as the divine manifest in human form. Only Jesus Christ is from above; all others are from below (John 8:23). Because God is separate from the world, Christians cannot bow to any earthly power as God, whether economic, political, religious, scientific, educational, or cultural. The inestimable benefit of bowing to a transcendent Lord of all is that it frees one from every finite, fallen tyranny.

A biblical theist not only believes that the one living God is separate from the world, as against pantheism and panentheism, but also that God is continuously active throughout the world providentially, in contrast to deism. God is not so exalted that he cannot know, love, or relate to natural law in the world of everyday experience. A study of divine providence as taught in Scripture shows that he sustains, guides, and governs all that he created. The nature psalms reflect upon his activity in relation to every aspect of the earth, the atmosphere, vegetation, and animal (e.g., Psalm 104). He also preserves and governs human history, judging corrupt societies and blessing the just and the unjust with temporal benefits like sunshine, rain, food, and drink. Through God's universal providential activity, the cosmos holds together and his wise purposes of common grace are achieved.

But God is *immanent* in the lives of his people who repent of their sin and live by faith to accomplish the goals of his redemptive grace.

> For this is what the high and exalted One says—
> he who lives forever, whose name is holy:
> "I live in a high and holy place,
> but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit,
> to revive the spirit of the lowly
> and to revive the heart of the contrite."
> Isaiah 57:15

Just as persons may be present to one another in varying degrees, God may be present to the unjust in one sense and to the just in a richer way. A

person may simply be present as another rider on a bus, or much more significantly as a godly mother who has prayed daily for you all of your life.

God is graciously present in forgiving love with the converted who by faith have been propitiated, reconciled, and redeemed by Christ's precious blood. They become his people, he becomes their God. God dwells in them as his holy place or temple. The relational oneness of thoughts, desires, and purposes grows through the years. That unity is shared by other members of Christ's body who are gifted to build each other up to become progressively more like the God they worship, not metaphysically, but intellectually, ethically, emotionally, and existentially.

Summary

In summary, God is a living, personal Spirit worthy of whole-soul adoration and trust (because of his perfect attributes), separate from the world yet continuously active in the world.

Unlimited by space, God nevertheless created and sustains the cosmos, scientific laws, and geographical and political boundaries.

Beyond time, God nevertheless actively relates to time, to each human life, home, city, nation, and to human history in general.

Transcendent to discursive knowledge and conceptual truth, God nevertheless intelligently relates to propositional thought and verbal communication, objective validity, logical consistency, factual reliability, coherence, and clarity, as well as subjective authenticity and existential integrity.

Unlimited by a body, God is nevertheless providentially related to physical power in nature and society, industrially, agriculturally, socially, and politically. God knows and judges human stewardship in the use of all the earth's resources.

God transcends every attempt to achieve justice in the world, but righteously relates to every good endeavor of his creatures personally, economically, socially, academically, religiously, and politically.

Although free from unworthy and uncontrolled emotions, God is caringly related to the poor, the unfortunate, the lonely, the sorrowing, the sick, and the victims of prejudice, injustice, anxiety, and despair.

Beyond all the apparent meaninglessness and purposelessness of human existence, God personally gives significance to the most insignificant life.

<div align="right">Gordon R. Lewis</div>

God's Work: Creation

Both the opening verse of the Bible and the opening sentence of the Apostles' Creed confess God as Creator. In Scripture, the theme of God as Creator of the "heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1) is prominent in both the Old Testament (Isaiah 40:28; 42:5; 45:18) and the New Testament (Mark 13:19; Revelation 10:6). God is the Creator of humans (Genesis 1:27; 5:2; Isaiah 45:12; Malachi 2:10; Mark 10:6), of Israel (Isaiah 43:15), indeed of all things (Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11). Creation occurs by God's word (Genesis 1:3ff.) so that when he speaks, all comes into being (Psalm 33:9; 148:5). His word of command that calls into being things that had no prior existence was uttered by the Word who was with God and is God (John 1:1–14). "All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made" is the statement of John 1:3 (RSV) with reference to the Word of God, Jesus Christ the Son, who became flesh (1:14). Of Christ it is said that "by him all things were created" (Colossians 1:16; cf. 1 Corinthians 8:6), thus making him the agent of creation. The work of God's Spirit is also involved (Genesis 1:2; Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30). Creation is the work of the triune God and is an article of faith, as Hebrews 11:3 clearly shows.

Theology of Creation

From the affirmation of God as Creator *ex nihilo* a number of theological points follow. Langdon Gilkey has cited three major dimensions of what this means theologically:

GOD IS THE SOURCE OF ALL THAT IS. God is sovereign Lord over all things. No other principle or power can be coequal or coeternal with God. Since all that is comes from God's will as its source, nothing in existence is in itself evil. The biblical picture is of a good Creator whose creative word is powerful and wise (Jeremiah 10:12; Proverbs 3:19) and who created all

things good (Genesis 1:31). Creation *ex nihilo* by a good God points to the essential goodness of all things that can be directed and transformed by God's power. God as sole Creator means no thing or no one else may be worshiped. All forms of idolatry are prohibited. God's creative act *ex nihilo* was a unique act, unlike any natural or human act with which we are familiar. The relation between Creator and creature must thus be spoken of in a way that differs from how we speak of the relation of one finite event to another. Therefore, the theological doctrine of creation cannot be examined in the fashion of contemporary science, which by definition deals only with the relations of finite events within limits and boundaries. The Christian doctrine of creation concerns ultimate origins, not the proximate origins with which science is concerned.

CREATURES ARE DEPENDENT YET REAL AND GOOD. The Christian doctrine over against monistic pantheism affirms that creaturely existence is real because God created it and is thus "good" if it is in relationship to God. Human creatures have been given freedom and intelligence, which may be used either to affirm or deny the fundamental relationship of existence, dependence on God. From this arises understandings of sin and grace in which creatures rebel and reject their Creator or are re-created by him through Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) into a relationship of love and fulfillment. The basic Christian view of life's goodness helps make science possible by stressing the orderliness and relational aspects of life and value and by nurturing the desire to control nature for positive human purposes.

GOD CREATES IN FREEDOM AND WITH PURPOSE. Against theories of how the world was created by emanation, as rays of light from the sun, or generation through a process of mating and birth, or by craft, as a carpenter would form a box out of wood, the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* abandons any explanation of *how* creation took place. Creation was a free act of the free God, an expression of God's character variously described in the Scriptures, but which finds its primary focus in love (1 John 4:16), specifically in his love for the world as shown in Jesus Christ (John 3:16). In creation and in God's continuing sustaining and providing for creation, he is working out his ultimate purposes for humanity and the world. This means human life can be meaningful, intelligible, and purposeful even in the face of evil or "anything else in all creation," because life can be

grounded in "the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39 rsv). This points finally to God's purpose of creating "new heavens and a new earth" (Isaiah 65:17; cf. 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1).

<div align="right">Donald K. McKim</div>

God's Work: Providence

Providence is one of the words that do not occur in the Bible, but which nevertheless truly represent a biblical doctrine. There is no Hebrew equivalent for *providence,* and the Greek word translated thus, *pronoia,* is used only of human foresight (Acts 24:2; Romans 13:14; for the verb *pronoeô,* see 12:17; 2 Corinthians 8:21; 1 Timothy 5:8). Rather, the Bible uses *ad hoc* words like "gives food to every creature" (Psalm 136:25), or "he makes springs pour water into the ravines" (104:10), expressing in concrete situations God's mighty acts toward his children.

We must resist the temptation to think about providence generally and independently of Christ. It would be possible to draw on certain psalms and the Sermon on the Mount, for example, to make up a doctrine of God's relationship to his creation that had nothing to do with Jesus. But since it is in Christ that this relationship is established, an attempt to understand it apart from him would be a misinterpretation from the start. In Christ, God has set up the relationship between himself and his creatures, promising to carry through his purpose in creation to its triumphal conclusion. The primal relationship with Adam, renewed with Noah (Genesis 8:21–22), is no less *in Christ* than the covenant with Abraham or Moses. The Mediator who is the incarnate Word establishes this relationship; in him God becomes the God of people, and they become his people. (The Mediator must also be regarded as setting up the relationship between God and his creatures other than people.) As their God, he will take up the responsibility for their earthly existence.

The doctrine of providence may be viewed from three different aspects.

(1) The creation is the stage on which are enacted God's dealings with humankind. Providence is God's gracious outworking of his purpose in Christ that issues in his dealings with humankind. We are not at this point slipping over into the doctrine of predestination, but saying that from the

beginning God has ordered the course of events toward Jesus Christ and his incarnation. From the biblical point of view, world history and personal life stories possess significance only in the light of the incarnation. The squalid little story of lust in Judah's dealings with Tamar (Genesis 38) falls into its place in the genealogy of the Messiah (Matthew 1:3). Caesar Augustus was on the throne in Rome for the sake of the unknown baby in its manger.

(2) According to Acts 14:17; 17:22–30; and Romans 1:18–23, God's providence served also the purpose of bearing witness to him among the heathen. His fatherly care was a sign, pointing toward himself. Romans 1:20 makes it clear that the purpose of this witness of providence was simply to render people inexcusable for not knowing God. At this point also, therefore, providence is included in the doctrine of reconciliation.

(3) The God who gives people life also preserves them while they are on the earth. God is not a God of the soul alone but of the body also. In Matthew 6:25–34, the disciples are reminded (by their Creator himself) of their creaturely relationship to God and are freed from all anxiety about their earthly future. The other creatures (as exemplified by the birds and the wildflowers) have been set in a definite relationship to God that he faithfully maintains by caring for their needs. Will he bestow less care upon humans, to whom he has given a higher place in the creation (cf. Psalm 8:6–8)? Human beings therefore "glorify their Creator . . . by a daily unquestioning acceptance of His gifts."[5] Behind this doctrine lies the almighty and loving freedom of God.

In sum, the doctrine of providence tells us that the world and our lives are not ruled by chance or by fate but by God, who lays bare his purposes of providence in the incarnation of his Son.

T. H. L. Parker

God's Agents

Angels are included in descriptions of all that God created (Psalm 148:2; Colossians 1:16). There are hints that they witnessed the world's creation (Job 38:7). No matter how close to God angels may be, they share with humankind the status of creatures, but as wholly spiritual creatures they are free from many human limitations, such as death (Luke 20:36). They do not marry (Matthew 22:30), so they could be regarded as sexless; in all biblical

appearances of angels in human form they were taken to be men, never women or children. Their ability to communicate in human language and to affect human life in other ways is basic to their biblical role. Their power (28:2) and awesome appearance (vv. 3–4) sometimes tempted people to fear or worship them, but the New Testament does not condone the worship of angels (Colossians 2:18; Revelation 22:8–9). Though angels are stronger and wiser than human beings, their power and knowledge are also limited by God (Psalm 103:20; Matthew 24:36; 1 Peter 1:11–12; 2 Peter 2:11).

Relationship to Christ

The apostle John had a vision of angels surrounding the throne of God (Revelation 5:11). Paul once gave a particularly solemn command to Timothy "in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels" (1 Timothy 5:21). Christ became "much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs" (Hebrews 1:4 RSV). "When God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him'" (1:6). "To which of the angels did God ever say, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'? Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" (1:13–14).

Fallen Angels

Before Christ's final victory, Satan (literally, "the adversary") must first be conquered. On earth Jesus cast out demons "by the Spirit of God" (Matthew 12:28). When his disciples discovered that the demons were subject to him, Jesus said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18). As his crucifixion drew near, Jesus said the time had come when "the ruler of this world [shall] be cast out" (John 12:31 RSV). Many indirect references identify Satan as an angel who sinned because of pride, and Revelation 12:7–9 describes war in heaven, in which the archangel Michael and his angels fought against Satan and his fallen angels. Although Christians are warned to be on guard against Satan, who is still the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2), there is no biblical basis for excessive fear of the devil or evil spirits.

Earthly Functions

Meanwhile, "of the angels he says, 'Who makes his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire'" (Hebrews 1:7 RSV; cf. Psalm 104:4). Angels appeared to many of God's people in the Bible to announce good news (Judges 13:3), warn of danger (Genesis 19:15), guard from evil (Daniel 3:28; 6:22), guide and protect (Exodus 14:19), nourish (Genesis 21:14–20; 1 Kings 19:4–7), or instruct (Acts 7:38; Galatians 3:19). When Christ came to earth as the Savior, angels heralded his birth (Luke 2:8–15), guided and warned his parents (Matthew 2:13), strengthened him when he was tempted (4:11) and in his last distress (Luke 22:43), and participated in his resurrection (Matthew 28:1–6). Jesus spoke about the guardian angels of little children (18:10). Philip was guided by an angel (Acts 8:26). Apostles were rescued from prison by an angel (5:19; 12:7–11). In a frightening situation, Paul was encouraged by an angel (27:21–25).

Role in Judgment

Christians expect angels to accompany Christ at his triumphant return (Matthew 25:31; Acts 1:10–11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:7). Angels will participate in the last judgment, even as they have exercised God's judgment before. It was an angel who struck Herod Agrippa dead (Acts 12:21–23). The Destroyer, whose passing over the Israelites as he struck down the Egyptians is celebrated in the Jewish Passover (Exodus 12:21–27), may have been a "death angel."

The Holy Spirit

Since New Testament times, many of the works previously entrusted by God to his angels have been part of the Holy Spirit's function in the lives of believers in Christ. In his guidance, illumination, protection, and empowering of Christians, the Spirit nonetheless may continue to employ angels for the sake of God and his people.

Walter R. Hearn and Howard F. Vos

For Further Reading and Study

The Doctrine of God the Son

✦

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.[1]

—C. S. Lewis

Jesus of Nazareth

In Matthew and Luke we find accounts of the birth of Jesus. Both point out that Jesus was born of a virgin by the name of Mary in the town of Bethlehem (Matthew 1:18–2:12; Luke 1:26–2:7; attempts to find allusions to the virgin birth in Galatians 4:4 and John 8:41 are quite forced). Attempts to explain these accounts as parallels to Greek myths stumble on the lack of any really substantial parallels in Greek literature and above all on the Jewish nature of these accounts.

The ministry of Jesus began with his baptism by John (Mark 1:1–15; Acts 1:21–22; 10:37) and his temptation by Satan. His ministry involved the selection of twelve disciples (Mark 3:13–19), which symbolized the regathering of the twelve tribes of Israel; the preaching of the need of repentance (1:15), and the arrival of the kingdom of God in his ministry (Luke 11:20); the offer of salvation to the outcasts of society (Mark 2:15–17; Luke 15; 19:10); the healing of the sick and demon-possessed (which is

referred to in the Jewish Talmud); and his glorious return to consummate the kingdom.

The ministry's turning point came at Caesarea Philippi when, after being confessed as the Christ by Peter, Jesus acknowledged the correctness of this confession and proceeded to tell the disciples of his forthcoming death (Matthew 16:13–21; Mark 8:27–31). Advancing toward Jerusalem, Jesus cleansed the temple and in so doing judged the religion of Israel (note Mark's placement of the account between 11:12–14 and 11:20–21 as well as the contents of the following two chapters). On the night he was betrayed, he instituted the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, which refers to the new covenant sealed by his sacrificial blood and the victorious regathering in the kingdom of God (Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18; 1 Corinthians 11:26). Thereupon he was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane, tried before the Sanhedrin, Herod Antipas, and finally Pontius Pilate, who condemned him to death on political charges for claiming to be the Messiah (Mark 15:26; John 19:19). On the eve of the Sabbath, Jesus was crucified for the sins of the world (Mark 10:45), outside the city of Jerusalem (John 19:20), at a place called Golgotha (Mark 15:22), between two thieves who may have been revolutionaries (Matthew 27:38).

He gave up his life before the Sabbath came, so there was no need to hasten his death by crucifragium (i.e., the breaking of his legs, John 19:31–34). He was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea (Mark 15:43; John 19:38). On the first day of the week, which was the third day (Friday to 6 p.m. = day 1; Friday 6 p.m. to Saturday 6 p.m. = day 2; Saturday 6 p.m. to Sunday a.m. = day 3), he rose from the dead, the empty tomb was discovered, and he appeared to his followers (Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20–21). He stayed forty days with the disciples and then ascended into heaven (Acts 1:1–11).

So ended the three-year ministry (John 2:13; 5:1; 6:4; 13:1) of Jesus of Nazareth.

Sources of Information About Jesus Christ

Non-Christian Sources. These sources can be divided into two groups: pagan and Jewish. Both are limited in their value. There are essentially only three pagan sources of importance: Pliny (*Epistles*, x.96); Tacitus (*Annals*, w.44); and Suetonius (*Lives*, xxv.4). All these date from the second decade of the second century. The main Jewish sources are Josephus (*Antiquities*, xviii.3.3 and xx.9.1) and the Talmud. The non-Christian sources provide meager information about Jesus, but

they do establish the fact that he truly lived, gathered disciples, performed healings, and was condemned to death by Pontius Pilate.

Christian Sources. The nonbiblical Christian sources consist for the most part of the apocryphal gospels (AD 150–350) and the "agrapha" ("unwritten sayings" of Jesus, i.e., supposedly authentic sayings of Jesus not found in the canonical Gospels). Their value is quite dubious in that what is not utterly fantastic (cf. Infancy Gospel of Thomas) or heretical (cf. Gospel of Truth) is at best only possible and not provable (cf. Gospel of Thomas 31, 47).

The biblical materials can be divided into the Gospels and Acts through Revelation. The information we can learn from Acts through Revelation is essentially as follows: Jesus was born a Jew (Galatians 4:4) and was a descendant of David (Romans 1:3); he was gentle (2 Corinthians 10:1), righteous (1 Peter 3:18), sinless (2 Corinthians 5:21), humble (Philippians 2:6–8), and was tempted (Hebrews 2:18; 4:15); he instituted the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23–26), was transfigured (2 Peter 1:16–18), was betrayed (1 Corinthians 11:23), was crucified (1:23), rose from the dead (15:3–8), and ascended to heaven (Ephesians 4:8). Certain specific sayings of Jesus are known (cf. Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 7:10; 9:14), and possible allusions to his sayings are also found (e.g., Romans 12:14, 17; 13:7–10; 14:10).

The major sources for our knowledge of Jesus are the canonical Gospels. These Gospels are generally divided into two groups: the Synoptic Gospels (the "look-alike" Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke) and John. The former are generally understood to have a literary relationship, the most common explanation of which is that Mark wrote first, then Matthew and Luke used Mark, and another source, now lost, which contained mostly teachings of Jesus (called "Q"), and that they used other materials as well ("M" = the materials found only in Matthew; "L" = the materials found only in Luke).

—Robert H. Stein

The Christ of Faith

The unique self-understanding of Jesus can be ascertained by two means: the implicit Christology revealed by his actions and words, and the explicit Christology revealed by the titles he chose to describe himself.

IMPLICIT CHRISTOLOGY. During his ministry, Jesus acted as one who possessed a unique authority. He assumed for himself the prerogative of cleansing the temple (Mark 11:12–33), of bringing the outcasts into the kingdom of God (Luke 15), and of having divine authority to forgive sins (Mark 2:5–7; Luke 7:48–49).

Jesus also spoke as one who possessed authority greater than that of the Old Testament (Matthew 5:31–32, 38–39), than Abraham (John 8:53), Jacob (4:12), and the temple (Matthew 12:6). He claimed to be Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28). He even claimed that the destiny of all people depended on how they responded to him (Matthew 10:32–33; 11:6; Mark 8:34–38).

EXPLICIT CHRISTOLOGY. Along with the implicit Christology of his behavior, Jesus also made certain Christological claims by means of the various titles he used for himself. He referred to himself as the Messiah, Christ (Mark 8:27–30; 14:61–62), and his formal sentence of death on political grounds

(note the superscription on the cross) only makes sense on the basis of Jesus' having acknowledged that he was the Messiah. He referred to himself also as the Son of God (Matthew 11:25–27; Mark 12:1–9), and a passage such as Mark 13:32, in which he clearly distinguished between himself and others, must be authentic, for no one in the church would have created a saying in which the Son of God claims to be ignorant as to the time of the end.

Jesus' favorite self-designation, due to its concealing as well as revealing nature, was the title Son of Man. In using this title, Jesus clearly had in mind the Son of Man spoken of in Daniel 7:13 (as is evident from Matthew 10:23; 19:28; 25:31; Mark 8:38; 13:26; 14:62). Therefore, rather than stressing humility, it is clear that this title reveals the divine authority Jesus possesses as the Son of Man to judge the world and his sense of having come from the Father (cf. here also Matthew 5:17; 10:34; Mark 2:17; 10:45). Many attempts have been made to deny the authenticity of some or all of the Son of Man sayings, but such attempts founder because this title is found in all the Gospel strata (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) and satisfies perfectly the "criterion of dissimilarity," which states that if a saying or title like this could not have arisen out of Judaism or out of the early church, it must be authentic. The denial of the authenticity of this title is therefore based not so much on exegetical issues as upon rationalistic presuppositions that *a priori* deny that Jesus of Nazareth could have spoken of himself in this way.

Robert H. Stein

New Testament Christology

The New Testament writers indicate who Jesus is by describing the significance of the work he came to do and the office he came to fulfill. Amidst the varied descriptions of his work and office, always mainly in Old Testament terms, there is a unified blending of one aspect with another and a development that means an enrichment, without any cancellation of earlier tradition.

JESUS IN THE GOSPELS. His humanity is taken for granted in the Synoptic Gospels, as if it could not possibly occur to anyone to question it. We see him lying in the cradle, growing, learning, subject to hunger, anxiety, doubt, disappointment, surprise (Mark 2:15; 14:33; 15:34; Luke 2:40; 7:9), and finally to death and burial. But elsewhere his true humanity is specifically witnessed to, as if it might be called into question (John 1:14; Galatians 4:4), or its significance neglected (Hebrews 2:9, 17; 4:15; 5:7–8; 12:2).

Besides this emphasis on his true humanity, there is nevertheless always an emphasis on the fact that even in his humanity he is sinless and also utterly different from other people; his significance must not be sought by ranking him alongside the greatest or wisest or holiest of all other people. The virgin birth and the resurrection are signs that here we have something unique in the realm of humanity. Who or what he is can be discovered only by contrasting him with others, and it shines out most clearly when all others are against him. The event of his coming to suffer and triumph as a human in our midst is absolutely decisive for every individual he encounters and for the destiny of the whole world (John 3:16–18; 10:27–28; 12:31; 16:11; 1 John 3:8). In his coming, God's kingdom has come (Mark 1:15); his miracles are signs that this is so (Luke 11:20). Woe, therefore, to those who misinterpret them (Mark 3:22–29).

He acts and speaks with heavenly regal authority. He can challenge people to lay down their lives for his own sake (Matthew 10:39). The kingdom is indeed his own kingdom (16:28; Luke 22:30). He is the One who, in uttering what is simply his own mind, at the same time utters the eternal and decisive word of God (Luke 5:22, 27–28; 24:35). His word effects what it proclaims (8:2; Mark 11:21), as God's Word does. He has the authority and power even to forgive sins (2:1–12).

CHRIST. His true significance can be understood only when his relationship to the people in whose midst he was born is understood. In the events set in motion in his earthly career, God's purpose and covenant with Israel is fulfilled. He is the One who comes to do what neither the people of the Old Testament nor their anointed representatives—the prophets, priests, and kings—could do. They had been promised that One would rise up in their own midst who would yet make good what all of them had utterly failed to make good. In this sense, Jesus of Nazareth is the One anointed with the

Spirit and power (Acts 10:38) to be the true Messiah, or Christ (John 1:41; Romans 9:5), of his people. He is the true prophet (Mark 9:7; Luke 13:33; John 1:21; 6:14), priest (John 17; Hebrews), and king (Matthew 2:2; 21:5; 27:11), as his baptism (3:13–17) and his use of Isaiah 61 (Luke 4:16–22) indicate. In receiving this anointing and fulfilling this messianic purpose, he receives from his contemporaries the titles Christ (Mark 8:29) and Son of David (Matthew 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; cf. Luke 1:32; Romans 1:3; Revelation 5:5).

But he gives himself and also receives many other titles that help to illuminate the office he fulfilled and that are even more decisive in indicating who he is. A comparison of Judaism's messianic ideas with both the teaching of Jesus himself and the witness of the New Testament shows that he selected certain features of messianic tradition that he emphasized and allowed to crystallize around his own person. Certain messianic titles are used by him and of him in preference to others, and are themselves reinterpreted in the use he makes of them and in the relationship he gives them to himself and to one another. This is partly the reason for his "messianic reserve" (Matthew 8:4; 16:20; John 10:24).

SON OF MAN. Jesus used the title Son of Man of himself more than any other. There are Old Testament passages where the phrase means simply "man" (e.g., Psalm 8:4), and at times Jesus' use of it corresponds to this meaning (cf. Matthew 8:20). But the majority of contexts indicate that in using this title Jesus is thinking of Daniel 7:13, where the "son of man" is a heavenly figure, both an individual and at the same time the ideal representative of God's people. In the Jewish apocalyptic tradition, this Son of Man is regarded as a preexistent one who will come at the end of the ages as judge and as a light to the Gentiles (cf. Mark 14:62). Jesus sometimes uses this title when he emphasizes his authority and power (2:10; 2:28; Luke 12:8–10). At other times, he uses it when he is emphasizing his humility and [the fact that he is] incognito (Mark 10:45; 14:21; Luke 9:58). In the Gospel of John, the title is used in contexts that emphasize his preexistence, his descent into the world in a humiliation that both conceals and manifests his glory (John 3:13–14; 6:62–63), his role of uniting heaven and earth (1:51), and his coming to judge people and hold the messianic banquet (5:27; 6:27).

Though *Son of Man* is used only by Jesus of himself, what it signified is otherwise expressed, especially in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, where Christ is described as the "man from heaven" and the "second Adam." Paul here takes up hints in the Synoptic Gospels that in the coming of Christ there is a new creation (Matthew 19:28) in which his part is to be related to and contrasted with that of Adam in the first creation (cf., e.g., Mark 1:13; Luke 3:38). Both Adam and Christ have the representative relationship to the whole of humankind that is involved in the conception *Son of Man*. But Christ is regarded as one whose identification with all humankind is far more deep and complete than that of Adam. In his redeeming action, salvation is provided for all. By faith in him, all can participate in a salvation already accomplished in him. He is also the image and glory of God (2 Corinthians 4:4, 6; Colossians 1:15), which humankind was made to reflect (1 Corinthians 11:7) and which Christians are meant to put on in participating in the new creation (Colossians 3:10).

Sᴇʀᴠᴀɴᴛ. Jesus' self-identification with humankind is brought out in passages that recall the suffering servant of Isaiah (Matthew 12:18; Mark 10:45; Luke 24:26). It is in his baptismal experience that he enters this role (cf. Isaiah 42:1; Matthew 3:17) of suffering as the one in whom all his people are represented and who is offered for the sins of the world (Isaiah 53; John 1:29). Jesus is explicitly called the *servant* in the early preaching of the church (Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30), and the thought of him as such was also in Paul's mind (cf. Romans 4:25; 5:19; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

In the humiliation of his self-identification with our humanity (Hebrews 2:9, 17; 4:15; 5:7; 12:2), he fulfills the part not only of victim but also of high priest, offering himself once for all (7:27; 9:12; 10:10) in a self-offering that brings about forever a new relationship between God and humankind. His baptism, the fulfillment of which he accomplishes in his earthly career, culminating in his cross (cf. Luke 12:50), is his self-sanctification to his eternal priesthood, and in and through this self-sanctification his people are sanctified forever (John 17:19; Hebrews 10:14).

Sᴏɴ ᴏꜰ Gᴏᴅ. The title *Son of God* is not used by Jesus himself to the same extent as *Son of Man* (though cf., e.g., Mark 12:6), but it is the name given

to him (cf. Luke 1:35) by the heavenly voice at his baptism and transfiguration (Mark 1:11; 9:7), by Peter in his moment of illumination (Matthew 16:16), by the demons (Mark 5:7), and by the centurion (15:39).

This title is messianic. In the Old Testament, Israel is titled *son* (Exodus 4:22; Hosea 11:1). The king (2 Samuel 7:14; Psalm 2:7), and possibly the priests (Malachi 1:6), are also given it. Jesus, thus, in using and acknowledging this title, is assuming the name of one in whom Israel's true destiny is to be fulfilled.

But the title also reflects the unique filial consciousness of Jesus in the midst of such a messianic task (cf. Psalm 2:7; Matthew 11:27; Mark 13:32; 14:36). This has the profoundest Christological implications. He is not simply a son but the *Son* (John 20:17). This consciousness, revealed at high points in the Synoptics, is regarded in John as forming the continuous conscious background of Jesus' life. The Son and the Father are one (John 5:19, 30; 16:32) in will (4:34; 6:38; 7:28; 8:42; 13:3) and activity (14:10) and in giving eternal life (10:28–30). The Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son (10:38; 14:10). The Son, like the Father, has life and quickening power in himself (5:26). The Father loves the Son (3:35; 10:17; 17:23–24) and commits all things into his hands (5:36), giving him authority to judge (5:22). The title also implies a unity of being and nature with the Father, uniqueness of origin, and preexistence (3:16; Hebrews 1:2).

Lᴏʀᴅ. Though Paul also uses the title *Son of God*, he most frequently refers to Jesus as *Lord*. This term did not originate with Paul. Jesus is addressed and referred to in the Gospels as Lord (Matthew 7:21; Mark 11:3; Luke 6:46). Here the title can refer primarily to his teaching authority (Luke 11:1; 12:41), but can also have a deeper significance (Matthew 8:25; Luke 5:8). Though it is most frequently given to him after his exaltation, he himself quoted Psalm 110:1 (Mark 12:35–37).

Christ's lordship extends over the course of history and all the powers of evil (1 Corinthians 2:6–8; 8:5; 15:24; Colossians 2:15), and must be the ruling concern in the life of the church (1 Corinthians 7:10, 25; Ephesians 6:7). As Lord he will come to judge (2 Thessalonians 1:7).

Though his work in his humiliation is also the exercise of lordship, it was after the resurrection and ascension that the title of *Lord* was most

spontaneously conferred on Jesus (Acts 2:32–36; Philippians 2:1–11) by the early church. They prayed to him as they would pray to God (Acts 7:59–60; 1 Corinthians 1:2; cf. Revelation 3:14, 21; 22:16). His name as *Lord* is linked in the closest association with that of God himself (1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; cf. Revelation 17:14; 19:16; cf. Deuteronomy 10:17). To him are referred the promises and attributes of the Lord (*Yahweh*) in the Old Testament (cf. Acts 2:21 and Jeremiah 4:14; Romans 10:3 and Joel 2:32; 1 Thessalonians 5:2 and Amos 5:18; Philippians 2:10–11 and Isaiah 45:23). To him are freely applied the language and formulas used of God himself. In John 1:1, 18; 20:28; 2 Thessalonians 1:12; 1 Timothy 3:16; Titus 2:13; and 2 Peter 1:1, Jesus is confessed as "God."

WORD. The statement "The Word became flesh" (John 1:14) relates Jesus both to God's Wisdom in the Old Testament (which has a personal character, Proverbs 8 NEB) and to God's Law (Deuteronomy 30:11–14; Isaiah 2:3) as these are revealed and declared in the going forth of the Word by which God creates, reveals himself, and fulfills his will in history (Psalm 33:6; Isaiah 55:10–11; 11:4; Revelation 1:16). There is here a close relationship between word and event. In the New Testament, it becomes clearer that the Word is not merely a message proclaimed but is Christ himself (cf. John 8:31 and 15:17; Ephesians 3:17 and Colossians 3:16; 1 Peter 1:3 and 1:23). What Paul expresses in Colossians 1, John expresses in his prologue. Both passages (and Hebrews 1:1–14) assert the place of Christ as the One who in the beginning was the agent of God's creative activity. In bearing witness to these aspects of Jesus, it is inevitable that the New Testament should witness to his preexistence. He was "in the beginning" (John 1:1–3; Hebrews 1:2–10). His very coming (Mark 1:24; 2:17; Luke 12:49) involves him in deep self-abasement (2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:5–7) in fulfillment of a purpose ordained for him from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). In the Gospel of John, he gives this testimony in his own words (8:58; 17:5, 24).

Yet while his coming from the Father involves no diminution of his Godhead, there is nevertheless a subordination of the incarnate Son to the Father within the relationship of love and equality that subsists between the Father and the Son (John 14:28). It is the Father who sends and the Son who is sent (10:36), the Father who gives and the Son who receives (5:26),

the Father who ordains and the Son who fulfills (10:18). Christ belongs to God, who is the Head (1 Corinthians 3:23; 11:3), and in the end will subject all things to him (15:28).

<div align="right">Ronald S. Wallace and Gene L. Green</div>

Atonement

The expression "make atonement" is frequent in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, but rare in the rest of the Bible. The basic idea, however, is widespread. The need for atonement arrives from the sinfulness of humankind, a truth made plain throughout Scripture yet infrequent outside the Bible.

In the Old Testament, sin is dealt with by the offering of sacrifice. Thus, the burnt offering will be accepted "to make atonement" (Leviticus 1:4), as also the sin offering and the guilt offering (4:20; 7:7), and especially the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement (7:16). Of course, sacrifice is ineffective if offered in the wrong spirit. To sin "with a high hand" (Numbers 15:30 RSV) is to proudly and presumptuously place oneself outside the sphere of God's forgiveness. Many times the prophets denounced the offering of sacrifice as merely external action. But to offer sacrifice as the expression of a repentant and trustful heart is to find atonement. Atonement is sometimes made apart from sacrifice—by paying money (Exodus 30:12–16) or offering life (2 Samuel 21:3–6). In such cases, to make atonement means "to avert punishment, especially the divine anger, by the payment of a *koper*, a ransom, which may be of money or which may be of life."[2] Throughout the Old Testament, sin is serious; it will be punished unless atonement is sought in the way God provided.

This truth is repeated and enlarged upon in the New Testament, where it is made clear that all are sinners (Romans 3:23) and that hell awaits them (Mark 9:43; Luke 12:5). But it is just as clear that God wills to bring salvation and that he has brought it in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of his Son. The love of God is the mainspring (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). We are not to think of a loving Son wringing salvation from a just but stern Father. It is the will of the Father that all be saved, and salvation is accomplished, not with a wave of the hand, so to speak, but by what God has done in Christ: "In Christ God was reconciling the world to

himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19 ʀsᴠ), a reconciliation brought about by the death of Christ (Romans 5:10). The New Testament emphasizes his death, and it is no accident that the cross has come to be accepted as the symbol of the Christian faith or that words like *crux* and *crucial* have the significance they do. The cross is absolutely central to salvation, and this is distinctive of Christianity. Other religions have their martyrs, but the death of Jesus was not that of a martyr: it was that of a Savior. His death saves people from their sins. Christ took their place and died their death (Mark 10:45; 2 Corinthians 5:21), the culmination of a ministry in which he consistently made himself one with sinners.

Sacrifice must be offered—not the sacrifice of animals, which cannot avail for humans (Hebrews 10:4), but the perfect sacrifice of Christ (9:26; 10:5–10). Christ paid sin's due penalty (Romans 3:25–26; 6:23; Galatians 3:13). He redeemed us (Ephesians 1:7), paying the price that sets us free (1 Corinthians 6:20; Galatians 5:1). He made a new covenant (Hebrews 9:15). He won the victory (1 Corinthians 15:55–57). He effected the propitiation that turns away God's wrath (Romans 3:25–26) and made the reconciliation that turns enemies into friends (Ephesians 2:16). His love and his patient endurance of suffering set an example (1 Peter 2:21); we are to take up our cross (Luke 9:23). Salvation is many-sided, but however it is viewed, Christ has taken our place, doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. Our part is simply to respond in repentance, faith, and selfless living.

The New Testament does not put forward a theory of atonement, but there are many references to the effectiveness of Christ's atoning work, and we are not lacking in information about its many-sidedness. Thus, Paul gives a good deal of emphasis to the atonement as a process of justification, using the concepts of redemption, propitiation, and reconciliation. Sometimes we read of the cross as a victory or as an example, as the sacrifice that makes a new covenant, or simply as a sacrifice. There are many ways of viewing it. We are left in no doubt about its efficacy and its complexity. View the human spiritual problem as you will, the cross meets the need. But the New Testament does not say how it does so.

Theories of the atonement are legion as believers in different countries and ages have tried to bring together the varied strands of scriptural teaching and to work them into a theory that will help others to understand how God has worked to bring us salvation. The way has been open for this

kind of venture, in part at least, because the church has never laid down an official, orthodox view. The early centuries saw great controversies about the person of Christ and the nature of the Trinity. Heresies appeared, were thoroughly discussed, and then disowned. In the end, the church accepted the formula of Chalcedon as the standard expression of the orthodox faith.

But there was no equivalent to the atonement. People simply held to the satisfying truth that Christ saved them by way of the cross and did not argue about how this salvation was brought about. Thus there was no standard formula like the Chalcedonian statement, and this left believers to pursue their quest for a satisfying theory in their own way. To this day, no one theory of the atonement has ever won universal acceptance. This should not lead us to abandon the task. Every theory helps us understand a little more what the cross means, and in any case, we are bidden to give a reason for the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15). Theories of the atonement attempt to do just that.

It would be impossible to deal with all the theories of the atonement that have been formulated, but most can be brought under one of three heads: those that view the essence of the matter as the effect of the cross on the believer; those that see it as a victory of some sort; and those that emphasize the Godward aspect. Some prefer a twofold classification, seeing subjective theories as those that emphasize the effect on the believer, in distinction from objective theories that put the stress on what the atonement achieves quite outside the individual.

Subjective View or Moral-Influence Theory

Some form of the subjective or moral view is held widely today, especially among scholars of the liberal school. In all its variations, this theory emphasizes the importance of the effect of Christ's cross on the sinner. The view is generally attributed to Peter Abelard, who emphasized the love of God, and is sometimes called the moral-influence theory, or exemplarism. When we look at the cross, we see the greatness of divine love, which delivers us from fear and kindles in us an answering love. We respond to love with love and no longer live in selfishness and sin. Other ways of putting it include the view that the sight of the selfless Christ dying for sinners moves us to repentance and faith. If God will do all that for us, we say, we ought not to continue in sin. So we repent, turn from it, and are

saved. The thrust in all this is on personal experience. The atonement, seen in this way, has no effect outside the believer. It is real in the person's experience and nowhere else. This view was defended by Hastings Rashdall in *Idea of Atonement* (1919).

It should be said in the first instant that there is truth in this theory. Taken by itself it is inadequate, but it is not untrue. We *must* respond to the love of Christ seen on the cross and recognize the compelling force of his example. The well-known and well-loved hymn "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" sets forth nothing but the moral view. Every line emphasizes the effect on the observer. It strikes home with force. What it says is both true and important. It is when the claim is made that this is *all* the atonement means that we must reject it. Taken in this way, it is open to serious criticism. If Christ was not actually doing something by his death, then we are confronted with a piece of showmanship, nothing more. If you were drowning in a rushing river and someone jumped in to save you, and in the process the would-be rescuer died, you would recognize the love and sacrifice involved. But if you were sitting safely on land and someone jumped into the torrent to demonstrate love, you would see no point in it and only lament the senseless act. Unless the death of Christ really does something, it is not, in fact, a demonstration of love.

Atonement as Victory

In the early church, there seems to have been little attention given to the way atonement works, but when the question was faced, as often as not the answer came in New Testament terms. Because of their sin, people rightly belong to Satan, the fathers reasoned. But God offered his Son as a ransom, a bargain the evil one eagerly accepted. When Satan got Christ down into hell, however, he found that he could not hold him. On the third day, Christ arose triumphant, and left Satan without either his original prisoners or the ransom he had accepted in their stead. It did not take a profound intellect to see that God must have foreseen this, but the thought that God deceived the devil did not worry the fathers. They took that as evidence that God is wiser and stronger than Satan. They even worked out illustrations in which the flesh of Jesus was the bait, the Deity the fishhook. Satan swallowed the hook along with the bait and was transfixed. This view has been variously

called the devil-ransom theory, the classical theory, or the fishhook theory of the atonement.

This kind of metaphor delighted some of the fathers, but after Anselm subjected it to criticism, it faded from view. It was not until recent times that Gustaf Aulén (*Christus Victor*) showed that important truth lies behind the grotesque metaphors. In the end, Christ's atoning work means victory. The devil and all the hosts of evil are defeated. Sin is conquered. Though this has not always been worked into set theories, it has always been there in our Easter hymns. It forms an important element in Christian devotion, and it points to a reality that Christians must not lose.

This view must be treated with some care, else we finish up by saying that God saves simply because he is strong—in other words, might is right. This is an impossible conclusion for anyone who takes the Bible seriously. We are warned that this view, in itself, is not adequate. But combined with other views, it must find a place in any finally satisfying theory. It is important that Christ has conquered.

Anselm's Satisfaction Theory

In the eleventh century, Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury, produced a little book called *Cur Deus Homo?* ("Why Did God Become Man?"), in which he subjected to severe criticism the patristic view of a ransom paid to Satan. He saw sin dishonoring the majesty of God. Now, a sovereign may well be ready in his private capacity to forgive an insult or an injury, but because he is a sovereign he cannot. The state has been dishonored in its head. Appropriate satisfaction must be offered. God is sovereign Ruler of all, and it is not proper for him to remit any irregularity in his kingdom. Anselm argued that the insult sin has given to God is so great that only one who is God can provide satisfaction. But this insult was done by a human, so only a human could provide the satisfaction. Thus he concluded that one who is both God and human is needed.

Anselm's treatment of the theme raised the discussion to a much higher plane than it had occupied in previous discussions. Most agree, however, that the demonstration is not conclusive. In the end, Anselm makes God too much like a king whose dignity has been affronted. He overlooked a sovereign's ability to exhibit clemency and forgiveness without doing harm to his kingdom. A further defect in his view is that Anselm found no

necessary connection between Christ's death and the salvation of sinners. Christ merited a great reward because he died when he had no need to (for he had no sin). But he could not receive a reward, for he had everything. To whom, then, could he more fittingly assign his reward than to those for whom he died? This makes it more or less a matter of chance that sinners be saved. Not very many these days are prepared to go along with Anselm. But at least he took a serious view of sin, and it is agreed that without this there will be no satisfactory view.

Penal Substitution

The reformers agreed with Anselm that sin is a serious matter, but they saw it as breaking God's law rather than as insulting his honor. The moral law, they held, is not to be taken lightly. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), and it is this that is the problem for sinful humankind. They took seriously the scriptural teachings about God's wrath and those that refer to the curse under which sinners lay. It seemed clear to them that the essence of Christ's saving work consisted in his taking the sinner's place. In our stead Christ endured the death that is the wages of sin. He bore the curse that we sinners should have borne (Galatians 3:13). The reformers did not hesitate to speak of Christ as having borne our punishment or as having appeased God's wrath in our place.

Such views have been widely criticized. In particular, it is pointed out that sin is not an external matter to be transferred easily from one person to another, and that while some forms of penalty are transferable (e.g., the payment of a fine), others are not (imprisonment, capital punishment). It is argued that this theory sets Christ in opposition to the Father by maximizing Christ's love and minimizing the Father's. Such criticisms may be valid against some of the ways in which the theory is stated, but they do not shake its essential basis, and they overlook the double identification: Christ is one with sinners (the saved are "in" Christ, Romans 8:1) and he is one with the Father (he and the Father are one, John 10:30; 2 Corinthians 5:18–19). They also overlook the large New Testament support for the theory. It is special pleading to deny that Paul, for example, puts forward this view. It may need to be carefully stated, but this view still says something important about the way Christ won our salvation.

Sacrifice

There is much about sacrifice in the Old Testament and not a little in the New Testament, and some insist that this gives us the key to understanding the atonement. It is certainly true that the Bible regards Christ's saving act as a sacrifice, and this must enter into any satisfying theory. But unless it is supplemented, it is an explanation that does not explain. The moral view or penal substitution may be right or wrong, but at least they are intelligible. But how does sacrifice save? The answer is not obvious.

Governmental Theory

Hugo Grotius argued that Christ did not bear our punishment, but suffered as a penal example, whereby the law was honored while sinners were pardoned. This view is called "governmental" because Grotius envisioned God as a ruler or government head who passed a law—in this instance, "The soul that sins shall die." Because God did not want sinners to die, he relaxed that rule and accepted the death of Christ instead. He could have simply forgiven humankind had he wanted to, but that would not have had any value for society. The death of Christ was a public example of the lengths to which God would go to uphold the moral order of the universe. This view is expounded in great detail in *Defensio Fidei Catholicae de Satisfactione Christi adversus F. Socinum* (1636).

Summary

All the above views, in their own way, recognize that the atonement is vast and deep. There is nothing quite like it, and it must be understood in its own light. The plight of sinful humans is disastrous, for the New Testament sees the sinner as lost, suffering hell, perishing, cast into darkness, and more. An atonement that rectifies all this must necessarily be complex. So we need all the vivid concepts: redemption, propitiation, justification, and so on. And we need all the theories. Each draws attention to an important aspect of our salvation, and we dare not surrender any. But we are small-minded sinners, and the atonement is great and vast. We should not expect that our theories will ever explain it fully. Even when we put them all

together, we will no more than begin to comprehend a little of the vastness of God's saving deed.

<div align="right">Leon L. Morris</div>

Particular Redemption. The doctrine that Jesus died for the elect in particular, securing their redemption, but not for the world, arose as the implications of the doctrine of election and the satisfaction theory of the atonement were developed immediately following the Reformation. A controversy arose that resulted in the pronouncement at the Synod of Dort (1618–19) that Christ's death was "sufficient for all but efficient for the elect." This did not satisfy many theologians, even some Calvinists, and the controversy has continued to this day.

Numerous arguments are used to defend the doctrine of limited atonement, but the following represent some of the more frequently found.

First, in the Bible there is a qualification as to who will benefit by the death of Christ, thus limiting its effect. Christ is said to have died for his sheep (John 10:11, 15), his church (Acts 20:28), the elect (Romans 8:32–35), and his people (Matthew 1:21).

Two Different Views of Christ's Atonement

Was the death of Jesus intended to secure salvation for a limited number of people (the "elect") or for everyone? The first view is sometimes called "limited atonement," because God limited the effect of Christ's death to a specific number of elect persons, or "particular redemption," because redemption was for a particular group of people. The second view is sometimes referred to as "unlimited atonement" or "general redemption," because God did not limit Christ's redemptive death to the elect but allowed it to be for humankind in general.

<div align="right">—Walter A. Elwell</div>

Second, God's designs are always efficacious and can never be frustrated by humans. Had God intended for all to be saved by the death of Christ, all would be. It is clear that not everyone is saved, because the Bible clearly teaches that those who reject Christ are lost. Therefore, it stands to reason that Christ could not have died for everyone, because not everyone is saved. To argue that Christ died for everyone is in effect to argue that God's saving will is not being done or that everyone will be saved, both of which propositions are clearly false.

Third, if Christ died for everyone, God would be unfair in sending people to hell for their own sins. No law court allows payment to be exacted twice

for the same crime, and God will not do that either. God could not have allowed Christ to die for everyone unless he planned for everyone to be saved, which clearly he did not, since some are lost. Christ paid for the sins of the elect; the lost pay for their own sins.

Fourth, to say that Christ died for everyone logically leads to universalism. It is true that not all of those who believe in general redemption believe in universalism, but there is no valid reason that they do not. If they were consistent, they would, because they are arguing that Christ paid for everyone's sins, thus saving them.

Fifth, Christ died not only to make salvation possible, but actually to save. To argue that Christ died only to provide the possibility of salvation is to leave open the question of whether anyone is saved. If God's designs are only of possibilities and not actualities, then no one is secure and everything is open to doubt. The Bible clearly teaches that the death of Jesus actually secures salvation for his people, thus making it a certainty and limiting the atonement (Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:4; 3:13; Ephesians 1:7).

Sixth, because there are no conditions to be met in order to be saved (i.e., salvation is by grace and not by works)—not even an act of faith—both repentance and faith are secured for those for whom Christ died. If the design of the atonement were for everyone, then all would receive repentance and faith, but this is clearly false. Therefore, Christ's death could have been intended only for those who will repent and believe, namely, the elect.

Seventh, the passages that speak of Christ's death for "the world" have been misunderstood. The word *world* really means the world of the elect, the world of believers, the church, or all nations.

Finally, passages that say Christ died for all have also been misunderstood. The word *all* means "all classes" of people, not everyone.

General Redemption. The doctrine of general redemption argues that the death of Christ was designed to include all humankind, regardless of whether all believe. To those who believe it is redemptively applied, and to those who do not believe it provides the benefits of common grace and the removal of any excuse for being lost. God loved them and Christ died for them; they are lost because they refuse to accept the salvation sincerely offered to them in Christ.

First, those who defend general redemption point out that it is the historic view of the church, being held by the vast majority of theologians, reformers, evangelists, and fathers from the beginning of the church until the present day, including virtually all the writers before the Reformation, with the possible exception of Augustine. Among the reformers, the doctrine is found in Luther, Melanchthon, Bullinger, Latimer, Cranmer, Coverdale, and even some of Calvin's commentaries. For example, Calvin says regarding Colossians 1:14, "This redemption was procured through the blood of Christ, for by the sacrifice of his death, all the sins of the world have been expiated"; and on the phrase "shed for many" in Mark 14:24 (KJV) he says, "By the word *many* he means not a part of the world only, but the whole human race." Even among Calvinists, there is a generalism called hypothetical universalism, to be found with Moïse Amyraut, Richard Baxter, John Bunyan, John Newton, and John Brown, among many others. Is it likely that the overwhelming majority of Christians could have so misunderstood the leading of the Holy Spirit on such an important point?

Second, when the Bible says Christ died for *all*, it means just that. The word ought to be taken in its normal sense, unless some compelling reason exists to take it otherwise—and no such reason exists. Some passages (e.g., Isaiah 53:6; 1 John 2:2; 1 Timothy 2:1–6; 4:10) make no sense if not taken in the normal way.

Third, the Bible says Christ takes away the sin of the world and is the Savior of the world. A study of the word *world*—especially in John, where it is used seventy-eight times—shows that the world is God-hating, Christ-rejecting, and Satan-dominated. Yet that is the world for which Christ died. There is not one place in the entire New Testament where *world* means "church" or "the elect."

Fourth, the several arguments that reduce to a charge of universalism are special pleading. Christ dying for all does not mean all are saved—one must believe in Christ to be saved, so Christ's death for the world apparently does not secure salvation for all. Paul had no trouble saying that God could be the Savior of all in one sense and of those who believe in another sense (1 Timothy 4:9–10).

Fifth, God is not unfair in condemning those who reject the offer of salvation. He is not exacting judgment twice. Because nonbelievers refuse to accept the death of Christ as their own, the benefits of Christ's death are

not applied to them. They are lost not because Christ did not die for them, but because they refuse God's offer of forgiveness.

Sixth, it is true that the benefits of Christ's death are referred to as belonging to the elect, his sheep, his people, but it would have to be shown that Christ died only for them. No one denies that Christ died for them. It is only denied that Christ died exclusively for them.

Seventh, the Bible teaches that Christ died for "sinners" (Romans 5:6–8; 1 Timothy 1:15). The word *sinner* nowhere refers to "the church" or "the elect"; it refers to all of lost humankind.

Finally, God sincerely offers the gospel to everyone to believe, not just the elect. How could this be true if Christ did not actually die for everyone? God would know very well that some people could never be saved because he did not allow Christ to pay for their sins. Even Louis Berkhof, a staunch defender of limited atonement, admits, "It need not be denied that there is a real difficulty at this point."[3]

SUMMARY. Both points of view try to preserve something of theological importance. Defenders of limited atonement stress the certainty of God's salvation and the initiative he took in offering it to humans. If salvation depended on our work, all would be lost. The defenders of general redemption attempt to preserve God's fairness and what to them is the clear teaching of Scripture. Salvation is no less certain because Christ died for all. The decision to reject it brings about condemnation, and faith puts one in a saving relationship with Christ, who died that we might live. E. A. Litton attempts to mediate the two views in this fashion: "Thus the combatants may not be in reality so much at variance as they had supposed. The most extreme Calvinist may grant that there is room for all if they will come in; the most extreme Arminian must grant that redemption, in its full scriptural meaning, is not the privilege of all men."[4]

<div align="right">Walter A. Elwell</div>

For Further Reading and Study

chapter 6
The Doctrine of God the Holy Spirit

✦

Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire.

      —Rabanus Maurus (Archbishop of Mainz), *Veni Creator Spiritus*

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. The word *spirit* (Hebrew *ruah*, Greek *pneuma*) is the word used from ancient times to describe and explain the experience of divine power working in, upon, and around people, and understood by them as the power of God.

The Spirit in the Old Testament

There are three basic meanings evident in the use of *spirit* from the earliest Hebrew writings.

PERIOD OF THE JUDGES. (1) Wind of God. It was a wind from God that caused the waters of the flood to subside (Genesis 8:1), and that blew locusts over Egypt (Exodus 10:13) and quails over the camp of Israel. The blast of his nostrils separated the waters of the Red Sea at the exodus (14:21).

(2) Breath of life. The breath of God constituted humankind as living beings (Genesis 2:7). It is one of the earliest perceptions of Hebrew faith that people live only because of the stirring of the divine breath or spirit within them (Job 33:4; 34:14–15; Psalm 104:29). Later, a clearer distinction was drawn between the divine Spirit and the human spirit, and between the spirit and the soul, but at the earliest stage, these were all more or less

synonymous manifestations of the same divine power, the source of all life, animal as well as human (Genesis 7:15, 22; see Ecclesiastes 3:19, 21).

(3) Spirit of ecstasy. There were occasions when this divine power seemed to overtake and possess an individual fully, so that his or her words or actions far transcended those of normal behavior. Such a person was clearly marked as an agent of God's purpose and given respect. This was apparently how leaders were recognized in the pre-monarchy period—Othniel (Judges 3:10), Gideon (6:34), Jephthah (11:29), and the first king, Saul (1 Samuel 11:6) as well. So too the earliest prophets were those whose inspiration came in ecstasy (1 Samuel 19:20, 23–24).

Such an understanding of divine appointment naturally posed some serious questions: Is ecstasy the only divine authentication, and is *all* ecstasy to be equally so regarded? There are some indications in the Old Testament that these became relevant questions during the period of Israel's nationhood prior to the exile in Babylon.

PERIOD OF THE MONARCHY. During the transition from the charismatic leadership of the judges to the institution of a hereditary monarchy, the issue was raised whether an anointing with God's power was the qualification for kingship or part of the coronation ceremony itself. The issue was more alive in the northern kingdom of Israel, where hereditary monarchy did not long survive. Jehu's claim to the throne rested on his anointing by Elijah at divine command. In the southern kingdom, the model ruler was David, whose own claim to the throne rested on the charismatic anointing by Samuel (1 Samuel 16:13; Psalm 89:20–21).

The question of qualification for office and divine anointing arose in even sharper form in the preexilic period. Who should be regarded as authoritative speakers for God—the priests and official prophets, or the independent prophets? Did the authoritative Word of the Lord come from the priest or prophet who spoke by virtue of his place within the official worship system or sanctuary, or from the prophet who spoke with the sole authority of compelling inspiration? Even with hindsight we cannot decide unequivocally for the latter alternative. While Isaiah and Jeremiah attack the corruptness of the official spokesmen of their day (Isaiah 28:7; Jeremiah 6:13; 23:11), it is quite likely that some of the canonical prophets, including Habakkuk and Zechariah, belonged to the official worship system. (Recent

scholarship has concluded that at least some of the psalms began as prophetic utterances within the worship at the sanctuary.) On the other hand, where official religion and charisma clash, it is almost always the charismatic prophet whose utterances have been enshrined as the authoritative Word of the Lord. The two most famous incidents are the encounter between Micaiah and the four hundred prophets of King Ahab (1 Kings 22:5–28) and the confrontation between Amos and Amaziah, priest of Bethel (Amos 7:10–17).

In the earlier stages of Hebrew thought, ecstatic experience was seen as the direct effect of divine power. This was true even when the ecstasy was recognized as evil in character, as in the case of Saul's seizure by the Spirit (1 Samuel 16:14–16). A spirit could be permitted for evil as well as for good (see Judges 9:23; 1 Kings 22:19–23).

However, from the major prophets onward, talk about the spirit becomes much more cautious. For Isaiah, spirit was that which characterized God and distinguished him and his actions from human affairs (Isaiah 31:3). Later, the adjective *holy* appeared as that which distinguished the Spirit of God from any other spirit, human or divine (Psalm 51:11; Isaiah 63:10–11).

The problem of false prophecy emphasized the danger of assuming that every message delivered in ecstasy was the Word of the Lord. Thus, tests of prophecy evaluated the content of the message delivered or the character of the prophet's life, not the degree or quality of inspiration (see Deuteronomy 13:1–5; 18:22; Isaiah 44:7–8; Jeremiah 23:14; Micah 3:5). This sense of a need to discriminate between true and false inspiration and to distinguish the Word of God from the merely ecstatic oracle may help to explain the otherwise puzzling reluctance of the major eighth- and seventh-century BC prophets to attribute their inspiration to the Spirit (Micah 3:8 may be the only exception). Perhaps, as Hosea 9:7 may suggest, the Spirit had become too much identified with the madness of ecstasy, and a period of silence was necessary to separate the word from the grosser manifestations that earlier had been regarded as its clearest expression.

The questions posed by the earliest understanding of the Spirit and agonized over by the great prophets are questions that remain: How is one to recognize the experience of the Spirit to be such? How can one distinguish true inspiration from false? How can a proper balance and healthy tension be maintained between the Spirit and the institutional forms of religion?

Exilic and Postexilic Periods. In exilic and postexilic literature the role of the Spirit is narrowed to two major functions.

(1) The prophetic Spirit. The later prophets again spoke of the Spirit in explicit terms as the inspirer of prophecy (see Ezekiel 3:1–4, 22–24; Haggai 2:5; Zechariah 4:6). As they looked back to the preexilic period, these prophets freely attributed the inspiration of "the former prophets" to the Spirit as well (Zechariah 7:12 KJV).

This tendency to exalt the Spirit's role as the inspirer of prophecy became steadily stronger in the period between the Old Testament and New Testament, until in rabbinic Judaism the Spirit was almost exclusively the inspirer of the prophetic writings now regarded as Scripture.

(2) The eschatological Spirit. The other understanding of the Spirit's role during exilic and postexilic times was as the power of God that would characterize the age to come. That eschatological hope of divine power effecting a final cleansing and a renewed creation is rooted principally in Isaiah's prophecies (Isaiah 4:4; 32:14–15; 44:3–4), where the hope of one anointed by the Spirit as the agent of final salvation comes to clearest expression (11:1–2; 42:1; 61:1–3). Elsewhere, the same longing is expressed for that time when the Spirit would be freely dispensed to all Israel (Ezekiel 39:29; Joel 2:28–29; Zechariah 12:10), for that new creation and new covenant when relationship with God would be much more vital and immediate (Jeremiah 31:31, 34; Ezekiel 36:26–27).

In the period prior to Jesus, the understanding of the Spirit as the Spirit of prophecy and as the Spirit of the age to come had developed into the widespread dogma that the Spirit was no longer to be experienced in the present. The Spirit had been known in the past as the inspirer of prophetic writings, but after Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the Spirit had been withdrawn (1 Maccabees 4:44–46; 9:27; see also Psalm 74:9; Zechariah 13:2–6). The Spirit would be known again in the age of the Messiah, but in the interim the Spirit was absent from Israel. Even the great Hillel (learned Jewish leader and teacher, 60 BC–AD 20), a near contemporary of Jesus, had not received the Spirit. There is a tradition that at a meeting of Hillel and other wise men, a voice from heaven said, "Among those here present is one who would have deserved the Holy Spirit to rest upon him, if his time had been worthy of it."

The consequence of this accepted dearth of the Spirit was that the Spirit in effect became subordinated to the Law. The Spirit was the inspirer of the Law, but since the Spirit could no longer be experienced directly, the Law became the Spirit's sole voice. It was this increasing dominance of the Law and its authoritative interpreters that provided the background for the mission of Jesus and the initial spread of Christianity.

The Spirit in the New Testament

If we are to understand rightly the New Testament's teaching on the Spirit, we must recognize both its continuity and discontinuity with the Old Testament. At many points, New Testament usage cannot be fully understood except against the background of Old Testament concepts or passages. For example, the ambiguity of John 3:8 ("wind," "Spirit"), 2 Thessalonians 2:8 ("breath"), and Revelation 11:11 ("breath of life") takes us back to the basic Hebrew meanings of *spirit*, outlined at the beginning of this chapter. Acts 8:39 and Revelation 17:3; 21:10 reflect the same conception of the Spirit that we find in 1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:16; and Ezekiel 3:14; and the New Testament writers express the rabbinic view that Scripture has the authority of the Spirit behind it (see Mark 12:36; Acts 28:25; Hebrews 3:7; 2 Peter 1:21). The principal continuity, however, is that of fulfillment of what the Old Testament writers looked forward to in hope. At the same time, Christianity is not simply fulfilled Judaism. In the central significance of Jesus and in the new definition of the Spirit that follows from the life and work of Jesus, we have an element of discontinuity that marks off the new faith as something distinct.

THE SPIRIT OF THE NEW AGE. The most striking feature of Jesus' ministry and of the earliest Christians' message was their conviction and proclamation that the blessings of the new age were already present, that the eschatological Spirit had already been poured out. With the exception of the Essenes at Qumran, no other group or individual within the Jewish religion of that time had dared to make such a bold claim. The prophets and the rabbis looked for a messianic age yet to come, and the apocalyptic writers warned of its imminent arrival, but none thought of it as already present. Even John the Baptist spoke only of one about to come and of the Spirit's

operation in the imminent future (Mark 1:8). But for Jesus and first-century Christians, the longed-for hope was a living reality, and the claim carried with it the exciting sense of being in "the last days." Without some recognition of that eschatological dimension of Christian faith and life, we cannot understand this teaching on, and experience of, the Spirit.

Jesus clearly thought of his teachings and healings as fulfillment of the prophetic hope (Matthew 12:41–42; 13:16–17; Luke 17:20–21). In particular, he saw himself as the One anointed by the Spirit as the agent of eschatological salvation (Matthew 5:3–6; 11:5; Luke 4:17–19). So too Jesus understood his exorcisms as the effect of the eschatological power (Spirit) of God and as manifestations of God's end-time rule (kingdom—Matthew 12:27–28; Mark 3:22–26). The Gospel writers, especially Luke, emphasize the eschatological character of Jesus' life and ministry by stressing the Spirit's role in his birth (Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:35, 41, 67; 2:25–27), his baptism (Mark 1:9–10; Acts 10:38), and his ministry (Matthew 4:1; 12:18; Mark 1:12; Luke 4:1, 14; 10:21; John 3:34).

Christianity proper began with the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost "in the last days," the overwhelming experience of vision and inspired utterance being taken as proof positive that the new age prophesied by Joel had now arrived (Acts 2:2–4, 17–18). Similarly, in Hebrews, the gift of the Spirit is spoken of as "the powers of the age to come" (6:4–5). More striking still is Paul's understanding of the Spirit as the guarantee of God's complete salvation (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:13–14), as the "firstfruits" of God's final harvest of men (Romans 8:23), and as the first installment of the believer's inheritance of God's kingdom (8:15–17; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11; 15:42–50; Galatians 4:6–7; 5:16–18, 21–23; Ephesians 1:13–14). Here again the Spirit is thought of as the power of the age to come, as that power—which will characterize God's rule at the end of time—is already shaping and transforming the lives of believers.

For Paul, this means also that the gift of the Spirit is but the beginning of a lifelong process that will not end until the believer's whole person is brought under the Spirit's direction (Romans 8:11, 23; 1 Corinthians 15:42–49; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 5:1–5). It also means that the present experience of faith is one of lifelong tension between what God has already begun to bring about in the believer's life and what has not yet been brought under God's grace (Philippians 1:6), between Spirit and flesh, between life and

death (Romans 8:10, 12–13; Galatians 5:16–17; 6:8). It is this eschatological tension between life "in the Spirit" and life "in the flesh" (see 2:20) that comes to poignant expression in Romans 7:24 and 2 Corinthians 5:2–4.

THE **S**PIRIT OF **N**EW **L**IFE. Since the Spirit is the mark of the new age, it is not surprising that the New Testament writers as a whole understood the gift of the Spirit to be that which brings an individual into the new age. John the Baptist described the way the coming One would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Matthew 3:11). According to Acts 1:5 and 11:16, this imagery was taken up by Jesus, and the promise seen as fulfilled at Pentecost—the outpouring of the Spirit here being understood as the risen Christ's action in drawing his disciples into the new age, in initiating them into "the last days" (2:17, 33).

It seems to be one of Luke's aims in Acts to highlight the central importance of the gift of the Spirit in conversion-initiation, as that decisive "gift of the Holy Spirit" that makes one a Christian (2:38–39). People could have been followers of Jesus on earth, but it was only with the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost that they could be said to have "believed in [i.e., committed themselves to] the Lord Jesus Christ" (11:16–17). Even belief of the gospel message in baptism could fall short of full commitment to and acceptance of Christ, of which the Spirit was the decisive evidence (8:12–17).

The Spirit's presence manifested in and upon a life was recognized by Peter as proof enough that God had accepted that person even though they had not yet made any formal profession of faith or been baptized (Acts 10:44–48; 11:15–18; 15:7–9). So too Apollos, already aglow with the Spirit (18:25; cf. Romans 12:11), even though his knowledge of "the way of the Lord" was slightly defective (Acts 18:24–26), apparently was not required to supplement his "baptism of John" with Christian baptism. However, the twelve so-called disciples at Ephesus proved by their very ignorance of the Spirit that they were not yet disciples of the Lord Jesus (19:1–6). Luke represents Paul as asking them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (19:2).

This is entirely in accord with Paul's own emphasis in his letters. The step of faith and reception of the Spirit go together, two sides of the one

coin: to receive the Spirit is to begin the Christian life (Galatians 3:2–3); righteousness through faith and the promise of the Spirit are equivalently regarded as "the blessing of Abraham" (vv. 1–14); to be baptized in the Spirit is to become a member of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13); if anyone does not "have the Spirit of Christ" that person does not belong to Christ, is not a Christian (Romans 8:9); only reception of the Spirit makes it possible for us to be children of God, to call on God as Father (vv. 14–17; Galatians 4:6–7); the divine seal establishing the bond between God and the believer is now the Spirit himself, not circumcision (and not baptism—2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13–14). The Spirit so characterizes the new age and the life of the new age that only the gift of the Spirit can bring a person into the new age to experience the life of the new age. The Spirit is distinctively and peculiarly the life-giver; the Spirit indeed is the life of the new age (Romans 8:2, 6, 10; 1 Corinthians 15:45; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Galatians 5:25).

In the same way in John's writings, the Spirit is characteristically the life-giving Spirit (John 6:63), the power from above, the seed of divine life that brings about the new birth (3:3–8; 1 John 3:9), and a river of living water that brings life when one believes in Christ (John 7:37–39; see also 4:10, 14). Or again, reception of the Spirit in 20:22 is depicted as a new creation analogous to Genesis 2:7. Consequently, in 1 John 3:24 and 4:13, possession and experience of the Spirit count as one of the "tests of life" listed in that letter.

THE SPIRIT OF THE NEW COVENANT. The life that begins with the Spirit depends on the Spirit for its continuance (Galatians 3:3). As Christ fulfilled his mission in the power of the Spirit (Hebrews 9:14), so the person "in Christ" can only live life as a Christian out of the same Spirit. Jesus had promised the inspiration of the Spirit in times of trial (Mark 13:11), and the first Christians found this to be fulfilled in their own experience (Acts 4:8, 31; 6:10; 13:9). But they also experienced the Spirit in a much more regular way as the one who directed their mission (1:8; 8:29, 39; 10:19; 11:12; 13:2, 4; 15:28; 17:16–17; 19:21; 1 Peter 1:12; also John 16:8–11; 20:21–23), and as a strengthening power (Acts 9:3; 1 Peter 4:14; John 14–16).

The experience of the Spirit is like the experience of breathing: one is not conscious of it all the time, but if one is not conscious of it at least sometimes, something is wrong.

Paul in particular is quite clear that this living out of the Spirit's resources and direction is what distinguishes Christianity from the Judaism of his day. There is a practice of religion that is according to the letter, "the written code" (Romans 2:28–29; 7:6; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Galatians 4:9–10; Colossians 2:20–23), just as there is a quality of living that is "according to the flesh," on the level of one's appetites and selfish desires (Romans 8:3–7, 12–13; Galatians 5:13). But the Christian is one who "walks by the Spirit," is "led by the Spirit," and "lives by the Spirit" (Romans 7:6; 8:3–7, 14; Galatians 5:5, 16, 18, 25). The Spirit within is precisely the fulfillment of the prophetic hope of a new covenant, for a circumcision of the heart, giving an immediate and direct knowledge of God's will and a spontaneity of worship that leaves all rulebook religion far behind (Romans 2:28–29; 7:6; 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:3—alluding to Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ephesians 2:18; 6:18; Philippians 3:3; cf. 1 John 2:27; Jude 20).

MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SPIRIT. It will be clear from what has already been said that when the first Christians, like the ancient Hebrews, spoke of the Spirit, they were thinking of experiences of divine power. As in the Old Testament so in the New, *Spirit* is the word used to explain the experience of new life and vitality (see above), of liberation from legalism (e.g., Romans 8:2; 2 Corinthians 3:17), and of spiritual refreshing and renewal (cf., e.g., Isaiah 32:15; Ezekiel 39:29 with John 7:37–39; Romans 5:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Titus 3:5–6). It is important to realize how wide a range of experiences were attributed to the Spirit—ecstatic experiences (Acts 2:2–4; 10:44–47; 19:6; cf. 10:10; 22:17—in ecstasy; 2 Corinthians 12:1–4; Revelation 1:10; 4:2), emotional experiences (e.g., love—Romans 5:5; joy—Acts 13:52; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; see also Galatians 5:22; Philippians 2:1–2), experiences of illumination (2 Corinthians 3:14–17; Ephesians 1:17–18; Hebrews 6:4–6; 1 John 2:20), and experiences resulting in moral transformation (1 Corinthians 6:9–11). Likewise, when Paul speaks of spiritual gifts, charismata (acts or words that bring divine grace to concrete

expression), he evidently has a wide range of actual events in mind—inspired speech (1 Corinthians 12:8, 10; see also 2:4–5; 1 Thessalonians 1:5), miracles and healings (1 Corinthians 12:9–10; Galatians 3:5; cf. Hebrews 2:4), and acts of service and help, of counsel and administration, of aid and mercy (Romans 12:7–8; 1 Corinthians 12:28).

In talking thus of the Spirit in terms of experience, we should not overemphasize particular experiences or manifestations, as though earliest Christianity consisted of a sequence of mountaintop experiences or spiritual highs. There clearly were such experiences, indeed a wide range of experiences, but no one experience is singled out to be sought by all (except prophecy), there is no distinctively second (or third) New Testament experience of the Spirit, and Paul, if anything, warns against overvaluing particular manifestations of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:6–19; 2 Corinthians 12:1–10; cf. Mark 8:11–13). Where particular experiences are valued it is as manifestations of a more sustained experience, particular expressions of an underlying relationship (cf. Acts 6:3–5; 11:24—"full of the Spirit"; Ephesians 5:18).

What we are in touch with here is the vigor of the experiential dimension of earliest Christianity. If the Spirit is the breath of the new life in Christ (cf. Ezekiel 37:9–10, 14; John 20:22; 1 Corinthians 15:45), then presumably the analogy extends further, and the experience of the Spirit is like the experience of breathing: one is not conscious of it all the time, but if one is not conscious of it at least sometimes, something is wrong.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE SPIRIT. It was out of this shared experience of the Spirit that the earliest Christian community grew and developed—for this is what "the fellowship (*koinonia*) of the Spirit" properly means, common participation in the same Spirit (Philippians 2:1–2; cf. Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 1:4–9). As it was the gift of the Spirit that brought those in Samaria, Caesarea, and elsewhere effectively into the community of the Spirit (Acts 8, 10), so it was the experience of the one Spirit that provided the unifying bond in the churches of Paul's mission (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:3–4; Philippians 2:1). Here we see the real importance of the divine Spirit manifestations for Paul: it is out of the diversity of these particular manifestations that the unity of the church emerges, that the body of Christ grows in unity (Romans 12:4–8; 1 Corinthians 12:12–27;

Ephesians 4:4–16). Paul thinks of the charismata as specific shared expressions of the divine life. And it is only as these expressions benefit and build up the common life and worship that Paul values them (1 Corinthians 12:7). This is why he ranks prophecy so highly (cf. Acts 2:17–18), because unlike glossolalia (speaking in tongues), it ministers to the whole person (mind as well as spirit) and, more important, to the whole community (1 Corinthians 14).

For the same reason, Paul is cautious about accepting all claims to charismata—the experience of inspiration is not self-authenticating—and urges that every such claim be submitted to the judgment of the community. What does not find an echo among those who have the Spirit and does not build up the community of the Spirit is unlikely to be a gift of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:12–15; 14:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22; cf. Matthew 7:15–23).

In this way, Paul provides a resolution to the Old Testament problem of whether authority lies in the individual utterance of the charismatic prophet or in the official of the institutionalized religion. For the antithesis of individual charismatic over against official spokesman has been transcended. All, not just one or two specially anointed individuals, have the Spirit; and all, not just a particular prophet, may be used by the Spirit as ministers of grace (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 12:7, 11). This means that authority lies not in an either/or of charisma or office, but rather in the correlation and interaction of charisma and community, in the individual charisma (word or act) as tested and approved by the community as a whole.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST. The most important development and element in earliest Christian understanding of the Spirit is that the Spirit is now seen to be the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7; Romans 8:9; Galatians 4:6; Philippians 1:19; 1 Peter 1:11; see also John 7:38; 15:26; 16:7; 19:30; Revelation 3:1; 5:6). It is this more precise definition of the Spirit that provides the Christian answer to the other Old Testament problem: how to recognize the experience of the Spirit to be such. The answer is partly that the Spirit is to be identified as the Spirit that bears witness to Jesus (John 15:26; 16:13–14; Acts 5:32; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 1 John 4:2; 5:7–8; Revelation 19:10), but

also and more profoundly, as the Spirit that inspired and empowered Jesus himself.

Thus the Spirit is to be recognized as the Spirit of sonship—that is, as the one who inspires the same prayer and brings about the relationship with God as Father that Jesus enjoyed (Romans 8:15–17—co-heirs; Galatians 4:6–7). The Spirit is to be recognized as the power of God that transforms the individual into the image of God, that makes the believer like Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18; cf. Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 13; 15:42–49; Philippians 3:20–21; Colossians 3:9–10; 1 John 3:2). In particular, this means that experience of the Spirit of Jesus is experience of Christ the crucified as well as of Christ the Exalted One, experience not just of resurrection power but also of sharing his sufferings and death (Romans 8:17; 2 Corinthians 4:7–12, 16–18; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 3:10–11). The mark of the Spirit of Christ is not so much experiences of divine power that leave behind or transform physical weakness, but rather the experience of power in weakness, of life through death (2 Corinthians 12:9–10).

The link between the Spirit and the exalted Jesus is even closer for the believer. The Spirit in a real sense is Jesus' mode of existence now (Romans 1:4; 1 Corinthians 15:45; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 3:18). To experience the Spirit is to experience Jesus (John 14:16–28; Romans 8:9–10; 1 Corinthians 6:17; 12:4–6; Ephesians 3:16–19; Revelation 2–3). One cannot know Jesus apart from the Spirit or other than through the Spirit. One cannot experience the Spirit other than this: The Spirit bears the character of Christ and impresses that character on those who submit to it. Any other spiritual experience is to be discounted by the Christian, entirely disregarded and avoided.

<div align="right">James D. G. Dunn</div>

For Further Reading and Study

The Doctrines of Humanity and Sin

✦

God made man to be somebody—not just to have things.

—The Brotherhood Journal

Sin is man's declaration of independence from God.

—Anonymous

What It Means to Be Human

The biblical teaching on humanity begins with a right notion concerning God. The biblical perspective of anthropology (i.e., the study of humanity) is centrally displayed in the context of an elevated theology (i.e., the study of God). A high and reverent view of God leads to a noble and dignified view of humanity, whereas a poorly developed concept of God often produces a distorted perspective on humanity. Hence, human beings may be viewed more importantly than they ought, or less importantly than is biblical. Either view is sub-biblical. The place to begin a study of humanity, then, is with a high view of God, its Creator.

The Origin of Humanity

Against the naturalistic, materialistic theories of origins, the biblical view starts with the assertion that the eternal God has created humanity, the most significant of all his created works. It is not necessary for one to subscribe to a particular chronological scenario for God's work in humanity's creation. Some Christians believe the Bible teaches a closed chronology in Genesis 1 made of six literal twenty-four-hour days (cf. vv. 5, 8, 13, etc.), with the stunning, sudden appearance of Adam and Eve coming perhaps

just some six thousand years ago (cf. the chronologies associated with but not limited to Archbishop James Ussher, *Annales,* 1650–1658). Some who hold this general viewpoint (sometimes called creation science) extend the creation of man to about ten thousand years ago, based on a view of some elasticity in the chronologies of Genesis 5 and 11.

Others believe the texts of Genesis 1 and 2 may be interpreted far more broadly to speak of a most remote antiquity for the creation of humanity (extending to millions of years). They argue that process (under God's control and direction) may have played a significant role in God's creative work. This viewpoint is best termed *progressive creationism* and is to be contrasted with theistic evolution, in which God is usually viewed as initiating the process but having little involvement once the processes are in motion. In the former approach, the Hebrew term *day* (*yom*) in Genesis 1 may refer to an extended period of time (e.g., the "day-age" theory); the phrasing "there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day" may be a literary device to present successive scenes in God's creative works through the processes of time.

Many Christians find themselves somewhere between a conservative and a broad chronology for humanity's origin. Yet in spite of individual preferences, one must give assent to God's creative work in producing humanity in order to think biblically about humanity. The essence of faith begins in the words "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth."

Humanity is not only God's creation but the pinnacle of his creative effort. Long before modern precision in such things, the ancients were aware of human beings' anatomical similarities with members of the animal kingdom. But despite these similarities, the biblical viewpoint was never to confuse humans with animals—human beings are distinct, the high point of God's creative work, the apex of his handicraft. The progression of the created things in Genesis 1 is climactic; all of God's created work culminated in his fashioning of human beings.

Sociologically, the distinct behavior characteristics of human beings include language, toolmaking, and culture. Distinct experiential characteristics include reflective awareness, ethical concern, aesthetic urges, historical awareness, and metaphysical concern. These factors individually and collectively separate humans from other forms of animate life. Humanity is far more than the "naked ape" of some modern evolutionary

theories. But sociology alone does not suffice to explain the full nature of humankind. That is the subject of divine revelation.

While humanity bears a continuity with God's creation (assumed in the words of Genesis 2:7, being fashioned from the dust of the ground), human beings are also distinct from all that preceded them, as it was into a new creature that God breathed the breath of life so that he became a living being. The wording of this text deals a blow to the theory of gradualism in man's development. It was not into one of the developing creatures that God gave an extra boost or a distinctive nature, but into a fully fashioned yet inanimate creature that he breathed the breath of life. The animating principle of humanity comes directly as a gift from God.

Human beings were created by God as male and female (Genesis 1:27), meaning that what is said generally of humanity must be said of both the male and the female, and that the truest picture of what it means to be human is to be found in the context of man and woman together. The commands to multiply and exercise sovereignty over the earth were given to both sexes as shared responsibility. Similarly, it is both male and female who have rebelled against God and bear the consequences of that primeval sin in the post-fall world, and both male and female whom Christ came to redeem (cf. Galatians 3:28). At the same time, the words *male* and *female* denote true distinctions. Many perceived gender differences may be culturally conditioned, yet the prime sexual distinctions between male (Hebrew *zakar*, "the piercer") and female (Hebrew *neqeba*, "the pierced") are divinely intended. It may be too much to argue as did Karl Barth that it was in the male and female relationship that the image of God is to be found; yet the male and female relationship is at least a part of what the image of God means (see Genesis 1:27).

The most stunning biblical assertion respecting humanity is that God made human beings *in his image*. Of no other creature, not even the angels, is such a statement found. The words *in God's image* in 1:20–28 are the basis for the psalmist's paraphrase in Psalm 8:5, "For you have made him to lack but little of God" (lit. trans. "lower than the angels," Septuagint). The meaning of the phrase *the image of God* (Latin *imago Dei*) has been the subject of much debate. Some have thought the phrase to refer to a physical representation of God, but this is doubtful in that God is spirit (cf. John 4:24). Others think the phrase refers to personhood, which corresponds to God's personality (having intellect, sensibilities, and will). Such qualities

may be found in God's image; however, these varied aspects of personality are also shared by other members of the animal kingdom and are not unique to the human species.

The basic meaning of the word *image* (Hebrew *salem*) is "shadow," "representation," or "likeness." God's image in human beings reveals God's perspective of humanity's worth and dignity as a representation or a shadow of himself in the created world. Ancient kings of Assyria were known to have physical images of themselves placed in outlying districts as a reminder to those who might be prone to forget that these areas were a part of the empire. So God has placed in us a shadow of himself, a representation of his presence, in the world that he has made.

This view of God's image in human beings seems to be confirmed by the immediate context in Genesis 1. Humanity, created in God's image, is to have dominion over all of God's other works (v. 26; see also Psalm 8:5). Further, as representative of the Creator, human beings are to respond to him. Jesus' assertion of God's spirituality results in a response of worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:21–24).

The Nature of Humanity

One may tend to think of a human being in parts, but the biblical emphasis is on the human being as a whole. Debates continue on the tripartite (threefold) nature of humanity (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:23), spirit, soul, and body, as against a bipartite (twofold) nature, material and immaterial. Though the Bible does seem to support both positions, the more important issue respecting the nature of humanity is one's unity rather than the number of one's parts. Hence, a biblical view of humanity begins in the assertion that one is a person made up of physical and nonphysical properties. In the words of Barth, the human person is "bodily soul, as he is also besouled body." There is no person in body only (death), nor can one easily think of a bodiless spirit as a person, except in a temporary, transitional state. The Hebrew term *nephesh*, often translated *soul*, is best rendered *person* in most contexts (cf. ᴋᴊᴠ reading of Genesis 46:26–27 with ʀsᴠ). The Hebrew word *ruah* ("breath," "wind," "spirit") and the Greek words *pneuma* ("spirit") and *psyche* ("soul") often speak of the immaterial part of a person. This is no less real than the physical. A purely material, physical view of humanity is frightfully deficient. At the same time, an

overemphasis on the spirit and a de-emphasis on the physical is neither realistic nor balanced. One might say, "I am a person whose existence is presently very dependent upon my physical body. But I am more than body, more than flesh. When my body dies, I still live. When my flesh decays, I exist. But one day I shall live in a body again. For the notion of a disembodied spirit is not the full measure of my humanity. God's ideal for me is to live my life in my [new] body. So in hope of the eternal state, I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting."

These, then, are the two points I wanted to make. First, that human beings all over the earth have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way and cannot really get rid of it. Second, that they do not in fact behave in that way. They know the Law of Nature; they break it. These two facts are the foundation of all clear thinking about ourselves and the universe we live in. [1]
—C. S. Lewis

One cannot go far in thinking of the nature of humanity from the biblical vantage point without first facing the problem of the fall. Genesis 3 suggests that unfallen humans were immortal, that their powers of sexual reproduction were not originally bound in the pain of childbearing, and that their work was not troubled by reversals in nature. After the fall, however, all was changed: within each person, between the male and the female, in their interaction with nature, and in their relationship with the Creator.

As a result of the fall, humanity has become profoundly fallen, a fallenness extending to every part of the person. The term *total depravity* need not mean that one is as evil as he or she might be, but rather that the results of sin affect one's whole being. At the same time, God's image in human beings continues in some way after the fall, providing the divine rationale for salvation (cf. Romans 5). It is essentially because of God's estimation of the intrinsic worth of humanity that the divine justification of salvation may be maintained.

The old debate between the essential goodness and the evil disposition of humanity finds its quandary and resolution in the Genesis account: God made human beings to consciously reflect the dignity and nobility of the Creator; yet humans, by their own deliberate rebellion, turned against the Creator and continue, except by God's grace, in the ensuing sin that marks their life. This resultant sin is both a quality of being in the fallen person as well as numerous, continuing acts of pride and selfishness. Though God's image in humanity is marred in the post-fall period, it may be stimulated anew by the effective work of the Spirit of God as one comes to newness of life in Christ. This gracious work of God brings personal renewal, restoration of relationships with others, and fellowship with him.

Human beings, then, were created by God good, have become evil by their own devices, and yet in God's power may recapture the original good. The rediscovery of what it means to be fully human as God's shadow is found in the life of Jesus, whose human life is the new beginning for humanity. Hence, Jesus is the new Adam; in his model, a new beginning replaces the former pattern.

The Destiny of Humanity

A biblical view of humankind must include a balanced statement respecting its divine origin, its rebellion against God's grace, its judgment, and its prospect for redemption in the person of the Savior, Jesus, with the promise of eternal life. Human beings have a beginning and will live forever. This assertion is in stark contrast to naturalistic theories of origins and destinies. One of the most deceptive tendencies of modern thought is the concept "coming to terms with death." People with no thought of God and no hope for eternity are encouraging each other to accept the inevitable decline and demise of their bodies as the natural end to human life. The biblical notion is that death in human beings is not natural at all.

Death is an acquired trait, not a person's natural destiny. Death may be said of the body, but not of the spirit. The biblical teaching is that while the body dies and decays, the person lives on in hope of a renewed body. Those who have come to know Christ go to be with him when their bodies die (Philippians 1:23) and anticipate the resurrection of the body for eternal life to come (1 Corinthians 15:35–49). Those who die apart from Christ do not cease to exist but are assigned an eternal existence of conscious knowledge

that they are separated from God and have fallen short of their destiny to enjoy his presence forever. The biblical teaching on the destiny of the lost is quite unpalatable for modern people. Even Christians who generally have high views of biblical inspiration may find themselves blanching at the thought of eternal punishment of the wicked. Yet the biblical doctrine of the final judgment of the wicked is as well established as most biblical teachings.

One of the most dramatic truths in Scripture respecting the nature of humanity is to realize that it was for humans that God initiated the salvation work that led to the incarnation of the eternal Son of God. With the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior returned to his eternal position of glory and majesty in heaven where he forever remains the God-man. As God, he shares all the attributes of the Father and the Holy Spirit, and as man he identifies with human beings. He reveals himself in a physical body, albeit the resurrection body, the firstfruits of the resurrection of all who are his. The incarnation, then, brought about an eternal change in deity. Only a very high view of the worth of humanity could have brought God to such a fundamental change in himself. As the writer to the Hebrews states, "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity" (2:14).

The final measure of our humanity is that we were made to worship God and to enjoy him forever. Such thoughts are not attributed to any other created being. Even the angels, who have maintained their perfect state and who worship the Father in conscious bliss, do not have quite the same relationship with God as do redeemed people. "Surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants" (2:16). What is humanity? In Christ, we are all God means us to be, in majesty and dignity, and in joy before his throne forever.

<div style="text-align: right">Walter A. Elwell, et al.</div>

A Biblical View of Sin

In the biblical perspective, sin is not only an act of wrongdoing, but a state of alienation from God. For Israel's great prophets, sin is much more than the violation of a taboo or the transgression of an external ordinance. It signifies the rupture of a personal relationship with God, a betrayal of the

trust he places in us. We become most aware of our sinfulness in the presence of the holy God (cf. Psalm 51:1–9; Isaiah 6:5; Luke 5:8). Sinful acts have their origin in a corrupt heart (Genesis 6:5; Isaiah 29:13; Jeremiah 17:9). For Paul, sin (*hamartia*) is not just a conscious transgression of the law, but a debilitating, ongoing state of enmity with God. In Paul's theology, sin almost becomes personalized. It can be thought of as a malignant, personal power that holds humanity in its grasp.

The biblical witness also affirms that sin is universal. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," Paul declares (Romans 3:23). "There is no one on earth who is righteous, no one who does what is right and never sins" (Ecclesiastes 7:20). "Who can say, 'I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin'?" (Proverbs 20:9). "They have all gone astray," the psalmist complains. "They are all alike corrupt; there is none that does good, no, not one" (14:3 RSV).

In reformed theology, the core of sin is unbelief. This has firm biblical support: in Genesis 3, where Adam and Eve trust the word of the serpent over God's word; in the Gospels, where Jesus Christ is rejected by the leaders of the Jews; in Acts 7, where Stephen is martyred at the hands of an unruly crowd; and in John 20:24–25, where Thomas arrogantly dismisses the resurrection.

Hardness of heart, closely related to unbelief (Mark 16:14; Romans 2:5), likewise belongs to the essence of sin. It means refusing to repent and believe in God's promises (Psalm 95:8; Hebrews 3:8, 15; 4:7). It connotes both stubborn unwillingness to open ourselves to God's love (2 Chronicles 36:13; Ephesians 4:18) and its corollary—insensitivity to the needs of our neighbor (Deuteronomy 15:7; Ephesians 4:19).

Whereas the essence of sin is unbelief or hardness of heart, the chief manifestations of sin are pride, sensuality, and fear. Other significant aspects of sin are self-pity, selfishness, envy, and greed.

Sin is both personal and social, individual and collective. Ezekiel declared: "This was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy" (16:49). According to the prophets, it is not only a few individuals that are infected by sin but the whole nation (Isaiah 1:4). Among sin's collective forms that cast blights over the world today are racism, nationalism, imperialism, ageism, and sexism.

Sin's effects are moral and spiritual bondage, guilt, death, and hell. James explained: "Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death" (1:14–15 RSV). In Paul's view, "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:56).

According to Pauline theology, the law is not simply a check on sin but an actual instigator of sin. So perverse is the human heart that the very prohibitions of the law, intended to deter sin, serve instead to arouse sinful desire (Romans 7:7–8).

Biblical faith also confesses that sin is inherent in the human condition. We are not simply born into a sinful world; we are born with a propensity toward sin. The psalmist says, "Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward, spreading lies" (58:3; cf. 51:5). Church tradition speaks of original sin, but this is intended to convey not a biological taint or physical deformity but a spiritual infection that in some mysterious way is transmitted through reproduction. Sin does not originate from human nature, but it corrupts this nature.

The origin of sin is indeed a mystery and is tied in with the problem of evil. The story of Adam and Eve does not really give us a rationally satisfactory explanation of either sin or evil (this was not its intention), but it does throw light on the universal human predicament. It tells us that prior to human sin, there was demonic sin, which provided the occasion for human transgression. Orthodox theology, both Catholic and Protestant, speaks of a fall of the angels prior to the fall of humanity, and this is attributed to the misuse or abuse of the divine gift of freedom. It is the general consensus among orthodox theologians that moral evil (sin) sets the stage for physical evil (natural disaster), but exactly how the one causes the other will probably always remain a subject of human speculation.

Sin and Hubris

The biblical understanding of sin has certain parallels with the Greek tragic concept of hubris, and yet there are also profound differences. Hubris, sometimes (not wholly accurately) translated as *pride,* is not to be equated with the idolatrous pride that proceeds from a corrupted heart; rather, unwise self-elevation proceeds from the vitalities of nature. Whereas hubris signifies the attempt to transcend the limitations appointed by fate, sin

refers to an unwillingness to break out of our narrow limitations in obedience to the vision of faith. While hubris connotes lack of moderation, sin consists in misplaced allegiance. Hubris is trying to be superhuman; sin is becoming inhuman. Hubris means rising to the level of the gods; sin means trying to displace God or living as if there were no God.

In Greek tragedy, the hero has quite a different standing from the sinner portrayed in the Bible. The tragic hero is punished for authentic greatness, not for unwarranted exaltation. While the tragic hero is to be admired, the sinner, insofar as he or she persists in sin, is to be justly condemned. Both are to be pitied, but for different reasons. Tragic heroes are victims of fate and are not really responsible for their predicament. Sinners, on the other hand, know the good but do not do it. Tragic heroes are tormented by the sorrow of being blind to the forces that brought about their undoing. Sinners are troubled by the guilt of knowing they have no one to blame but themselves. The fault of the tragic hero is inevitable; that of the sinner is inexcusable. The tragic hero is a pawn in the hands of fate, the sinner a willing accomplice in evil. In Greek tragedy, the essential flaw is ignorance; in the biblical perspective, the tragic flaw is hardness of heart.

Historical Controversy over Sin

In the fifth century, Augustine challenged the views of the British monk Pelagius, who saw sin basically as an outward act of transgressing the law and regarded the human person as free to sin or desist from sin. Appealing to the witness of Scripture, Augustine maintained that sin incapacitates humans from doing the good, and because we are born as sinners we lack the power to do the good. Yet because we willfully choose the bad over the good, we must be held accountable for our sin. Augustine gave the illustration of a man who, by abstaining from food necessary for health, so weakened himself that he could no longer eat. Though still a human being, created to maintain his health by eating, he was no longer able to do so. Similarly, by the historical event of the fall, all humanity has become incapable of that movement toward God—the very life for which it was created.

Pelagius held that one could raise oneself by one's own efforts toward God, and therefore grace is the reward for human virtue. Augustine countered that humans are helpless to do the good until grace falls upon

them, and when grace is thus given they are irresistibly moved toward God and the good.

At the time of the Reformation, Luther powerfully reaffirmed the Pauline and Augustinian doctrine of the bondage of the will against Erasmus, who maintained that humans still have the capacity to do the right, though they need the aid of grace if they are to come to salvation. Luther saw humanity as totally bound to the powers of darkness—sin, death, and the devil. What we most need is to be delivered from spiritual slavery rather than inspired to heroic action.

In the last century, the debate between Karl Barth and Emil Brunner on human freedom is another example of church division through the ages on this question. Though firmly convinced that we are sinners who can be saved only by God's unmerited grace as revealed and conveyed in Jesus Christ, Brunner nonetheless referred to "addressability" in humanity, a "capacity for revelation" that enables us to apprehend the gospel and to respond to its offer. For Barth, not even a capacity for God remains within our fallen nature; therefore, we must be given not only faith but also the condition to receive faith. In this view, there is no point of contact between the gospel and sinful humanity. Brunner vehemently disagreed, contending that there would then be no use in preaching. Barth argued that the Spirit must create this point of contact before we can believe and obey. In contrast to Brunner, he affirmed the total depravity of humanity, yet he did not believe that human nature is so defaced that it no longer reflects God's glory. In his later writings, Barth contended that sin is alien to human nature rather than belonging to this nature. Nonetheless, he continued to affirm that every part of our nature is infected by the contagion of sin, which renders us totally unable to come to God on our own.

Modern Reappraisals of Sin

In the nineteenth century, theologians under the spell of the New World consciousness associated with the Enlightenment and romanticism began to reinterpret sin. For Friedrich Schleiermacher, sin is not so much revolt against God as the dominance of the lower nature within us. It is the resistance of our lower nature to the universal God-consciousness, which needs to be realized and cultivated in every human soul. Sin is basically a minus sign, the inertia of nature that arrests the growth of God-

consciousness. Schleiermacher even saw sin in a positive light, maintaining that evil has been ordained in corporate human life as a gateway to the good. Sin has occurred as a preparation for grace rather than grace occurring to repair the damage of sin. Schleiermacher did acknowledge a corporate dimension to sin.

Albrecht Ritschl, in the same century, understood sin as the product of selfishness and ignorance. He did not see the human race in bondage to the power of sin, but instead believed that people could be effectively challenged to live ethical, heroic lives. His focus was on actual or concrete sins, not on humanity's being in sin. He even allowed for the possibility of sinless lives, though he did not deny the necessity of divine grace for attaining the ethical ideal. For Ritschl, religion is fundamentally the experience of moral freedom, a freedom that enables humans to be victorious over the world. At the same time, he acknowledged the presence of radical evil; although, as in the case of Immanuel Kant, this did not significantly alter his vision of a new social order characterized by the mastery of the spirit over nature. He also tried to do justice to the collective nature of evil, but this effort was never quite convincing.

Twentieth-Century Reinterpretations of Sin

Reinhold Niebuhr pioneered in reinterpreting sin. Rejecting the Reformation understanding of sin for its biblical literalism and determinism, he also disputed the liberal view, which confused sin with human weakness and finitude. For Niebuhr, sin is inevitable because of the tension between human freedom and human finitude, but it is not a necessary implication of human nature. Our anxiety over our finitude provides the occasion for sin; our ability to transcend ourselves is the source of the possibility of sin. We are tempted either to deny the contingent character of our existence (in pride) or to escape from the responsibilities of our freedom (in sensuality). Niebuhr sought to preserve the paradox of the inevitability of sin and human culpability for sin.

Paul Tillich saw human sin as consisting in estrangement from one's true self and the ground of one's selfhood. Virtually making sin an invariable concomitant of human finitude, he spoke of an ontological fall in addition to an immanent fall. Tillich made generous use of psychological and sociological categories (such as "alienation" and "estrangement") to

illumine the mystery of sin. Just as sin is a fall from our ontological ground, so salvation lies in reunion with this ground. For Tillich, the universal experience of estrangement from the creative depth and ground of all being is the tie that links Christians and non-Christians.

In liberation theology, sin is redefined in terms of social oppression, exploitation, and acquiescence to injustice. Sin is also seen as greed for financial gain at the expense of the poor. Just as sin is what dehumanizes and oppresses people, so salvation is what humanizes them, liberates them for meaningful and creative lives.

Closely related is feminist theology, which sees the essence of sin in passivity to evil, in timidity and cowardice in the face of intimidation. Sin consists not so much in self-affirmation as in self-contempt. The need for women who have been subjugated by a patriarchal ethos is for self-assertion, and their sin lies in resignation to the social system that relegates them to an inferior status.

The understanding of sin has also undergone a profound transformation in popular culture religion, where psychology is more significant than theology. Under the influence of "New Thought" and other neotranscendentalist movements, media religion reinterprets sin as negative thinking or defeatism. In some other strands of culture religion, also showing the impact of "New Thought," sin is equated with sickness or instability. The cure lies in self or group therapy rather than in a sacrifice for sin. The way to overcome guilt is through catharsis rather than repentance. Atonement is reinterpreted to mean atonement with the self or the world.

Overcoming Sin

Christian faith teaches that sin cannot be overcome through human ingenuity or effort. The solution to the problem lies in what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. The penalty for sin is death, judgment, and hell, but the gospel is that God has chosen to pay this penalty himself in the sacrificial life and death of his Son, Jesus (cf. John 3:16–17; Acts 20:28; Romans 3:21–26; 5:6–10; 2 Corinthians 5:18–19; Colossians 2:13–15).

Through his atoning sacrifice on Calvary, Christ set humankind free by taking the retribution of sin upon himself. He suffered the agony and shame that we deserve to suffer because of our sin. He thereby satisfied the just

requirements of God's law and at the same time turned away God's wrath from fallen humankind. His sacrifice was both an expiation of our guilt and a propitiation of God's wrath. It also signifies the justification of sinners in God's sight in that Christ's righteousness is imputed to those who have faith. Likewise, it represents the sanctification of sinners by virtue of their being engrafted into Christ's body through faith. The cross and resurrection of Christ also accomplish the redemption of sinners, because they have been brought back out of the slavery of sin into the new life of freedom.

Humankind is objectively delivered through the cross and resurrection victory of Christ over the powers of sin, death, and the devil; but this deliverance does not make contact with the sinner until he receives the gift of the Holy Spirit in the awakening to faith. The outpouring of the Spirit completes Christ's salvific activity. His atoning work is finished, but the fruits of his redemption need to be applied to God's people by the Spirit if they are to be saved *de facto* as well as *de jure*. It is through *regeneration* by the Spirit, the imparting of faith and love, that the sinner is set free from bondage to sin and enabled to achieve victory over sin in everyday life.

Reformation theology insists that Christ saves us not only from the power of sin but also from its dire consequence—eternal death. We are given both immortality and the remission of sins. Christians do not suffer further penalties for sins committed after baptism and conversion, for sin's punishment has already been borne by Christ. Christians have been delivered from sin's guilt, but they still suffer the interior pain of guilt or feelings of guilt insofar as they continue to sin while in the state of grace. The remedy lies not in acts of penance prescribed by the church, but in the act of repentance by which we claim again the assurance of forgiveness promised in the gospel. The suffering that accompanies the sin of the Christian is to be understood not as a penalty for sin but as a sting that reminds us of our deliverance from sin and also as a spur that challenges us to persevere and overcome.

Sin in Evangelical and Legalistic Religion

The meaning of sin is quite different in a religion based on the gospel from one based on the law. Sin, in the evangelical perspective, is not so much the infringement of a moral code as the breaking of a covenantal relationship. Sin is an offense not so much against law as against love. In

legalism, sin is the violation of a moral taboo. In evangelicalism, sin is wounding the very heart of God. The opposite of sin is not virtue, but faith.

Biblical faith acknowledges the legal dimension of sin, recognizing that the just requirements of the law have to be satisfied. Yet it also perceives that sin is basically the sundering of a personal relationship between God and humanity and that the greatest need is not the payment of debt but reconciliation.

The opposite of sin is not virtue, but faith.

The deepest meaning of the cross is that God, out of his incomparable love, chose to identify himself with our plight and affliction. The suffering of Christ was the suffering of vicarious love, and not simply a penal suffering canceling human debt. Salvation means that Christ's merits are transferred to the deficient sinner and also that God's forgiveness is extended to the undeserving sinner. Christ not only pays the penalty for sin, but he does more than the law requires: he accepts the sinner unto himself, adopting that person into his family as a brother or sister. He gives sinners a writ of pardon and embraces them as a loving shepherd who has found the lost sheep.

Just as sin is deeper than the infringement of law, so love goes beyond the requirements of law. The answer to sin is a forgiveness that was not conditional on Christ's sacrifice but one that was responsible for this sacrifice. God did not forgive because his law was satisfied; yet because he chose to forgive, he saw to it that the demands of his law were fulfilled.

Donald G. Bloesch

For Further Reading and Study

chapter 8
The Doctrine of Salvation

✦

> Thy work alone, O Christ, can ease this weight of sin.
>
> Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God, can give me peace within.[1]
>
>   —Ray Ortlund Jr.

Soteriology, the doctrine of *sôtéria*—salvation—is all about God's purposes and actions in saving humanity from the power and effects of sin.

The Biblical Idea

The common Hebrew words for *salvation*, deriving ultimately from a root word meaning "width," "spaciousness," "freedom from constraint," hence deliverance, obviously lend themselves to broad development in application. Literally, they cover salvation from any danger, distress, enemies, from bondage in Egypt (Exodus 14:13; 15:2), exile in Babylon (Isaiah 46:13; 52:10), adversaries (Psalm 103:19), defeat (Deuteronomy 20:4), or oppression (Judges 3:31). Metaphorically, in salvation from social decay (Hosea 1:7) and from want, the meaning approaches moral and personal welfare (prosperity, Job 36:11); in Psalm 28:9, religious blessing in general. "The Lord is . . . my salvation" is the heart of Old Testament testimony, always with an overtone of undeserved mercy. Later, Judaism anticipated a messianic deliverance, which might include political, national, or religious elements (Psalms of Solomon 10:9; Testament of Benjamin 9:10; cf. Luke 1:69, 71, 77).

    Sôtéria therefore gathered a rich connotation from the Septuagint to carry into the New Testament. There too it means deliverance, preservation from

any danger (Acts 7:25; 27:31; Hebrews 11:7). The root words here, however, add the notions of "wholeness," "soundness," and "health," giving *salvation* a medical connotation—salvation from affliction, disease, demon-possession, or death (Mark 5:34; James 5:15). Sometimes this meaning is literal: peace, joy, praise, and faith are so interwoven with healing as to give *saved* a religious significance also. Jesus' self-description as "physician" (Mark 2:17 KJV) and the illustrative value of the healing miracles in defining his mission show how readily physical and spiritual healing unite in salvation (Luke 4:18–19).

Much of the most frequent use of *sôtéria,* and its derivatives, is for deliverance, preservation from all spiritual dangers, and the bestowal of all religious blessings. Its alternative is destruction (Philippians 1:28), death (2 Corinthians 7:10), and divine wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9); it is available to all (Titus 2:11), shared (Jude 3), and eternal (Hebrews 5:9). It is ascribed to Christ alone (Luke 19:10; Acts 4:12), "the pioneer of salvation," and especially to his death (Romans 5:9–10; Hebrews 2:10). In this sense, salvation was "from the Jews" (John 4:22), though for Gentiles too (Romans 11:11). It is proclaimed (taught) as a way of thought and life (Acts 13:26; 16:17; Ephesians 1:13–16), to be received from God's favor by faith alone—a confessed confidence and trust (Acts 16:30–31; Ephesians 2:8) focused upon Christ's resurrection and lordship (Romans 10:9) "calling" upon him (Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13). Once received, salvation must not be neglected but held fast, grown up to, humbly worked out (1 Corinthians 15:2; Philippians 2:12; Hebrews 2:3; 1 Peter 2:2). Some will be only narrowly saved in the end (1 Corinthians 3:15; 1 Peter 4:18).

The Comprehensiveness of Salvation

The comprehensiveness of salvation may be shown in the following ways:

(1) By what we are saved from. This includes sin and death; guilt and estrangement; ignorance of truth; bondage to habit and vice; fear of demons, of death, of life, of God, of hell; despair of self; alienation from others; pressures of the world; and a meaningless life. Paul's own testimony is almost wholly positive: salvation has brought him peace with God, access to God's favor and presence, hope of regaining the glory intended for men, endurance in suffering, steadfast character, an optimistic mind, inner

motivations of divine love and power of the Spirit, ongoing experience of the risen Christ within his soul, and sustaining joy in God (Romans 5:1–11). Salvation extends also to society, aiming at realizing God's kingdom; to nature, ending its bondage to futility (8:19–20); and to the universe, attaining final reconciliation of a fragmented cosmos (Ephesians 1:10; Colossians 1:20).

(2) By noting that salvation is past (Romans 8:24; Ephesians 2:5, 8; Titus 3:5–8), *present* (1 Corinthians 1:18; 15:2; 2 Corinthians 2:15; 1 Peter 1:9; 3:21), and *future* (Romans 5:9–10; 13:11; 1 Corinthians 5:5; Philippians 1:5–6; 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:8; Hebrews 1:14; 9:28; 1 Peter 2:2). That is, salvation includes that which is given freely and finally by God: grace (forgiveness [called in one epistle "justification"], friendship or reconciliation, atonement, sonship, and new birth), that which is continually imparted (sanctification—growing emancipation from all evil, growing enrichment in all good—the enjoyment of eternal life, experience of the Spirit's power, liberty, joy, advancing maturity in conformity to Christ), and that which is still to be attained (redemption of the body, perfect Christlikeness, final glory).

(3) By distinguishing salvation's various aspects: religious (acceptance with God, forgiveness, reconciliation, sonship, reception of the Spirit, immortality), emotional (strong assurance, peace, courage, hopefulness, joy), practical (prayer, guidance, discipline, dedication, service), ethical (new moral dynamic for new moral aims, freedom, victory), personal (new thoughts, convictions, horizons, motives, satisfactions, self-fulfillment), and social (new sense of community with Christians, of compassion toward all, and overriding impulse to love as Jesus has loved).

Salvation in the New Testament

Distinctive approaches underline the richness of the New Testament concept of salvation. Jesus presupposed the universal sin and need of men, originating in rebelliousness (Matthew 7:23; 13:41; 24:12, lit. "lawlessness"; 21:28–31), and causing "sickness" of soul (Mark 2:17), which lies deep within the personality, defiling from within (Matthew 7:15–16; 12:35; cf. 5:21–22, 27–28; 15:19–20; 23:25), and leaving men in debt to God for unpaid duty (6:12; 18:23–24). He therefore called all to repentance

(Mark 1:15; Luke 5:32; 13:3, 5; 15:10)—to a change of outlook and lifestyle that enthrones God (Luke 8:2; 19:8–9; John 8:11; Matthew 9:9)—urged daily prayer for forgiveness, offered forgiveness himself (Mark 2:5), and commended humble penitence as the only acceptable basis upon which to approach God (Luke 18:9–14).

Salvation includes that which is given freely and finally by God (justification), that which is continually imparted (sanctification), and that which is still to be attained (glorification).

In Jesus' openness toward and friendship with sinners, God's loving welcome found perfect expression. Nothing was needed to win back God's favor. It waited eagerly for man's return (15:11–24). The one indispensable preliminary was the change in man from rebelliousness to childlike trust and willingness to obey. That shown, there followed life under God's rule, described as feasting, marriage, wine, finding treasure, joy, peace, all the freedom and privilege of sonship within the divine family in the Father's world.

Peter also called people to repentance (Acts 2:38), promising forgiveness and the Spirit to whoever called upon the Lord. Salvation was freeing especially from past misdeeds and from conformity to a perverse generation (vv. 23–40), and with a purpose, inheritance, and glory still to be revealed (1 Peter 1:3–5).

In John's thought, salvation saves from death and judgment. He restates its meaning in terms of life, rich and eternal (thirty-six times in his Gospel, thirteen in 1 John), God's gift in and with Christ, beginning in total renewal (new birth), illumined by truth (knowledge, light), and experienced as love (John 3:5–16; 12:25; 1 John 3:11; 4:7–11).

Paul saw his own failure to attain legal righteousness reflected in all men and due to the overmastering power (rule) of sin, which brought with it death. Salvation is therefore, first, acquittal, despite just condemnation, on the ground of Christ's expiation of sin (Romans 3:20–22), and second, deliverance by the invasive power of the Spirit of holiness, the Spirit of the risen Christ. The faith that accepts and assents to Christ's death on our behalf also unites us to him so closely that with him we die to sin and rise to new life (6:1–11). The results are freedom from sin's power (vv. 7, 18; 8:2),

exultation in the power of the indwelling Spirit, assurance of sonship (ch. 8), and increasing conformity to Christ. By the same process, death is overcome and believers are prepared for life everlasting (6:13, 22–23; 8:11).

<div align="right">Reginald E. O. White</div>

For Further Reading and Study

The Doctrine of the Church

✦

The church has many critics but no rivals.

—Anonymous

Our word *church,* like its cognate forms *kirche, kerk, kirk,* comes from the Greek adjective *kuriakon,* used first of the house of the Lord, then of his people. The New Testament word, *ekklésia,* is used of a public assemblage summoned by a herald (Acts 19:32, 39–40); in the Septuagint, however, it means the assembly or congregation of the Israelites, especially when gathered before the Lord for religious purposes. Accordingly, it is used in the New Testament for the congregation the living God assembles about his Messiah Jesus. Thus, the church is God's spiritual family, the Christian fellowship created by the Holy Spirit through the testimony to God's mighty acts in Christ Jesus. Wherever the Spirit unites worshiping souls to Christ and to each other there is the mystery of the church.

The Definition of the Church

More fully stated, the one church of God is not institutional but a supernatural entity in process of growth toward the world to come. It is the sphere of the action of the risen and ascended Lord. All its members are in Christ and are knit together by a supernatural kinship. All their gifts and activities continue Christ's work by the power of the Holy Spirit, originate from Christ, and are coordinated by him to the final goal. Then the church will appear in the age to come as the one people of God united in one

congregation before the throne, as the one celestial city—the new Jerusalem.

The Marks of the Church

The Lord brings and keeps his people in covenant fellowship with himself by his Spirit and his Word (Isaiah 59:21). His voice is heard in the proclamation of his Word, and his acts are seen in the administration of his sacraments. Accordingly, with prayer and praise, these are the marks of the visible church, the means the Spirit uses to bring individuals to personal faith and to nourish believers in the corporate worship of the Christian community. As they receive God's promises, he forgives the sins of his people and seals them with his sacraments for the world to come.

The Biblical History of the Church

The existence of the church is a revelation of God's gracious heart. The Father chose his eternal Son to become the Savior of sinners, the Messiah of the whole Israel of God. In him, God chose the people for his own possession and called individuals into this fellowship. This one people of God includes the patriarchs, the congregation of ancient Israel, Jesus and his disciples, the primitive community of his resurrection, and the Christian church.

For God's people, the Old Testament period was the dispensation of promise, the New Testament, that of fulfillment. Jesus Christ revealed not a new God but a new way of worshiping the same God. In the Old Testament, it is "the whole assembly of [the congregation of] Israel" (Deuteronomy 31:30) who hear the law (4:10; 9:10; 18:15–19; Acts 7:38), who sacrifice the Passover lamb (Exodus 12), whom God redeems from Egypt (15:13, 16; Psalm 74:2; 77:15; Acts 20:28), with whom God makes the covenant at Sinai (Exodus 33–35), for whose sins expiatory sacrifices are provided (Leviticus 4; 16), who are a holy nation to praise God (Exodus 18:10; Psalm 22:22; cf. Hebrews 2:12; 1 Peter 2:9–10). Other New Testament passages also recognize a unity with the Old Testament people of God (Matthew 8:11; Romans 11:16–28; 1 Corinthians 10:1–4). The messianic

expectation of the Old Testament includes the formation of a faithful new Israel. In Christ, the Old Testament God speaks so that the New Testament church is the fulfillment of the Old Testament congregation.

The local church is—or ought to be—a family, a local expression of the worldwide family of God, whose members regard, love, and treat one another as brothers and sisters. [1]
—John R. W. Stott

The several steps in the formation of the new Israel of God include the calling of the disciples to gather as sheep about their shepherd, the confession of Peter, the Last Supper, the cross, the resurrection, Pentecost, and the sending out of the apostles as eyewitnesses of the resurrection. Jesus bound the disciples not to the Torah of the rabbis, nor to the ideas of a Socrates, but to himself. To this fellowship gathered around God's saving self-revelation in Messiah, Jesus gave the kerygma (proclamation of the gospel), the Lord's Prayer, the sacraments with common praise following the Last Supper, and a distinct code with special teachings on such matters as divorce, authoritative teachers, and a common purse and treasurer.

God's dealings with humanity are marked first by a narrowing of the channel that the stream of revelation may be deepened and then thereafter that the blessing may become worldwide. Thus he dealt first with the human race, then with the nation of Israel, later with the remnant thereof, further with the few pious families from which John, Jesus, and the first disciples came. When the Good Shepherd was taken, all the disciples forsook him and fled so that the Israel of God was one person, the Savior who died on Calvary for the world's sins. But God raised up from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ and sent that Great Shepherd to gather again the flock. At the appointed mountain, over five hundred met him at one time, three thousand were converted at Pentecost, and the Lord continued to add together daily those who were being saved.

On the basis of the Old Testament and the gospel preparation, Christ poured forth the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to constitute the assembled fellowship as God's church. The Spirit anointed, christened, and sealed every member of the gathering. From the exalted Christ, the Spirit came to be the life and guide of the church until the return of her Lord. In bringing

the gospel to the Gentile world, God established a new missionary center, Antioch; called a new voice, the apostle Paul; and approved a new name for his people, Christian.

The Nature of the Church

Paul speaks of the whole and of each local group as *the church* even as he uses this term for a household of believers as well as for larger gatherings. Thus it is not the addition of churches that makes the whole church, nor is the whole church divided into separate congregations. But wherever the church meets she exists as a whole, she is the church in that place. The particular congregation represents the universal church, and through participation in Christ's redemption, mystically comprehends the whole of which it is the local manifestation.

Sacraments and Ordinances

Certain rites or ceremonies of the church are known as *sacraments* or *ordinances*. The Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and some other churches recognize seven sacraments: baptism, the Eucharist (Communion), confirmation, marriage, holy orders, penance, and extreme unction. Most Protestants recognize only baptism and Communion, holding that these two alone were specifically instituted by Christ. Those who view these rites as *sacraments* see them as a "means of grace," that is, grace is conveyed to the believer through participation. Those who use the term *ordinance* tend to see these rites as outward or visible symbols of an inward or spiritual reality.

Communion. Also called the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Table, or the Eucharist, Communion is a reenactment of the Last Supper of our Lord with his disciples before he was crucified. Bread and wine (or grape juice) represent the body and blood of Christ. There are four main views of Communion, though in practice each has variations.

The Roman Catholic View. The Roman doctrine is known as transubstantiation, in which the "substance" of the bread and wine (when properly consecrated) is said to actually, *physically* change into Christ's body and blood, even though the physical *appearance* remains unchanged.

The Lutheran View. Called consubstantiation, this approach holds that Christ's body and blood are *substantially present with* the consecrated bread and wine, even though these elements do not physically change.

The Memorial/Commemorative View. Here the partaking of the bread and wine is a memorial—"in remembrance" of Christ's atoning sacrifice. The elements are understood to be representative symbols of Christ's body and blood; his presence is not believed to be physically or substantially present in them.

The Calvinist/Reformed View. This stresses the mystical, spiritual communion between the believer and Christ through the Holy Spirit. The body and blood of Christ are held to be truly (but only spiritually) present in the elements.

Baptism. Baptism is the Christian rite of initiation that symbolizes identification with and commitment to Christ, spiritual rebirth (or regeneration), and purification.

In some churches (e.g., Roman Catholic, Orthodox), baptism is believed to have salvific benefits and is therefore administered to children as well as converts of any age.

Some (e.g., Reformed/Presbyterian) believe baptism signifies the covenantal relationship between God and his people (as in the Old Testament rite of circumcision), and thus it is offered to children of believing parents as well as adult converts. In this view, baptism is not considered salvific.

Some, like Baptists and others, reserve baptism (sometimes called believer's baptism) for those having professed faith in Christ.

Modes of baptism, which differ among churches, include immersion, effusion (pouring), and aspersion (sprinkling).

The terms *the church of God* and *the churches in Christ* reach their full expression in "the churches of God in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 2:14 ʀsᴠ). This phraseology indicates that the significant features of the church are her relationship to God and to Jesus Christ.

As to the former, the church is a fact established by God. It is his supernatural act. According to the consentient testimony of the Testaments, this is not a man-made myth, but a God-given fact. The same God who spoke the word of promise to ancient Israel speaks the word of fulfillment to the Christian congregation. As the Father reveals the Son, the Messiah builds his church (Matthew 11:25–30; 16:17–18). At Pentecost, the three miracles manifest the direct action of God establishing his church.

The New Testament speaks of the church as God's building, his planting, his vineyard, his temple, his household, his olive tree, his city, and his people. It describes her ministers as exercising the gifts of God (1 Corinthians 12:28), of the ascended Christ (Ephesians 4:11–12), or of the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28). Paul recognized the priority of the Jerusalem church not because of the personal importance of the individuals who composed it, but because this fellowship of men and women was the assembly of God in Christ. That is, he recognized the fact of God's action and did not treat it as a matter of human speculation.

As the church is an entity established by God, so is she the place where God acts for our salvation. Here the risen Lord encounters men and women, changes them from rebels against their Maker into children of their heavenly Father, bringing them from enmity into peace. It pleases God to save by the foolishness of the kerygma those who believe (1 Corinthians 1:21). The gospel is the power of God who saves us and calls us to faith (Romans 1:16; 15:15–16ff; 2 Timothy 1:8). As we observe the outward functioning of the Word and the sacraments with our bodily faculties, it is not less important that we contemplate God's activity in the church with the ear and the eye of faith. Preaching becomes more effective when it calls men and women more often to behold God working for them than scolding them for not working better for God. Martin Luther said, "God, the Creator of heaven and earth, speaks with thee through His preachers, baptizes, catechizes, absolves thee through the ministry of His own sacraments."

Gifts and Abilities

A spiritual gift is a special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the body of Christ according to God's grace for use within the context of the body.

There are twenty-seven spiritual gifts found in lists in the Bible: prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, mercy, wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, discerning of spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues, apostle, helps, administration, evangelist, pastor, celibacy, voluntary poverty, martyrdom, hospitality, missionary intercession, and exorcism.

The great majority of the spiritual gifts are mentioned in three key chapters: Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4. One of the primary spiritual exercises for any Christian is to discover, develop, and use his or her spiritual gift or gift mix.

What Gifts Aren't

Natural talents. Every person possesses certain natural talents, but spiritual gifts are reserved exclusively for Christians. In some cases, God takes a natural talent in an unbeliever and transforms it into a spiritual gift when that person enters the body of Christ. But even in such cases, the spiritual gift is more than just a souped-up natural talent; it is given by God.

Fruit. The fruit of the Spirit is described in Galatians 5:22–23 NKJV: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control (temperance). Fruit is not discovered like the gifts. It is developed through the believer's walk with God. While spiritual gifts help define what a Christian does, the fruit of the Spirit helps define what a Christian is.

Roles. Roles are Christian practices, such as having faith or being a witness to the gospel. They are slightly different from the fruit of the Spirit in that they involve more doing than being. And they are different from spiritual gifts and similar to the fruit in that they are expected of every Christian.

Faith is a spiritual gift and fruit of the Spirit that is also a role. Faith is required to become a Christian, but over and above this is the special gift of faith given by God to only a few members of the body. The gift of faith is much more than the fruit of faith and role of faith that we see in an ordinary Christian. Another example is celibacy. Some are gifted with it, but all Christians must be prepared to practice the role of celibacy if single or widowed or even when [apart from] a spouse.

The Benefits of Gifts

What happens when people discover, develop, and use their spiritual gift or gifts? They become better [able to] do more for God. People who know their gifts have a handle on their "spiritual job description." They find their place in the church with more ease. They tend to develop healthy self-esteem. This does not mean they think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. But they learn that no matter what their gift is, they are important to God and to the body. Crippling superiority complexes drop by the wayside when people begin to think soberly of themselves (Romans 12:3).

The church is made healthier. Ephesians 4 tells us that when spiritual gifts are in operation, the whole body matures, and when each separate part is "joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love" (v. 16). There is clearly a biblical relationship between spiritual gifts and church growth.

God is glorified. First Peter 4:10–11 advises Christians to use their spiritual gifts and then adds the reason why: "That in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ." What could be a more worthy goal than glorifying God?

—C. Peter Wagner

As the sacrament is administered, Christ is not less busy giving himself and his blessings to the believers than the minister is in distributing the bread and the cup to the communicants. The reformers speak of the Sabbath as the day we are to rest from our labors that God may work in us. As God generates believers by the preaching of the Word of Christ, and nourishes them by the sacraments of his grace, faith beholds the face of the Lord in the form of the church of the living God.

God's acts in the church are through Christ Jesus. An adequate recognition of Jesus as Messiah and of God's mighty acts through him establishes the integral relation of the church to her Lord. The King-Messiah and the people of God belong together. As the shepherd gathers the flock and the hen broods her chicks beneath her wings, as the vine has many branches and the body several members, so the Servant justifies many, and the Son of Man holds up the saints of the Most High. The King has his kingdom, and the Messiah has his twelve, the Lord his church. Jesus spoke of "my church" and of "my flock"; these two are linked together in Acts 20:28. The several lines of parallel thoughts support Jesus' infrequent use of the word *church* (Matthew 16:18; 18:17). Following his exaltation, by the one Spirit we are all baptized into the one body of Christ and each given a special function in it. Christ is the church herself, the body of Christ, and yet Christ is distinct from the church in that while she is the body he is her Head, and at the same time her Lord, her Judge, her Bridegroom. Her life, her holiness, and her unity are in him.

The heavenly church is the bride awaiting Christ her Bridegroom (Mark 2:19–20; Romans 7:1–6; 2 Corinthians 11:2; especially Ephesians 4:4–6, 16 and Revelation 19–21). Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Having cleansed the church by the washing of water with the Word, he is now sanctifying her in order that he may present her spotless for the marriage feast of the Lamb. Thus, within the heart of Christ's bride there should ever be a great longing for the hour when all the shadows shall flee before the flaming of his advent feet.

The Ministry of the Church

The church's one essential ministry is, therefore, the ministry of her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Hebrews and Revelation reveal the Lamb in the midst of the throne, the High Priest ever interceding at the heavenly altar of prayer as the focus of Christian worship. By his heavenly ministration, all of God's people have access to the throne of grace. In the New Testament church there is no chancel separating the clergy from the laity. *All* are God's heritage (clergy), a royal priesthood, a people (laity) for God's own possession (1 Peter 2:9; 5:2–3).

As under-shepherds, Christ appointed first of all the apostles who had accompanied him through his ministry and who were eyewitnesses of his resurrection. By the apostolic kerygma, God brought those who had not seen Jesus into a like precious faith with the apostles. As they directly represented Christ and spoke with the authority he conferred, there is no way to him that detours around the apostolic witness to him. They preached Christ Jesus as Lord and themselves servants for his sake (2 Corinthians 4:5). While the church belongs to Christ, the apostles belong to the church, not the church to them (1 Corinthians 3:22). Lest anyone would think they baptized in their own name, it was their custom to have baptism performed by their associates (Acts 10:47; 1 Corinthians 1:13–17).

Following the apostles were the prophets who brought words from God for the practical problems of life and were responsible to the church. Then there were evangelists, gifted in presenting the gospel to win people to Christ, and teachers to instruct them in Christian living. In the local congregations, there was a plurality of officers: elders to oversee the work and conduct of the church, and deacons to distribute to the necessities of saints. In this latter service, ministering women ably assisted.

The Mission of the Church

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the sun about which the church's whole mission revolves. Public worship is the encounter of the risen Redeemer with his people; evangelism is calling men to the Savior; publishing God's law is proclaiming his lordship; Christian nurture is feeding his lambs and disciplining his flock; ministering to people's needs is continuing the work of the Great Physician.

In the whole work and witness of the church, Jesus Christ is to be recognized as Lord, the only King in Zion. Her business is to obey his will, to proclaim not her own but his reign. God has established him upon that throne of which David's was a type (Isaiah 9:6–7; Luke 1:26–35; Acts 2:25–36). He has been enthroned with all authority that he may give repentance and remission of sins (Matthew 28:18; Acts 5:31). Thanks to his intercession, his people have access to the throne of grace for mercy and help in every time of need. Every mercy received from Christ, every comfort of the Spirit, every assurance of the Father's love is a testimony to

the praise of God's glorious grace. And the church is this witness, the concrete evidence of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

<div align="right">Robert G. Clouse</div>

For Further Reading and Study

chapter 10
The Doctrine of Last Things

✦

> We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.
>
> —2 Corinthians 4:18

Eschatology is that branch of theology concerned with the study of the "last things" (i.e., what will happen in the future, both to individuals and to the world as a whole).

Topics of Eschatology

DEATH. The Bible teaches that all humans will die (Hebrews 9:27). The only exceptions will be those still alive when Christ returns (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Physical death, or the "first death," is the separation of the soul from the body. Because of the presence of sin in the world, death has come upon everyone (Romans 5:12).

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE. This refers to the condition of the person between the time of death and the resurrection. The traditional orthodox view is that believers experience a state of conscious bliss in the presence of the Lord, while unbelievers are tormented by separation from the presence of God. This, however, is a relatively incomplete state when compared with the final destiny of each. Some groups, such as Seventh-day Adventists, have held a belief in a type of "soul sleep," or unconsciousness, between death and resurrection. Still others, notably Roman Catholics, believe in a place of purging (purgatory) in preparation for the future life.

The Second Coming. Scripture teaches that at the end of time Christ will return in a personal, bodily form (Acts 1:11). No one knows exactly when this occurs, and it will consequently catch some by surprise, coming as a thief in the night (Luke 12:39–40). Although the time is not known, that it occurs is very definite. Many of Jesus' parables (especially in Matthew 24–25) refer to this fact and to the appropriateness of alert, faithful, and intensive activity.

The Millennium: Three Views

For purposes of analysis and explanation, Christian attitudes toward the millennium can be classified as premillennial, postmillennial, and amillennial. These categories involve much more than the arrangement of events surrounding Christ's return. The thousand years expected by the premillennialist is quite different from that anticipated by the postmillennialist. For example, the premillennialist believes that the kingdom of Christ will be inaugurated in a cataclysmic way and that divine control will be exercised in a more supernatural manner than does the postmillennialist.

Premillennialism holds that Christ's return will be preceded by signs, including wars, famines, earthquakes, the preaching of the gospel to all nations, a great apostasy, the appearance of Antichrist, and the great tribulation. These events culminate in the second coming, which will result in a period of peace and righteousness when Christ and his saints control the world. This rule is established suddenly through supernatural methods rather than gradually over a long period of time by means of individual conversion. The Jews will figure significantly in the future age because the premillennialist believes that they will be converted in large numbers and will again have a prominent place in God's work. Nature will have the curse removed from it, and even the desert will produce abundant crops. Christ will restrain evil during the age by the use of authoritarian power. Despite the idyllic conditions of this golden age, there is a final rebellion of wicked people against Christ and his saints. This exposure of evil is crushed by God, the non-Christian dead are resurrected, the last judgment conducted, and the eternal states of heaven and hell established. Many premillennialists have taught that during the thousand years dead or martyred believers will be resurrected with glorified bodies to intermingle with earth's other inhabitants.

Postmillennialism emphasizes the present aspects of God's kingdom, which will reach fruition in the future. They believe that the millennium will come through Christian preaching and teaching. Such activity will result in a more godly, peaceful, and prosperous world. The new age will not be essentially different from the present, and it will come about as more people are converted to Christ. Evil will not be totally eliminated during the millennium, but it will be reduced to a minimum as Christian moral and spiritual influence is increased. The church will assume greater importance, and many economic, social, and educational problems will be solved. This period is not necessarily limited to a thousand years, because the number can be used symbolically. The millennium closes with the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the last judgment.

Amillennialism states that the Bible does not predict a period of Christ's rule on earth before the last judgment. According to this outlook, there will be a continuous development of good and evil in the world until the second coming, when the dead shall be raised and the judgment conducted. Amillennialists believe that the kingdom of God is now present in the world as the victorious Christ rules his church through the Word and the Spirit. They hold that the future, glorious, and perfect kingdom refers to the new earth and life in heaven. Thus Revelation 20 is a description of the souls of dead believers reigning with Christ in heaven.

—Robert G. Clouse

The Resurrection. All who have died will come to life. This will be a bodily resurrection, a resumption of bodily existence of each person. For believers this will take place in connection with the second coming of Christ, and will involve the transformation of the body of this present flesh into a new,

perfected body (1 Corinthians 15:35–56). The Bible also indicates a resurrection of unbelievers, unto eternal death (John 5:28–29).

THE JUDGMENT. There will be a time of judgment, in which the Lord will determine the spiritual condition of everyone who has lived, based on relationship to him. On these grounds, some will be sent off to everlasting reward and others to eternal punishment. Some theologians distinguish between the time when believers and unbelievers will be judged. Some see as many as seven different judgments occurring.

THE FINAL STATES. The Bible teaches the existence of heaven, a place of eternal joy, where believers are in the presence of God, and of hell, a state of anguished separation of unbelievers from the presence of God. These are fixed states, determined by the decisions made within this life.

THE MILLENNIUM. Many Christians believe there will be an earthly reign of God, called the millennium, immediately preceding the final judgment. This belief is based on Revelation 20:4–7. Those who hold that Christ will return personally to inaugurate this period are called premillennialists. Others, who teach that the kingdom will be established through the progressive successful preaching of the gospel, are termed postmillennialists. Still others, called amillennialists, do not believe that there will be any earthly reign of Christ at all, interpreting the one thousand years of Revelation 20 symbolically.

THE GREAT TRIBULATION. The Bible speaks of a time of great anguish, or tribulation, that will come upon the earth, exceeding anything that has ever occurred before. Some, identifying this with the seventieth week of Daniel 9:24–27, believe it will be of seven years' duration. Some believe the church will be present to experience this, the Lord not returning until the end of the period. These are termed posttribulationists. Others, known as pretribulationists, believe the Lord's second coming will be in two stages, or phases—that, in addition to his public second coming, Christ will come for his church, to remove them from the world, or "rapture" them, before the great tribulation. Still others, known as midtribulationists, believe the church will be present for the first half of the seven years but removed before the severe part of the tribulation begins.

Recent History

In recent decades there has been an increased interest in eschatology. Some have defined eschatology in such a way that it is almost all-inclusive rather than merely a part of theology. Since the Christ-event was the introduction of the new age, much of the New Testament must be considered eschatology.

Some have carried this so far as to suggest that the supposedly future events were already accomplished. Thus, the second coming of Christ took place at Pentecost. There is no future event to look forward to. This view is termed "realized eschatology."

The theology of hope has extended this eschatological conception into all areas of theology, even into the doctrine of God. Thus, whereas God's transcendence had been thought of as the God who has his being above or beyond us, these people think of him as lying before us. He is the God who is to be. His transcendence is thought of in relation to time, not to space.

Conservative Christians have retained a more traditional conception of eschatology. There has been great interest in the predictive prophetic passages of Scripture, as indicated by the popularity of books like *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1973), the fictional *Left Behind* (1996), and others. Many have seen a correlation between current events in the Middle East and passages such as Daniel 9, Matthew 24 and 25, 1 Thessalonians, and Revelation.

Cautions

Sometimes eschatology has been a divisive force within Christian circles, as believers quarreled over minor points. In some cases, denominations in which there was agreement on major eschatological doctrines have split over a minor point, such as the tribulational views. Another danger to be avoided is date setting. While we are to be alert to the "signs of the times," we must remember that God has not revealed the exact time of our Lord's return to any human being or even to the angels (Matthew 24:36). Some who have believed they could determine the exact time of the Lord's return have had their faith jeopardized when their calculations proved incorrect.

Practical Values

Properly understood and applied, eschatology has a powerful positive significance for Christians. It is to be a source of comfort (1 Thessalonians 4:18), of encouragement (1 Corinthians 15:58), of challenge to watchfulness and faithful service, and the assurance of reward (Matthew 25:14–30). Because the time is limited, Christians are to use faithfully their opportunities. Because of the certainty of our Lord's return, we are to be filled with hope and courage.

<div align="right">Walter A. Elwell, et al.</div>

For Further Reading and Study

Donald G. Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit*

Ted M. Dorman, *A Faith for All Seasons*

Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*

Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology* (4 vols.)

Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*

Ranald Macaulay and Jerram Barrs, *Being Human*

Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth*

J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* and *Keep in Step with the Spirit*

Robert Stein, *Jesus the Messiah*

A.W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*

chapter 11
Background to the Old Testament

✦

> To more clearly understand scriptural text, one needs to understand the setting—physical, cultural, and literary—that God chose as he gave humanity his Word.
>
> —Paul W. Ferris Jr.

A couple of radio talk show hosts, discussing recent natural disasters, reported that they'd heard some suggest this might be an occasion to consider what God might be saying through the troubles. Neither of them thought much of the idea. Then one of them declared that she did not believe in the God of the Old Testament.

The problem with this notion is that "the God of the Hebrew Bible" (our Old Testament) is the God Jesus claimed he had come to glorify. Jesus said his mission was to supply the ultimate atonement that the Old Testament God required on the one hand and provided on the other.

The Old Testament presents a real problem for these broadcasters; Bernhard Anderson insists:

> No problem more urgently needs to be brought into focus. It is a question that confronts every Christian in the church, whether that Christian is a professional theologian, a pastor of a congregation, or a layperson. It is no exaggeration to say that on this question hangs the full meaning of the Christian faith.[1]

This becomes plain when one takes seriously how Jesus and the writers of the New Testament regarded the Hebrew Bible.

Rather early in his public ministry, Jesus was teaching on a mountainside in Galilee. One of the issues he addressed was the notion that now that the Messiah had come, the Hebrew Bible was *kaput*—obsolete. He categorically denied this:

> Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.
>
> Matthew 5:17–18

A dramatic example comes from Dr. Luke's Gospel. In chapter 24, we pick up just after Jesus had been publicly put to death by one of the most horrific means of execution, Roman crucifixion. His body had been taken down and cared for by some of his followers, then placed in a rich man's tomb. The tomb was closed with a large stone, then sealed by Roman officials and put under guard. Against this setting, Luke tells of two Christ-followers walking down the mountain to the town of Emmaus about six miles away, unaware that Jesus is no longer dead. So sure are they that it's all over, they cannot recognize the risen Jesus as he joins them on the trek. When he asks what they'd been discussing, they answer with the depressing defeat of Jesus. His response is stunning.

> How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah *have to* suffer these things and *then* enter his glory? [Then Jesus,] beginning with Moses and all the Prophets . . . explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.
>
> vv. 25–27, emphasis added

Later, in Jerusalem, Jesus met with the disciples and others apparently struggling with whether or not they could believe he had risen. Luke reports that Jesus said to this larger group, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms," citing all three traditional sections of the Hebrew Bible. Luke goes on: "Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures" (vv. 44–45).

Someone might argue, "Well, okay, maybe it has some value for Jesus' Jewish followers. But surely the Old Testament is not for Gentile believers." Paul, missionary to the Gentiles, as he approaches the end of his letter to believers in Rome, declares, "Everything that was written [inscripturated] in the past was written [inscripturated] to teach *us*, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope [confident expectation]" (15:4, emphasis added). In that very context, Paul anchors this encouragement in "the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify

God for his mercy" (vv. 8–9), which he then supports by quoting from all three sections of the Hebrew Bible: 2 Samuel 22:50 and Psalm 18:49, Deuteronomy 32:43, Psalm 117:1, and Isaiah 11:10.

The great apostle continued to mentor a young New Testament pastor named Timothy, whom he reminded that he had come to saving faith in Jesus the Messiah because of the teaching of Holy Scriptures, and that this "Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:14–17). Paul was referring to the only Scripture available to Timothy at that time: the Hebrew Bible. He also charged Pastor Timothy to "preach the word" (4:2).

To the question of whether the God of the Hebrew Bible is different from the God of the New Testament, the writer of Hebrews answers:

> In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.
>
> 1:1–3

The claims: that the God of the Hebrew Bible and the God of the New Testament are one and the same; that the New Testament Messiah was active in the events recorded in the Hebrew Bible; and that the message God spoke through the prophets is the very same, in essence, as the message he spoke through his Son.

Now, it is significant that neither the Hebrew Bible nor the New Testament was written in a sterile environment. Scriptural narratives and teachings take place on a stage with real people and places in real-life situations. This stage and these actors and props are an integral part of God's self-revelation. To more clearly understand scriptural text, one needs to understand the setting—physical, cultural, and literary—that God chose as he gave humanity his Word.

Physical Setting

The literature of the Hebrew Bible is both shaped and colored by the physical setting that provides the backdrop for its narratives, poetry, and

other literary forms.

First, the physical setting of the Hebrew Bible is oriental, not occidental; Asian and African, not European. It's in the Near East or, as some call it, the Middle East.

FERTILE CRESCENT. The physical "stage" on which the story told in the Hebrew Bible takes place has been called "the fertile crescent."[2] This is a swath of arable land anchored by two great river systems. The eastern side of the crescent is composed of the river basin formed by the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, which start in the mountains of Armenia. Geographically, historians refer to this region as Mesopotamia, "[the land] between rivers." Mesopotamia stretches from the southern border of contemporary Iraq and southwest Iran up to Syria and southeast Turkey. Some five hundred fifty miles to the southwest, the Nile River flows northward from its Egyptian valley through the delta into the Mediterranean.

Connecting these major areas is a narrow bridge of arable land along the east coast of the Mediterranean through modern Lebanon and Israel. Geography and topography forced social and commercial interaction between the two anchor regions to flow through the "bottleneck" of ancient Israel.

It is at this bottleneck that the majority of the Hebrew Bible takes place.

INTERSECTION OF THREE CONTINENTS. The biblical account notes that God strategically located the nation of Israel on a land bridge that connects three continents: Africa, Europe, and Asia. This reality is reflected in the flora and fauna reported in narrative and poetry, and in various facets of the cultures of Canaan and Israel. God called Abraham from his homeland in Mesopotamia and led him to this bridge.

BETWEEN SEA AND DESERT. Perhaps more dramatically than elsewhere in the ancient Near East, Canaan experienced the tension between desert and arable land. Abraham pitched his tent and built an altar to Yahweh at Bethel, almost three thousand feet above the Mediterranean Sea just thirty miles west. Only four or five miles to the east of Bethel is wilderness, dropping precipitously into the great rift valley through which the Jordan River flows nearly a mile below. The Judean mountains, with their deep V-shaped canyons slicing into

the central ridge from east and west, made travel difficult and rendered the area a genuine challenge for political unity.

Unlike Egypt or Mesopotamia, Canaan's core lacks a significant river to irrigate the land. The main river, Jordan, located well below sea level, cannot offer help or hope to farmers or herdsmen in the central mountains. Whoever lives here feels the tension between mountains and plains. In such a narrow strip of arable land, where water is at a premium, there is also a palpable tension between farmer and herdsman.

Abraham, a major herdsman, experienced such tension. The (biblical) narrative follows him to Africa, where he sought relief from famine that ravaged the land-bridge territory. His grandson, Jacob, also later fled with his family to Africa to escape extended famine.

Moses described the promised land not only as a "land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8), but also as a "land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven" (Deuteronomy 11:11). It is in this context that he went on to teach:

> Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them. Then the Lord's anger will burn against you, and he will shut up the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the LORD is giving you.
>
> Deuteronomy 11:16–17

The land promised to Abraham and his descendants was a proving ground, a place where faith was tested.

Cultural Setting

While there is ample material evidence of cultural development prior to the end of the fourth millennium BC, these data are referred to as prehistoric for lack of written texts to correlate with the non-literary material remains. The earliest written texts discovered, so far, come from the Sumerian culture in southern Iraq around the end of that millennium. So it is said that "History begins at Sumer," as the late Samuel Kramer entitled his book. Very soon after, at the other end of the Fertile Crescent, written documents were found in Egypt.

Bronze Age: 3100–1200 BC

The advent of written texts leads to the first period about which one can develop a "history" based on writing that complements the artifacts and other material remains of a community or society. Archaeologists refer to this period as the Bronze Age because instruments of industry and warfare were being fabricated from bronze.

That shift from stone implements to cast metal fostered significant cultural advancement. While villages were still the prevalent community structure, the new technologies particularly engendered developments in monumental and defensive architecture. Cities became centers of culture, commerce, and security.

All of these advancements were connected to the development of writing. The earliest texts from Mesopotamia can be described as essentially economic: inventories of assets (in this case, livestock).

The advent of the city also made its mark on social structure. The family and clan were still important, but these kinship connections began to be counterbalanced by political connections. In the city-states, king replaced father as the key social figure, giving rise to a more broadly based kingdom and then to an empire. Further culture shift is witnessed in a variety of texts treating mathematics, astronomy, medicine, jurisprudence, banking and finance, commerce and industry.

To the southwest, the Bronze Age witnessed a consolidation of communities: Menes, first pharaoh of the First Dynasty, assumed the crown of Lower (northern) Egypt while already wearing the crown of his native Upper Egypt. Among the developmental Egyptian highlights were monumental architecture and the burgeoning skills in mathematics, geometry, and engineering it required.

As a unified Egypt continued to strengthen economically and militarily, it came to dominate the land bridge. The nation's international power and presence reached an apex during the Eighteenth Dynasty, and in the mid-fifteenth century BC, Pharaoh Thutmose III engaged in seventeen military campaigns into and beyond Canaan to establish Egypt as a superpower and expand into western Asia. Spoils and tribute provided the empire with capital dedicated to temples, resulting in the religious institution holding substantial amounts of property.

Thutmose was succeeded by Amenhotep II, who was succeeded by Thutmose IV when his older brother, the crown prince, died unexpectedly.

During the reign of the next pharaoh, Amenhotep IV, aka Akhenaten, much attention was focused on political and religious upheaval. It was at this time that Egypt's client kings in Canaan and Syria complained of being threatened by marauding, landless tribes. By the middle of the twelfth century BC, the empire had disappeared. Egypt no longer dominated Canaan and beyond.

Iron Age: 1200–332 BC

The Iron Age opened with a power vacuum along the east coast of the Mediterranean (the Levant). Without the stabilizing influence of a superpower to the southwest or the northeast, city-states along the Levant took every opportunity to try to exert control over the area's main commercial and social arteries. When a given city-state or tribal group was unable to establish control on its own, alliances were formed. The Bible reports coalitions between King David and the Philistines at one point; it was David against the Philistines at another. After Solomon's reign, when the monarchy of Israel was divided, the northern kingdom of Israel was sometimes allied with the Aramaeans, at other times doing battle against them. It often seemed pagan culture had a greater influence on Abraham's descendants than Israelite culture had on the pagans.

Perhaps one of the most significant outcomes of this superpower-less period had been that it set the stage for the establishment of a kingdom in Israel, which became something of an empire in its own right under David and Solomon. But that empire was short-lived.

By the ninth century BC, Assyria began to reassert its power. Ashurnasirpal II's almost-annual military campaigns resulted in increased status and revenue. This renaissance was continued by his successor, Shalmaneser III, and within decades Assyrian superpower status was unquestioned. One result: the downfall of the northern kingdom of Israel and increased pressure on the southern kingdom of Judah.

An archaeological excavation in Jerusalem's Old City

Literary Setting

Reading the Hebrew Bible compels one to notice that the original audience had a keen sense that this was God's Word. However, the literary medium God used to record this revelation of himself and his will was not unique. That is, in the broader sense, the biblical literature was not all that much different from the literature of the surrounding people groups.

The God of the Hebrew Bible was *other* than the space, time, and material he created. Nevertheless, God was not aloof to his creation, nor was he reticent to use features of the created order—including cultural features—to interact with the beings he had made in his own image. While there are many similarities between the various genres of Hebrew scriptural literature and the literatures of surrounding peoples, the biblical claim is that it communicates Yahweh's Word.

Ancient Near Eastern Literature

PRIMEVAL HISTORY. *Creation stories*. Texts discovered from the ancient Near East preserve stories of creation. "Atrahasis" tells of the gods, weary of labor, creating humans to relieve them of responsibilities. "Enuma Elish" speaks of Marduk's rise to the top of the Babylonian pantheon; he was said to have created the world with the corpse of the god Tiamat. Humans were created from the blood of Kingu, another slain god, to relieve the gods of work.

From Egypt we have the "Memphite Theology of Creation," which gives prime place to Ptah, patron deity of Memphis, who created by "the teeth and lips in his mouth" (i.e., by speaking), in contrast to Atum, who created "by semen and by his fingers."

Flood. Literature from Early-Bronze-Age Mesopotamia tells of a natural disaster resulting from the displeasure of the gods; one king escaped the impending extinction of humankind by boarding a boat. The flood theme is found in Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian, Hittite, and Hurrian texts. At the other end of the Fertile Crescent, fragments of a flood story are preserved in the Egyptian "Book of the Dead."

LAW. A number of law codes have been preserved in Mesopotamia. One of the oldest found so far is the code of Ur-Nammu, founder of the dynasty that fostered the Sumerian renaissance at the end of the third millennium BC. The surviving portion demonstrates a concern to foster social justice and to banish "malediction, violence, and strife" with both civil and criminal code.

The nineteenth-century BC Laws of Eshnunna are a combination of civil and criminal law. From the same century, the Code of Lipit-Ishtar is focused on civil law. Perhaps the most well-known and extensive code is that attributed to Hammurabi (eighteenth century BC), with 282 provisions preserved.

While there are many parallels between Hebrew law and the laws of their neighbors, there are also significant differences. The great law codes from Mesopotamian cultures are based on the king's authority. Hebrew law is given by God long before Israel had a king. One result is that Mesopotamian law codes are secular whereas Hebrew law is sacred. Hebrew law provides a theological basis for its civil and criminal code. The case law of Hammurabi's code, for instance, provides for the punishment of murder, but the Mosaic Law anchors prohibition of murder in the context of the one true God's character, explaining the penalty on the grounds that to murder is to ravage God's image. Violation of Mesopotamian law was considered an infraction. Violation of Hebrew law was considered sin.

KINGS AND PROPHETS. A collection of almost four hundred cuneiform tablets called "the Amarna Letters," mostly letters from vassal kings in Canaan and Syria, was discovered in the remains of the archives of Amenhotep III (1402–1363 BC) and Akhenaten (1363–1347 BC). Out of the significant body of historical texts from both Mesopotamia and Egypt, full university disciplines in Assyriology and Egyptology have been built. Reports of contact with Israel are found in the writings of each.

The concept of prophecy can be seen in texts from both ends of the Fertile Crescent. Texts from Egypt like the "Admonitions of Ipuwer" and the Prophecies of Neferti reflect a "prophetic" role of challenging the community and the king and making predictions. The "prophets" represented in texts from Mesopotamia focus on the king, his activities, and his welfare.

Abraham Malamat observes that "this sort of message is significantly distinct from biblical prophecy, which presents a full-fledged religious ideology, a socioethical manifest, and a national purpose alongside the universal vision."[3]

SAGES. The greatest literary correspondence between Hebrew literature and that of their neighbors is seen in Egyptian wisdom literature. Specifically, the didactic wisdom demonstrates many points of similarity with the Hebrew

Proverbs. Among the wisdom literature preserved in Mesopotamia, dialogical wisdom reveals some similarity with Job and Ecclesiastes.

Hebrew Literature

Aɴᴛᴇᴄᴇᴅᴇɴᴛ Tᴇxᴛs. As already noted, the Hebrew Bible did not appear out of nowhere: It unfolded in real time and space, and it has a context. In several different genres the biblical authors wrote of past events and used other sources for supporting or referential material for their readers to go check for more detail if desired. This is demonstrated most clearly in Chronicles; Moses also cites the Book of the Wars of the Lord in Numbers 21, and Joshua refers his audience to the Book of the Upright in Joshua 10.

Cᴀɴoɴ ᴀɴᴅ Tᴇxᴛ oғ Hᴇʙʀᴇw Bɪʙʟᴇ. In the progress of revelation, the Book of Torah is followed by the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings) and the Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Book of the Twelve ["Minor Prophets"]), and, lastly, the Writings (poetry and wisdom: Psalms, Proverbs, Job; the Megilloth [scrolls read in annual liturgy]: Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther); and History (Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles).

The term *canon*, applied to literature officially recognized as authoritative (see chapter 1), is used in secular law as well as ecclesiastical. It is also the designation of those texts that have demonstrated divine inspiration and authority. The Bible's inspiration and authority were not assigned by a much-later ecclesiastical council; these qualities were recognized by the first audience as revelation was given. So, for example, Joshua claims that the biblical writings of Moses bore divine authority, and he challenged his audience to trust and obey. This same response can be seen as the scriptural canon continued to grow. One by-product of this recognition was careful textual preservation and transmission. The warning of an ancient rabbi to a scribe engaged in making a copy is recorded in the Talmud: "My son, be careful, because your work is the work of heaven; should you omit one letter, the whole world would be destroyed."[4]

Connection with New Testament Literature

The Hebrew Bible ends with the historical books of Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles; the Protestant Old Testament contains the same texts but in a different order, ending with the postexilic prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi). The writers of both communicate a keen sense that God was not finished with revelation or redemption. Though after Malachi there was a Jewish recognition that God was no longer speaking through prophets, there was an anticipation of the day when God would reveal himself anew. The apostle John notes this: when John the Baptist was asked if he was the promised Messiah and denied it, he was then asked, "'Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No'" (John 1:19–21).

The anticipation of revelation's renewal included both additional teaching —the written Word of God—and Messiah, the living Word of God. At the same time, the New Testament looks back on the Hebrew Bible as integral to and consistent with its revelation. Furthermore, this is the authoritative text Jesus and his disciples preached.

For example, Peter begins his first letter by outlining the themes of salvation, cleansing and forgiveness, reconciliation, and spiritual inheritance (1:1–9). In the next stroke of the pen, he anchors this salvation in the text of the Hebrew Bible, claiming that the prophets understood God's promise and plan to be not only for Hebrew believers but for Gentiles as well. The good news of the New Testament is not a new gospel, but the same good news as proclaimed by Moses and the prophets. Peter claims those prophets understood at least three key issues:

1. God's Anointed One—Messiah—must suffer vicariously for the sins of humankind;
2. Messiah would be glorified as victor over Satan and sin; and
3. These two crucial events would occur in that order.

What the Old Testament prophets did not understand and were mighty curious about was when these things would happen and what clues might give them notice.

> Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with greatest care, *trying to find out the time and circumstances* to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the *sufferings* of the Messiah and the *glories* that would *follow*.
>
> 1 Peter 1:10–11, emphasis added

Sometimes the New Testament writers refer to the Hebrew Bible's core theological message as "gospel"; one of the most common designations for Jesus' preaching, "gospel of the kingdom," is firmly anchored in it. The writer of Hebrews argues that the gospel proclaimed to his contemporaries is the same gospel proclaimed to Moses' contemporaries; the issue is not that the former revelation was defective but that "the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed" (4:2).

Sometimes the New Testament writers refer to the good news of God's plan of redemption as "the promise." Paul linked "gospel" and "promise" when preaching Jesus Christ to an audience in Antioch:

> We tell you the good news: What God promised our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. . . . God raised him from the dead so that he will never be subject to decay. As God has said, "I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David."
>
> Acts 13:32–34

Paul confronts the heresy of earning God's grace by reminding Christ-followers in Galatia how they first came to faith. In that connection, he sends them back to Genesis and notes that Abraham trusted God and his promise, "and it was credited to him as righteousness" (Galatians 3:6). God's plan, way back then, was to "justify the Gentiles by faith," and this was the "gospel" given to Abraham in the promise: "All nations will be blessed through you" (v. 8).

> The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.
>
> 3:16–18

Hebrews says, "When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself" (6:13) and goes on to quote a few lines from Genesis 12 to direct the mind of his audience back to that promise: God had chosen this childless couple through whom he planned to bring the blessing of salvation, not just to Abraham and Sarah's family but to all the families of the earth.

> Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged.
>
> <div align="right">Hebrews 6:17–18</div>

As Paul defended himself before the court of Agrippa in Acts 26, he claimed the reason for the conflict was that many of his contemporaries misunderstood the Hebrew Bible's core theme, thinking it was exclusively for them.

> It is because of my hope in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today. This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night.
>
> <div align="right">vv. 6–7</div>

The Hebrew Bible and the New Testament share a theological focus on the doctrine of God's promise/plan of redemption.

Pentateuch

Hebrew tradition treats the first five books of our Bible not as five independent compositions but as a unit: the Torah of Moses. In Hebrew, *torah* means "instruction"; the related verb means "teach"; the cognate noun means "teacher." The point is, "torah" is not essentially a legalistic notion, but formative and instructional. Of course, if God is doing the instruction, it behooves one who claims to be in covenant relationship with him to trust him and follow his instructions.

PREFACE: GENESIS 1–11. The first eleven chapters of the Pentateuch stand out against the narrative that begins in Genesis 12. At the same time, Genesis 11 is a deliberate segue from the preface (chapters 1–10) and the patriarchal narrative (chapters 12 and following).

These opening chapters are punctuated with inclusions of "account" or "family history." First, the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth (2:4); then, the written family history of Adam's line (5:1); the family history of Noah (6:9); the family history of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10:1); the family history of Shem (11:10); and the family history of Terah (11:27), where one of his sons, Abram, is introduced.

Before the drama and theology that begins in Genesis 12 and unfolds through the rest of the Pentateuch, critical issues challenge the worldview prevalent among fallen humankind. Without clarity on these, the message of the rest is well nigh meaningless.

Genesis 1–11 addresses the person, character, and power of God, the source of life and the created order; the nature of humankind as bearer of God's image; and the nature of temptation, the character of sin, and its impact on all creation, including the relationship between humanity and God. Genesis foretells spiritual conflict and promises the ultimate victory as the "seed of the woman" crushes the head of Satan (3:15). It likewise speaks of the origins of social order and culture, and of God's plan to dwell among us (9:24–27).

All this is vital because one of the great challenges in communicating Scripture's core message is the disparity between a pagan worldview (whether animistic or humanistic) and a biblical worldview. Without this frame of reference it is not possible to understand either God's righteous expectations or the grace of redemption.

This grace is foreshadowed in God's gracious benedictions. First he blessed all creation (1:22), then he specifically blessed humankind (1:28; 5:2; 9:1); then we are introduced to the tension between God's amazing grace and humanity's dreadful rebellion.

Promise to the Patriarchs: Genesis 12–50. The blessing of humankind sets the stage for the blessing of Abraham and, through Abraham's seed, all the people of the earth (12:1–3). God makes a most unlikely choice: he selects a couple who are elderly (even by ancient Near Eastern standards) and proven unable to have children; he uproots them and tests their faith by calling them to follow his leading to an unknown destination; he further tests their faith by promising them a child; he encourages them by promising the provision of a homeland, protection, and eventually even kings from their family tree. However, these elements of the promise are merely means to an end: The blessing's bottom line is God's plan to bring salvation to all people groups of the world.

The narrative follows Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all the way to being threatened by severe famine. Protecting and providing for this little family mean that it could develop into a people who could be "a light to the nations" (Isaiah 51:4) and through whom *the* seed of Abraham would come

as God's anointed Deliverer. In God's providence, Jacob's son Joseph ended up in Egypt to prepare the way for Abraham's descendants to survive. The promise is reiterated and expanded in Jacob's blessing of his sons: "The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his" (Genesis 49:10).

BUILDING AND **R**ESCUING: E**XODUS**. Without skipping a beat between Genesis and Exodus, the Pentateuch uses the "blessing" language of Genesis to tell how God was faithful to the promise: "The Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers and became so numerous that the land was filled with them" (Exodus 1:7). When a new pharaoh "to whom Joseph meant nothing" (v. 8) oppressed Abraham's family, God stood by his promise to protect the seed and punish the wicked. God chose another unlikely instrument (Moses) to rescue his people, the people he calls "my firstborn son" (4:22–23).

The narrative develops a theology of divine retribution on the one hand and a theology of Passover grace on the other. It also narrates a theology of providence, following up on God's covenant promise to Abraham by now providing righteous instructions to the covenant community intended to be a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (19:6).

These commands are preceded by a crucial declaration: "I am [*Yahweh*] your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (20:2). The first three directives teach how believers should live in covenant relationship with this one-of-a-kind God; in that light, the last seven teach how communities ought to expend their energy and dwell among one another and with all humankind in God's image. Concerning worship, God's people are ordered to properly attribute worth to the Holy One who desired to dwell in their midst ("God with us"). His manifest presence was visibly demonstrated by means of designated sacred space, namely, the tabernacle.

While the Hebrew concept of biblical torah is unified, a twenty-first-century reader may find it helpful to notice that some aspects of torah teach God's moral and ethical norms. Some aspects of torah are intended to instruct covenant community in spiritual worship, and much of what some call the ceremonial law provides graphic object lessons of theology and faith, providing for the expression of faith in God and his promise to someday provide the ultimate atonement to which these symbols point. Still

other dimensions of torah are specific to this ethnic group, in order to teach implications of the moral and ceremonial law in their home and community.

TEACHING AND TESTING: LEVITICUS, NUMBERS. Leviticus teaches how the covenant people are to be holy because Yahweh is holy. Its full-orbed theology of atonement includes object lessons via the system of sacrifices. No single sacrifice is sufficient to demonstrate God's promise/plan; even so, taken together, they teach of the horror of sin and its consequences, the cost of atonement, the peace that comes with forgiveness and cleansing, and the joy of restored relationship with God.

Some Old Testament Dates (BC) to Remember

c. 1280	The Exodus from Egypt
c. 1050	The Monarch established under King Saul
c. 1010	King David ascends the throne
c. 930	King Solomon dies; the Divided Monarchy begins—Israel lasting until 722 and Judah until 586
722	The fall of Samaria and the end of the Northern Kingdom
701	Jerusalem besieged by Sennacherib
612	The fall of Ninevah, Assyria's capital
597	The fall of Jerusalem. The Babylonian captivity begins
586	Jerusalem is destroyed
539	The edict of Cyrus. The first exiles return about a year later
515	The restored temple is opened
458	Ezra arrives in Jerusalem
445	Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem
323	Alexander the Great dies
167	Antiochus Epiphanes profanes the Temple. The Maccabean revolt begins
63	Pompey reaches Jerusalem; Judea becomes a Roman protectorate

Numbers narrates how faith was tested and often found wanting, teaching about God's wholly otherness through instructions on purity. Even "if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself" (2 Timothy 2:13). Although virtually all the Exodus generation died in the wilderness

because of unbelief (Hebrews 3), God preserved a remnant of believers (such as Joshua and Caleb and their families) for the promised land.

Covenant: Deuteronomy. Moses now uses the format of a second-millennium BC treaty between a "great king" and a vassal to restate and renew the covenant as he prepares the next generation to trust King Yahweh and claim his promise. At the very heart of this covenant renewal is a focus on God's love and grace, and Moses provides the most reasonable corollary: a call to love this one-of-a-kind God back with all of one's heart, all of one's soul, and with all of one's ability, and to introduce the next generation to that loving covenant relationship (Deuteronomy 6:4–19).

Great Empires of Old Testament Times

The dates BC are related to each empire's sovereignty as it affected Israel

845–612	Assyrian
612–605	Egyptian
605–539	Babylonian
539–331	Persian
331–63	Greek (including Seleucids and Ptolemies)
63–	Roman

Historical Books

While this literature is ancient Hebrew historiography, not modern Western, no historiography is merely a sterile catalog of facts. These Hebrew authors are giving testimony, telling what they had seen and heard from their perspective. A historian will often select a theme and adduce evidence to develop it; a much later example of this is John's Jewish "biography" of Jesus, which he forthrightly states is not an exhaustive accounting.

> Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.
>
> 20:30–31

Understanding this, it's no surprise that the perspective and intent of the writer of Chronicles is not exactly the same as that of Samuel or Kings. These histories are anchored in the theology of the promise developed in the Pentateuch. The language of God's promise-covenant with Abraham is echoed in the commissioning of Joshua in Deuteronomy 31 and Joshua 1; it is reverberated in the promise-covenant God makes with David in 2 Samuel 7; and it is linked to the covenant God made with Moses at Mount Sinai.

PEOPLE AND PLACE: JOSHUA, JUDGES, ESTHER, EZRA, NEHEMIAH. While the five books of Moses stand as a unit, even a casual reading of the text indicates a smooth and clear connection with Joshua. It is a watershed transition—the unbelieving generation never left the wilderness, and Moses, not allowed to enter the land of promise, has passed the baton to Joshua—but the themes carry over into Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. In Joshua and Judges especially, focus is on the promised place God had chosen to plant his name; the place he had chosen for his people to live and from which they were to be a witness to his glory, a light to the Gentiles. This place is his inheritance (Joshua 1:6), the place of rest (1:13), and the place Israel became a people. The preservation of those through whom the promised seed would come is a major theme of Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

KING AND KINGDOM: SAMUEL, KINGS, CHRONICLES. The establishment of the kingdom was foreshadowed in the promise to Abraham (Genesis 17:6), about which instructions were given in the covenant renewal (Deuteronomy 17). So although Israel's impure motives were grievous to Samuel (and, doubtless, to God), kingship was part of God's plan, and God gave them what they demanded. Genesis 49 had foretold that redemptive kingship would come not from the tribe of Benjamin, as Saul did, but from Judah. At the right time, David, a man after God's own heart, was appointed leader and became the designated channel or conduit of the Abrahamic promise-covenant (2 Samuel 7:8–16).

Though many times the promise is threatened, the Old Testament historians give their testimony regarding the often sorry pilgrimage of this blessed people, purposing to show God's faithfulness to preserve a righteous remnant through whom Messiah, the Son of David, would come.

Poetic/Wisdom Books

Poetry, by definition, is a more colorful, more expansive, more emotive means of expression than prose narrative. Poets and sages reflect on the vicissitudes of life, especially on what it means to live in this fallen world in the fear of God and in the hope of his promise-covenant.

FEAR OF THE LORD: JOB, PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES, SONG OF SONGS, LAMENTATIONS. There are at least two critical points in the Pentateuch where "fear of the Lord" is highlighted. The first is in the context of Abraham's most severe test of faith. Having demonstrated its authenticity, the angel of the Lord said, "Now I know that you fear God" (Genesis 22:12). The second is when Moses emphasized having capable leaders "who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain" (Exodus 18:21), "wise, understanding and respected men" (Deuteronomy 1:13). Wisdom had been a significant issue for the covenant community. Thus the concept of the "fear of the Lord," anchored in the Pentateuch, is developed in the wisdom literature. These deal with a wide range of life issues from the perspective of a vital relationship with God and a prudent application of his truth. The Preacher sums it up this way:

> Now all has been heard;
> here is the conclusion of the matter:
> Fear God and keep his commandments,
> for this is the duty of all mankind.
> For God will bring every deed into judgment,
> including every hidden thing,
> whether it is good or evil.
>
> Ecclesiastes 12:13–14

PRAISE OF THE HOLY: PSALMS. The Psalter was Israel's hymnbook. Some hymns express repentance, some reflect on the fear of the Lord, others speak expectantly of the coming Messiah. Still others sorely complain of the testing of calamity and pain, and many beautifully express the joy of a believing heart to the awesome and gracious God. Pay as much attention as possible to the historical setting of a given psalm.

Prophetic Books

It is not unusual for prophecy to be equated with prediction. But while the prophetic books do contain predictions, by far the greater part of them is given to teaching the theology of Torah and preaching to apply the

significance of God's promise/plan to everyday life. While predictions did indeed expand the revelation of God's redemptive purpose, they were intended to have an immediate impact on the first audience—to encourage hearers to repentance and faith, to trust and obey as they waited for that great and awesome day of the Lord.

In the progress of revelation concerning the promise/plan, the prophets developed two themes in particular: Messiah as vicariously suffering servant, and Messiah as righteous, victorious, and reigning king.

Again, as prophecy ceases in Israel, there is a keen sense that God is not finished. There is a palpable anticipation of Messiah's coming. The last of the prophets ends with these words:

> See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.
>
> Malachi 4:5–6

Malachi speaks not of domestic reconciliation but of spiritual revival, of a time when those who have been content to be nominal followers (honoring God with their lips while their hearts were far from him) repent and are revived, and a vital, vibrant, intimate covenant relationship is restored. A time when those who had strayed far from the faith of the fathers would have their hearts turned toward home.

Thus is the stage set for the coming of Messiah and the resumption of the narrative by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Paul W. Ferris Jr.

For Further Reading and Study

R. Dillard and T. Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*

R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*

A. J. Hoerth, et al., *Bible Archaeology and Peoples of the Old Testament World*

E. H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*

R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*

J. H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible*

chapter 12
A Survey of the Old Testament

When we read the Old Testament, we read the Bible Jesus read and used. These are the prayers Jesus prayed, the poems he memorized, the songs he sang, the bedtime stories he heard as a child, the prophecies he pondered. He revered every "jot and tittle" of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The more we comprehend the Old Testament, the more we comprehend Jesus.[1]

—Philip Yancey

The Pentateuch

Pentateuch, one term for the first section of the Old Testament, derives its meaning from the Greek words for *five* and *book*. It is often said to denote a fivefold book since its components (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) are closely interrelated. Judaism refers to this compilation as Torah, often interpreted as "law" (as in the law of Moses) but also connoting "teaching" or "instruction," a definition clearly in keeping with its content.

Long-standing tradition holds that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. Many Old Testament writers, and Jesus himself, refer to Moses as the author of these books, or at least portions thereof. Indeed, many passages in the last four books point to his direct involvement in the action as well as the recording of it. The story of Genesis, of course, transpired well before his birth, but given his high level of education and his relationship with the Divine Author, his authorship is certainly plausible.

Critics of the traditional view point out passages that contain information unknown to anyone in Moses' day, theorizing that these were written much later. The use of different names for God (*Yahweh, El Shaddai, Adonai*, etc.) also suggests to some that other writers in other eras were involved. Most everyone agrees that Moses did not complete the writing of Deuteronomy, as the final pages chronicle his death and succession by Joshua. Conservative

scholars do not claim that Moses wrote every word of the Pentateuch, acknowledging that some passages (Deuteronomy 34, for example) were probably added after his death, but they insist that his basic authorship is not in question.

The biblical record offers the only account of Moses' life, so pinpointing dates with any precision may not be possible. Because of uncertainty as to which pharaoh reigned at the time of the Exodus, appeals to Egyptian history have not helped much. Many scholars place Moses in the fifteenth century BC, a time frame that seems to coincide with the known dates of later biblical events; others speculate that he may have lived more than two hundred years later. In any case, it seems safe to say that the bulk of the Pentateuch was committed to writing during his lifetime.

Among the Pentateuch's great themes are the fall of humanity and God's sovereignty, covenant, salvation, and holiness. These are fleshed out through the accounts of creation, the flood, the Tower of Babel, and the development of God's covenantal relationship with Abraham and his descendants.

Genesis

"In the beginning God . . ." (1:1).

These famous words initiate one of history's most amazing narratives, the story of God and his people. Genesis (from a Greek word for "origins") begins with God forming and establishing the universe and creating its human inhabitants in his own image (chaps. 1–2). Adam and Eve's disobedience (3) is but the first in a cycle of events highlighting human sin and divine corrective measures: Cain and Abel, the flood, the Tower of Babel. Though sin's consequences are enormous, succeeding generations still choose to ignore and defy God. This prologue sets the biblical stage in revealing much about God's character and his intentions for humanity and creation, also unveiling sin as the fundamental obstacle in the divine-human relationship.

Near the end of chapter 11, we are introduced to Abraham (Abram), a man who responds to God in faith and with whom God makes a covenant that carries three promises:

1. to give Abraham innumerable descendants
2. to provide Abraham with a prosperous land

3. to make Abraham and his descendants a means of blessing for the entire world

This marks the first phase in God's long-term plan to remedy the sin problem.

The remainder chronicles the lives of Abraham and Sarah and their descendants—focusing especially on Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and their families—in their often stumbling attempts at following God faithfully. Also detailed are his miraculous interventions on their behalf and his patience with their failures. Genesis concludes with Abraham's descendants, now a large clan, living in Egypt; they have taken their name, the people of Israel, from the name God gave to Jacob, whose sons would give their names to the twelve tribes.

Exodus

"*Let my people go*" (5:1).

Moses' demand provides a key theme for the book of Exodus (meaning "way out" or "departure"). Several hundred years have passed since Abraham's descendants settled in Egypt. Their exponential growth worries their masters, who cruelly abuse them and even mandate male infanticide.

Though raised and educated in the Pharaoh's palace, Moses goes into exile before reluctantly agreeing to lead his people out of bondage (chaps. 1–4).

As Moses attempts to persuade Pharaoh to release the Israelites (5–12), the ruler's resistance provides God with one opportunity after another to demonstrate his power, culminating in Passover, at which all those who fail to follow his specific commands lose a firstborn son. The sacrificial lamb of the Passover feast symbolizes Christ's later atoning work and the role of faith in our ultimate salvation.

Israel's initial experiences as a free people (13–18) are relatively unpleasant. When they arrive at Mount Sinai (19), God initiates another covenant—this time not with one man but with a fledgling nation.

The covenant's cornerstone is the Decalogue—the Ten Commandments (20)—of which the first five guide one's relationship with God, the last five one's relationships with people. Out of these commands (*torah*, or "instruction") flow a dozen chapters of *casuistic law*, "specific cases in which the principles of covenant law are applied to life."[2]

When the people accept the covenant, God orders the construction of an elaborate, movable tent (tabernacle) where his presence could be seen as a cloud by day and fire by night—a daily reminder of the fellowship possible through his redemptive work.
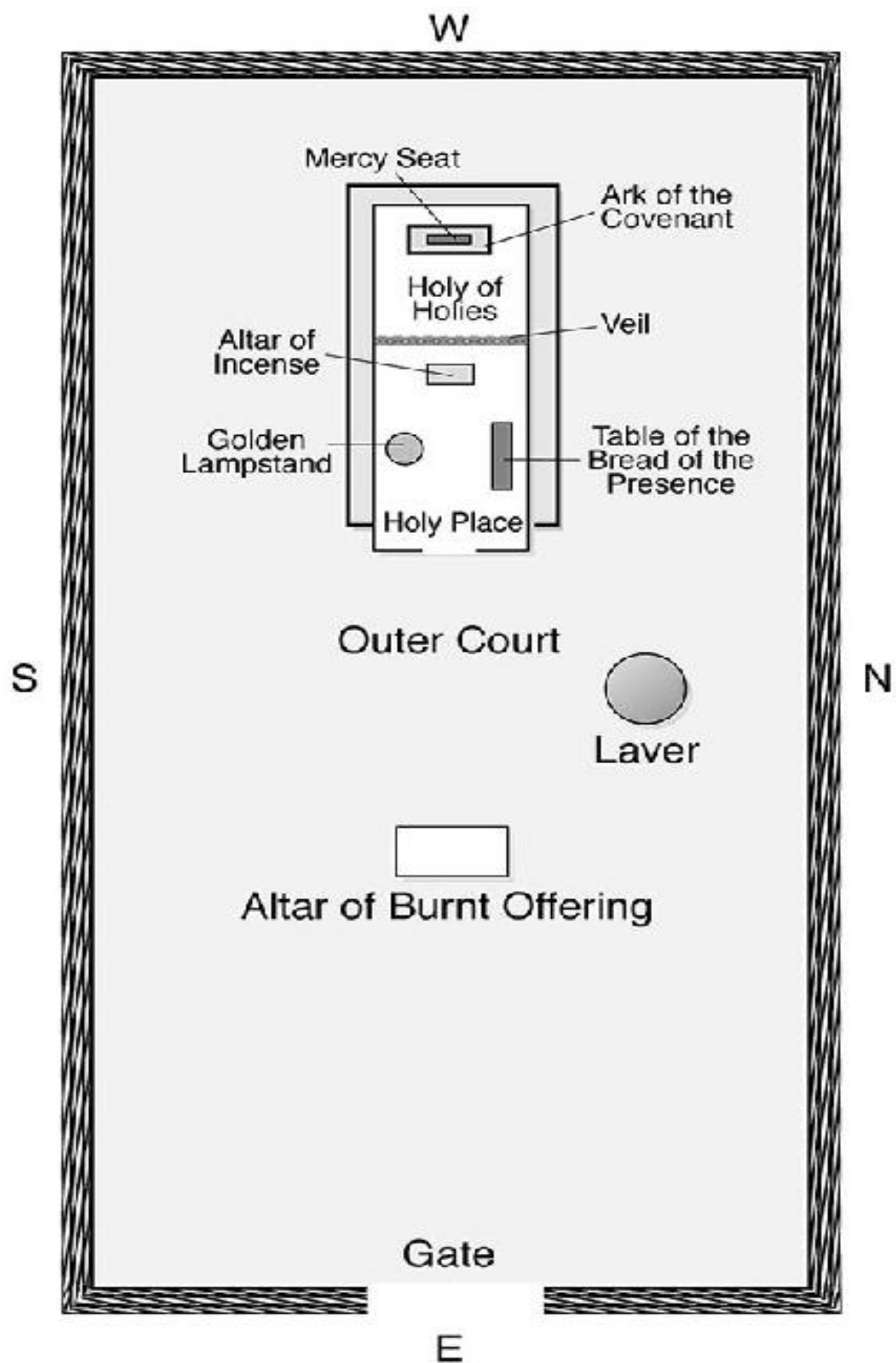
Leviticus

"Be holy, because I am holy" (11:44).

This recurring command may well be considered the Leviticus motto. Filled with rules and regulations for sacrifices, priestly duties, various types of impurity, and the celebration of festivals, Leviticus underscores God's holiness—and the need for holy living among his people. Unlike the general and broadly applicable Ten Commandments, many (though not all) Levitical precepts are specific to the time and culture in which they were given. To benefit from these, we must look at the principles behind the regulations.

Scholars differ in their approach, but one aid to understanding Leviticus is to view the first seventeen chapters as primarily about how the Israelites should worship God. Offerings—burnt, grain, peace, sin, and guilt—are prescribed for various situations in which sinful people need atonement. The consecration of priests (who officiate the sacrifices) includes the recounting of an incident in which priests commit sacrilege.

The final ten chapters relate mainly to how God's chosen people are to deal with one another. Among the laws are those regulating sexual relationships, issues of daily living, handling gross offenses, treatment of the poor and the alien, and the keeping of vows and giving of offerings.

In addition to his holiness, Leviticus emphasizes God's presence: the Israelites are not to forget that he is among them. The sacrificial system highlights human sinfulness, points forward to (and sets the stage for) Jesus' eventual once-for-all atonement, and the law is a constant reminder that God's covenant carries expectations and consequences—for obedience as well as for disobedience.

Numbers

*"Only do not rebel against the L*ORD*"* (14:9).

Numbers (Greek *arithmoi*) is so-called because of its two major censuses, but its Hebrew title means "in the wilderness," entirely appropriate for a recap of nearly forty years of Israelite wanderings. Beginning one month after the close of Exodus, the story follows Moses and his people in their travels.

The structure of Numbers—which can be somewhat confusing, as it does not follow any typical Western literary form—may be roughly divided into three parts: the introductory section (chaps. 1–10:10) finds the Israelites

camped at Sinai, receiving instructions; the second (10:11–21) recounts events from the lengthy wilderness journey; the third (22–36) is set on the plains of Moab, as the Israelites prepare at last to enter the land of promise.

The repeated failure of God's people to keep their covenant agreement (highlighting human propensity to sin) is a central theme. They complain, they challenge Moses' authority, they give in to fear; scouts give a false report, a priest foments rebellion, Moses disobeys God, the people worship Baal. In each case, disobedience carries a high price: plagues, death, leprosy, and military defeat ensue, and an entire generation—including Aaron and Moses—is denied entrance to its homeland. God does not take sin lightly.

Remarkably, in spite of their faithlessness, God refuses to give up on his people. He disciplines, instructs, and faithfully leads them toward the goal for which he has called them. He will not allow his plans to be thwarted.

Deuteronomy

"*Love the LORD your God with all your heart . . .*" (6:5).

Deuteronomy means "second law," yet the book is more accurately described as a renewal or reestablishment of God's covenant with Israel. After forty years, a new generation waits to enter Canaan, a generation that must renew its engagement.

While three speeches by Moses constitute Deuteronomy's basic content, its structure follows that of contemporary suzerainty treaties (i.e., between overlords and vassals). The first five verses are a sort of preamble; 1:6–3:29 forms a historical prologue in which Moses recaps what has occurred from Sinai (and the original covenant) to that present moment; this is, in part, an appeal to the people to learn from previous failures. Chapters 4–26 outline the covenant's stipulations, and, rather than a simple rehearsal of Sinai, this expands on the Ten Commandments' provisions, giving instruction for all areas of life. At issue here: God's concern that his people be completely different in all aspects from the pagan world that will surround them in Canaan.

Chapters 27–30 prescribe the covenant ratification with its attendant curses and blessings, clarifying consequences of obedience and disobedience. Chapters 31–33 provide for succession of leadership and continuation of the treaty; Joshua is designated to lead the people into the new land. Chapter 34 recounts Moses' death.

Loving God is a major theme of Deuteronomy. As a means of blessing, Moses emphasizes devotion to God alone, expressed in a life of humble obedience. Jesus later quoted Deuteronomy 6:5, when he stated the greatest commandment.

The people enthusiastically ratify the covenant, preparing the way for their entry into and establishment in the land God had promised them.

The Historical Books

> The Old Testament portrays the world as it is, no holds barred. In its pages you will find passionate stories of love and hate, blood-chilling stories of rape and dismemberment, matter-of-fact accounts of trafficking in slaves, honest tales of the high honor and cruel treachery of war. Nothing is neat and orderly. Spoiled brats like Solomon and Samson get supernatural gifts; a truly good man like Job gets catastrophe. As you encounter these disturbances, you may recoil against them or turn away from a God who had any part in them. The wonderful quality of the Old Testament is that it contains those very responses as well! God anticipates our objections and includes them in his sacred writing.[3]
>
> —Philip Yancey

Joshua

"Be strong and courageous . . . for the LORD your God will be with you" (1:9).

Joshua begins where Deuteronomy left off, with the death of Moses and the passing of the leadership baton. As the Israelites prepare to take possession of their new home, their loyalty to God is tested.

Traditionally, Joshua is thought to be the author of at least most of the book of Joshua. The conclusion, recounting his death, must have been added later. Though the date is in some dispute, many scholars believe the majority was written at the time of the events it records, perhaps as early as circa 1400 BC. Joshua's leadership is thought to have lasted some twenty years.

The preparation for entry into Canaan (chaps. 1–5) begins with a reconnaissance of Jericho. When the spies give a good report, Joshua and his people, by faith, cross the Jordan River into enemy territory.

The conquest (6–12) opens with an unorthodox but victorious assault; the next battle (against Ai) results in humiliating defeat. While God is using Israel to bring judgment on Canaan, he at times uses others to bring judgment on Israel; when they confess and purge their sin, his blessing is

restored. Three major campaigns (central, southern, northern) follow, and the Israelites defeat one enemy after another. In each encounter, the Lord's intervention is credited for the victory.

The division of the land (13–21) into specific tribal grants makes tangible the long-promised inheritance, yet more local battles must be fought for them to fully occupy.

Joshua challenges the people (22–24) not to forsake the Lord, who has remained entirely faithful and made good on his promises. "As for me and my household," he pledges, "we will serve the Lᴏʀᴅ" (24:15). The people willingly reaffirm their covenant with God.

Judges

"*In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit*" (21:25).

As Joshua and his generation pass from the scene, Israel enters a new era, one in which there is no all-encompassing national leadership and in which loyal devotion fades to a distant memory.

Judges is named for the periodic leaders who are its main characters. They were more than "judges" in the legal sense; God raised them up for military action against oppressors and for temporal governance. The author of Judges is unknown, but evidence suggests the book may have been compiled as late as 1000 BC, during the early reign of King David.

An introduction (chaps. 1–2:11) links this narrative to Joshua and emphasizes the Canaan conquest's unfinished nature. Joshua had success, but it was not complete.

Repetitious oppression at the hands of one neighboring power or another predominates as the Israelites forget God, indulge in sinful behavior, suffer defeat and subjugation, then are rescued by a "judge" God elevates to leadership (3–16). Twelve judges are identified (including Deborah, Gideon, and Samson), and the pattern is remarkably the same each time. Though divinely raised up for a specific purpose, they are not all exemplary characters.

The corruption eventually results in a societal collapse (17–21) for which no external force can be blamed. This disturbing segment of Israel's history includes gross idolatry, debauchery, lawlessness, violence, and civil war. The unstable nation is going nowhere fast; moral and spiritual compromise has kept her from fully occupying the land God promised. Yet his patience is still evident as he hears and answers each sincere cry for deliverance.

Ruth

"Your people will be my people and your God my God" (1:16).

As the events recorded in Ruth take place during the period of the judges, it follows Judges in the Christian canon; in the Jewish canon, Ruth is considered part of "the Writings," along with Psalms, Proverbs, and Song of Songs. No one knows who wrote Ruth, but many surmise it was authored during the reign of David (c. 1000 BC), for it includes his genealogy.

Naomi and her family had moved to Moab (chap. 1:1–5) because of famine in Israel. While there, her sons marry, her husband dies, and then her sons die; she is left with two daughters-in-law, both Moabites.

When Naomi decides to return home to Bethlehem (vv. 6–22), her daughter-in-law Ruth makes a pledge of loyalty (vv. 16–17) and will not leave her. In the culture of the day, poverty and hardship await widowed, childless women; furthermore, Ruth is a foreigner.

Ruth goes to work to provide for herself and Naomi (2), gleaning grain in the fields of Boaz, who is a close relative of her deceased father-in-law. He notices her and makes arrangements for her protection and provision.

At Naomi's direction, Ruth presents herself to Boaz with a risky request: she wishes him to marry her (3). There is an even closer relative who, according to custom, must be given first opportunity.

The way is cleared for Boaz to marry Ruth (4). Their first child will be King David's grandfather. Messiah's lineage will include a Moabite woman.

God's sovereignty and faithfulness are evident throughout: Ruth and Naomi's fidelity is rewarded, and the plan of redemption is furthered by the generous acts of a "kinsman-redeemer."

1 and 2 Samuel

"Appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have" (1 Samuel 8:5).

Samuel, originally a single book in the Jewish canon, was divided in the Septuagint; it's called Samuel after the leader by that name. However, he could not have authored more than a portion of 1 Samuel, as his death is recorded partway through; some speculate that the prophets Nathan and Gad may have recorded some of Samuel, but no one knows for sure. Various allusions to the divided (post-Solomonic) kingdom lead some scholars to suggest that Samuel was completed after Solomon's death (930 BC).

Samuel himself is the focus of the first eight chapters—his birth, calling, and rise to national leadership. He is both prophet and judge, governing, directing the military, and dispensing God's Word. The people, though, want a king, just like their neighboring nations.

God relents and instructs Samuel to anoint a king. The remainder of 1 Samuel is concerned with Saul's kingship and the establishment of the monarchy. Saul unfortunately does not live up to his potential, and God rejects him because of repeated disobedience. Samuel then anoints David as successor, and as Saul declines, David rises to national prominence, both through military prowess and through mistreatment at Saul's hands, which contributes to his status as folk hero. First Samuel concludes with Saul's suicide.

After a period of political instability (2 Samuel 1–4), David consolidates his rule over Israel, then captures Jerusalem and establishes his capital there. He wants to build a permanent temple in Jerusalem, but God reserves that privilege for his successor. Instead, God promises David a permanent dynasty.

Second Samuel goes on to record David's exploits (5–24), both good and bad. He commits—then repents of—great sin, and God remains faithful to him. His kingdom is firmly established.

Israel's demand for a king is, in effect, a rejection of the theocracy God had designed. Saul fails to be an effective king. David succeeds, and unlike the neighboring kings (or Saul), he is accountable to the King of heaven and rules accordingly.

Under David's reign, the borders of Israel's promised territory are expanded. In keeping with God's promise, through David's line will come Israel's ultimate king, Jesus Christ.

Israel's Settlement in Canaan

GREAT SEA

Tyre

DAN
Dan (Laish)

Kedesh

ASHER

NAPHTALI

ZEBULUN   Sea of Chinnereth

Golan

Shimron   Endor

MANASSEH

Megiddo   ISSACHAR

Ramoth-gilead

MANASSEH

Shechem

Jordan

Succoth

Beth-dagon   EPHRAIM   Shiloh

GAD

DAN   Bethel

BENJAMIN   Gibeah   Jericho

Jebus (Jerusalem)   Heshbon   Bezer

Salt Sea   REUBEN

JUDAH   Hebron

Gaza

MOAB

Beersheba

SIMEON

Brook of Egypt

E   D   O   M

0   25   50 km
0   10   20   30 miles

—·—·— Probable boundary of tribe of Israel
——▶   Migration of the tribe of Dan
◎   City of refuge

1 and 2 Kings

"*Who is able to govern this great people of yours?*" (1 Kings 3:9).

Like Samuel, Kings was a single book in the Jewish canon. Its author is unknown, though certain Jewish traditions (and some modern scholars) credit Jeremiah. It was likely penned during the Babylonian exile—after 561 BC, the date of the last event it describes (2 Kings 25:27–30), but prior to 539 BC, since it does not acknowledge the exile's end. Kings covers a period of approximately four hundred years.

Solomon's reign (1 Kings 1–11) begins well enough. He consolidates power and asks God for wisdom to rule well; he becomes famous throughout the region for his wisdom and wealth. He undertakes the building of a permanent temple in Jerusalem; the resulting architectural wonder, astounding in its display of lavish beauty, becomes a unifying symbol in Israel.

But Solomon's devotion falters. His many marriages to women of other religions lead him astray. His latter years are plagued by foreign and domestic troubles. Because he does not remain faithful, God promises to wrest most of the kingdom from his family.

Kings of the Divided Monarchy[4]

Israel

Jeroboam I	930–909
Nadab	909–908
Baaha	908–886
Elah	886–885
Zimri	885
Omri	885–874
Ahab	874–853
Ahaziah	853–852
Joram	852–841
Jehu	841–814
Hehoahaz	814–798
Jehooash	798–782
Jeroboam II	793–753
Zechariah	753

Shallum	752
Menahem	752–742
Pekahiah	742–740
Pekah	752–732
Hoshea	732–722

Judah

Rehoboam	930–913
Abijah	913–910
Asa	910–869
Jehoshaphat	872–848
Jehoram	848–841
Ahaziah	841
Athaliah	841–835
Joash	835–796
Amaziah	796–767
Uzziah	792–740
Jotham	750–732
Ahaz	735–715
Hezekiah	729–686
Manasseh	696–642
Amon	642–640
Josiah	640–609
Hehoahaz	609
Jehoiakim	608–598
Jehoiachin	598–597
Zedekiah	597–587

Dates in other sources will vary widely depending on the chronological system used in those sources.

The kingdom is divided in the very next generation (1 Kings 12–2 Kings 17). Solomon's son Rehoboam is able to retain control of Judah and Benjamin, but ten tribes separate and follow Jeroboam I. Kings summarizes and evaluates the reign of each successive king of both Judah (the Davidic line) and Israel (the northern tribes).

God's spokespersons, prophets such as Elijah and Elisha, are especially prominent in Kings. In this era, God speaks primarily via those outside the political or priestly elite, both of which are increasingly corrupt. His

prophets warn against disobedience and Baal worship, often performing miracles as confirmation of their connection to Yahweh.

Eventually, Assyria conquers the northern kingdom and deports much of the populace. Judah remains as an independent state (chaps. 18–25), but a succession of ineffective kings ends in Jerusalem's destruction by the Babylonians.

Throughout this sordid history, we see clearly that God keeps his promises. He blesses those who remain faithful and disciplines those who reject him, always ready and willing to help those who return to him. And even in the face of Babylonian captivity, the Davidic line remains intact.

1 and 2 Chronicles

"*His throne will be established forever*" (1 Chronicles 17:14).

The tradition holding that Ezra was the writer of Chronicles (originally one book) is considered entirely credible by many scholars, though no claim to authorship is made in the book itself. Its place as the last book in the Hebrew Scriptures (among other evidence) suggests a writing as late as 400–450 BC. The author selectively borrows from Samuel and Kings, and other sources must have been available to him as well.

Apparent discrepancies between accounts in Chronicles and parallel events in Samuel and Kings have raised concerns. Though some remain unexplained, these may be due simply to differing authorial viewpoints and/or a desire to emphasize divergent events.

First Chronicles begins with extensive genealogies (chaps. 1–9): the patriarchs of Israel, the twelve tribes, and the postexilic inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The reign of David is recounted (10–29), with special emphasis on his covenant with God and his extensive preparations for temple construction.

The record of Solomon's reign (2 Chronicles 1–9) focuses primarily on the building of the temple, with some detail regarding his fame and wealth. The remaining subjects are the subsequent kings of Judah (10–36); under some Judah flourished, under others the nation declined, all according to whether or not the king followed God's ways. The book ends with Judah in captivity, but even in this dire situation, the final verses sound a note of hope for the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple.

The chronicler emphasizes the Davidic covenant and God's faithfulness to his promises. Obedience and rewards are highlighted rather than

disobedience and punishment (as in Kings); for example, nothing is said of David's sin with Bathsheba, and only one of Solomon's wives is mentioned. The writer also stresses the importance of Jerusalem as the center of national life and worship and the temple as the symbol of God's presence among his people.

Ezra and Nehemiah

"*They realized that this work had been done with the help of our God*" (Nehemiah 6:16).

The Hebrew Scriptures (as well as the Septuagint) treated Ezra and Nehemiah as a single book that recounts the rebuilding endeavors of Jewish exiles returning from Persia to Jerusalem (538 to 445 BC). Some scholars believe these books may have been compiled as late as 300. Various sources are evident (Aramaic documents quoted in Ezra, for example), but the personal memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah provide the bulk of the text.

The first expedition to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1–6), authorized in 538 by Cyrus, King of Persia, is led by Zerubbabel and others. Due to hindrances, the task is not completed until 516. The temple is indeed restored, but the builders are unable to duplicate its former splendor.

A second expedition, in 458, led by Ezra, a descendant of Aaron and a scribe (teacher of the Torah), finds the local Jews in danger of losing their once-distinct cultural and religious identity due to intermarriage with people of pagan cultures (7–10). To preserve their integrity as God's people, Ezra issues a call to repentance and to a life of obedience and purity.

Thirteen years later, Nehemiah, an important official in the court of Persian King Artaxerxes I, leads yet another expedition to Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1–6) to rebuild the walls in the face of threats to the city's security. Nehemiah is not only granted the king's goodwill but also military protection and provisions. In the face of considerable opposition, Nehemiah invokes God's help, rallies the people to his cause, and succeeds in restoring Jerusalem's defenses in only fifty-two days.

After the walls are completed, Nehemiah and Ezra lead the people in a succession of social and religious reforms (7–13). A revival occurs, and the people reaffirm God's covenant with Israel. They no longer enjoy nationhood, as they remain subject to Persian rule, but their identity as a faith community, "the people of God," is restored.

Esther

"Who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" (4:14).

Widely confirmed historical events place the dramatic story of Esther within a ten-year period, beginning in 483 BC. The actual writing appears to have been somewhat later (perhaps 465—some scholars suggest even later), as a mention of Xerxes' (Hebrew: Ahasuerus) reign in chapter 10 is in the past tense. The author is unknown, though some have speculated that Mordecai, Esther's kinsman and court official, may have recorded the events.

Esther, a beautiful young Jew, is chosen to replace Xerxes' deposed queen after a long, arduous, and competitive process. She does not reveal her Jewish identity to Xerxes. When her relative and former guardian Mordecai alerts her to a conspiracy to kill the king, she warns her husband and the plot is foiled.

Later, when Mordecai refuses to bow to Haman, the prime minister, Haman plots not only Mordecai's demise but that of his people, the Jews. At risk of her own life, Esther goes before the king for help. Xerxes remedies the situation, executes Haman, and gives his property to Haman's archenemy, Mordecai.

On the day they were to be annihilated, the Jews celebrate their deliverance with feasting. The festival becomes known as Purim, annually commemorated to this day.

Esther is a most unusual biblical book because it makes no direct mention of God. This has caused some to doubt its worthiness to be included in the canon, but others see God as the book's main (though unseen) character whose providence is everywhere apparent, orchestrating events and protecting his people in the face of great peril.

The Persian Empire
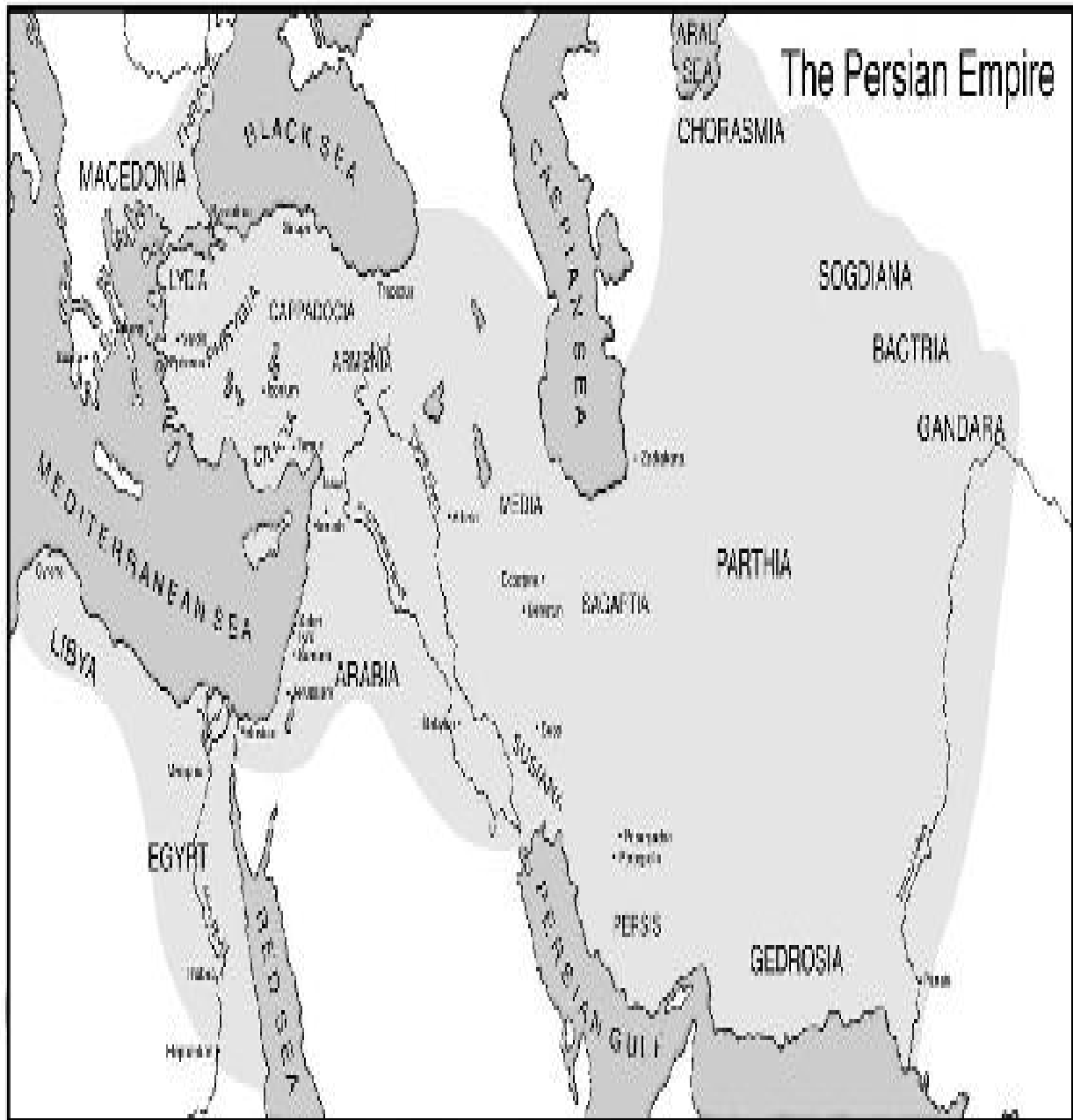
The Poetical Books

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs are referred to as poetical books because of their extensive use of poetry. A brief review of basic characteristics of language (see chapter 2) may enhance appreciation and understanding of these writings.

Job

"I know that my redeemer lives" (19:25).

The origins of Job are unclear; both the author and time of writing are unknown. Evidence suggesting the book was written circa 700 BC has persuaded some, but this remains debated even among conservative scholars.

Job, belonging to the category known as "wisdom literature," addresses the age-old question "Why does God allow the righteous to suffer?" The subject matter is presented largely through poetry, framed by the prose of a prologue and an epilogue.

In the prologue (chaps. 1–2), God accepts Satan's challenge regarding his blameless servant Job: "Strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face" (1:11). Consequently, one disaster after another befalls Job.

A series of dialogues and speeches follows (3–42:6) in which Job's friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar attempt to answer Job's complaint that God is being unfair. Their words are of little comfort—in fact, their accusations are at times cruel. They insist that Job is reaping the consequences of a sinful life. Job defends himself to no apparent avail. A fourth friend, Elihu, enters the discussion to rebuke Job and his friends—the former for his lack of righteousness, the latter for their ineffective arguments.

Finally, the Lord himself breaks in, challenging Job's pride and misconceptions without directly answering his questions. Human beings cannot understand the created universe; how can they presume to fully understand the ways of the Creator? Job is silenced and humbled.

In the epilogue (42:7–17), God rebukes Job's friends for their mistreatment, and he vindicates Job's loyalty by restoring all he had lost and more.

Psalms

*"Praise the L*ord*, my soul, and forget not all his benefits"* (103:2).

Psalm Type	Basic Characteristic(s)	Examples
Hymns	Songs of praise and thanksgiving to God for who he is and what he has done	Psalm 9

Penitential	Confess sorrow for sin, appeal to God for grace and forgiveness	Psalm 39 and 51
Wisdom	General observations on life, especially God and our relationship to him	Psalm 1
Royal	Focus on the king as son of David and as God's special instrument to rule his people	Psalm 2 and 45
Messianic	Describe some aspect of the Messiah's person or ministry	Psalm 22
Imprecatory	Call for God's judgment against God's enemies and/or his people's enemies	Psalm 35 and 69
Lament	Lament one's condition; usually include statement of lament, statement of trust in God, and affirmation of praise to him	Psalm 3, 4, and 6

The Psalms, a collection of 150 songs or hymns known in Hebrew as "Praises," are organized into five "books": 1–41, 42–72, 73–89, 90–106, and 107–150. They are not organized by subject matter or poetic genre; some in themselves are of different genres. Seventy-three have been ascribed to David, whose personal experiences are reflected in many of his compositions. Asaph, chief musician during David's reign, is credited with twelve. Several more are attributed to the "sons of Korah," a name about which little is known for certain. Psalm 90 was written by Moses, Psalms 72 and 127 by Solomon. The authorship of the remaining fifty-plus is unknown. It is presumed that the final collection and arrangement occurred after the Babylonian exile.

Various psalm genres are represented throughout the book:[5]

Because such a wide range of emotions, subjects, and experiences are represented among the Psalms, believers continue to find in them Spirit-breathed direction for their own prayer and worship.

Proverbs

"*The LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding*" (2:6).

Proverbs is a collection of sayings and precepts reflecting divine wisdom. Its contents are attributed to several authors, including Solomon, Agur, and Lemuel (little is known of the latter two). The proverbs of Solomon were penned between 970 and 930 BC. Proverbs 25–29, sayings of Solomon compiled by "Hezekiah's men," may have been added as late as 700 BC.

"A proverb is a short saying about principles of living that have been proven by life experience, but a proverb is not a promise or a command."[6] The biblical proverbs do not merely reflect sage human advice; there is an unmistakable spiritual dimension to these wise principles.

After a statement of purpose (chap. 1:1–7), several "lessons" on wisdom are given (1:8–9:18), with particular emphasis on what one must avoid to live wisely.

A collection of Solomon's wise sayings follows (10:1–22:16) in which he covers a broad range of subjects: righteousness and foolishness, speech, wealth and poverty, family relations, friendship, and others.

The sayings of the "wise men" (22:17–24:34) bear some apparent relationship to the Egyptian proverbs of Amenemope. Far from merely repeating conventional wisdom, however, the author is clearly intent on engendering trust in God.

Chapters 25–29 are grouped more by subject matter than other sections of Proverbs.

The wisdom of Agur and of Lemuel (30:1–31:9), though significant in and of itself, is especially interesting because of the assumption that these men were not from Israel. There is no mistaking their reverence for God and his ways.

The excellent wife (31:10–31) is an acrostic poem in which each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Ecclesiastes

"*This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind*" (6:9).

Ecclesiastes is the Greek name given this book of wisdom literature by the Septuagint translators. *Qoheleth* is the Hebrew title; often translated "the Preacher," the term may imply leadership among the wise. Scholars disagree considerably on the book's authorship and date—while Solomon's influence at least is assumed by most, and while authorship is traditionally ascribed to him, references to the writer do not specifically identify him, and some believe that certain of its literary elements may indicate otherwise. If Solomon is the writer, he likely penned it around 940 BC. In the case that another author is responsible, some maintain a postexilic date, others a preexilic date.

The author begins by reflecting on the futility of life's cyclical nature, touching on wisdom, pleasure, material abundance, and fame from a human perspective (chaps. 1–4). Along the way, he acknowledges God's sovereignty over events and destiny, and he advises contentment—in our work, as in the simple pleasures of life—in view of God's providence.

He continues with observations and advice (5–12:8) regarding worship, wealth, wisdom, and life's uncertainties and injustices. The subject matter is gloomy, yet the reader is encouraged toward constructive action, contentment, and wise living.

In his conclusion (12:9–14), the writer boils it all down to this: "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind" (v. 13). God, meanwhile, will judge everything, good or bad. Reverence and obedience—with assurance of God's justice—enable us to keep all else in proper perspective.

Song of Songs

"*My beloved is mine and I am his*" (2:16).

Song of Songs reflects the Hebrew superlative (see chapter 2) and may be interpreted as "the greatest song" or "the most beautiful song." The opening line, variously translated "Solomon's Song of Songs" or "The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's" (along with other "royal" references), gave rise to the traditional view of Solomon's authorship. Some argue that the Hebrew inscription could be a dedication to Solomon, or that it was written about or in honor of him. As with Ecclesiastes, theories abound, making the date of writing difficult to determine. If Solomon wrote this poetry, he likely did so between 950 and 930 BC.

Some treat Song of Songs primarily as an allegory. Ancient Hebrew tradition viewed it as a picture of God's love for Israel, and it was apparently read at the Passover celebration. Many Christians have interpreted it in terms of Christ's love for the church. Strangely, some interpreters have not at the same time affirmed the joy and beauty of marital sexual love so apparent in the text.

Whether the content is one long poem or an anthology of love poetry is also debated. In either case, the poet invites the reader to a celebration of the longing, the beauty, the pleasure, and the joy of marital love. This gift from God has its origins in Eden, and in it we may glimpse a reflection of the depths of love the Creator and Savior has for those who belong to him.

The Prophets

According to early Hebrew tradition, the Scriptures were divided into three parts: Law, Prophets, and Writings. The Prophets consisted of eight books: Joshua, Samuel (1 and 2), Kings (1 and 2), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Minor Prophets (Hosea–Malachi, arranged in the same order as in our modern Bibles, but considered one book). Lamentations and Daniel were considered part of the Writings.

Isaiah

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty" (6:3).

Isaiah, whose name means "the Lord saves," served circa 740–690 BC as prophet to several of Judah's kings, most notably Ahaz and Hezekiah. Some scholars allege that Isaiah himself wrote only chapters 1–39, that another/other writer(s) is/are responsible for 40–66; they cite differences in style and subject matter, as well as noting that the events of the book's second half (including specific mention of Cyrus) occurred long after Isaiah's lifetime. Other scholars maintain that stylistic or content differences necessitate no additional authorship, seeing God's hand in the predictions; they also stress acceptance of Isaiah's authorship by New Testament writers. All seem to agree that Isaiah contains some of the Old Testament's most beautiful and powerful writing.

Isaiah's prophecy begins with an introduction (chap. 1) that lays out God's case against his sinful people and the restoration to follow his judgment upon them.

Chapters 2–35 set forth an assortment of judgments against Judah and the surrounding nations, interspersed with signs of the Messiah and his coming kingdom.

Accounts from the reign of Hezekiah (36–39) appear to form a transition between the book's first and second parts; the focus shifts from a world dominated by Assyria to one dominated by Babylon.

Chapters 40–66 emphasize consolation, restoration, deliverance, and redemption as Judah's captivity comes to an end. Chapters 49–53 portray the Servant-Messiah in dramatic language.

Isaiah's message throughout is shaped by his vision of God's sovereignty and holiness (e.g., see chapter 6). His messianic images are among the most striking and most quoted in all of Scripture.

Jeremiah

"'*But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,' declares the* L*ORD*" (30:17).

Jeremiah's prophetic career lasted about forty years (627–587 BC) and coincided with the final years of Judah's independence before being conquered by Babylon. Few doubt his authorship, though some assume that the final chapter was added by a scribe after Jeremiah's death. Jeremiah's assistant, Baruch, probably is responsible for recording much of the book.

Jeremiah's call to become a prophet (chap. 1) occurred during the reign of King Josiah, who had initiated a revival of sorts. But the people's adherence to God's ways was not profound, and Josiah's death hastened their return to idolatry and rebellion.

In this climate of moral decay, Jeremiah repeatedly warned of impending judgment (2–45). His treatment at the hands of his fellow citizens is harsh and demoralizing, and these chapters frequently display his despair and his struggles with God over his persecution. His perseverance in the face of an unheeding nation is critical to the book's overall message.

Eventually, the predicted doom comes about as Judah succumbs to Babylon's might. Many of his countrymen are deported to Babylon, while Jeremiah is forced for a time to Egypt.

Amid the gloom of God's judgment is what some call "the Book of Comfort" (30–33). Yes, God is punishing his people, but he will not abandon them. On the other side of judgment lies his blessing and a bright future.

In the end, Jeremiah also announces God's plans for retribution against Jerusalem's neighbor nations (46–51). Everyone must understand that God's sovereignty knows no political boundaries; no one can defeat his plans or defy him indefinitely.

Lamentations

"*Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the* L*ORD*" (3:40).

Both Jewish and Christian traditions attribute Lamentations to Jeremiah, though scholarly opinion sometimes differs. Most likely penned around 587 BC, the book names no specific writer, but Jeremiah's presence in Jerusalem at the time of its destruction and his prophetic role in calling the people to repentance make him a likely author. Also, Jeremiah and

Lamentations contain several similar turns of phrase, despite their differences in literary form.

Lamentations is considered one of the prophetic books, but its message is contained in a collection of poetry. Chapters 1, 2, and 4 (each poem is one chapter long) are acrostics in which each of the twenty-two Hebrew letters begins a verse. Chapter 3 follows the same pattern, but here three-verse groupings begin with a different letter. Chapter 5 does not employ the acrostic device.

These five poems are known as laments (see chart of Psalm types/characteristics, earlier in this chapter): cries of anguish, some representing personal agony, some the collective tragedy and humiliation of Jerusalem's citizenry. God has brought about his promised punishment by allowing the city to be sacked by the Babylonians. The writer gives voice to those who know that the discipline is deserved but are in deep distress over the destruction of their beloved city, temple, and hope for the future. Has God abandoned them forever?

Words of comfort and encouragement show that God will heal them and their land if they but return to him.

Ezekiel

*"I the L*ord *have spoken, and I will do it"* (17:24).

There is little argument over the authorship of Ezekiel, a young priest who was among those deported in 597 BC from Judah to Babylon, where he received his calling from God. If the writing occurred during the events described, these prophecies were likely recorded between 592 and 570.

Ezekiel's call to prophetic office (chaps. 1–3) is accompanied by an impressive vision of God and the command to warn his people of impending peril.

The prophet then begins to hear regularly from the Lord and faithfully transmits a series of judgments against the nation (4–24). Ezekiel employs many symbols, including the performance of dramatic acts, perhaps to seize their attention, but also to memorably convey his message. He also recounts startling visions, all in an effort to stem the tide of sin and rebellion among his people: God will bring judgment on all who do not repent.

God uses Ezekiel to announce his intentions for the nation's neighbors as well (25–32). Their complicity in Jerusalem's destruction—or their plans to benefit thereby—would not go unpunished. Four chapters of prophesied

judgment are reserved for Egypt alone; its political and military power will be crushed.

Ezekiel then turns to proclaiming a hopeful future for Israel (33–48). This section (especially 40–48) has been the subject of various interpretations: some hold that its prophecies were fulfilled when Israel was restored to her land, while others believe that both Israel and the church are implicated and that those promises are to be fulfilled in the messianic age. Perhaps it is best to allow that God has planned a glorious future and can be counted on to fulfill his promises (in his own way and time) to all who put their trust in him.

Daniel

"There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries" (2:28).

It is widely (though not universally) assumed that an anonymous writer combined accounts of Daniel's colorful, virtuous life (written in the third person) with Daniel's own visions (recorded in the first person—i.e., "I, Daniel . . ."). Some scholars believe the book was written as early as 537 BC; others, citing a variety of linguistic and historical issues, prefer a date as late as 165 BC. The latter raises problems of its own, however, including the dismissal of Daniel's prophecies as predictive.

The book is written in two languages. The Hebrew of Daniel 2:4 begins, "Then the astrologers answered the king," and from that point until 7:28 the text switches to Aramaic. Several explanations have been proposed for this unusual feature, none of which seems conclusive.

Daniel is readily divided into two distinct parts. The first half (chaps. 1–6) offers glimpses into the life of a young Jewish nobleman deported to Babylon about 605. Featured events include his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams (2 and 4) and his subsequent rise to prominence at court; his three friends' test of faith, culminating in the fiery furnace (3); and his own test of faith in the lions' den (6).

The second half (7–12) is the vivid retelling of visions given to Daniel, often involving symbolic imagery (e.g., beasts with unusual characteristics). These are linked to history, less about what is already past and more about what is yet to come. God's sovereignty over political powers (and history itself) is emphasized, offering hope to those living under great distress.

Connections are often made between Daniel, the only apocalyptic book in the Old Testament, and John's Revelation, the New Testament's apocalypse.

(See chapter 3.)

Hosea

"*But you must return to your God*" (12:6).

Though there is little scholarly debate regarding the date or authorship of the book of Hosea, little is known about the prophet. His ministry began during the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel (northern kingdom) and appears to have lasted into the reign of Hoshea. Unlike some other biblical prophets, he served solely in Israel, and his prophecies are thought to have been recorded about 722 BC.

Sin, punishment, and restoration are recurring themes as Hosea attempts to call Israel to repentance during a time of prosperity, idolatry, and regional political turmoil. Israel's rebellion has manifested itself in spiritual adultery and corruption, violence, disregard for God and his covenant, and trusting in political alliances rather than in God.

God's message for Hosea (chaps. 1–3) assigns him to live a painful object lesson. Hosea marries Gomer (an immoral woman, perhaps a prostitute) and is forced to watch along with the community as she mocks their vows by carousing with various lovers. She eventually abandons Hosea, her faithlessness leads her into slavery, and Hosea must redeem her at significant expense. He restores her to his home in spite of his pain and humiliation.

BLACK SEA

CASPIAN SEA

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Tarsus

Haran

Tigris River

Nineveh
Calah

Euphrates River

Tyre
Sidon
Damascus

Jordan River

Jerusalem
Rabbah

Babylon

Susa

Memphis

Ezion-geber

Ur

Nile River

RED SEA

PERSIAN GULF

The Babylonian Empire

Thebes

God's message for Israel (4–14) parallels this lesson. He makes his case against his wayward people, makes clear the punishment they are yet to suffer, yet holds out the hope of ultimate restoration if they will repent and trust in him alone for salvation.

Joel

"I will pour out my Spirit on all people" (2:28).

Scholars are of two opinions regarding the date of Joel's writing. Some believe it was penned during the reign of Josiah (perhaps 835 BC); others insist that the available evidence supports a date after Judah's Babylonian exile, when Judah no longer had a king, when idolatry was of less concern than before, and when Greece posed a threat in the region. This latter theory places the writing around 400. As for Joel, we know nothing of him other than what little is offered in his book.

Joel begins with the stark report of a devastating plague of locusts on Judah's land (chap. 1). Vineyards, orchards, field crops, and pastures are all desolated by the onslaught of insects. Agriculture grinds to a halt, and even the priests no longer have what they need for offerings.

Using the locust plague as a symbol of devastation at some future time (the day of the Lord), Joel challenges God's people to repent and to return wholeheartedly to God's ways (2:1–17).

God then uses Joel to announce his promise of deliverance (2:18–3:21), both from the immediate circumstance and also from future destruction. He will punish Judah's oppressors and bring spiritual and material blessings to those who are his. Among the spiritual blessings is the advent of the Holy Spirit, seen in Peter's declaration of the fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32 (see Acts 2:14–21).

Amos

"But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (5:24).

Amos was likely written around 760 BC, during the latter years of Jeroboam II's reign over the northern kingdom of Israel. The author apparently earned his livelihood tending sheep and sycamore trees. Originally from a small town in Judah, he was called by God to prophesy in Bethel, in Israel, during a period of considerable national prosperity.

Amos announces God's displeasure with several neighboring kingdoms, as well as Judah, before concluding that Israel too has offended him by failing to keep his commandments (chaps. 1–2). He is especially harsh in condemning the injustice and oppression against the poor, the needy, and the helpless.

He denounces Israel's indifference, indulgent lifestyles, and religious hypocrisy, then warns of impending ruin (3–6), again condemning oppression of the poor and needy.

Visions of judgment follow (7–9), amid which Amaziah, priest at Bethel, becomes incensed, accuses Amos of treason, and tries to get him to return to Judah. Amos reiterates his calling from God, then prophesies catastrophe for the priest and his family. After two more visions of judgment, Amos concludes with a hopeful vision, a blessed future that implicitly includes all in the kingdom of God.

Amos emphasizes God's sovereignty over all nations; none who do evil will go unpunished. Those who know his commands and fail to follow them (or follow only outwardly), he holds to a higher standard of responsibility.

Obadiah

"*As you have done, it will be done to you*" (v. 15).

Nothing is known of Obadiah, author of the Old Testament's shortest book, except the vision he recorded. Scholars differ on the date of his writing, due to some uncertainty as to which invasion of Jerusalem is in view (there were several). Most likely it was around 587 BC, the date of Jerusalem's destruction by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

The people of Edom, in spite of being "cousins" to the people of Israel (they are the descendants of Jacob's brother, Esau), have a centuries-long history of animosity and mutual antagonism, dating back to their refusal to let Moses and the people traverse their land on the way to Canaan. Now, in the wake of Babylon's invasion, they have acted arrogantly and cruelly toward God's people, looting, capturing, even killing refugees and gloating over their plight.

Obadiah has a very straightforward message: God is going to repay the Edomites in kind for their reprehensible behavior. As they have aided and abetted Jerusalem's destruction, so he will ensure their destruction as well.

Obadiah also makes it clear that on the day of the Lord, all nations will find themselves similarly judged for their collective behavior. God's reign is

not limited to Israel; all are accountable before him.

Jonah

"Should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh?" (4:11).

Jonah, a prophet during the reign of Jeroboam II (793–753 BC) and a contemporary of Amos and Hosea, is presumed to have recorded the book bearing his name (cf. 2 Kings 14:25). Both the date and authenticity have been the subject of some controversy. Some contend that Jonah is only a parable or an allegory. Some argue that it was written much later than Jonah's lifetime. Questions of historicity have been raised regarding descriptions of Nineveh, and some doubt the veracity of Jonah's three-day ordeal in the fish. These arguments are not irrefutable, however, and Jesus' references to Jonah (see Matthew 12:39–41; Luke 11:29–30) do not indicate any such doubts.

God commands Jonah to travel to Nineveh and warn of impending judgment (chap. 1). Nineveh is the capital of Assyria, a rising power that poses a threat to Israel (and, in fact, will conquer it in 722), and its populace practices pagan religions. Jonah, though, heads in the opposite direction and boards a ship in Joppa to Tarshish. When a severe storm arises, he is thrown overboard and a large fish swallows him.

From inside the fish, Jonah offers a prayer of repentance (2). God causes the fish to deliver Jonah safely to shore.

Jonah now goes to Nineveh (3), a journey of some five hundred miles. When he arrives, he preaches as instructed; the Ninevites believe in God and turn from their sin; God spares the city.

An outraged Jonah desires condemnation, not mercy, for these pagans (4). But God makes it clear that his compassion is available to everyone he has created—regardless of nationality—when they turn to him in repentance.

The Assyrian Empire

Micah

*"What does the L*ᴏʀᴅ *require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God"* (6:8).

Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, prophesied between 740 and 700 BC. He was from a small border town in Judah, but his prophecies implicated both Judah and Israel. Like Amos, he was concerned with social justice and religious hypocrisy, among other themes.

Micah 1–2 addresses all the people and lays out God's case against them for the evil they are practicing, for their idolatry and their ruthless exploitation of the poor and powerless. Destruction is predicted for both Samaria (representing the northern kingdom) and Judah. Micah concludes this section with a message of hope and restoration for the "remnant" that remains faithful to God.

Micah's next messages (3–5) begin with judgment addressed to the civil leaders who abuse the poor and needy, and religious leaders who pervert their offices for material gain. Hope of restoration is offered here as well, including messianic prophecies (see 5:2–3, where Messiah's birthplace is predicted).

Micah renews his indictment (6–7), reminding God's people of his mighty acts on their behalf. Yet their injustice, violence, and greed are impossible to ignore, so he will bring judgment upon them. Once again, there is hope of restoration for the faithful remnant that turns back to him.

Nahum

*"The L*ᴏʀᴅ *is slow to anger but great in power; the L*ᴏʀᴅ *will not leave the guilty unpunished"* (1:3).

Almost nothing is known of Nahum (whose name means "consolation") except that he was from Elkosh, a place yet unknown. His prophecy must have been written after 663 BC, the year of Thebes' destruction (mentioned in 3:8), and before 612 BC, the date of Nineveh's demise. Nahum's allusions to Assyrian domination suggest the era of Manasseh's reign (696–642 BC), when Judah paid tribute to Assyria.

Nahum extols the power and wrath of God (1:2–15), both in terms of his judgment against those who oppose him (i.e., Nineveh) and his compassionate vindication of "those who trust in him" (v. 7; i.e., Judah).

Perhaps Nineveh's harsh punishment is tied to having returned to paganism after a brief period of repentance (Jonah preached there a century earlier).

Nineveh's ruin is predicted and described (2–3) in vivid detail. Its military defenses, its enormous wealth, its pagan religions—nothing will be able to save the city God opposes. Nahum reminds Nineveh that Thebes, also a military power, has been recently crushed despite strong defenses and powerful alliances. Nineveh is doomed, and all who have suffered its cruelty will celebrate its fall.

Nahum emphasizes God's power over nations and all creation. God is slow to anger, but he does become angry with those who refuse to obey him. His justice is sure; he punishes evil and protects the oppressed.

Habakkuk

"But the righteous person will live by his faithfulness" (2:4).

A virtually unknown figure apart from his prophecy, Habakkuk is held by apocryphal tradition to be of a priestly family. Notations in chapter 3 suggest he had musical training. It seems likely that he wrote sometime after the death of King Josiah, when Judah's morality was in decline and Babylonian influence was on the rise; some scholars suggest a date of 605 BC.

Habakkuk complains of God's apparent lack of concern regarding the injustice and moral decay of society (1:2–4).

God responds that he is aware of the situation (vv. 5–11) and is planning to use the Babylonians as instruments of judgment against his wayward people.

Habakkuk voices a second complaint: How can God consider using the cruel, ruthless Babylonians to punish his own people (1:12–2:1)?

God's reply (vv. 2–20) indicates that Babylon too will come to judgment, but in the time and place of his choosing. He then goes on to pronounce a series of woes—judgments—that will eventually befall Babylon for its wickedness.

Habakkuk's final response (3) is a psalm of faith (unswerving trust) in God's ways, no matter how mysterious. Whatever happens, however long it takes, "yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior" (v. 18).

Justice is God's domain. He causes powers and nations to rise and fall. He rewards good and punishes evil—in his own way, in his own time.

Zephaniah

*"The L*ORD *your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves"* (3:17).

Zephaniah's ancestry includes Hezekiah, though there is some debate over whether this Hezekiah was the former king of Judah. In any case, Zephaniah, whose name means "Yahweh has hidden" and who was a contemporary of Jeremiah, ministered during Josiah's reign. Scholars place his writing between 630 and 625 BC.

God uses Zephaniah to announce his plans to judge Judah as well as the surrounding nations because of their refusal to follow his ways (1:1–3:8). Even distant powers are implicated. Arrogance will especially be punished, as will corruption, idolatry, deceit, violence, and injustice.

Allowance is made, however, for a remnant that humbles itself and repents (2). All is not lost for those who will turn to the Lord, even amid the terrible display of his righteous anger.

The day of the Lord will not only mean punishment, but will usher in a time of hope and restoration (3) in which the faithful remnant (both Jews and Gentiles) will experience God's presence, protection, and blessing.

Haggai

"Give careful thought to your ways" (1:5).

All that is known of Haggai (mentioned also in Ezra) is that he prophesied to the exiles (and their leaders, Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest) who had returned from Babylon to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Haggai's own calendar reference dates his prophecy to 520 BC.

Haggai receives four messages from God over a period of a few months. The first is intended to rouse the people and their leaders out of complacency (1:1–15). The exiles have been in Jerusalem for sixteen years and live in comfortable homes, yet the temple is unfinished. God is not pleased. Haggai indicates that their current haplessness is the result of divine blessing withheld because of their spiritual apathy. They respond eagerly by resuming work on the temple.

Next is a message of encouragement (2:1–9). Though the reconstructed temple doesn't compare to the splendor of the original, God's presence is with the people through his Spirit. One day, the glory of the new temple will outshine the old—and that glory will be accompanied by peace.

The third message is a reminder of sin's corrupting nature (vv. 10–19). Contact with a clean object does not make a dirty object clean, but a dirty object causes uncleanness in whatever it touches. Haggai tells the priests that spiritual impurity makes their sacrifices unacceptable. Obedience precedes God's blessing.

Last is a promise to reestablish the Davidic line in Jerusalem after the disruption of the Babylonian exile (vv. 20–23), ensuring Messiah's royal lineage.

Zechariah

"On that day there will be one Lᴏʀᴅ, and his name the only name" (14:9).

In 520 BC, two months after the beginning of Haggai's ministry, Zechariah also began to prophesy to Judah's repatriated exiles. Zechariah was from a priestly family that returned from Babylon in 538 BC (see Nehemiah 12:16). He wrote the first eight chapters between 520 and 518 BC; chapters 9–14 may have been written later. Many of his prophecies are difficult to understand, but some are quoted—and fulfilled, at least in part—by Jesus in the New Testament.

The first six verses of the book call the people of Judah to turn to God, reminding them that their ancestors paid a price for their disobedience.

In the following section (1:7–6:8), Zechariah recounts eight visions in which he is shown scenes symbolizing various future realities—some to be fulfilled in his time, some in the distant future.

A crown is made for Joshua the high priest (6:9–15), a symbolic gesture pointing to Jesus Christ, the priest and king who will one day rule from his holy temple.

A question is raised about the annual fast commemorating the temple's destruction (7:1–8:23): Now that the temple is being rebuilt, should the people continue to fast? God's answer makes clear his desire for obedience, faithfulness, and justice above ritual fasting. Then he makes ten promises to encourage the people.

Chapters 9–14 contain several "oracles" (divine revelations) concerning the future, including many messianic references: "See, your king comes to you . . . lowly and riding on a donkey" (9:9); "They will look on me, the one they have pierced" (12:10); "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered" (13:7). In Zechariah's prophecies, sometimes it is challenging to distinguish between references to Messiah's first and second advents.

Malachi

"*The sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays*" (4:2).

It has been suggested that Malachi (whose name means "my messenger") was actually the work of an anonymous author. Most scholars dismiss this as unlikely, although nothing is known of Malachi. Estimates for date of writing range from 470–433 BC, after the return of the people of Judah from exile. Malachi was probably a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Malachi indicts the people and their religious leaders for their skepticism and contempt toward God (chap. 1). They question God's love for them, yet they bring unworthy, blemished sacrifices to appease him. They wouldn't think of offering such to the governor. Why would they treat the King in this way?

The priests are censured for their failure to provide spiritual leadership, and the people's practices of divorce and interfaith marriage are condemned (2:1–16). They have broken faith with God, who does not take it lightly.

The people doubt God's justice against the wicked (2:17–3:5), but he responds that his messenger (John the Baptist) will prepare the way for his coming and that he will then judge all who do not fear him.

Next, God accuses the people of robbing him by not bringing their tithes (3:6–12). If they will return to tithing, he will pour out blessings on them.

Again the people express doubt about God's justice (3:13–4:5): Does he actually reward godly living? His response is an emphatic yes. All who follow his ways, who revere his name, will be preserved when he punishes the wicked in the "great and dreadful day of the Lᴏʀᴅ."

For Further Reading and Study

Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament*

Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*

Alec Motyer, *The Story of the Old Testament*

Charles F. Pfeiffer, *Baker's Bible Atlas*

Between the Testaments

✦

. . . until a true prophet should appear.

—1 Maccabees 14:41

Introduction to the Intertestamental Period

Second Temple Judaism

The designation "Intertestamental period" is somewhat of a misnomer. Generally, it is thought to indicate the time from the last book listed in the canonical Old Testament, Malachi (ca. 475–450 BC), to Matthew, the first book listed in the New Testament (about AD 70). But it is not certain that Malachi was written last in the Old Testament, and surely Matthew was not written first in the New Testament. Furthermore, the influences on the Jewish people during this time extend well back into the era of the Old Testament, and forward into and throughout the time of the New Testament. The preferred terminology in more recent years is the "Second Temple" period, which recognizes the influences and overlaps with the canonical texts and the centrality of the temple.

By the time the Second Temple period begins, Jews had returned from exile and rebuilt a Second Temple (2 Chronicles 36:22; Ezra 1:1–2; 5:13) to replace the Solomonic Temple destroyed by the Babylonians in 587/586 BC (2 Kings 25:8–9; Jeremiah 52:12–13). This Second Temple was finally completed during the governorship of Zerubbabel (ca. 516/515 BC; Ezra 6:15; Nehemiah 8–10). In a number of respects it was the central feature of Jewish life and identity in the Second Temple period. As the locus of Israel's distinctive cultic worship, it was a pillar of Jewish identity in its covenant with God, as well as the political center for Jewish leadership.

After the close of Nehemiah's account (ca. 430 BC), little is known of Jewish life until Alexander the Great of Macedon who, at the age of twenty, began his conquest of the Persian Empire and subdued much of the Near East in just three years (333–330 BC). His untimely death at age thirty-two (June, 323 BC) triggered a violent series of wars for power among his generals, from which two "successors" stand out: Ptolemy, whose descendants held much of Egypt and ruled the environs of Judea from 301 to 198 BC, and Seleucus, whose descendants held vast territory in Syria and ruled in Judea from 198 to 167 BC. For much of this time, the Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties were too busy fighting one another and within their own ranks to interfere in the affairs of Jews in the region known as Coele-Syria, a swath of land sometimes identified as Syro-Palestine. In the course of events, the Seleucid ruler Antiochus III ("the Great") bit off more than he could chew in his ambitions for territorial acquisitions. Under the terms of peace (188 BC), the Seleucids were to pay massive indemnities to their opponent, the burgeoning powerhouse, Rome.

(Much of what follows is recorded in the books of 1 and 2 Maccabees, documents written shortly after the events and included in a collection known as the "Old Testament Apocrypha." These writings are often included in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Bibles, but not in Protestant Bibles. See "Introduction to the Apocrypha," later in this chapter.)

The debt to Rome was passed down to successive Seleucid rulers who were burdened with raising funds as they could. One such ruler, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, welcomed a substantial bribe from Jason, the brother of a high priest, not only for an appointment himself to the high priesthood in Jerusalem but also the right to introduce customs in Jerusalem contrary to Jewish law (171 BC; 2 Maccabees 4:7–20). As in the Old Testament, the office of high priest was supposed to be hereditary through the line of Zadok (cf. 1 Chronicles 6:14–15; 2 Kings 25:18) and responsible for conducting the Day of Atonement sacrifices (Leviticus 16). Jason's appointment and actions were egregious to pious Jews of Jerusalem.

Protest by Jews was seen by Antiochus IV as an indication of insurrection, prompting his march on Jerusalem. In his fury, he ordered the massacre of eighty thousand persons indiscriminately, and sold as many into slavery (2 Maccabees 5:12–14).[1] He then entered the temple (2 Maccabees 5:15), plundered its sacred vessels, and profaned the sanctuary (1 Maccabees 1:21–23).[2] Then, two years later (167 BC), Antiochus issued a decree requiring

everyone to give up their ancestral customs (1 Maccabees 1:41–42). Under pain of death, the king expressly forbade sacrifices, feasts, sabbaths, and circumcision throughout Jerusalem and the cities of Judah. Everyone was to sacrifice unclean animals and build shrines for idols (1 Maccabees 1:44–50). The temple in Jerusalem was made the Temple of "Olympian Zeus" and became a scene of debauchery, prostitution, and abominable offerings (2 Maccabees 6:3–5; cf. 1 Maccabees 1:62–63). On the fifteenth day of the ninth month (Chislev), in 167 BC, the Seleucid overlords erected a "desolating sacrilege," a new altar dedicated to Zeus (1 Maccabees 1:54).

Opposition arose under the leadership of Mattathias (1 Maccabees 2:1–14; ca. 166 BC), son of Asamoneus (hence "Hasmonean"), and his five sons.[3] The most prominent son was Judas, called Maccabeus (1 Maccabees 3:1), who led the revolt in relentless guerilla attacks on the Seleucids. Judas and his brothers retook Jerusalem and set about purifying the sanctuary and resuming its sacrifices with a festival of "dedication" (Hanukkah) on Chislev 25 in 164 BC (1 Maccabees 4:36–59).[4] When Judas died in battle (160 BC; 1 Maccabees 9:4–18), he was succeeded in turn by his brothers as a series of Hasmonean rulers. Most of these men (there was one queen, Salome Alexandra) likewise served as high priest and led the struggle for Jewish independence. However, it was not until Simon, a brother of Judas, that "the yoke of the Gentiles was removed from Israel" (142 BC; 1 Maccabees 13:41). Some of these Hasmonean rulers were tyrannical. For instance, Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 BC) was so brutal he slew six thousand people in Jerusalem for opposing his rule.[5] Fifty thousand more died in a six-year uprising,[6] which ended only when he publicly crucified eight hundred opponents while he murdered their wives and children in front of them (88 BC).[7] His brutality is enshrined in the Dead Sea Scrolls, where in one instance he is called the "Lion of Wrath."[8]

Israel Under the Maccabees

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

PHOENICIA

Tyre

Antochia

Gischala

Seleucia

Ptolemais

Sea of Galilee

Gabora

Seophoris

Hippos

Dium

Geba

Mount Tabor

Philoteria

Abila

GALILEE

Gadara

Dora

GILEAD

Strato's Tower

Scythopolis

Palla

SAMARIA

Samaria

Shechem

Apollonia

Mount Gerizim

Gerasa

Jordan

Joppa

Arimathea

PEREA

Lydda

JUDEA

Philadelphia

Jamnia

Jericho

Emmaus

Samaga

Azotus

Jerusalem

Ascalon

Medeba

Beth-zur

Anthedon

Marisa

Dead Sea

Gaza

Hebron

Er-gedi

Orda

Gerar

IDUMEA

MOAB

Raphia

Beersheba

Malatha

Rhinocorura

NABATAEA

Zoar

Independent Judea after Jonathan's campaigns, 142 BC
Land conquered by Simon, 142-135 BC
John Hyrcanus I, 128-104 BC
Aristobulus I, 104-103 BC
Alexander Jannaeus, 103-76 BC
Boundary of Hasmonean kingdom, 76 BC
Hellenistic city

0   25   50 km

0   10   20   30 miles

Soon the Roman empire extended its territorial influences eastward, under Pompey, who led his army to Jerusalem and placed the region of Coele-Syria and Judea under Roman rule (63 BC).[9] Soon a rival to Pompey, Julius Caesar was gaining power through military prowess, aided in no small part by a certain Antipater, later father to Herod the Great. With Caesar's rise to power, Antipater was made governor of Judea and charged with uniting the region in its loyalty to Rome.[10] For this task, he dispatched his son Herod to govern Galilee (ca. 47 BC), where he distinguished himself by rounding up and executing local bandits.[11] He was declared king by the Roman senate, and secured his rule in Jerusalem in the spring of 37 BC.[12] Herod's reign was marked by stages of consolidating power, extensive building programs, and the seemingly endless barrage of intrigue within his own family. He is best known for rebuilding the Jerusalem temple, a feat that he began around 20 BC but was not completed until 64 AD.[13] But he also rebuilt and enhanced other important locations, such as Caesarea, where he erected an extensive harbor to accommodate sea voyages of all kinds, including those of the apostle Paul (Acts 18:22; 21:16; 25:4).[14] But later his rule was marred by his infamous suspicions of intrigue, which fueled his execution of his wife, Miriamme, and sons Alexander and Aristobulus.

When Herod finally died (4 BC), his surviving sons vied for power by appeal to Emperor Augustus, who divided the region among Archelaus, Herod Philip, and Herod Antipas.[15] Archelaus was notorious for his brutality, cruelty, and tyranny,[16] prompting Augustus to remove him from power and establish direct Roman rule under a series of procurators.[17] One such ruler, Pontius Pilate (26–36 AD; Matthew 27), was so brutal he was ordered to give an account to the emperor (March, 37 AD).[18] Except for a brief rule by Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great (41–44 AD; Acts 12),[19] procurators ruled right up to the outbreak of war in 66 AD. These Roman appointees had little cognizance of—or interest in—the distinct sensitivities of their Jewish subjects. One blunder after another compounded resentment among the Jewish population, and ultimately led to rebellion.

During this period, some revolutionary and religious movements emerged. The Sicarii were radical assassins who concealed daggers under their garments and disposed of their opponents under cover of crowds. The Sanhedrin, convened by the high priest Ananus, were a group of influential men from a variety of affiliations who tried cases of individuals charged

with significant crimes (cf. Mark 14:53–55; Acts 22:30–23:10).[20] The Pharisees, noted for their accurate interpretations of the Law, which were disseminated and passed down orally (Mark 7:5),[21] differed in their beliefs from the Sadducees, who were typically the social elite who saw only the written Law as authoritative.[22]

The Essenes, never mentioned in the New Testament, were notoriously ascetic, communal, industrious, disciplined, and honest, and typically thought to have some connection with the Dead Sea Scrolls.[23] This is a cache of ancient Jewish documents written no later than the first century AD, found in caves adjacent to the Dead Sea at a site called Qumran. They provide a complicated window into the beliefs and practices of one isolated Jewish community that lived in the wilderness to "prepare the way for the LORD" (Isaiah 40:3; cf. Matthew 3:3).[24] Their piety was in stark contrast with some of the Roman procurators who, by the time dissent tipped into armed hostilities (66 AD), were personally profiting from the very criminals they were charged to reign in.

Some Jews in the temple forbade sacrifices on behalf of the emperor, raising the ire of the Romans and stirring dissent among other Jews who saw the folly in such a decision. When armed Roman soldiers came on the scene, some Jews holed up in the temple, while others fled the city entirely.[25] Factionalism was rampant, political assassinations were commonplace, and many rebels dug in for a prolonged conflict.[26] Vespasian and his son Titus led the Roman campaign against the uprising. Soon Josephus (37–ca. 100 AD), among the initial leaders in the Jewish struggle, was himself captured and came into service of Rome by appealing to his countrymen to surrender. He later provided some of the most important—and sometimes only— available historical documentation from antiquity of the events in the region.

Rebels in Jerusalem were embroiled in factionalism, which Vespasian was pleased to allow to run its course and weaken Jerusalem while he turned his attention to neighboring regions. Within a few weeks, Vespasian had Jerusalem effectively surrounded and planned his final assault on that city. This was halted, however, by news of Emperor Nero's death (June 9, 68 AD). The ensuing tumult in Rome brought the campaign to a standstill. More Jews fled for refuge to Jerusalem, where division among Jews was seething. Priests zealous for the temple, designating themselves "Zealots," pressed Ananus and the provisional leadership for more aggressive

prosecution of the war. When their pleas fell on deaf ears, the Zealots barricaded themselves in the temple, overthrew the provisional government, executed Ananus and his supporters, and commenced a ruthless assault on Jews within Jerusalem who did not share in their active zeal for rebellion.

By the time Vespasian was able to resume his campaign, Jerusalem had been encircled for nearly a year (May/June, 69 AD). But the campaign was stalled again when Vespasian himself was declared emperor (July, 69 AD). By the summer of 70 AD, the new emperor left his son Titus to finish the job of subduing the rebellion at its heart: Jerusalem. Those who fled to Jerusalem for refuge were met with the terror incited by the burgeoning Zealots, who slew all those opposed to the rebellion. Factions held different sections of Jerusalem when Titus arrived on the scene with four legions of Roman soldiers in March 70 AD.

Josephus describes horrific scenes of the sufferings of innocent civilians within the city—trapped between both extreme famine and violent factions among their countrymen within, and the siege machines of mighty Rome without. Titus's siege penetrated the city walls, and within a few months Jerusalem and its massive temple were in ruins. Many survivors were taken as slaves, some all the way to Rome for public display. Titus then finished subjugation of a few remaining strongholds, including Masada, a large plateau adjacent to the Dead Sea, fortified by Herod the Great and held by rebels (Sicarii) for several years. Masada fell after a prolonged siege (73/74 AD), and its defenders committed mass suicide.

With the rebellion effectively subdued, the region was governed by a Roman legate while soldiers occupied Jerusalem. The Jewish priesthood endured in some fashion, though without a temple, communal religious observance increasingly became a function of local communities and synagogues, which had been around for some time as places of regular instruction in Scripture (cf. Luke 4:16–28).[27] For many Jews, there were thoughts of rebuilding the temple destroyed in 586 BC. Some Jews, like the authors of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, writing shortly after these events, wrestled with how to account for God's justice while looking for his ultimate redemption in the future. Some later traditions suggest that during this time Jews were given leave to found a center for the study of Torah at Yavneh, from which rabbinic Judaism was born.

Christianity, though emerging prior to the destruction, makes surprisingly little of these events in its earliest writings. It is important to note, however,

that while the carnage of the revolt, especially in Jerusalem, was unfolding in all its horror, the fledgling church was well underway. The wars, rumors of wars, and famine anticipated by Jesus were in their midst (Matthew 24; Mark 13).

The Jewish people during this period were long accustomed to brutal rule from external (Gentile) forces, and even rule by fellow Jews could be harsh. There was no unified notion of "us versus them," and many Jews were simply casualties in the ambitions of other men—Jew and Gentile alike. The flurry of literary activity evidenced in the Dead Sea Scrolls gives a small window into but one sect of ancient Judaism, but it depicts a people with a longing for God's intervention with a decidedly eschatological outlook. It is small wonder, then, that although Peter was ready to acknowledge Jesus as the "Christ" or "Messiah," his conception of exactly what that meant was markedly different from that of Jesus himself (Mark 8:29–33).

<div align="right">Daniel M. Gurtner</div>

Introduction to the Apocrypha

Old Testament Apocrypha

The collection of books often referred to as "Old Testament Apocrypha" dates from about the third century, before Christ, until roughly AD 100. Written well after the close of the Old Testament, during times of national unrest, the spirit of the books is characterized by the Hebrew people's response to their discordant situations and their hope for a better future. The etymology of *apocrypha* (meaning "hidden things") is misleading inasmuch as the writings are neither secret nor esoteric. While there is an apocrypha associated with the New Testament, the word customarily brings to mind the Old Testament, not only because most of the original manuscripts were doubtless written in Hebrew or Aramaic but also because the subject matter of the apocrypha is decisively linked to Old Testament events.

In addition to the narrow use of the term, *apocryphal* is often employed in a less restricted sense to refer to a group of writings of lesser status that circulated under false titles. Thus, these writings are sometimes called "Pseudepigrapha" and include Enoch, the Psalms of Solomon, the books of Adam and Eve, the Martyrdom of Isaiah, and the Testament of the Twelve

Patriarchs. Although the books of the Apocrypha were included in the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament), it is doubtful that the early Jews ever considered them canonical. Canonical status, when it was conferred, came by way of Greek-speaking Christians who accepted the parts of the Septuagint without making critical evaluation of books of questionable origin and content. In the Septuagint, the apocryphal books (with the exception of 2 Esdras, which was not included in the Septuagint) are generally located alongside the canonical books of the same literary genre. For example, 1 Esdras precedes Ezra-Nehemiah, with the two books of the Maccabees following the Prophets. The Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus accompany the Old Testament Wisdom literature, with Baruch logically following Jeremiah. While the Vulgate follows a similar arrangement, English versions from Coverdale's Bible (1535) onward regularly place the books after and separate from those having canonical authority.

The order of the books in English versions that include the Apocrypha is as follows: 1 Esdras, 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Additions to the Book of Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach), Baruch (with the Letter of Jeremiah), Song of the Three Young Men, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, Prayer of Manasseh, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees. The overall length of these writings is roughly equal to four-fifths the volume of the New Testament.

CLASSIFICATION AND CONTENT. It is helpful to note the different types of literature in the Apocrypha and consider their classifications. Books of a historical character are 1 Esdras and 1 and 2 Maccabees.

1 Esdras. Written sometime after 150 BC, 1 Esdras contains material given in the biblical Ezra ("Esdras" is the Greek form), yet begins its account earlier with the observance of Passover in the eighteenth year of the reign of King Josiah. Its details of the kingdom of Judah's final years closely parallel the 2 Chronicles 35–36 narrative. The conclusion in which Ezra reads the Law has marked similarities to Nehemiah 8, yet no mention of that prominent leader is found in the story.

Historical sequencing is somewhat chaotic in the author's attempt to fill in the gaps of the Ezra-Nehemiah narrative. First Esdras 3:1–5:6 gives the engrossing account of an intellectual contest among three young men serving as bodyguards to [Persian] King Darius I. In their battle of wits, each soldier writes down his answer to the king's question as to what is the strongest

thing in the world. The first writes "wine is the strongest" and defends his belief by pointing out that wine exerts a powerful, even irrepressible, influence upon all men regardless of their station in life. The second guardsman draws attention to the unlimited authority of the king, whose commands must always be obeyed by all his subjects. While his argument appears more impressive than the first, a third guardsman, who is identified as Zerubbabel, speaks in favor of the strength of women. He reasons that men are born of them and are dependent upon them for life. Moreover, a man will give all he possesses out of his passionate devotion to one captivating woman. Having said this, Zerubbabel begins a discourse upon another topic, truth. He argues that although the earth is vast, the heavens high, and the sun swift, all creation magnifies truth: "All men approve her deeds, and there is nothing unrighteous in her judgment. To her belongs the strength and the kingship and the Power and the majesty of all the ages. Blessed be the God of Truth!" (4:39–40). To this the people respond supportively, "Great is truth, and strongest of all!" (4:41). In championing the cause of truth, Zerubbabel is victorious and seeks as his prize the monarch's faithfulness to his earlier word that he would build up Jerusalem.

Among those in the early church influenced by 1 Esdras, Cyprian and Augustine connected the proverbial insight on the greatness of truth (4:41) with Christ, its living embodiment (John 14:6).

1 Maccabees. This is considered by many the most appealing apocryphal book. Martin Luther regarded 1 Maccabees as necessary and useful. Samuel Taylor Coleridge declared it inspiring enough to actually be inspired. Written in Hebrew, probably around 100 BC, 1 Maccabees deals primarily with the period of Jewish history from 175 to 134 BC. It tells of the Syrian ruler Antiochus Epiphanes' attempt to establish pagan worship among the Jews and how their unified revolt against him resulted in a remarkable victory for the Jewish people. In addition to that extensive military conflict, 1 Maccabees covers the period of the wars of the Hasmoneans, the rise of their dynasty, and the rule of John (identified historically as John Hyrcanus). The book concludes with a discourse in praise of that leader's notable achievements.

The main purpose of the author is to praise the heroic Maccabees and bring glory to Israel through recounting her people's mighty deeds of valor. There is a fine emphasis upon the sovereignty of God, who is acknowledged as the One who overrules the flimsy devices of men. At the same time, the

author stresses the importance of good military planning and the value of godly men who take the initiative in crises. It is also obvious that the writer has a profound respect for both the Law and the temple.

The account of the Maccabean victory with all its attendant details has served as the central point of reference for the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah (or Chanukah). Known as the "Feast of Lights," Hanukkah commemorates the rededication of the temple consequent to the Jewish triumph over the Syrians. Tradition recalls how a very small cruse of oil burned miraculously for eight days in the sanctuary lamp. Jewish families have a special candlestick with eight receptacles, and on each day of the festal period a candle is lit in memory of that extraordinary event. It has been suggested that 1 Maccabees was not accepted as canonical by the rabbis because of the eventual secularization of the Hasmoneans, which deeply offended the influential Pharisees.

2 Maccabees. Composed perhaps as early as 120 BC, 2 Maccabees is actually a shorter version of a historical document written primarily by a religious Cyrenian Jew named Jason. Its view is from the standpoint of the orthodox Pharisees, with special emphasis on such things as ritual purity, temple sanctity, and the resurrection of the martyred faithful. Extensive moralization predominates, often at the cost of historical accuracy. Thus, 1 Maccabees is far more reliable in its documentation.

The events related cover a period beginning shortly before the accession of Antiochus Epiphanes (175 BC) to the year 160 BC. The resistance of pious Jews against the paganizing influences of the Seleucid dynasty is a main concern. Among the many issues addressed in 2 Maccabees are faithfulness in the midst of great adversity (6:18–31); the role of angelic intercession (10:29; 13:2); the resurrection of the dead (7:11, 23); the chastening love of God (6:10–12); the offering of prayers and sacrifices on behalf of the dead (12:43–46); and God's uniquely creative power (7:28). The book pays homage to the temple and delights in the intrusion of such miracles as heavenly horsemen fighting in support of the brave Maccabees. Written in Greek, the author surely hoped to inspire and instruct the people of Israel in the elements of their unique faith. The cruel tortures described in chapters 6 and 7 seem to be well known to the writer of the letter to the Hebrews (see Hebrews 11:35).

That which the rabbis might have termed "Haggadah" (whereby morals are communicated through tales of fiction) involves the following: Tobit,

Judith, additions to the book of Esther, and three additions to Daniel (Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, and Song of the Three Young Men).

Tobit. Dating from about 200 BC, this book presents the folktale of an Israelite named Tobit who had been carried away into exile following the Assyrian conquest of Samaria. While on his way to a town of Media to collect a debt from a relative, young Tobias (Tobit's son) is assisted in his travels by the angel Raphael, who helps Tobias in fending off the evil spirit Asmodaeus. Persian influences upon the tale are obvious, for the Persians subscribed to a spiritual dualism, and Asmodaeus is a name well known to Persian demonology. In addition to the developing story, many themes and doctrinal affirmations are evident. God is identified with the ascriptions "Holy One," "Great King," "King of Heaven," "King of the Ages" (12:12, 15; 13:6–7, 10–11, 15). These titles magnifying his great power and glory are supplemented by expressions of his loving nature: he is merciful (3:2), the hearer of prayers via angelic intercession (12:12), and the restorer of his people's fortunes (14:5). His concern extends beyond the borders of Israel to other nations that will ultimately acknowledge his salvation (13:11).

The main thrust is to exalt the Law with a view to stimulating obedience. In that context, performing deeds of charity is especially emphasized. Tobit 12:8–9 sees almsgiving as an example of good works that merit salvation. Fasting and prayer are also given high priority as indications of true piety. Even attending to a properly arranged burial for the dead finds its place in the life of the pious.

It is of interest to note that the 1549 edition of *The Book of Common Prayer* contains a prayer in the marriage service that draws from this book's account of the angel Raphael's assistance to Tobias and his wife, Sarah.

Judith. This is another romantic tale that illustrates the way God justly provides for and vindicates his own. It takes its name from a young Jewish widow who charms a pagan general, Holofernes, and thereby finds an opportunity to rescue her city and people by beheading him. The book erroneously cites Holofernes as a general of Nebuchadnezzar and identifies the monarch as one who reigned over the Assyrians in Nineveh. While fictional and inaccurate, it is clear the author was familiar with the geography of Palestine, despite his abundant use of cryptograms to disguise actual places. Apparently composed shortly after the Maccabean conflict with Antiochus Epiphanes, the author attempts to encourage his people to be faithful to God and obedient to his Law.

Judith may be described as a woman of great piety: she fasts and prays with extraordinary zeal, observes all religious feasts, and performs every act necessary for ritualistic purification. Yet she is also a woman of fierce cunning and bravery. The author seems to envision her as the female counterpart of the bold warrior Judas Maccabeus. Hers is a long and famous life. Judith's death at the age of 105 causes great mourning throughout Israel (16:21–25).

Additions to the Book of Esther. These writings are partly intended to compensate for the conspicuous absence of the name of God in the book of Esther. They extend the story line of their biblical counterpart to make the case for true religion and the uniqueness of Israel's God in the heathen world (14:3–4). The book seems disjointed because a substantial amount of material was added to the original text, which was a translation of Esther (from Hebrew to Greek) a century or so before Christ, by Lysimachus, a resident of Jerusalem (11:1). The added episodes enlarge the original manuscript by 107 verses. For the sake of clarity, it is advisable to read this book along with canonical Esther, especially if one is to make chronological sense out of the narrative.

Noteworthy is the book's strong reaffirmation of those tenets of Jewish theology proclaiming God's omniscience (13:12), omnipotence (13:9), and righteousness (14:6–7). God is also presented as Israel's Redeemer, whose election of the nation finds root in the covenantal promises given to Abraham (13:15–17). Prayer is highlighted as a true index of godliness (13:8–14:19).

Susanna. This literary gem has inspired writers, artists, and musicians throughout history. In Susanna, Daniel defends a virtuous woman against the slanderous accusations of two lustful elders. He vindicates her by exposing the patent inconsistencies of their stories through careful examination. Thus, the heroine's honor is established and the evil of her adversaries made known.

From a moral standpoint, the author shows the importance of holiness, prayer, and total trust in God. In addition, a warning is clearly implied that God will inevitably judge all whose ways fall short of his ethical standards. Some scholars are tempted to see in the book a satire of the judicial system and legal processes of that era. Notwithstanding, Daniel's presence in the story gives hope that God will bring about needed reforms through those champions of justice he raises up.

Bel and the Dragon. This brief story is a denunciation of idolatry and exposes the evil behavior of the seventy priests who minister before the image of the Babylonian god Bel (aka Marduk). Daniel's ridicule of the false deity enrages his adversaries, who pressure the king to cast Daniel into a den of lions. While Daniel is in the den, the prophet Habbakuk is miraculously transported from Judea by the Angel of the Lord to care for all his needs. After a week of confinement, Daniel is released by the king, and those who had tried to cause his death are thrown into the den, whereupon the lions immediately devour them. The book concludes with the king shouting loudly, "You are great, Lord God of Daniel, and there is no other beside You!"

Song of the Three Young Men. This addition to Daniel, moored in the third chapter of that book, purports to give an account of the events transpiring between verses 23 and 24. It is the only one of the so-called additions that attempts to supplement an actual event in the book of Daniel.

Abednego (Azariah) prays from the midst of the fire, confessing his sins and those of his nation. He seeks God's abundant mercy (v. 18), to which God responds by sending the Angel of the Lord to rescue him and his godly companions from the furnace. Then follows what has been termed the Song of the Three Holy Children. The prayer reveals the trying conditions that existed during the time of the Maccabees and Antiochus Epiphanes' persecution. Over against those tribulations, the author encourages his people to seek God's face and trust in his deliverance (vv. 16–18). The song strives to draw all creation to worship the one true God. A litany of sorts is apparent in the frequently recurring phrase "Sing praise to Him and greatly exalt Him forever" (vv. 35–68).

Two important entries classified as wisdom literature: the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach (known as Ecclesiasticus) and the Wisdom of Solomon. Both entries are characteristically didactic.

Ecclesiasticus. The longest and one of the most valued apocryphal books, Ecclesiasticus was written about 180 BC. The author, a man of extensive travels (34:11–12), is doubtless familiar with the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. Having taught on a variety of topics (51:23), he sets forth in biblical Hebrew those principles communicated orally to his students. A half century later, his writings were evidently translated by his grandson into Greek for the benefit of the Alexandrian Jews.

Like the book of Proverbs, the material is presented in parallel couplets. Its wide scope of interest encompasses not only great theological matters but also such things as dieting, table manners (including the way to chew food), marital relationships, and the correct treatment of children. The longest theme, in praise of famous men, occupies chapters 44 to 50. There is much of a Sadducean spirit, for immortality is thought of largely as the remembrance and honor given by future generations to those who had lived honorably. Ecclesiasticus sees the Law as the means to live an honorable life. God's commandments are the only antidote to the sinful inclination in every man. When men pursue evil ways, God will nonetheless use their rebelliousness to suit his eternal purposes.

"Enoch pleased the Lord and was taken up from the earth" (44:10) finds a remarkably close parallel in Hebrews 11:5 (based on Genesis 5:24).

Wisdom of Solomon. This strictly orthodox Jewish writing employs the name of Solomon, perhaps with the hopes of gaining a wider audience. The book exalts the wisdom that God, its living embodiment, has manifested throughout history, particularly in the liberation of the Israelites. The author also attacks idolatry in a way similar to Paul's scathing indictment in Romans (1:18–23; 12:2; 13:1, 5, 8; 14:4, 7). Some date the book around AD 40, which corresponds to when Emperor Gaius (Caligula)ordered his image erected in the temple. While the writer firmly believes in the inherent immortality of the soul, his doctrine is not in accord with the biblical statement in Daniel 12:2 or the teaching on the resurrection as expounded in the New Testament.

Once again, one is tempted to see the book's influence on the writer of Hebrews (cf., e.g., Hebrews 12:10–11 with Wisdom 3:5–6).

Baruch. The author is believed to have lived around the beginning of the Christian era. From a literary standpoint, Baruch is modeled after Old Testament prophetic writings. Though attributed to Jeremiah's faithful companion, at least two authors are responsible for its contents. There is a confession of Israel's sin, a treatise on the wisdom bound up with the Law, and a prophecy of the nation's ultimate deliverance and subsequent reestablishment in the promised land. The first part, written in prose, speaks of the captivity in Babylon and its underlying cause, sin. Following prayers for Israel's restoration, proverbial expressions, reminiscent of biblical wisdom literature, abound. Thoughts of consolation are often offset by laments, although the spirited message of victory prevails.

Some early Christian writers seized upon 3:37 as a text with overtones for Wisdom's incarnation.

Letter of Jeremiah. The letter (a companion piece to Baruch) was not sent by Jeremiah, nor is it, strictly speaking, a letter. Rather it is a sincere attempt by a concerned Israelite to guard his people against the folly of embracing a way of life below the standards of their ancient faith. Written perhaps as early as 300 BC, it is sermonic in character and repeatedly debunks the idolatry of the heathen by declaring, "Their idols are not gods" (vv. 16, 20, 30, 40, 44, 49, 52, 56, 64, 69).

Prayer of Manasseh. A devotional piece that first appears in literature around the third century of the Christian era. It contains a prayer of repentance and confession of sin that King Manasseh of Judah could have appropriately uttered when he was carried away to Babylon by the Assyrians (2 Chronicles 33:11–13). Someone, apparently unable to find the prayer alluded to in 2 Chronicles 33:19, composed a spiritual entreaty deemed suitable for the monarch. Though very brief, the work effectively speaks of the compassion God offers to all who are truly repentant. It sets forth the greatness of God's love as seen in his willingness to save a man whose vile fifty-five-year reign is characterized by the evaluation "He did much evil in the eyes of the Lord" (v. 6).

2 Esdras. This apocalyptic work circulated in the early Christian era and was the only one among many to become an accepted part of the Apocrypha. The heart of the book presents seven visions of the future, supposedly given to Ezra while in Babylon. Its slanted Jewish-Christian theology prophesies the rejection of the Jews in favor of the Christian church. The final chapters denounce sin and cite particular nations for their loathsome behavior. A poetic strain is discernible in the work despite its often bewildering and fantastic symbolism. The author's pessimism is counterbalanced by his belief in God's justice, mercy, and deliverance (16:67).

New Testament Apocrypha

Besides the fourteen books of the Old Testament Apocrypha, there were unknown authors whose influential works were produced from about the second century AD to perhaps as late as the ninth century. Their writings were largely modeled after the New Testament Gospels or Letters and sought to supplement, correct, or even replace established books of the New Testament. Where the four Gospels were silent, several apocryphal gospels

were written to resolve questions concerning our Lord's childhood and early adulthood. Such was the motivation giving rise to the Armenian Gospel of the Infancy, the Protevangelium of James, and the Gospel of Thomas. The Gospel of Nicodemus and the Gospel of Bartholomew delve into imagined events following Jesus' crucifixion and his descent into Hades. Some gospels indulge in false and heretical ideas. Pilate's guilt is presented in a less heinous light by the Gospel According to Peter, and the Gospel of the Egyptians advances the notion (later termed docetism) that Jesus only appeared to be a human being.

As therefore the Church reads the books of Judith, Tobit and Maccabees but does not receive them among the canonical Scriptures, so it also reads these two volumes (Wisdom of Solomon, and Wisdom of Jesus, the Son of Sirach) for the edification of the people, but not for authority to prove the doctrines of religion.[28]

—Jerome

Still others felt compelled to give more details concerning missionary activities, which Luke's account in Acts presents only in part. Such books include the Acts of John, the Acts of Paul, the Acts of Peter, the Acts of Andrew, the Acts of Philip, and the Acts of Thomas. In addition to the deeds they record, the authors moralize extensively to motivate the reader to deeper Christian piety. In the Acts of Paul, an account is given of the apostle's encounter with a ferocious lion in the amphitheater at Ephesus. This story of a talking "Christian" lion who befriends Paul in the arena bears a marked similarity to the old tale of Androcles attributed to Aulus Gellius around AD 160.

Certain documents imitated the form of the epistle, like 3 Corinthians and Paul's Letter to the Laodiceans (which early Syrian and Armenian churches regarded as canonical).

A number of entries bore the apocalyptic character of Daniel and Revelation, envisioning in great detail the future blessings of the saints as well as the awful judgments facing the unredeemed. Some apocalypses were

spuriously attributed to Paul, Peter, Thomas, and the early Christian martyr Stephen.

History and Usage of the Apocrypha

By and large, the early Greek-speaking church accepted the Septuagint in its entirety, including the Apocrypha. While some of the Greek fathers, such as Origen and Athanasius, limited the number of canonical books to those of the acknowledged Hebrew Old Testament, they nonetheless freely quoted from the Apocrypha in their teachings. Augustine (Bishop of Hippo, 396–430) accepted Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Ecclesiasticus, and Wisdom of Solomon along with the acknowledged Old Testament books. But the greatest biblical scholar of the Western church, Jerome (d. 420), drew a firm line between canonical and noncanonical books, using the word *apocryphal* to identify the latter. He considered the apocryphal books unsound for the formulation of doctrine, though he recognized that inspirational material could be found in them.

At the time of the Reformation, Protestants and Catholics differed sharply as to the relative worth of these books. The Catholic Church at its Council of Trent (1546) declared Tobit, Judith, the Additions to Esther and Daniel, Baruch, Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom, and 1 and 2 Maccabees to occupy an accredited place in the canon of Scripture. Protestants like Lutherans and Anglicans followed the position of Luther who, while denying the books' biblical authority, looked upon them as "profitable and good to read." Reformed churches, on the other hand, classified the books as having no value above any other human writings. That conviction was spelled out clearly in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), which said,

> The Books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are not part of the canon of the Scripture; and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings.

Nowadays, the Apocrypha is not found in most editions of the Bible. However, in the early days of English Bible printing, it was simply normative to find the Apocrypha in the text. The first English Bibles to exclude the Apocrypha were the Wycliffe Bible (1382) and some copies of the Geneva Bible of 1560, published at Geneva in 1599. Translators of the 1611 KJV translated the Apocrypha right along with the canonical books. A few years afterward, Archbishop Abbot issued a decree threatening a year's

imprisonment to any Bible printer deleting the Apocrypha. In 1644, Parliament ordered only canonical books to be read aloud in church, which may have contributed to a more lenient atmosphere for printers of Scripture in the following years.

The first Bibles printed in America in English (1782) did not contain the Apocrypha. In 1826, the British and Foreign Bible Society altogether discontinued printing Bibles with the Apocrypha. Among contemporary Protestants, only the Anglicans make use of the Apocrypha to any degree.

Evaluation

Notwithstanding a certain resemblance to biblical books, problems in the Apocrypha of authorship, historical accuracy, and spiritual integrity abound. Termed "Outside Books" by the rabbis, it is evident that the Hebrew people never considered these books worthy of canonical status. It is also evident that our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles accepted only that canon long recognized by their fellow Israelites. While certain parallel expressions are noticeable in the New Testament in conjunction with the wisdom literature (Ephesians 6:13–17 and Wisdom 5:17–20; Hebrews 11 and Ecclesiasticus 44), such correspondences do not indicate that the New Testament writers were dependent upon the Apocrypha for their inspiration.

The books of the Apocrypha were not rejected by the church at a special meeting of an ecclesiastical body. Rather, the unworthiness of the books became evident as God's people simply read them alongside those highly revered books already regarded as canonical.

Nonetheless, it is also true that the Apocrypha has a valuable contribution to make, especially in its enabling us to better understand the social, political, and religious climate of Jesus' contemporaries as well as those generations following his advent. We are particularly helped through the Apocrypha's insights into the life and thought of the Jewish people during that significant period of history immediately preceding the coming of Christ. There are, moreover, writings of abiding spiritual value that have often edified the saints and inspired the arts.

Walter A. Elwell, et al.

For Further Reading and Study

David A. de Silva, *Introducing the Apocrypha*

For online texts: http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-apocrypha

chapter 14
Background to the New Testament

✦

As responsible intrepreters, we should continue to engage in study of the world behind the text in order to better understand the world of the text and apply it to our lives.

—Lidija Novakovic

The New Testament represents a collection of twenty-seven individual books written in Greek during the first century AD. They are organized not chronologically but topically, although they follow the basic sequential outline of the events they address. At the beginning are four Gospels that describe the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. They are followed by Acts, which explains the birth of the church and the spread of its mission from Palestine through the Greco-Roman world.

The next section contains the letters of the apostles, thirteen ascribed to Paul, one anonymous (Hebrews), and seven to other apostles and their associates. These contain theological reflections on the meaning of the salvation history, culminating in Jesus Christ, and give ethical advice to believers. Revelation appropriately concludes the collection by offering a glimpse into the world to come.

The order in which these writings were written differs from this layout. Most likely, Paul's letters represent the New Testament's oldest material; even within that group itself, the organizing principle was not chronology but decreasing length. The writing of the Gospels was preceded by decades during which the Jesus stories were transmitted orally; they were eventually written down to preserve the accounts of his words and deeds for future generations, to strengthen the faith of specific Christian communities, to help them better understand the meaning of Jesus' ministry, and to assist them in bringing the good news to unbelievers. Each Gospel gives a different perspective on Jesus' life, even though Matthew, Mark, and Luke are most

likely literally interdependent. Most biblical scholars today believe Mark was written before the others, but Matthew was placed at the beginning of the New Testament because it emphasizes the link between the Old Testament and Jesus' ministry.

The New Testament came in a time and culture very different from our own. Our sources for this period are abundant, including the writings of Josephus, the works of Philo, various intertestamental books (Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha), rabbinic writings, such as Mishnah, Tosefta, Midrashim, and Talmud, Greek and Roman classical writers, and the New Testament itself. Moreover, numerous archaeological excavations have enriched our knowledge of how people lived and the customs they followed.

The New Testament authors wrote to readers living in the same culture, so even when they referred to events that took place in a different region—such as explaining the ministry of Jesus and his local followers to the Gentile audience living in Asia Minor—only a few terms had to be clarified. For modern readers, this sense of cultural immediacy is completely lost. In order to properly understand the New Testament message ("the world of the text"), we must study the background of the writings we want to analyze ("the world behind the text"). This includes the historical, social, and religious context of biblical authors, their readers, and the characters about whom they wrote.

At the same time, we must be aware that despite our lack of knowledge of the first-century milieu, we do not come to the text completely blank. For instance, most of us have heard at least something about the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Jewish sacrificial system, either from our pastor, in a Bible study class, or through popular Christian literature. Unfortunately, though, these channels frequently reinforce certain questionable stereotypes. In the following, an attempt will be made to address these issues by reviewing the most relevant aspects of the New Testament cultural background with the purpose of sketching the world in which Jesus lived and that in which the early church continued his ministry.

Historical Survey

Most biblical scholars today recognize that there was no sharp distinction between Palestinian Judaism and its surroundings; the Palestine of the first

century was permeated by and intermingled with Hellenistic ideas and practices. This can be traced back to Alexander the Great, whose attempts to bridge the gap between East and West brought Palestine into direct contact with the Hellenistic world. (There were certainly *contacts* between Judaism and Hellenism in the earlier Persian era—a period characterized by the absolute authority of the high priest, lasting from the exilic return in 538 BC until Alexander's conquest of Judea in 332—but there was no mutual *influence*.) Hellenistic influence, especially through Greek language, continued until the beginning of the second century BC; the most significant change in this direction came with the takeover of Judea by the Seleucids in 198.

Around this time, certain segments of Jewish society became increasingly attracted to Greek culture. The leading force of the pro-Hellenistic party was the house of Tobiads, Jerusalem aristocrats with significant financial power. For them, Jewish theocratic constitution, particularism, and isolation from the wider world were a burden that had to be overcome through the Hellenization process. To achieve this goal, they first influenced Jason, brother of the high priest Onias III, to buy the office of high priest from the Seleucid king Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) and gain permission for a Greek-style gymnasium in Jerusalem. Jason, however, was not an extreme Hellenist; the Tobiads soon became dissatisfied with him and replaced him with Menelaus, an unfit layman.

With this, the conflict between two influential families—the Oniads and Tobiads—became obvious. The majority public support for Jason's Hellenistic reform began to collapse with Menelaus, and the tension eventually led to civil war; this significantly contributed to Antiochus's decision to issue an edict in 167 BC that prohibited keeping the Jewish Law, such as observing the Sabbath and circumcising male babies, and imposed practices like making pagan sacrifices and eating pork. Those who refused to comply were persecuted.

In the subsequent revolt, Mattathias and his five sons provided leadership for the Hasidim (pious, orthodox Jews who adamantly resisted Hellenization) and convinced them to give up certain prescriptions, such as the prohibition to fight on the Sabbath. Judas, whose nickname was Maccabaeus ("hammer"), was the revolt's first leader. Originally, he had predominantly religious motives, based on zeal for the Law, and his initial goal was achieved in 164 with the rededication of the temple and the new

edict of Antiochus V in 163 that reestablished the Jews' former right to live by their ancestral laws. However, Judas and his brothers continued the now more ambitious struggle, with the goal of gaining complete political independence from the Seleucids.

In 152, Jonathan, Judas's brother and successor, became both military governor and high priest. His brother Simon, who succeeded him, finally achieved political freedom and took the title of king in 143. From that time until Pompey's conquest of Jerusalem in 63, the Hasmoneans (the family name of the Maccabees) were in power, uniting the offices of king and high priest. In terms of territorial scope, Hasmonean military campaigns expanded the borders of the Jewish state north and south of Judea until it almost reached the size of the Davidic and Solomonic kingdoms in the ninth century BC.

The Maccabean revolt had tremendous consequences. Positively, it prevented the introduction of polytheism and preserved monotheism. Consequently, Jewish particularity and its political and religious survival among the nations were maintained. Among the negative results were increased Jewish isolation and a development of anti-Semitism. Furthermore, Jews became extremely sensitive with regard to the Law and the temple. A new zeal significantly contributed to the development of Jewish factionalism, where various groups claimed to be the Law's only true interpreters and then accused the others of lawlessness or apostasy.

Although the Maccabees were remembered as champions of Jewish religious and political independence, their dynasty (Hasmoneans) was increasingly perceived as oppressive. The connection between religious and national elements was more acute and intricate after the war, which deprived the Jews of the ability to produce constructive theological criticism. Any attempt in this direction tended to be misunderstood and compared to Jewish apostasy during the conflict. In addition, even the Maccabees' violent fight against Greek culture couldn't eliminate it; Hellenism came in the back door through language, Greek cities in Palestine, pagan customs of Hasmonean rulers, and certainly Herod the Great. Hellenistic influence was probably more pervasive in the Diaspora (a dispersion of Jewish population living outside of their homeland), but its impact in the Jews' immediate area could no longer be denied.

The Hasmonean dynasty came to an end through the inability of Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, two sons of Queen Salome Alexandra, to

settle the dispute of who would inherit the throne after her death. Upon their invitation, Roman general Pompey entered Jerusalem in 63 BC; even though his arrival temporarily settled the brothers' internal struggle, the Romans had no intention of leaving. From then on, their presence had to be reckoned with, ultimately becoming the most dominant political feature of first-century Palestine.

At the beginning of the Roman dominance, however, another important figure emerged. Herod the Great was Idumean (Edomite), from a region south of Judea added to the Jewish state by the Hasmoneans through military conquest and forced conversion. Herod, like his father, Antipater, was always on good terms with Rome. Thanks to political slyness, administrative skill, and flagrant cruelty, he succeeded in convincing the Romans that he would be a reliable client if they supported him in his ambition to become king of the Jews. In 40 BC, the Senate awarded him this title, which he officially claimed three years later when he took control of Jerusalem. His rule was characterized by considerable political autonomy vis-à-vis the Romans, his personal paranoia—which drove him to execute even his most beloved wife, Mariamne, and their two sons—and enormous building projects, such as the rebuilding of the temple and the construction of several huge fortresses.

After Herod's death in 4 BC, Emperor Augustus divided Herod's kingdom into three parts and allotted them to his three surviving sons: Herod Archelaus got Judea, Samaria, and Idumea, which comprised half of his father's kingdom; Herod Antipas got Galilee in the north and Perea on the east of the Jordan; Herod Philip got the regions north and east of the Sea of Galilee. Because of his brutality and incompetence, Archelaus was deposed in AD 6, and, except for a very short period (41–44), these territories remained under direct Roman governance until the outbreak of the Jewish revolt in 66. Antipas's reign lasted much longer, until 39, when he was also deposed and exiled.

The reign of Philip, a half-brother of Archelaus and Antipas, ended with his death in 34. Since he died without sons, his territory was added to the Roman province of Syria, but Caligula, who became Roman emperor in 37, gave it then to Herod Agrippa, Philip's nephew and the grandson of Herod the Great. After the deposition of his second uncle, Antipas, Agrippa also got Galilee and Perea. In 41, Emperor Claudius, Caligula's successor, added Judea and Samaria to Agrippa's reign, which at this point comprised the

entire area that was formerly ruled by his grandfather, Herod the Great. His reign ended by his sudden death in 44 (see Acts 12:20–23) and was followed by direct Roman control of his territories.

Palestine in Jesus' Time
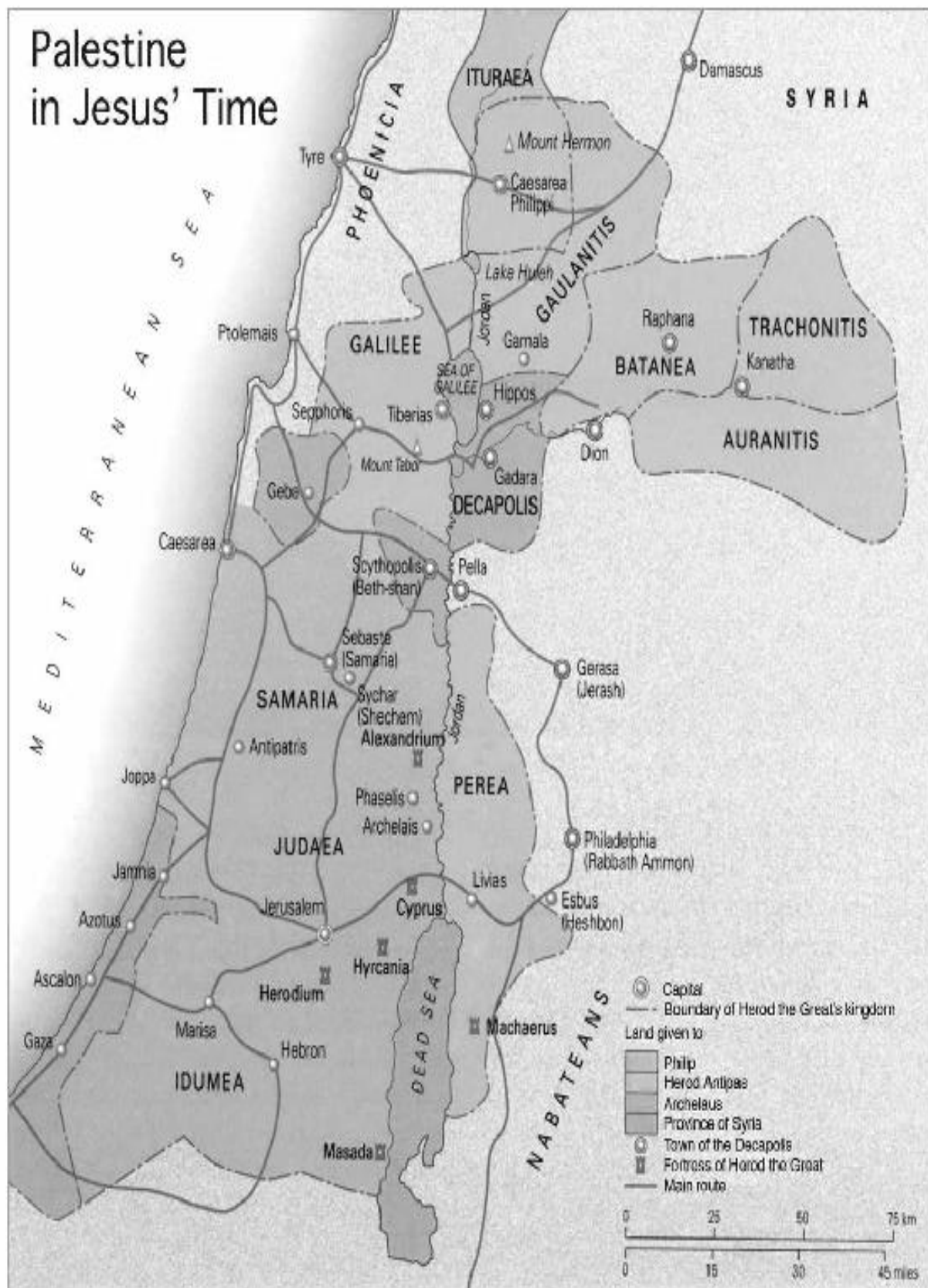
These political changes directly affected the life of Jesus, who was born in Bethlehem in Judea before the end of Herod the Great's reign, grew up and conducted much of his ministry in Galilee, governed by Herod Antipas, and was executed in Jerusalem, governed by the Roman prefect Pontius Pilate. Also, some of the most severe persecutions of Christians in Jerusalem took place during the reign of Herod Agrippa, who executed James, son of Zebedee and brother of John, shortly before the Passover in 44.

AD 66 marked the beginning of a wide-ranging revolt of the Palestinian Jews against Rome. Emperor Nero took action by sending troops under Vespasian's command to crush the uprising. This was basically accomplished with the fall of Jerusalem in 70, even though the fall of Masada (74) spelled the mission's final completion. The capture of Jerusalem was followed by mass slaughter and massive destruction of the city, including the temple.

Socioeconomic Aspects of Palestinian Judaism

The origin of the inhabitants of Galilee—a region that became part of the Jewish state in the second century BC through Hasmonean military expansion—is not entirely clear. Some scholars say they were the descendants of ancient Israelites, northern-kingdom inhabitants not dislocated by the Assyrians after the fall of Samaria in 722 BC; they allegedly preserved their Yahwistic beliefs based on the Pentateuch, even though they developed their own customs not shared by Judeans. Others deny their Israelite origin and argue that they were predominantly non-Jews.

A more compelling explanation, supported by both Josephus and archaeology, is that the ethnically diverse Galilean population was converted to Judaism by the Hasmoneans. A slight variation of this view is that following the Hasmonean invasion, Galilee was repopulated by predominantly Jewish migrants from Judea. In either case, Galileans in the time of Jesus recognized Jerusalem as their religious center and followed its customs, especially with regard to ritual purity. Significantly, however, Galilee had a substantial Gentile presence, especially in its cities. Sepphoris —Galilee's administrative center, located only five miles from Nazareth, where Jesus grew up—and Tiberias, Galilee's subsequent capital, built by Herod Antipas when Jesus was a young man, both serve as examples.

Galilee was predominantly an agrarian society that was markedly stratified. At the top of the hierarchy was Herod Antipas, who had a secured annual income from his territories, Galilee and Perea. He was supported by the loyal aristocratic class, composed of wealthy landowners, called the Herodians (Mark 3:6; 12:13; Matthew 22:16); in addition, Mark mentions his "courtiers and [military] officers and the leading men of Galilee" who attended the celebration of his birthday (6:21 RSV)—these also apparently supported him. The Gospels frequently note Jesus' scandalous association with the tax collectors, lesser officials in the bureaucratic system who worked for the governing structures by collecting taxes either for Antipas or for the Romans. Given the political and religious sentiment of the time, it is not surprising that they were detested by the lower classes and despised by religious purists like the Pharisees.

An ancient stone press used to produce olive oil
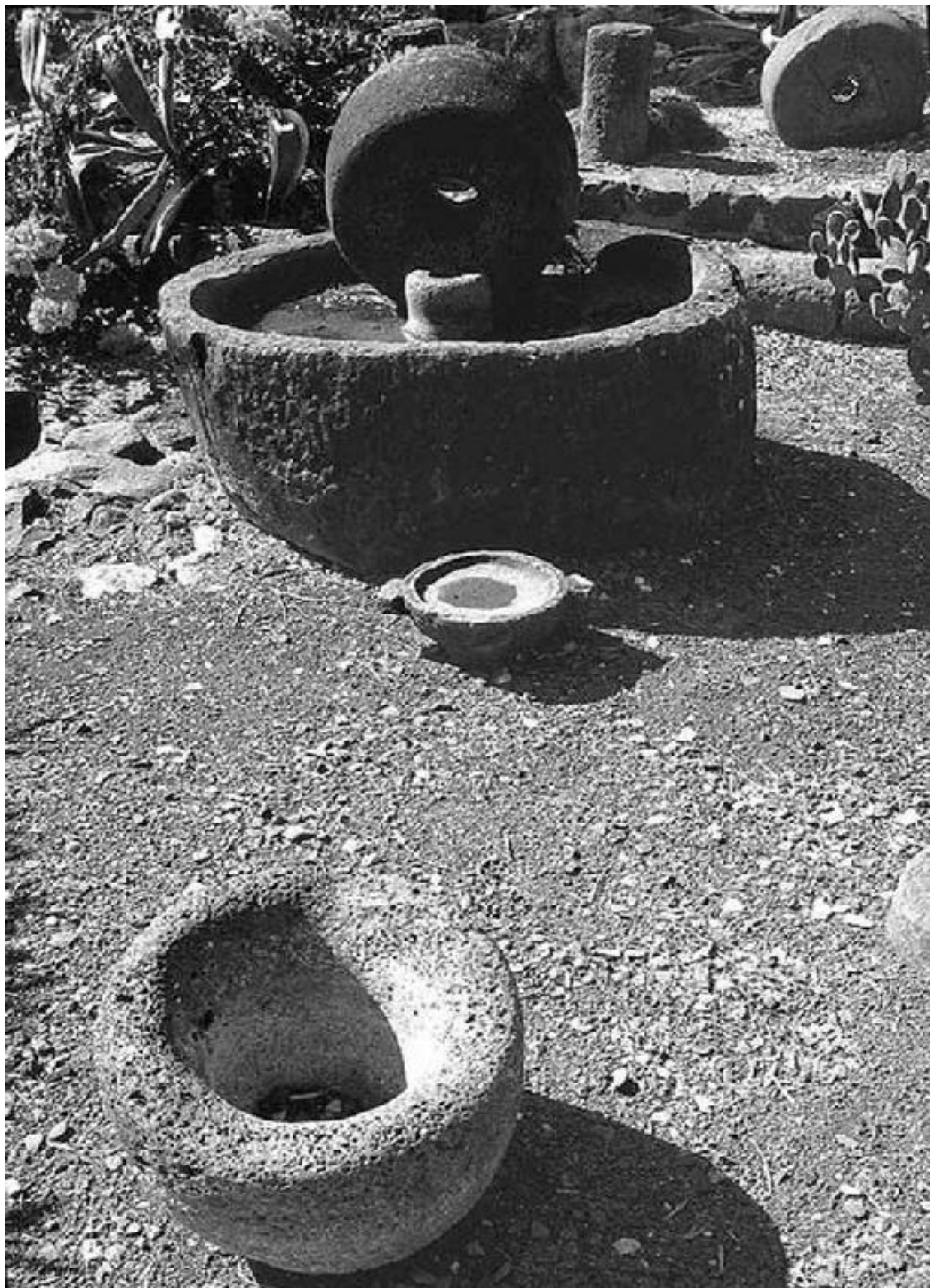
At the bottom of the social strata were peasants, either small landowners or laborers on large estates. Increased taxation had reduced many former landowners to poverty; some scholars even insist that the entire population could be divided into the haves and the have-nots, which kindled social turmoil, growth of debt, banditry, and popular protests. The Gospel accounts show that Jesus' ministry focused on rural areas and avoided big urban centers; it is very likely that many of his listeners were completely or nearly impoverished. His pronouncement of blessing upon the poor and his call to trust God's providential care for all attracted many who were destitute and had lost every hope that things could become better.

Even though the Samaritans—inhabitants of the region situated between Galilee and Judea—formed a distinct religious community, they were primarily defined through their ethnic and social background. The Jews regarded them as foreigners and avoided any social contact with them. According to 2 Kings 17, Josephus, and the rabbinic writings, after the Assyrians defeated the northern kingdom in 722 BC, they deported many Israelites and replaced them with non-Jews. Unlike their Judean neighbors who preserved their identity by resisting ethnically mixed marriage, the remnants of the northern tribes produced an ethnically diverse offspring and also developed a certain religious syncretism.

The main components of Samaritan theology did not differ much from mainstream Judaism: They worshiped the one God of Israel, had a strong sense of election, acknowledged the Law of Moses, and rigidly observed the Sabbath, circumcision, and festivals. However, they did not recognize the temple in Jerusalem as the center of religious life; they built their own on Mount Gerizim at the site of Shechem, the old northern sanctuary destroyed by the Hasmoneans. The Samaritans recognized only the Pentateuch as Scripture, and their version did not completely agree with that accepted by the Jews. Since the Samaritans did not acknowledge other Old Testament books, it is not surprising that their eschatological hopes focused on God's promise to send a prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18), the Messiah called *Taheb*. John indicates that when traveling from Judea to Galilee, Jesus neither evaded Samaria nor avoided interaction with its inhabitants, which apparently startled not only his Jewish contemporaries—including his own disciples—but also the Samaritans themselves (John 4:7–42).

Judea and its capital, Jerusalem, significantly contributed to the sense of unity of the first-century Jewry. The temple as the center of worship was the point of gravitation for both the Palestinian and the Diaspora Jews. Most Jews who did not live in Jerusalem visited at least once a year during the celebration of Passover, when the number of pilgrims could raise the Jerusalem population from approximately eighty thousand to three-hundred thousand. The temple itself, magnificently refurbished by Herod the Great, also functioned as a financial institution, holding significant wealth created through the collection of the temple tax (obligatory for every Jewish male), other donations, and private deposits. Archaeological excavations have also brought to light many grand buildings indicating that Jerusalem's aristocracy lived luxuriously. On the other side of the socioeconomic spectrum were the impoverished citizens and peasantry; the disparity created social discontent and significantly contributed to the increase of various types of turmoil, especially in the Judean countryside.

Jerusalem in the Time of Christ

Josephus' Third Wall

Kidron Valley

Fish Gate

Tower Gate

Sheep Pool
(Pool of Bethesda)

Antonia Fortress

Israel Pool

Sheep Gate

Tyropoeon Valley

Golgotha

Temple

Golden Gate

Warren's Gate

Beautiful Gate

Barclay's
Gate

Court of the
Gentiles

Ophel

Gennath Gate

Hulda Gates

? Palace of
Herod Antipas

Herod's Palace

Aqueduct

Valley Gate

UPPER CITY

Tyropoeon Valley

Gihon Spring

Hezekiah's Tunnel

House of Caiaphas

ESSENE QUARTER

Upper Room

LOWER CITY

Pool of Solomon

Gates of Essenes

Aqueduct

Pool of Siloam

Water Gate

Valley of Hinnom

Judeans additionally had to cope with the strenuous political realities of foreign rule. Since AD 6, they were directly governed by the Roman prefects, who resided at Caesarea on the coast but controlled Jerusalem through the military units permanently situated there as well as their own personal visits during festivals and other occasions. Judas of Gamala's uprising, in response to the Roman census at the beginning of their Judean administration, was caused by fears that this measure would lead to increased taxation and add to an already heavy economic burden. Judas's rebellion was brutally suppressed by the Romans, who defeated him and his followers and burned Sepphoris, where Judas temporarily seized a Roman armory. According to Josephus, Judas of Gamala was the founder of the so-called "Fourth Philosophy"—various armed groups that cherished exceptional passion for liberty. Other turbulences that occasionally erupted and eventually developed into wide-ranging rebellion against Rome, in AD 66, were partially instigated by the Roman governors themselves, some of whom were insensitive to Jewish religious sentiments and used every opportunity to satisfy their greediness. Pontius Pilate, prefect of Judea during Jesus' public ministry, was the first of the governors who gravely antagonized the Jews. All the Gospels report that he, as the representative of the Roman jurisdiction of Judea, had final say in Jesus' trial and eventually condemned him to death.

Jewish Religious Practices and Beliefs

The slightly unusual word order in this section's title indicates that the most important characteristic of early Judaism was not its doctrinal system but its way of life (i.e., not orthodoxy but orthopraxy). This does not mean the content of religious convictions was irrelevant—it formed the basis of religious practices. The second most important feature of first-century Judaism was its diversity: different groups had different views of what it meant to be a Jew and live according to God's will. Josephus, for example, mentions four "sects" or "schools of thought": Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and the "Fourth Philosophy" revolutionaries, such as Zealots, who advocated an active resistance to Rome. The Gospels reflect this state of affairs by showing Jesus frequently engaged in controversies with his contemporaries. From this, however, we should not conclude or infer that

these groups disagreed on every point of practice and belief: all of them shared a common core that the Gospels assume, but do not extensively elaborate, instead focusing on differences so as to explicate the uniqueness of Jesus' message. Also, that there were different groups in first-century Palestine does not mean the entire population was divided into parties. According to some estimates, based on Josephus's writings, there was a small number of Sadducees, roughly four thousand Essenes, and approximately six thousand Pharisees, which suggests that most ordinary people were unaffiliated. Our discussion of Jewish religious practices and theology will begin with the common core they shared.

Common Judaism. The prevailing view in early Judaism was that there should be only one temple—in Jerusalem—and that only there should sacrifices be made. The temple consisted of several areas organized according to the progressive levels of sanctity regulating the admission of various groups. The underlying rationale for such division was the understanding that God's presence dwelled in the holy of holies, which the high priest was permitted to enter, and that only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. The court of priests was reserved for the priests in temple service; the court of Israel was reserved for Jewish men; the court of women for women and children; the outer area was called the court of the Gentiles. Hereditary priests and Levites were responsible for preparing and making sacrifices, and estimates based on Josephus suggest there were approximately twenty thousand priests and Levites in the first century. The blood and fat of the animals were burned, and while the meat was usually used for food, occasionally whole animals were consigned to the altar.

The purity laws, which had little impact on ordinary daily life, but primarily regulated temple access, were for the most part not identical with the moral laws. Rather, they referred to a change of status with regard to life, death, and reproduction. For example, touching a corpse would make a person ritually unclean and unfit for temple worship; when caring for their dead, for the purpose of temple worship they went through the process of ritual purification. Other typical causes of ritual impurity were childbirth, menstruation, irregular discharge of blood, and emission of semen. In most cases, bathing through water immersion was required for ritual cleansing.

According to Exodus (23:17; 34:23) and Deuteronomy (16:16), celebration of three annual festivals was required:

1. Passover, in remembrance of the exodus from Egypt;
2. the Festival of Weeks, also called Pentecost or Feast of Firstfruits, in honor of God's ownership of the land and gracious care for his people; and
3. the Festival of Booths, or Tabernacles, at the conclusion of harvest.

It is, however, questionable whether an average first-century Jew could afford to make more than one trip to Jerusalem in a year. Though festival celebration was expected only of men, frequently women and children accompanied them, such as during the Passover celebration described in Luke 2:41–51, when the boy Jesus and his mother accompanied Joseph. In addition to these festivals when participants enjoyed good food, social interaction, music, and dancing, celebration of the Day of Atonement required fasting. The main celebrant was the high priest, who on that occasion made the sin offerings on the people's behalf and sprinkled blood from the sacrificed animals in the holy of holies.

In their homes, Jews worshiped God by reciting the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4–5), making daily prayers, studying Scripture, observing the Sabbath, eating kosher food, and circumcising their sons. They also gathered on a weekly basis in synagogues or houses of prayer to study Scripture and pray. Both Jesus (Mark 1:21; Luke 4:16–30) and Paul (Acts 13:15) frequently taught those assembled in the synagogues.

Underlying these practices was a common theology with the chief component of strict monotheism, which meant no toleration for any worship of other gods. Jews believed that God created and rules the world and that his acts are visible in human history. They also believed that God chose Israel and entered into covenantal relationship with his people by giving them the Law, obliging them to live obediently to his will as expressed in his commandments.

PHARISEES. The Pharisees are traditionally seen as representatives of a legalistic, self-righteous, hypocritical Judaism, the ones who condemned Jesus to death. Recent studies, though, emphasize their sincere dedication to the Law expressed through desire to apply its requirements to everyday life. It is certainly unfortunate that none of their writings prior to Jerusalem's destruction are preserved. Our main sources are the New Testament,

Josephus, and the rabbinic literature, such as Mishnah, Tosefta, and Talmud, a careful study of which generates a more sympathetic portrayal. Even the New Testament, which usually portrays the Pharisees as critical toward Jesus' practices—such as his occasional disregard of the Sabbath and purity laws—contains the traces of their positive appraisal. For example, Luke's Gospel mentions one occasion when they appear to be concerned for Jesus' safety (13:31), and recounts two cases when Jesus was invited to dine in the house of a Pharisee (7:36; 14:1); John's Gospel tells of Nicodemus, a Pharisee who was not only attracted to Jesus' teaching, but became a believer (3:1–21; 7:50–51; 19:39); John also mentions that some had positive attitudes toward Jesus and his teaching (9:16); if Gamaliel's speech recorded in Acts 5 represented the opinion of at least some Pharisees in Jerusalem, they seem to have adopted a relatively tolerant position toward the rapidly developing Christian movement.

The origin of the Pharisees is unclear, but most scholars regard them as spiritual descendants of the *Hasidim*, who had significant political influence under the Hasmoneans until they came into conflict with John Hyrcanus (reigned 134–104 BC). Their decline continued during the reign of Alexander Jannaeus (103–76), who executed many of them by crucifixion. They regained political power under his widow, Salome Alexandra (76–67), but were driven once more out of that area by Herod the Great, who was at first on good terms with them but later came into conflict with them after they predicted the end of his reign. The extent of their influence in the first century AD is still unsettled, especially in view of Josephus being virtually silent about their political involvement between 63 BC and AD 70. Some scholars believe they continued to function as an interest group that endeavored to reform society; others contend that they withdrew from political life and formed something like private eating clubs, where they met for common meals that implemented strict purity laws. A more balanced view takes into account Josephus's claim that the Pharisees were held in high regard among ordinary people, but underscores their lack of collective political might as neither members of the governing class nor a dominant societal force. In other words, they were ideologically popular but not politically influential. They had the leading role in the synagogues and engaged in various forms of scribal activity, especially with regard to legal matters, and their influence appears to have been much greater in Galilee than in Judea.

The Gospel accounts give additional support to this view. An attentive reader will notice that even though the Pharisees function as the main opposition to Jesus' ministry in Galilee, they practically disappear as an overt group in the accounts of his arrest, trial, and death in Jerusalem. In this vein they are explicitly mentioned only in the Gospel of John (18:3); Matthew, Mark, and Luke are virtually silent on their direct involvement in these events.

The Pharisees' social and economic structure concurs with this assessment: most were not aristocrats but laymen unilaterally devoted to the Law. Moreover, the extant literature mentions only a few cases when certain Pharisees were also priests engaged in temple service; some were small landowners, others merchants and traders. On the whole, they were laymen who studied Scripture on their own and formed their views accordingly. In the following, only their distinctive views will be mentioned, but it should be kept in mind that they shared with their contemporaries many beliefs described above under common Judaism.

The Pharisees were especially concerned with the purity laws. Mark 7:3–4 explains,

> The Pharisees . . . do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles. (NRSV)

Mark's reference to "tradition of the elders" corresponds to Josephus's remark that the Pharisees followed certain regulations handed down by former generations but not recorded in the written Law. This concern was usually expressed through the claim that they believed in the equality of written and oral Law. In the time of Jesus, there were two major subgroups: (1) Hillelites, named after Hillel, their founder, more liberal and adaptable to evolving circumstances, and (2) Shammaites, named after Shammai, Hillel's opponent, more literal and conservative.

The Pharisees believed in an afterlife, and, according to Acts 23:8, they believed in the resurrection of the dead. Josephus explains this to his Greco-Roman audience as a belief in the imperishability of the soul, which after death passes into another body that either will be eternally rewarded for a virtuous life or will suffer eternal punishment for a wicked life.

Josephus also ascribes to them a belief in both fate and free will, but he does not explain how these two interrelate. Paul, a Jew of Pharisaic

background, simultaneously affirms God's providence and human responsibility. For example, in Romans 8:29–30, he speaks about God's foreknowledge and predestination of those called according to his purpose, while two chapters later he emphasizes human voluntary acts, such as hearing and believing the preaching about Jesus Christ (10:14–17).

Sᴀᴅᴅᴜᴄᴇᴇs. Even though the main sources for information about the Sadducees are the same as for the Pharisees (New Testament, Josephus, rabbinic literature), a reconstruction of their practices and beliefs has a slightly different character: all information about them comes from their opponents. Hence, our description can be neither objective nor comprehensive. As with the Pharisees, only their distinctiveness will be emphasized.

The Sadducees were priestly aristocracy associated with the temple, even though only some were actually priests. Connected with the high priests by marriage or other social relations, they centered their interests in political life and represented nobility, power, and wealth. They enjoyed the support of political establishment but not of the general public; along with the disappearance of other aristocratic representatives, they ceased to exist as a group after the temple's destruction.

Josephus says the Sadducees were harsh in judgment and insisted on literal execution of the law of retaliation: "Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth" (Matthew 5:38). He also adds that in their behavior they were boorish and rude to their peers. Their theology was characterized by three features:

1. They recognized as the only authority the written Torah, rejecting the oral Law.
2. They denied the resurrection of the dead.
3. They affirmed free will.

It is usually assumed that the first feature explains the second—that is, they rejected the resurrection because they were scriptural literalists—but the matter was certainly more complex. Quite possibly their contentment with their earthly existence did not stimulate thinking about the afterlife, which created the interpretative framework for their understanding of Scripture.

The information provided by the New Testament supports Josephus's assessment. Both Mark 12:18–27 (and parallels) and Acts 23:8 affirm that the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. Also, Acts 4:1–6 and 5:17–18 portray them as leaders of the persecution of the first Christians in Jerusalem.

ESSENES AND THE QUMRAN COMMUNITY. Essenes are the only group not explicitly mentioned in the New Testament. In contrast to the Pharisees and Sadducees, sources for the Essenes and the Qumran community, especially if the latter is understood as a branch of Essenism, are readily available. The Essenes are described by Josephus, Philo, and Pliny the Elder; they are also mentioned by such Christian authors as Hegesippus, Hippolytus, Eusebius, Epiphanius, and Jerome. Moreover, after the twentieth-century discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, scholars obtained numerous manuscripts either written or preserved by the Qumran covenanters. In view of its sectarian theology and secluded life, this group most likely had a relatively minor impact on Judaism at large, and yet the unearthing of these documents belongs among our greatest archaeological discoveries because they help us better perceive the religious diversity of early Judaism. Moreover, exploration of the relationship between Qumran theology and the New Testament writings has only begun and has already yielded fascinating results.

According to Josephus, Essenes followed strict purity laws, were very attached to each other, disdained marriage, adopted orphaned children, carried nothing except arms for protection, did not swear, investigated diseases and sought medical remedies, were not internally secretive but were unwilling to disclose secrets to nonmembers, subjected candidates for admission to a two-stage process of examination, expelled members who committed certain offenses but sometimes took them back before starvation, were just and scrupulous in trials, were organized hierarchically and obeyed the elders, did not fear danger, and believed that the body is corruptible but the soul immortal and imperishable. Many of these descriptions correspond to the customs reconstructed on the basis of the Dead Sea Scrolls, strongly suggesting that they represented one branch of the Essenes.

The sectarian group that formed the monastic community at Qumran was quite distinct from other streams of Judaism, differing markedly from the official cult and theology represented by Jerusalem's priestly class. Their uniqueness can be ascribed to their origin and their relationship to the

temple: the Qumran community formed when a group of Zaddokite priests—most likely in response to the Hasmonean usurpation of the office of high priest—withdrew to the wilderness under the leadership of the Righteous Teacher. Most scholars believe this happened during the reign of Jonathan (i.e., middle-second century BC). They remained until obliteration by Roman troops in AD 68.

Determinism, predestination, and modified dualism probably represent the group's major beliefs, most elaborately exposited in the Rule of the Community (1QS 3.13–4.26), which asserts that the God of knowledge predetermined everything that occurs and that nothing can be changed. Creation represents the materialization of God's design and brings everything created under God's sovereign control. God created two spirits, the spirit of truth or light and the spirit of deceit or darkness, and allotted them to each human being according to his will. Accordingly, all people can be divided into two groups: the Sons of Light (Qumran community) and the Sons of Darkness (everyone else). There is no evil force equal to God in power; even though in the present the forces of light and darkness are at war, the final victory belongs to God, who stands at the beginning (creation) and the end (eschaton) as sole ruler of the universe.

Caves at Qumran, site of the discovery of the famed Dead Sea Scrolls

The members of the Qumran community did not advocate the presence of prophecy in their midst. They believed God's mysteries had been revealed to the prophets in the past but maintained that these were to be decoded in the present. This gift was given to the Righteous Teacher and his followers, so we can thus speak of a "double" or "progressive" revelation. It is therefore not surprising that we find many biblical interpretations (the so-called *Pesharim*) in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The status of a divinely inspired message is ascribed to both the contents of the *Pesharim* and to the *pesher* exegetical method. The unique feature of Qumran interpretation is that biblical prophecies were applied to the group's concrete historical situation (i.e., to those concrete persons situated in history). In that sense, Qumran interpretation shares many similarities with the New Testament writings.

Jᴇᴡɪsʜ Esᴄʜᴀᴛᴏʟᴏɢɪᴄᴀʟ Hᴏᴘᴇs. Many textbooks assert that most first-century Jews expected the Messiah. However, such an assessment of the available evidence is highly questionable. Early Jewish documents demonstrate that only certain circles, which should not be associated with any particular party or group, cherished eschatological hopes and that these hopes were quite diverse. Variations included the expectation of the end of the present world order, the restoration of national Israel, or the subjugation and expulsion of the Gentiles; their common characteristic is a qualitative difference between present and future. The coming age will be marked by the universal, permanent eradication of evil and the cosmic, eternal sovereignty of God.

Past scholars tended to read every eschatological text as messianic, without regard to whether a savior figure that can be properly called "Messiah" is mentioned. However, some end-time visions do not include any eschatological deliverer at all, or, if they do, such a figure can be a prophet, priest, king, or God himself. The references to a future Davidic king are far less frequent than one might expect. Generally, the term *Messiah* should be reserved for an anointed eschatological redeemer actually called "the Messiah" in the original text. Even so, application of this criterion should not be mechanical—early Jewish documents are diverse and contain various designations for a future deliverer. Such a figure can still be regarded as messianic if we possess evidence that the actual designation was associated with the term *Messiah*.

For example, the first and last sections of 1 Enoch (1–35, 85–105), written sometime between the second century BC and the birth of Jesus, speak of the

coming judgment and the future eon but do not mention any messianic figure. Yet in the main middle section (37–71), also known as the Parables of Enoch, written in the first century AD, the agent of God's judgment is a transcendent figure who combines the attributes and functions of the Davidic king and the Danielic Son of Man. In the first-century-AD Testament (Assumption) of Moses, the agents of the final judgment are a chief angel and God, rather than a human Messiah. The apocalyptic 4 Ezra, written after Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70, includes the expectation of Messiah, identified as a descendant of David, who will die after the reign of four hundred years, when the earth returns to primeval silence before the resurrection and judgment. The apocalyptic 2 Baruch, written shortly thereafter, contains three passages associating end-time events with the appearance of Messiah. However, the precise relationship between the messianic reign and the expected future world of incorruption is unclear. Moreover, there is a complete silence about the humanity and Davidic lineage of Messiah, who is probably a transcendent figure.

It is generally assumed that the Qumran community believed in the coming of two Messiahs—the priestly (Messiah of Aaron) and the princely (Messiah of Israel). However, the passages addressing this issue are not homogenous. In the Rule of the Community, for example, we find the *locus classicus* for the concept of two Messiahs (of Aaron and Israel), even though the text does not explain what they are expected to accomplish. However, all messianic passages in the Damascus Document contain the phrase "Messiah of (from) Aaron and Israel," which leaves open the question of whether two Messiahs are meant here or whether this could reflect a belief that both priestly and princely lineage will be unified in one person.

Psalms of Solomon, a collection of eighteen psalms, probably written after Pompey's conquest of Jerusalem in 63 BC, is the earliest extant Jewish writing that applies the term *Messiah* as a technical term to a deliverer of the Davidic line, who is also for the first time called the *Son of David*. Chapter 17 of this collection, which criticizes the Hasmonean usurpation of the Davidic throne, contains a prayer for a Davidic king based on God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:12–16. He is expected to purge Jerusalem from the Gentiles, drive out sinners, destroy unlawful nations, and gather the holy people. However, Messiah will destroy his enemies not by the horse or the bow (Hosea 1:7), but by the word of his mouth. His power comes from obedience to God, and he is thus not a sovereign ruler and does not act on

his own, but only according to God's will. The time of his coming is known only to God; he will be sinless, and his holiness and purity will be both the measure of his authority and the instruments of his power. His people will also be holy because there will be no more unrighteousness among them. In that sense, he shall be the perfect king.

In view of this diversity of Jewish eschatological hopes, it is not surprising that Jesus' contemporaries had difficulties discerning his messianic identity. The Gospel writers themselves use various terms to explain his messiahship, because his life for the most part did not correspond to popular expectations. Jesus' death on the cross was particularly offensive to the Jews because none of the expected messianic deliverers was expected to die so shamefully. We should always keep in mind that the term *suffering Messiah* is an oxymoron and expresses the foolishness of Christian claims (1 Corinthians 1:23); yet by raising Jesus from the dead, God has shown that, paradoxically, the one who was crucified as "King of the Jews" was indeed the expected royal Messiah who has fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies.

Religious and Socioeconomic Aspects of the Hellenistic World

As the early Christian movement spread from Palestinian soil to the Hellenistic world, it encountered slightly different religious and social circumstances. Ideas like the concept of "Messiah" were unintelligible to the broader audience and had to be explained. These people were polytheists who worshiped different gods; many believed in magic and served the spirits of the underworld. Especially popular were mystery religions, such as the mysteries of Eleusis or the cults of Isis and Osiris, which promised profound mystical experiences to initiates.

At the same time, there was a significant Jewish population throughout Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome. According to Acts, Paul would typically begin his missionary activity in new locations by teaching in the synagogues, which were attended not only by the Diaspora Jews but also Gentiles attracted to Judaism—God-fearers and proselytes. Both groups studied the Jewish Law and followed its commandments; the God-fearers did not accept

circumcision, while the proselytes did. In any case, Paul expected Gentile converts either to already have or to acquire some basic knowledge of Jewish Scripture in order to understand the significance of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

Greco-Roman society was characterized by hierarchical structures and clearly defined relationships between groups. In the family, which included parents, children, and slaves, the father (*paterfamilias*) was head of the household. The ideal was a benevolent patriarch who ruled justly and fairly. Wives were expected to accept their husbands' religion and not follow their own beliefs. Slavery was widespread, but though slaves were legally the property of their owners, they enjoyed certain social privileges: many were highly educated, they were permitted to own property, and most could expect to eventually be emancipated. Their social status, individual honor, and economic opportunities depended on the status of their masters.

A Roman coin bearing the likeness and inscription of Caesar Augustus

Modern readers are sometimes troubled by Paul's failure to challenge the patriarchal structure of his day or to criticize the institution of slavery. However, an attentive reader will discover that even though Paul was not a social revolutionary, his advice to husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and slaves contains the liberating message of Christian

proclamation: Every believer must lead a life of love and compassion, following Christ's example (Ephesians 5:21–6:9).

The world of Jesus and the early church is both strange and fascinating. The knowledge of its major characteristics as outlined in this essay is essential, but certainly not sufficient for detailed analysis of individual biblical passages. As responsible interpreters, we should continue to engage in study of the world behind the text in order to better understand the world of the text and apply it to our lives.

<div align="right">Lidija Novakovic</div>

For Further Reading and Study

Richard A. Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People*

Calvin J. Roetzel, *The World That Shaped the New Testament*

E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE*

J. Julius Scott Jr., *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*

Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Times*

A Survey of the New Testament

✦

We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true.

—1 John 5:20

The Gospels and Acts

Matthew

That we have records of the history of important people—great men and women, political, military, and religious figures—does not surprise us. That we have many records of the life of Jesus of Nazareth should be expected from the ripples that have kept moving through history since he walked on the Sea of Galilee. What may surprise us is that we have four linked-together accounts believed to be authoritative.

Documenting the Jesus story would be an enormous task for anyone who crossed his path. What to include, what to omit? Any narrative of this Jewish rabbi, then, becomes selective—does that make it biased or unreliable? Matthew, like any writer, made choices.

Traditionally, authorship is assigned to Matthew even though the book is anonymous. His account was the most widely read and quoted by the early church, and authenticity is assumed in absence of support for other theories.

The Jordan River

  Despite the challenge of selectively recording the most important life ever lived, Matthew makes no purpose statement, but the genealogy immediately connecting Jesus with Abraham and David is taken to indicate Matthew's

intent to demonstrate the relevance of Jesus to Jews—those converted to Christianity and perhaps also those not yet convinced. Because of the genealogy, this Gospel account is deemed "royal" and "messianic."

Peculiar to Matthew is the term *kingdom of heaven,* and he includes many references to Old Testament places, fulfillment of ancient prophecies, and the interaction of Jesus with contemporary Jewish institutions, ceremonies, and customs. Because sequences differ between Matthew and the other Gospels, scholars believe he organized some events around specific themes, but followed strict chronological order for the birth story and for Holy Week. His narrative style is brief, yet he includes lengthy speeches (Sermon on the Mount [5–7]; Parables of the Kingdom [13]; Denunciation of the Pharisees [23]; Discourse of the end of the age [24–25]). Matthew also includes fifteen parables, ten of which are found only in his account.

Outline of Matthew

Messiah's kingdom is prepared (birth, early life, beginning of public ministry, baptism, temptation)	1:1–4:16
Messiah's kingdom is announced (teaching and miracles)	4:17–16:20
Messiah prepares disciples for the coming kingdom	16:21–20:34
Messiah offers his kingdom (rejection, crucifixion, and ultimate triumph)	21:1–28:20

Mark

The early church viewed Mark's Gospel as the "memoirs" of the apostle Peter and as a more condensed version of Matthew, though some scholars in our times believe Mark was a key source for Matthew and Luke. Mark, also called John Mark, a relative of Paul's associate, Barnabas, was believed to have recorded the events Peter included in his teaching. Tradition says Mark composed his account in Rome near the end of Peter's life.

Mark's pace is rapid and without pause all the way to its closing comments. Like the other Gospel writers, Mark selected from the wealth of material in Jesus' life and ministry; he does not include Jesus' birth or early years, but begins with his entrance into public life and ministry as a rabbi. In Rome, a city with an extremely high percentage of slaves, Mark elevates Jesus by thematically describing him as the servant par excellence.

Mark announces that there is good news in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He makes no mention of Jewish laws or covenants but includes some explanation of Jewish customs and terminology. He translates Aramaic words into Greek, uses Latin equivalents to Greek terms, and makes few references to prophecy; all of this suggests that he had in mind Roman/Latin audiences—Christians or seekers.

Outline of Mark

Introduction to the great Servant	1:1–13
The never-ending ministry of the great Servant	1:14–13:37
The sacrificial death of the great Servant	14:1–15:47
The resurrection of the great Servant	16:1–20

Luke

Have you ever witnessed or participated in a world-changing event? As memorable as the experience may be, remembering each detail becomes more difficult as time passes. Twenty or thirty years later, circulating stories begin to confuse basic truths, mislead hearers, and cloud crucial issues. If you wanted to set the record straight and were not an eyewitness, you might begin an extensive process of investigation to collect, validate, and organize the pertinent information. Such is the motive and the method behind Luke's Gospel.

The garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed before his arrest and crucifixion

Luke's is the longest Gospel account, the most comprehensive by intention, and although it is anonymous—as are the others—there are clues to its authorship. Tradition supports Luke as writer, largely due to the connection between this Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles; both are dedicated to Theophilus, and Acts refers to a former document (apparently Luke's Gospel). The author of Acts references himself periodically

beginning in chapter 16. Of all Paul's named companions and colleagues, Luke is the logical candidate (cf. Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:11).

Luke's account carries the unique perspective of a non-eyewitness who knew the eyewitnesses. In addition to knowing Paul, he had met Peter and other apostles; during Paul's two years of imprisonment in Caesarea, Luke would have been able to travel and conduct interviews. Luke includes much material not found in the other Gospels (e.g., 6:20–8:3; 9:51–18:14); he substitutes Greek words for Aramaic terms and explains local sites and Jewish culture. His chronology is thorough, and his style reflects familiarity with classic Western writings of the time. The language is suited to Gentiles —Luke was himself probably a Gentile.

Outline of Luke

Jesus' early life (birth, baptism, temptation)	1–3
Jesus' activities	4–21
Jesus' last days on earth (entering Jerusalem, betrayal, crucifixion, resurrection)	22–24

John

John's Gospel, quite different from Matthew, Mark, and Luke (the Synoptics), holds a special appeal for the church and for the casual reader. Its soaring opening statements illustrate how something simple can also be profound; its style and vocabulary are limited, but its sentiments are universal. John's account is distinguished by extensive personal glimpses of several characters, long speeches of Jesus, and lengthy conversations. John alone includes the stories of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha, and Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus, teaching at the Last Supper, and interaction with Peter at the Sea of Galilee.

Like Luke, John states a purpose (20:30–31): he intentionally selected episodes from all the available material to demonstrate that Jesus is God's Son so that readers will put their trust in him and receive life. The fourth Gospel is anonymous like the others, but support for the traditional view is as great as for any part of the New Testament. Donald Guthrie notes that the author appears to be a member of Jesus' inner circle.[1] The author possesses an exact knowledge of Palestine and Jewish customs, along with vivid details (chapter 2—the number of jars, and chapter 21—the number of fish)

to suggest an eyewitness. Church tradition connects the author with the writer of 1 John; together these documents demonstrate the dramatic transformation for this former "Son of Thunder."
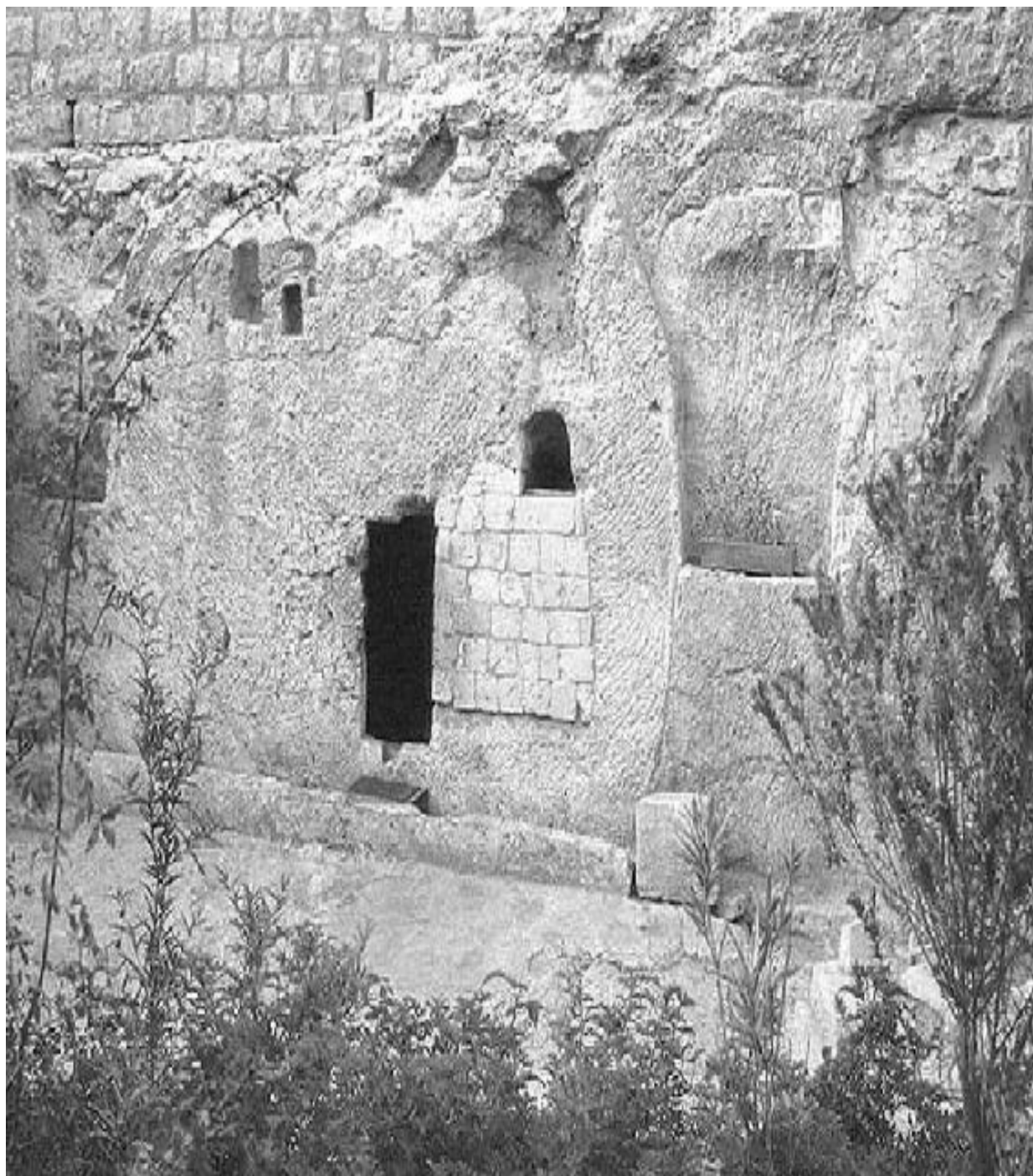
The garden tomb, traditional burial place of Jesus of Nazareth

John's Gospel contains public miracles (called "signs") and discourses, for the most part not included in the Synoptics—only the feeding of the five thousand and Jesus walking on water are in all four. John's chronology is more detailed and more selective; he mentions three Passover festivals to their one; he includes four visits to Jerusalem to their one; the Synoptics include events from fifty days of Jesus' life, but John includes only twenty days—less than 2 percent of Jesus' public ministry. In John's Gospel, the church cherishes the fragrant aroma of the Savior's life and ministry.

Outline of John

Prologue—explaining the Word	1:1–18
Jesus' public ministry—miraculous signs, conversation with Nicodemus, the woman at the well, triumphal entry into Jerusalem	1:19–12:50
Jesus' private ministry—with disciples in last week before death	13:1–17:26
Jesus' public trial and execution	18:1–19:42
Jesus' resurrection	20:1–31
Jesus' post-resurrection appearances to the Twelve	21:1–25

The Acts of the Apostles

Acts claims to be "Part Two" of a series, and its author was identified as Luke within a century of its writing. Both Acts and Luke's Gospel are addressed to Theophilus. The author appears in the story of Acts as an associate of Paul (see under "Luke" above).

First-century documents were written on papyrus sheets; the largest practical size was about thirty sheets attached together and then rolled up. Acts and Luke would each fill one scroll, and together they comprise about 25 percent of the New Testament.

Inspiration (see chapter 1) does not rule out the use of sources—Luke had them for his Gospel and no doubt used them in writing Acts. Because communication and transportation were firmly established in the Mediterranean world of his day, Luke would have been able to interview eyewitnesses and use his own journals to produce reliable texts. Paul's two years in prison in Caesarea would have provided Luke time to travel and investigate what he had not personally witnessed.

Studying Acts is critical to understanding the New Testament; Acts, which complements Paul's letters and allows us to place them historically, is the only biblical book that significantly details early church life. Showing Christianity to be Judaism's heir but distinct from it, Acts could be an apologetic aimed at both Jews and Romans; its author may also have intended to demonstrate that Christianity was no threat to government.

Acts does not mention most of the apostles, and after chapter 12 focuses almost exclusively on Paul. There is no mention of the deaths of Peter or Paul, and the latter's imprisonment in Rome is described as two years—a fact that would be known only if it had already ended. The abrupt conclusion to the book must mean the story of the church is not yet finished!

Outline of Acts

Jesus' witnesses in Jerusalem: Coming of the Spirit, healing and persecution, purity and service	1–7 (1:8 is the key)
Jesus' witnesses in Judea and Samaria: Preaching, persecution, conversion of Saul, prison for Peter, death of James (John's brother)	8–12
Jesus' witnesses to farthest parts of the earth	13–28
Saul and Barnabas: Journey #1	13–14
Council in Jerusalem	15
Paul and Silas: Journey #2	16–18
Paul: Journey #3	18–21
Paul in prison: two years in Palestine	22–24
Paul in prison: two more years in Rome	25–28

The Epistles of Paul

Romans

In the first century AD, Rome was the largest city in the Western world, with close to four million residents; slaves accounted for nearly half the city's population, which was relatively peaceful and prosperous. Jews, first brought to Rome by Pompey in 63 BC, were often set free because of their stubbornness and were later expelled from Rome by Claudius (Acts 18:2).

Rome was generally polytheistic, but most local religions had fallen into contempt, allowing opportunity for religions from neighboring regions.

Judaism's ethical monotheism attracted many Gentiles, even if they did not practice its rituals.

Paul's letter to the church in Rome does not indicate how it came into existence, but founding theories include a visit by Peter, or Jews from Rome who had been in Jerusalem at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2), or believers who came from cities where churches had already been started. However it began, Paul seems to have had regular communication with the church, or at least reports about it. That he wanted to visit Rome for many years is clear from his opening comments, but he had not done so when he wrote the letter. Nevertheless, he seemed familiar with individuals in the church and knew they had several meeting places. The church appeared to be healthy and was known far and wide (Romans 1:8).

Paul wrote to the Romans from Corinth, near the end of his third journey (Acts 20:1–3, Romans 15:25), en route to Palestine to deliver financial gifts for the poor. His eventual visit was delayed nearly five years because of imprisonment, so that his meeting with the Jewish leaders in Rome (Acts 28) suggests the church had achieved an identity independent of Rome's Jewish communities.

Paul's First Two Journeys

First Journey →

Second Journey ······

Written to believers Paul had not actually met, Romans is not as personal or anecdotal as earlier letters (Galatians, Thessalonians, Corinthians), but is didactic in nature, universal in scope, systematic in approach, and free from the emotions of difficult scenarios. It is probably the most read and studied of the New Testament letters and provides the most thorough explanation of God's saving grace in Jesus Christ.

Outline of Romans

Introduction, Paul's qualifications, desire to see the Roman believers	1:1–17
The true human condition and need for Christ's work on the cross	1:18–3:20
The doctrine of Christ's sacrificial death	3:21–5:21
The opportunity and obstacles of living life with Christ	6:1–8:39
The "Jewish question": Why have so few believed?	9:1–11:36
The challenges of this new life	12–16

1 Corinthians

The New Testament letters distinguish Christianity's writings from those of other religions. They are not strictly essays, and while they contain teaching, their primary purpose was to provide immediate correction or instruction, making their structure secondary to their content. Because of Paul's letters (in addition to the Acts 18 narrative), today's readers know more about the church in Corinth than any other congregation from the apostolic era.

Corinth was an important trade center, strategically located and multicultural in character (Romans/Italians, Greeks, and Asians). *Corinthian* carried negative moral implications, which posed a potential new challenge to Paul and the gospel, and later became a source of trouble for the church.

Paul arrived near the end of his second journey, before returning to Jerusalem via Ephesus. His experiences in Europe were not unlike those in Asia; opposition invariably followed close on his heels and brought persecution to new believers. Paul may not have expected to stay long in Corinth (Acts 18:1–11), but God encouraged him through a vision, foretelling significant results.

Compared to a few days in Philippi, and a few weeks or months in Thessalonica, Corinth became a place of settled ministry for Paul. There he followed his normal strategy for nearly eighteen months, first visiting the Jewish synagogues, then withdrawing to a private home following Jewish

opposition. He found employment and formed a lifelong relationship with tentmakers Priscilla and Aquila; financial gifts from the Philippian church enabled him to devote more time and effort to teaching and evangelism. New converts came primarily from the lower social and economic strata.

When Paul finally departed for Ephesus, the new believers had unresolved issues and questions. First Corinthians includes his reply (7:1; 8:1, 12:1; 16:1) and addresses serious moral breaches in the church. The proximity of Corinth and Ephesus permitted easy travel and communication; this was neither the first letter Paul would write to them (5:9) nor the last.

Outline of 1 Corinthians

Greetings and thanksgiving	1:1–9
Evaluation of the faults within the church	1:10–6:20
Responses to questions from the Corinthians	7:1–11:1
Appraisal of additional faults in the church	11:2–34
More responses to questions	12:1–14:40
Correction and teaching on the resurrection	15:1–58
Further answers to questions and closing comments	16:1–24

2 Corinthians

Second Corinthians is considered one of Paul's more personal (autobiographical) and pastoral letters. The deep emotions revealed through style and structure, the detailed defense of his ministry, and the appeal to the believers reveal his desire to see them translate God's truth into daily living. What transpired between 1 and 2 Corinthians? It is not easy to reconstruct a foolproof chronology, but those events hold the key to understanding this letter.

After Paul founded their church (Acts 18), he left for Ephesus and stayed nearly three years (19–20); when he wrote 1 Corinthians, he planned to leave Ephesus in the spring and visit Corinth on his way to Macedonia and again on his return (1 Corinthians 16), but he changed his plans and sent Timothy in his place (v. 10). Paul traveled to Macedonia (2 Corinthians 2) having also sent Titus to Corinth to initiate a collection for the poor in Palestine (8:6–7); when Titus rejoined Paul, his report of the conditions in the Corinthian church became the immediate cause for this letter. Titus then returned to Corinth, carrying 2 Corinthians with instructions to complete the collection for the poor.

Paul later came back to Corinth and spent three months before departing for Jerusalem with their gifts. While contemporary scholars do not dispute Paul's authorship, some question the letter's unity; even though it contains a lengthy description of Paul's interaction with the church, a special defense of his apostolic authority is included in chapters 10–13. A challenge for the serious student: Was 2 Corinthians written all at once, or were its individual parts put together over time?

Outline of 2 Corinthians

Introduction	1:1–11
Explanation of trials and of God's comfort	1:12–7:16
Details of planned travels and actual itinerary	1:12–2:17
Details of ministry motives and methods	3:1–5:19
Appeals for cooperation and courage to face the future	5:20–7:16
Request for completion of the offering	8:1–9:15
Defense of ministry, apostolic authority, beliefs, and practices	10:1–13:10
Concluding comments	13:11–14

Galatians

At the end of the journey that had included visits to Cyprus and the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe in modern-day Turkey (Acts 13–14), Paul and Barnabas retraced their steps and revisited their "spiritual children" to confirm them in their faith experience. Now Paul organized them into groups and appointed leaders (14:21–25).

However, as the sun set on this remarkable adventure, Paul heard that some in Galatia who embraced Christ were deserting him for a different message. Envious, opposing parties planted their own seeds in the same fertile soil that had welcomed the gospel; foes were attempting to divert the young believers from the joy of God's grace by poisoning them with a detailed system of religious behavior based on ancient Jewish ceremonies—a system usually called legalism. This doctrinal "departure" occurred very quickly (Galatians 1:6) after Paul's visit; his long stay in Antioch at the close of his first journey (Acts 14:28) provided time to learn of the problem and write this letter.

Clearly frustrated, Paul sent this letter to the churches he had just established. While Luke does not use the term *Galatia* in Acts 13–14, he does in Acts 16:4–6, when he records that Paul and Silas traveled from

"town to town" to strengthen the churches. The events of Paul's life as described in Acts can suggest a date of 48 or 49 AD for Galatians.

ITALIA
Rome
ADRIATIC SEA
Puteoli
MACEDONIA
Philippi
Thessalonica
AGEAN SEA
Troas
Mitylene
MYSIA
PHRYGIA
GALATIA
ASIA
SICILIA
Rhegium
ACHAIA
Corinth
Athens
Ephesus
Miletus
Iconium
LYCAONIA
CILICIA
Syracuse
Cnidus
LYCIA
PAMPHYLIA
Patara
Myra
Tarsus
Antioch
MALTA
Rhodes
SYRIA
CRETE
Salmone
CYPRUS
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
CAUDA
Sidon
Tyre
Ptolemais
Caesarea
Jerusalem

Paul's Third & Fourth
Journeys

Third Journey ·······
Journey to Rome ⟶

Greetings and expression of surprise at believers' fall into legalism	1:1–10
Authority, experiences cited to validate Paul's message and mission	1:11–2:21
Message of grace fleshed out	3:1–4:31
Challenge to live as God intends	5:1–6:18

Ephesians

Ephesus, located in what is now Turkey, three hundred miles from Corinth by sea, was Western Asia's greatest city, ranking with Antioch in Syria and Alexandria in Egypt among Mediterranean commercial centers. Ephesus was a "free city," meaning it had its own government. Though it was not the provincial capital, it was nevertheless important to Rome. Ephesus boasted one of the ancient world's seven wonders, the Temple of Diana, which figures prominently in the story of Paul's ministry there.

How the Ephesian church came to life is unknown, but Paul left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus after his brief first visit (Acts 18); Apollos then came and conducted a powerful ministry before Paul spent much time there. On his next visit (19), after three months of synagogue debates, he established a ministry center in the school of Tyrannus, his operations base for over two years. He later taught the Ephesian elders at Miletus prior to his capture (by Jewish agitators) and imprisonment; after his apparent release, he revisited Ephesus and assigned his associate Timothy to remain there (1 Timothy 1:5).

In spite of his longstanding relationship with them, scholars consider this letter Paul's most impersonal. Ephesians, like Colossians and Philemon, was delivered by Tychicus and was apparently written during his imprisonment in Rome. What prompted Paul to write? False teachers spawned Colossians; a runaway slave brought about Philemon; Ephesians is not defensive or polemic but positive in tone, and the absence of personal references makes it universal in its appeal, with emphasis on the body of Christ.

Outline of Ephesians

Greetings	1:1–2
What God has done for believers in Christ	1:3–3:21
What God desires for believers in Christ	4:1–6:20
Final greeting	6:21–24

Philippians

Philippi, a fortified outpost in northern Greece, was intended to protect Rome from barbarians. Its largely agricultural and military character did not attract many Jews; a synagogue was noticeably absent. Paul's ministry began with a few people (mostly women, some of whom were converts to Judaism) at a quiet riverside park. In violation of Roman law, Paul, a Roman citizen, was once unjustly beaten and imprisoned overnight.

Without specific chronological New Testament milestones, readers may fail to recognize that more than ten years elapsed between Paul's first visit and his letter to Philippi. Those years included thousands of miles of travel on Roman roads and sea voyages across the Mediterranean, yet Paul maintained continuous communication with the church and received repeated financial gifts from them for his ministry.

Paul was apparently joined by Luke prior to reaching Philippi ("we," Acts 16:10), and may have left him there (16:39–40) when he and Silas were escorted from the city. Paul later traveled through Macedonia, no doubt stopping at Philippi.

When the churches were curious about Paul's well-being during his imprisonment, Philippi sent Epaphroditus to visit Paul in Rome. Epaphroditus became ill and could not return until he regained his health and strength. When he did go home, he carried this letter from Paul, which provided an update on Paul's case (he expected to be released), an expression of Paul's affection for the church, and the explanation for Epaphroditus's delay.

Outline of Philippians

Greetings	1:1–2
Recollected history of their relationship, status report	1:3–26
Faithfulness encouraged, plans for Paul's associates to visit	1:27–2:30
Warnings about errors, appeal for unity	3:1–4:9
Thanks for financial gifts, final greetings	4:10–23

Colossians

Many of Paul's letters can be connected to his travels, but nothing is stated about Paul visiting Colossae, a city then just past its prime in mountainous Phrygia, one hundred miles inland from Ephesus. Paul's long residence in

Ephesus no doubt led to the formation of other regional churches (1 Corinthians 16:19), in this case through a local man named Epaphras (Colossians 1:7).

Colossians is one of a small group of letters in which Paul refers to himself as a prisoner. Four years of incarceration did not prevent him from continued correspondence with his friends; he also entertained visitors in Rome (Acts 28) during the years that served as backdrop for the "Prison Epistles." Because Colossians (4:7), Ephesians (6:21–22), and Philemon were delivered by the same courier, it appears they were written closely together.

Although Paul had not yet visited Colossae, his relationship with believers there led him to acknowledge his friendship with Philemon and with mutual acquaintances in Rome who sent greetings, including their own Epaphras. Because the letter is largely devoted to the person and work of Christ and offers several warnings to the believers, commentators believe Epaphras reported moral and philosophical temptations making inroads among the congregants. Colossians provided what the church needed to refute false claims, maintain the truth, and stabilize community life. The letter shows Paul's concern, but he does not appear alarmed, as in his letters to Corinth or Galatia.

Outline of Colossians

Greetings	1:1–2
Thanks to God, prayer for the believers	1:3–1:23
Defense of authority, identification of false teachings, exhortation to faithfulness	1:24–3:4
True habits of the faithful in Christ	3:5–4:6
Personal greetings, farewell	4:7–18

1 Thessalonians

Paul's first journey (Acts 13–14) demonstrated that following God's will may include bumps along the way. After a time of rest (15:36), Paul intended to visit new believers in Asia (modern Turkey) but ended up in Macedonia. Following fierce opposition and harsh treatment in Philippi, Paul and Silas continued ninety miles west to Thessalonica, a large, prosperous city, where they again implemented their strategy of visiting Jewish synagogues and explaining the message of Christ. After three weeks, some Jews and a large number of Greeks and prominent women joined

them, and Paul apparently relocated his ministry to the home of Jason. He worked to support himself (1 Thessalonians 2:9), and the church at Philippi sent him at least two financial gifts (Philippians 4:16).

Antagonists eventually came to Jason's house, charging that Paul was dangerous to Rome because he proclaimed another king—Jesus. Because the mob did not find Paul or his companions, they took Jason to the magistrates. (The letters to the Thessalonians were likely written from Corinth and are dated by Gallio's proconsulship [Acts 18: 12–17], c. AD 51, 52.)

The believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea at night, but the opposition soon followed. Paul then traveled alone to Athens and on to Corinth, where Silas and Timothy met up with him. Paul's concern turned to relief and resulted in 1 Thessalonians, a letter whose theme is the kingdom of God, no doubt the subject of Paul's teaching in Thessalonica.

Outline of 1 Thessalonians

Introduction, commendation, thanksgiving	1:1–10
Defense of ministry, God's work in the believers through Paul	2:1–3:5
Encouragement to continue in the faith, instruction for holy living	3:6–4:12
The coming of the Lord, and a call to persevere	4:13–5:11
Farewell, with final instructions and encouragement	5:12–28

2 Thessalonians

Why would Paul write back-to-back letters to a new church in Thessalonica? His history with them began with three weeks of dialogue in the synagogue and continued during his ministry from Jason's house. First Thessalonians was written shortly after Paul's nighttime exit from the city. His anxious concerns were relieved by Timothy's report, but what happened next?

Paul's first letter likely had some effect on the church—perhaps the courier remained in the city to assess the situation, then returned to Corinth with an update. Paul's request for prayer (3:2) connects this letter to his earliest days in Corinth and his awareness of continued opposition. His greeting indicates that Silas and Timothy were still with him in Corinth. (Acts gives no evidence that Paul revisited Thessalonica.)

Second Thessalonians, which gives no direct reference to questions or correspondence from the church, was occasioned by recent prophetic messages and the Thessalonian responses (2:1–2). Paul had taught them to

respect prophecies (1 Thessalonians 5:20), but this new report, purporting to be from Paul, claimed that the day of the Lord had already come. (Paul's initial teaching of another king and kingdom, plus 1 Thessalonians, show that this great day was a central theme.)

While 1 Thessalonians suggests the church's troubles were largely external, 2 Thessalonians makes it clear that as time passed, they faced growing internal issues. This letter seeks to realign their beliefs and redirect their daily behavior. The reference to the "man of lawlessness" (2:3) is frequently quoted in early church writings and firmly establishes the authenticity of 2 Thessalonians.

Outline of 2 Thessalonians

Affirmation of the Thessalonians' faith and devotion	1:1–11
Correction about day of the Lord, Thessalonians' manner of life	2:1–12
Encouragement to stand firm; practical instruction	2:13–3:18

1 Timothy

Paul's ministry strategy included an ever-changing number of apprentices and trusted companions with whom he worked to multiply the gospel's impact. Timothy was one of Paul's earlier associates—a youth of mixed race enlisted at the beginning of Paul's second journey (Acts 18). They remained closely associated for nearly twenty years, but this letter doesn't seem to fit anywhere in the time frame established in Acts 13–28.

Paul had traveled to Macedonia after leaving Timothy in Ephesus to complete unfinished tasks (1:3). Was Paul released from prison at the end of Acts? This seems to be the crux of the issue; Paul anticipated being released (Philippians 1:19–20), and that possibility has given rise to various ideas about Paul's possible movements.

Timothy, though, was facing a challenge. Paul had predicted difficulties (Acts 20) even though he had taught in Ephesus for nearly three years during his third journey (19). Timothy's duty brought him face-to-face with the important issues of leadership and local church ministry, making this warm and tender letter a "pastoral epistle." Likely written from Macedonia, the subject matter is church order and discipline and suits Timothy's role as Paul's personal representative. (The situation doesn't exactly match modern

church job descriptions; Timothy was neither a pastor, an elder, nor a bishop.) This letter armed timid Timothy for the road ahead.

Following is a possible scenario of Paul's post-Acts travels:

1. Paul is acquitted at Rome.
2. Paul sends Timothy to Philippi as promised (Philippians 2:19–23).
3. Paul travels to Asia by sea, visiting Colossae as promised (Philemon 22), returning to Ephesus.
4. Paul is reunited with Timothy in Ephesus, but later travels to Macedonia, leaving Timothy behind (1 Timothy 1:3).
5. Paul travels to Crete, where Titus remains (Titus 1:5).
6. Paul travels to Corinth and meets Apollos and Zenas, who later deliver his letter to Titus (3:13).
7. Paul spends the winter in Nicopolis with Titus (3:12).
8. Paul travels to Spain as hoped (Romans 1).
9. Paul returns to points east, namely Troas (2 Timothy 4:13), Miletus, and Corinth (2 Timothy 4:20).
10. Paul is imprisoned again in Rome, then executed.[2]

Outline of 1 Timothy

Greetings	1:1–2
Timothy's duty to oppose false teachers	1:3–20
Timothy's duty to establish church order	2:1–3:16
Personal advice on apostasy and communities within the church	4:1–6:2
Final warnings and benediction	6:3–21

2 Timothy

Paul's final curtain was about to drop. Prior experiences (along with intuition and divine revelation) had previously led him to believe he would be released one more time, but not now. As the end drew near, Paul's confidence grew, but he still longed for the familiar and trusted. He remained faithful to the known yet unseen, banking everything on the hope of life to come.

Paul wrote 2 Timothy from prison, once again in familiar territory (see notes on 1 Timothy, above, for possible scenarios). When was the letter written? The era contains many well-dated events, including July 19, AD 64, when a great fire started in Rome and lasted six days and seven nights. More fires occurred a few days later, and half of Rome's city "wards" burned to the ground. Nero, who reputedly was complicit, redirected the blame to Christians, who thus suffered fierce persecution, first in Rome and then in the provinces. In contrast to Paul's expected release, the scene was a further sentence, this time an official persecution. Many friends deserted Paul and departed from the faith.

Timothy may still have been in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3). Paul was alone except for Luke (4:9–12), but he knew enough about the others to have a courier carry this letter to Timothy. The impending events held great promise in light of Paul's suffering, but they warned of loss and danger for his young friend. The potential impact on the church was enormous. Paul wanted Timothy to travel to Rome and perform a few errands on the way (4:13). This was a deeply personal rather than pastoral letter.

Outline of 2 Timothy

Introduction	1:1–5
Appeal to stand firm in ministry and service	1:6–2:13
Appeal to remain sound in belief and practice	2:14–4:8
Personal requests and farewell	4:9–22

Titus

Titus's long association with Paul dated at least to the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, even though Acts never mentions his name (see Galatians 2). Titus served Paul and the church in Corinth by making at least three visits to that city (2 Corinthians 2; 8:6; and as courier for the letter itself), which helped prepare him for an assignment on the Mediterranean island of Crete.

Crete, whose general population had a dubious reputation, is only mentioned in Acts (27) during Paul's voyage to Rome. Nothing of its church's origin is stated in the New Testament, but evidence implies the gospel spread there without the apostles' direct involvement.

Five years passed between Titus's role at Corinth and this letter (see notes on 1 Timothy, above). Titus is briefer and less personal than 1 Timothy, but

it likewise authorizes Titus as Paul's representative, enabling him to instruct the church and challenge members' moral behavior. Titus would have welcomed the visit of Apollos and Zenas, but he may not have known they were coming when they arrived with a letter from Paul.

Internal data suggests Titus was written in the same circumstances as 1 Timothy, with Paul free after his release from prison. It was written before 2 Timothy, but how long an interval lies between them is unknown.

Outline of Titus

Salutation	1:1–4
Instructions about elders	1:5–16
Instructions for communities within the church	2:1–15
Instructions about believers' behavior	3:1–11
Concluding remarks and benediction	3:12–15

Philemon

Could you turn down a request from an imprisoned old man who is also a friend? This letter, unique among Paul's New Testament writings, concerns a personal matter and is addressed to an individual.

Before churches owned property and constructed special buildings, they met in homes. In Colossae, Philemon was apparently a man of enough wealth to own slaves and provide the church a meeting place. Paul asks two favors: lodging during an upcoming visit, and a second, more difficult request.

Even though the Roman government had curtailed Paul's travels, it could not extinguish his ministry—to soldiers, to visitors, and to those who crossed his path in prison. One such person was Onesimus, a runaway slave from Colossae.

Paul's letter shows knowledge of Philemon's family; Apphia (his wife?) and Archippus (his son?) played an important part in the life of the church. Why was this brief letter preserved? One explanation, simply stated: Philemon applies the Christian faith to a special situation, a touching example of how it reaches into the furthest corners of human lives. In a busy world, the letter reminds us that kindness is always appropriate, and that people matter more than we often realize.

Outline of Philemon

The General Epistles

Hebrews

God only knows! That was the conclusion of the third-century Christian scholar Origen, when asked who authored Hebrews.[3] Two thousand years after its writing the church continues to wonder. The author shows the competence of an Old Testament scholar familiar with the Greek Septuagint; various theories suggest Paul, Luke, Apollos, Barnabas, Silas, or Priscilla. In spite of this mystery, Hebrews was widely circulated, and Clement of Rome cited from it as authoritative before the end of the first century.

As with the entire New Testament, Hebrews mentions neither the death of Nero and the end of his official persecution of Christians (AD 68), nor the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (70)—which ended temple sacrifices. To scholars, this suggests a date of composition either before those events or much later, so that they were already well known.

Who first received this document? The designation "to Hebrews" is not found in some of the oldest manuscripts, yet the language and content suggest its recipients were Jewish converts to Christianity dispersed throughout the empire. The original readers heard the gospel from the apostles and witnessed signs and wonders; they had been believers for some time, long enough to suffer persecution and loss of property. Timothy is known to them, and the writer, in the company of friends "from Italy," expects to visit them. All indications point to a specific community of believers (location unspecified).

Hebrews is more than an epistle: It combines religious teaching with epistolary elements—it provides warnings, encouragement, and instruction—but it contains no opening salutation as one would expect when the writer knows the readers (13:19). Interpreting the warnings, and determining the author, audience, place, and date, pose significant challenges, but should not

distract from appreciating Christ's priesthood as the answer to the question "What in the world is Jesus doing now?"

Outline of Hebrews

Christ is supreme, personally, in every way	1:1–2:4
Christ is supreme in his redemptive work	2:5–4:13
Christ is supreme in his priesthood	4:14–10:18
The privileges and peril of following Christ	10:19–39
The virtues of a life of faith	11:1–40
Trials are just around the corner	12:1–29
Practical duties and farewell	13:1–25

James

James, among the earlier New Testament documents, more closely resembles the Old Testament wisdom literature than the other epistles; it does not address or develop any specific doctrinal view for Christians. James employs a direct style and includes vivid illustrations from nature, everyday life, and human character. The letter has many similarities to the teaching of Jesus, especially the Sermon on the Mount.

Two prominent men named James appear in the New Testament: one the son of Zebedee, the brother of John (killed by Herod Agrippa, Acts 12), the other the son of Joseph and Mary, the brother of Jesus. Two other men named James are mentioned, but only in passing. This James, the writer, refers to himself as a servant of God and of Jesus Christ; if, as many believe, he is the brother of Jesus, he makes no claim to it, either because it was well known or because it was unimportant for his purpose. Named in Matthew 13 and Mark 6, James, the brother of Jesus, emerged as a key church leader in the beginning (Acts 1–2) and continued to play an important role throughout the early decades (Acts 15, 21; 1 Corinthians 15; Galatians 1:18–19; 2:9).

James remained in Jerusalem when persecution first dispersed the church (Acts 8); his audience was the Jewish community of new believers scattered outside of Palestine (James 1:1). Because the line between Judaism and Christianity was not yet clearly drawn, James addresses concerns over practices deemed unacceptable in God's community.

Outline of James

Introduction and theme—the tests of faith	1:1–18
How does faith respond to the Word?	1:19–27
How does faith respond to social and economic realities?	2:1–13
How is faith related to works?	2:14–26
How is faith seen in self-control?	3:1–18
How does faith relate to the world?	4:1–5:12
How does faith pray?	5:13–20

1 Peter

The early churches received many letters, not all of which were written by apostles. Most letters were neither authentic nor authoritative, but early church testimony clearly indicates they believed the letter called "1 Peter" was written by Peter the apostle, fisherman, and companion of Jesus, even though it contains little about Peter personally. Students know his story from the Gospel records, but the trail grows cold as the first century continues.

The date and place of writing are not clearly established because of Peter's use of the term *Babylon*. Was he actually in the Mesopotamian Babylon? Was he in the city of Babylon, Egypt? Or was he in Rome, which he cryptically calls *Babylon*? Tradition claims he was in Rome. Was he there because Paul had been released and decided to visit Spain? Was there a need for a prominent apostle in the capital city during Nero's reign? Tradition holds that Nero executed Peter; if so, the letter must have been written before Nero's death in AD 68.

First Peter is addressed to dispersed congregations in Asia (modern Turkey). There are no specific references to martyrdom, but with persecution growing, Peter's exhortation and theme of courage in the face of opposition would have been of great value to the early church. His letter is direct, and the composition is straightforward compared to some New Testament letters. Using a forceful style rather than a literary one, Peter encourages his readers to remain faithful.

Outline of 1 Peter

Introduction and salutation	1:1–2
Appeal to endure based on the believer's salvation	1:3–2:10
Appeal to endure based on the believer's separation from the world	2:11–3:12
Appeal to endure based on the believer's suffering	3:13–5:11
Concluding comments	5:12–14

2 Peter

Although 2 Peter differs significantly from 1 Peter, the early church likewise considered it apostolic and authoritative despite limited external evidence. Many other writings that claimed to be from Peter were rejected; his direct assertions about himself and his comments about the other apostles could have been construed as too much effort for a forgery. Such statements would be obviously false unless the author was indeed Peter.

Second Peter also shows similarity to Jude's epistle (see below). Did one influence the other? Scholars differ as to which one and why. The traditional view of inspiration and canonicity does not preclude the influence of other sacred writings. Peter clearly states this in his second letter to them, so the audience is intentionally the same—Gentile churches scattered throughout the empire. Peter mentions Paul to acknowledge his letters but does not mention Paul's death, so it may be safe to say Paul was still living at the time. Peter shows knowledge of at least several Pauline letters, which suggests that from an early time the church preserved or circulated them.

The intention of 2 Peter was to address an outbreak of teaching contrary to the faith of the Christian church.

Outline of 2 Peter

Introduction and salutation	1:1–2
Description of the believers' new life in Christ	1:3–21
Warning against false teachers who deny this new life	2:1–22
Explanation of the certainty of Christ's return	3:1–18

1 John

One of the New Testament's anonymous writings, 1 John is classified as a letter, yet its form is different from 2 and 3 John (and the rest of the books). It is not addressed to an individual or a local body; it has no closing section, ends abruptly, and includes no names except that of Jesus. Some apostolic writings were intended to be circulated among the churches, but 1 John offers no statement to this effect.

The author does not name himself, but there is more external evidence for 1 John than any other New Testament document. The letter was quoted early by Polycarp, and it popularized the use of the term *antichrist*, found only in

John's writing. The author must have known his readers; specific relationships or credentials are not mentioned, let alone argued. His style is simple yet profound, drawing on models of Hebrew language that make this book more like part of the Old Testament. Its structure is the most curious feature—circular (Eastern) rather than linear (Western). Students note content and style similarities between 1 John and John's Gospel; John, son of Zebedee, was an early follower, part of the closest circle of Jesus' friends, and the brother of James, who was executed by Herod Agrippa (Acts 12).

John wants his readers to be filled with joy, to avoid sin, and to know that they have eternal life (1:4; 2:1; 5:13). He combats an increasingly popular Gnosticism that denied the incarnation, holding that matter is evil. Some time had passed since the readers were converted, and in the face of antagonism, John warns them of the danger of complacency, which opens the door to havoc-wreaking false teachers.

Outline of 1 John

Introduction—remembering the Word	1:1–4
The confidence of faith through tests of fellowship	1:5–2:17
The confidence of faith through conflict of belief and practice	2:18–4:6
The confidence of faith through love	4:7–5:5
The confidence of faith through the witness of the Spirit	5:6–12
Concluding matters	5:13–21

The following "general epistles," grouped together for their brevity and their lack of clear indication of the recipients, are included in the later portion of the New Testament by traditional association. Second John is addressed to "the elect lady" and 3 John to "Gaius," but of these persons nothing is known except what is in each letter. Jude is simply addressed "to those who have been called."

2 John

Second John is a brief personal letter from the "elder" to "the elect lady" (RSV). The theme is truth; could John make it more clear? He tells the lady to love it, know it, live it, walk in it, for Jesus is in it with us. Why? Because many—including traveling teachers—do not know, love, or live the truth.

Was this elder John the apostle? So tradition states. Quotations from the letter appear in the second century and are attributed to the John who wrote

the Johannine Gospel and 1 John. Whether the "elect lady" and her "children" refers to individuals or a local church is not known.

We also do not know when this letter was written, as there are no other known historical or personal references (nor are there any in 3 John or Jude).

3 John

This epistle, written by "the elder" to one Gaius, a friend of the author, is a simple letter of thanks coupled with a prayer for health. Gaius would welcome this word of encouragement to live for the truth, walk in the truth, and remain devoted to the truth; some in the church (e.g., Diotrephes) do not follow this pattern.

Jude

In his brief epistle, Jude calls himself a servant of God and brother of James, which could make him a brother of Jesus as well (see James, above, on New Testament Jameses). Jude's failure to include his link to Jesus favors the authenticity of this letter and reminds us that Jude was not among the believers during Jesus' early ministry.

Because of its warning to the church and its condemnation of false teachers, Jude was quoted quickly and repeatedly. Jude resembles 2 Peter and includes a reference to the popular but noncanonical apocalyptic writings of the New Testament era.

Jude states his reason for writing (v. 3) and uses a curious triplet style.

Outline of Jude

Introduction and salutation	1–2
Purpose: a warning of apostasy	3–4
The fate of those who fell away	5–7
Details about the apostates	8–16
Appeal to remain faithful	17–23
Doxology	24–25

Revelation

Revelation is the only distinctively prophetic New Testament book; it tells "the rest of the story." Its symbolism challenges casual readers and serious students alike, leaving room for good-hearted yet vigorous debate in the church. There are several views of the world to come and how believers will arrive there; the twofold danger lies in either (1) ignoring the future—and this book—altogether or (2) being obsessively preoccupied with prophetic subjects or a particular eschatological viewpoint.

Apocalyptic writings were well known from the Maccabean time (c. 165 BC) through the New Testament era; these works claimed to reveal what was not previously known and were usually distributed using the name of a long-deceased figure such as Moses or Enoch; some purported to be from the pen of Peter. This document is a revelation of Jesus Christ, and it claims to come from a contemporary figure well known to the church in that day. The internal evidence—particularly his self-identification—clearly favors John's authorship, Jewish apocalyptic style notwithstanding. Tradition states he had long relationships with the churches named in chapters 2–3, so the opportunity to expose any forgery was great.

Revelation was written during John's incarceration, believed to have occurred during the reign of the Emperor Domitian, who died in AD 96. The early church acknowledged John as the author and quoted from it extensively by the end of the second century.

The work itself is an amazing combination of epistolary, prophetic, and apocalyptic styles. Revelation is similar to 1 John and the Gospel of John, but its content is vastly different. Its imagery draws on the entire biblical canon even though there are no direct quotes. Objects, actions, and even colors imaginatively describe a one-world system opposed to the God of the universe. This last book in the canon closes with the promise of God's ultimate triumph!

Outline of Revelation

Introduction and vision	1
John's vision of the current state of things	2–5
John's vision of things yet to come	6–19
The end of earthly history	20–22

Michael Redding

For Further Reading and Study

Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament*

Robert Gromacki, *New Testament Survey*

Robert Gundry, *Survey of the New Testament*

chapter 16
Apologetics

✦

God has put enough into the world to make faith in him a most reasonable thing, and he has left enough out to make it impossible to live by sheer reason or observation alone.[1]

—Ravi Zacharias

"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15). "Contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people" (Jude 3). These and other biblical passages encourage Christians to maintain a firm grasp on what they believe so they can explain it to others. This, in essence, is what apologetics is all about. It is not a matter of making excuses or apologies for our faith, as the word might seem to imply; rather it involves the logical, systematic explanation or defense of Christianity.

Contrary to popular belief, apologetics isn't just for the intellectual among us. At some point, unless we intend to keep our faith a secret, we will all have occasion to be apologists for the gospel of Jesus Christ. People will ask questions. For many among us, communicating the Christian faith is difficult, in part because we do not understand it sufficiently well ourselves. Sure, we understand that we are sinners in need of grace, and we believe that Jesus Christ, God's unique Son, died to pay the debt we owed, and that by receiving his free gift of forgiveness we are reconciled to God. But what are we to answer when a friend says he doesn't believe that God exists, or when a colleague wonders how a so-called "God of love" can allow so much evil and suffering in the world around us? Or what can we say to the neighbor who claims that her path to God is just as valid as ours, and that what is true for us isn't necessarily true for her?

Studying apologetics serves two purposes simultaneously. First, it helps us to better understand the faith we hold. Few things sow doubt in a believer so easily as the inability to come to terms with her own questions. And any intellectually honest person is likely to have some questions at one time or another. And the questions of unbelievers or the derision of those antagonistic to the faith only fuels a believer's doubts—if he is unsure of what he actually believes.

The second reason to study apologetics is specifically to answer the very questions that trouble honest skeptics and to defend the faith from the attacks of antagonists.

One of the pitfalls inherent in apologetics, however, is that in our zeal, we may become inclined to wield logic, evidence, even Scripture, as a blunt instrument with which to vanquish not only doubts but those who harbor them. We must not forget that a person yet to encounter the grace of God will hardly be convinced of that grace by belligerent volleys of evidence or by arrogant logic. If we are defending the gospel of Jesus Christ, we must do so in a way that is consistent with the object of our faith.

Another pitfall is resorting to philosphical arguments, as if their sheer logic automatically silences all dissent. It doesn't. A seemingly irrefutable ontological argument for the existence of God will surely fall on deaf ears if your friend is questioning God as a result of some deep loss or pain. Their first need is for you to act as God's ambassador to them, being present in their pain, even if you don't say a word. Often the time for words, and yes, even defense of the gospel, will come, but not unless you sheath your weapons and await the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Not all of the material in this chapter is easy reading (the glossary found at the back of this book will help). But by applying yourself, you may be surprised to see how your confidence in your own faith grows as you begin to learn answers to some of life's most troubling questions.

An Introduction to Apologetics

Apologetics attempts to render the Christian faith persuasive to the contemporary individual. For unbelievers, it is *belief forming*; it helps to defuse attacks upon Christianity and to establish Christianity as credible by giving intellectual support to the explanatory value of a biblical worldview.

For believers, it is *belief sustaining*; it nurtures Christian faith by calling believers to love their Lord with their minds (Matthew 22:37).

Clarifying Truth-Claims

Knowing the truth and having a right understanding of the way we get to truth form the bedrock of the Christian faith. That knowledge and foundation will ever be attacked as long as there is a voice that questions if God has truly spoken consummately and clearly in His revealed Word and through His Son Jesus Christ. G. K. Chesterton once said, "What we need is a religion that is not only right where we are right, but right where we are wrong." Only the Word of God provides that corrective. . . .

Indeed, the first and most vital task of apologetics is to clarify truth-claims. [Walter] Martin identified this as "scaling the language barrier." When asked to define a word such as *truth*, however, many Christians freeze, for they have seldom paused to consider what it means even as they themselves quote Jesus as "the way, the truth and the life." This easy mistake is a costly one.

I remember delivering a lecture in Moscow some years ago at the Lenin Military Academy. It was apparent that I was unwelcome by many of the officers forced to attend, and throughout my talk one officer kept giving me the choke sign. Trying to speak through an interpreter with this constant threat made the task even more daunting, yet when I finished, I soon realized my blunder and oversight. You see, the officer who was interrupting me immediately stood up and said, "You have been using the word *God* for the last one hour. What do you mean by that term?"

I was thoroughly embarrassed—how disconnected I had been from my audience. Here I was speaking to a group of atheists, and I had neglected to define my fundamental terms. Truth is the verbal coinage by which we exchange concepts of value and engender trust. Yet we often fail to explain what we mean when we reiterate the claims of Christ. . . .

The first reminder in understanding and responding to [other religions] is to remember that the claims of Jesus Christ at their core are exclusive and exclude everything to the contrary. This ought not to surprise us. Truth by definition is exclusive. If truth were all-inclusive, nothing would be false. And if nothing were false, what would be the meaning of *true*? Moreover, if nothing were false, would it be true to say that everything is false? It quickly becomes evident that the denial of truth as an absolute either ends up denying itself or else in effect not making any truthful assertion about truth. It is in this very challenge the various [religions] must be tested. . . .

The power to deceive is enormous. To this end Paul warned Timothy to cherish the Scripture, for it made him "wise unto salvation," and to "guard both your doctrine and conduct." The Scriptures are meaningful and personal because they are true, and not because we can wrest them to advantage or manipulate them into personal meaning. Meaning and application can be prostituted at the altar of self-gratification, but truth will stand in history when all human dissenters have said their last. The apostle also went on in speaking of Jesus Christ and His work to say, "We are complete in Him." Nothing need be added to the person and work of Jesus in the salvation He has provided and the Word that He has given for our instruction.

—Ravi Zacharias

Apologetics and Related Disciplines

Broadly, while *apologetics* is a branch of theology, it is primarily a horizontal discipline that focuses on the subjective question of how one knows, how one is convinced. *Metapologetics* focuses on the epistemological foundations for doing apologetics, particularly in relation to the unbeliever (natural theology, faith and reason, common ground). *Theodicy* attempts to answer the evidential objection to an all-good, all-powerful God who seems to permit gratuitous evil. *Evidence* is the factual component of apologetics, appealing to:

1. the moral effects of Christianity
2. the coherence and unity of the Testaments
3. the fulfilled prophecies of Scripture
4. the miracles of the Bible in general (Acts 2:22)
5. the miracle of the resurrection of Jesus in particular (1 Corinthians 15:6)
6. the inexplicable motive and ethical dissonance created if the faith of the New Testament church were built upon a conscious lie
7. the survival of the Christian church during persecution (when promising only spiritual benefits—and further persecution—rather than sensual enjoyments)

Biblical Antecedents

The two functions of forming and sustaining belief may be seen in Scripture.

In the Old Testament, from "the beginning," there is no cosmic dualism between spirit and matter—God alone is the Creator, which also rules out pantheism, animism, henotheism, and polytheism. He confers significance to humanity and the rest of creation (Genesis 1–2; see also Psalm 33; 104; 136). God is sovereign over history and over the problem of evil (Genesis 50:20; Job 1–2; 38–41). Throughout the Old Testament, there is a moral apologetic: those who break God's covenants will be judged, those who keep God's covenants will be blessed, and God's plan will be ultimately vindicated in history.

In New Testament narrative, the Gospels explain why the Jews did not embrace Jesus as their Messiah and how Jesus' death was a part of God's redemptive plan from eternity past. The New Testament miracles had apologetic intent (Mark 2:10–12; John 5:36; 10:37–38; Acts 2:22). The book of Acts reflects:

1. the prophetic apologetic that God's redemption through Jesus the Messiah fulfills God's redemptive plan in the Old Testament (Acts 2; 4; 7; 8:32–38; 9:22 "proving")

2. the political apologetic that Christianity (with Judaism) has the right to be called *religio licita*
3. the apostolic apologetic that Peter (anointed apostle to the Jews) and Paul (anointed apostle to the Gentiles) proclaim the same gospel. The early church apologists were missionaries who understood the need to adapt to their intended audience (17:22–31).

The rest of the New Testament was also written, in part, for apologetic reasons: to expound on the coherence of God's plan of salvation (Romans), to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity over Judaism (Hebrews), to counter heresy (Galatians, Colossians, 1 John) and false teachers (2 Peter, 2 John, Jude), to motivate toward a moral life that proclaims redemption and forgiveness (1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, James), and to deal with the existential problem of evil (1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 Peter). Further, Scripture explicitly invites believers to engage in the apologetic task (2 Corinthians 10:4–5; Colossians 2:8; 1 Peter 3:15; Jude 3). In the New Testament, responses to specific attacks are offered: see *apologeomai* in Luke 12:11; 21:14; Acts 19:33; 24:10; 25:8; 26:1–2, 24; Romans 2:15; 2 Corinthians 12:19; also *apologia* in Acts 22:1–25:16; 1 Corinthians 9:3; 2 Corinthians 7:11; Philippians 1:7, 16; 2 Timothy 4:16; 1 Peter 3:15–16.

Historical Perspective

Challenges to Christian faith were plentiful. After the biblical period, prominent early apologists addressing specific issues included Tertullian (c. 160–220), Justin Martyr (c. 100–165), and Origen (c. 185–254). Later, Augustine (354–430) sought to develop a comprehensive Christian worldview; during the medieval period, Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274) employed Aristotelian philosophy to argue the superiority of Christianity over other religions.

Few people have anything approaching an articulate philosophy—at least as epitomized by the great philosophers. Even fewer, I suspect, have a carefully constructed theology. But everyone has a worldview. . . . In fact, it is only the assumption of a

worldview—however basic or simple—that allows us to think at all. [2]
—James Sire

The "methodical doubt" of René Descartes (1596–1650) became the paradigm of a skepticism that challenged Christianity for centuries: this proposed that one is obligated to disbelieve any truth-claim unless there is compelling evidence for that claim. Then came the challenges of the Enlightenment: David Hume (1711–1776) attacked the concept of the miraculous, and the epistemology of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) subverted the very idea of knowledge of God. In the nineteenth century, anti-supernaturalism was invigorated by new attacks from David F. Strauss (1808–1874) and Joseph E. Renan (1803–1898), on both the historical reliability of Scripture and the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth; these attacks continue today in various forms. In reaction, some Christian thinkers arguably compounded the difficulty of the apologetic task by adopting a "subjectivist" approach to validation of truth-claims (Søren Kierkegaard, Karl Barth, Emil Brunner), which avoided some problems but surrendered both reason and the historical truth of Scripture.

Contemporary philosophical attacks come from two major sources: *modernity* pursues an ongoing search for certitude while insisting upon the autonomy of the human mind, and *postmodernity* insists that "meaning" is an imposition by the knowing subject and is not inherent or objective; one must abandon the search for any comprehensive worldview among competing epistemologies.

Therefore, the challenges to twenty-first century apologists are philosophical (the possibility of meaning, the presuppositions of modernism and postmodernism, etc.), evidential (the reliability of Scripture, the historical Jesus), and existential (the problem of evil, and the question of why one should believe anything).

Apologetics Methodology

Presuppositions play a crucial role in apologetics. If the non-Christian begins with the presupposition of naturalism (the transcendent is unreal, and the universe is a closed system), or with the presupposition of

transcendentalism (all is one, and there is no *personal* God), then Christianity would be considered *a priori* "false."

However, Christian apologists disagree over how the fallenness of humanity affects the role of the mind in regeneration (the "noetic" effects of sin). This disagreement is reflected in different apologetic methodologies that attempt to penetrate the presuppositions of the non-Christian.

The two main approaches may be called *autopistic* and *axiopistic*. (The dilemma in the choice of apologetics terminology is between convention and accuracy. For example, the familiar "presuppositional vs. evidential" classification ignores that presuppositionalists use evidences and that evidentialists acknowledge their presuppositions. Further, while all evidentialists are axiopists, not all axiopists are evidentialists. Some [e.g., Aquinas] are rationalists.)

Aᴜᴛᴏᴘɪsᴛɪᴄ Aᴘᴏʟᴏɢᴇᴛɪᴄs. In the autopistic approach, apologetics is the presentation of the Christian worldview as the only coherent, true expression of reality and the exposure of the epistemic and moral dissonance in non-Christian worldviews. Christian faith is self-authenticating, worthy of belief in itself (*autos* + *pistos*); it is *sui generis*. God is self-referential, and only he has the authority to validate himself (Hebrews 6:13–18; thus, for example, internal tests of canonicity, such as prophetic and apostolic authentication, are put forth as primary over decrees of any church council). In other words, the belief-*forming* function of apologetics differs little from evangelism. Reason is not a neutral tool applied impartially by unbelievers; rather, humanity is fallen in mind and disposition (Genesis 3:1; Romans 1:18–32; 8:7; 1 Corinthians 2:14; 2 Corinthians 4:4). Therefore, what would constitute "proof" to the believer and to the unbeliever may be very different.

After regeneration comes understanding ("I believe, therefore I understand"). Cornelius Van Til contends that unbelievers have knowledge of truth not because they operate on common ground with the believer; rather, they operate on borrowed theistic ground. Only special revelation (God's Word—see chapter 1) provides the epistemological and ontological framework for correctly interpreting conscience, creation, and evidence. External criteria (theistic proofs, historical evidences) may aid ministerially (not magisterially) by affirming that revelation.

Problems of autopistic apologetics include (1) how does one decide between competing self-validating truth-claims? Apparently autopists are at an epistemic standoff; here reasons and evidences have little or no polemical value; (2) Scripture seems to appeal to empirical evidence as perspicuous to the unbeliever (John 10:37–38).

Axiopistic Apologetics. In this approach, God has structured reality in such a way that all his creatures can know truth. The truth-claims of Christianity are judged credible using the same standards by which all truth-claims are judged credible (e.g., scientific hypotheses, historical facts), and those standards are external to Scripture. Thus, Christian faith is rendered worthy of belief (*axios* + *pistos*) by external criteria, such as reason (rationalism) and evidences (empiricism). Reason (*logos*) is the light that enlightens every person (John 1:9). Indeed, one should not believe anything unless there is sufficient evidence or reason for it ("I understand, therefore I believe"). The validation of propositions is both probabilistic and cumulative. Here, apologetics is the presentation of perspicuous evidences to the unregenerate mind, which is capable of responding positively to this message.

Problems with axiopistic apologetics include (1) the mind of unregenerate humanity is not presented in Scripture as being neutral but as being unable to receive or perceive spiritual truth (Romans 1:18–32; 5:6, 8, 10; 8:7; 1 Corinthians 1:18–2:14; Ephesians 2:1); (2) experientially, there seems to be less moral common ground than there once was. Human beings wildly differ over questions of meaning (modernity, postmodernity) and ethics, such as who lives (human genome studies) and who dies (abortion, euthanasia).

Subjectivist Apologetics. Subjectivist apologetics holds that only through experiencing God's grace are Christian truth-claims validated. Reason is an ineffective tool for attracting people to Christ; thus focus is placed on the experiential (sometimes at the expense of the objective truth of biblical events), which is self-validating (Kierkegaard, Barth).

Weakness: arguments from experience may be persuasive but are not logically compelling. First, contradictory viewpoints (from Muslims to Mormons) can have religious experiences; second, by definition one should

abandon any argument from experience and depend instead upon direct experience.

RELATIONAL APOLOGETICS. Relational apologetics maintains that the changed lives of believers and God's love shown to others (both believers and unbelievers) validate the truth of Christianity on the nerve-endings of life (1 John 3). Individually, one is to show love and compassion to those who hurt, even to one's enemies (Matthew 5:44; Acts 7:60), and to live such a life that one may speak with moral authority.

Weakness: one would expect a qualitative difference between the ethics of Christians and non-Christians, which is not always as evident as it should be.

CULTURAL APOLOGETICS. Cultural apologetics examines modern culture to ask why Christian faith is *a priori* unthinkable to many, and then challenges these cultural assumptions on different fronts in order to gain rational leverage. For example, Francis Schaeffer examined themes in art, literature, drama, and music to show man's search for absolutes, purpose, and destiny, and to expose the bankruptcy of non-Christian answers.

Weakness: this approach recognizes creativity and the love of beauty (aesthetics) inherent within man as being in God's image, but it faces the challenge that its analysis rests on Christian presuppositions and may therefore be rejected.

PRUDENTIAL APOLOGETICS. Prudential apologetics invites the unbeliever to ask what happens if he is wrong in his worldview. That is, given the alternatives, would it be more prudent to believe or not to believe? (e.g., "Pascal's wager").

Weakness: depends upon the neutral mind of man to rightly evaluate the eternal risks and commit himself to a change of worldview based upon a blatantly probabilistic construct.

Concluding Observations

Most apologists agree on the perspicuity of evidences as objective indicators of the truth of Christianity, independent of the perceiver. Advocates of differing approaches in apologetics disagree on the persuadability of the unregenerate mind yet acknowledge that only the Holy Spirit enables the unbeliever to overcome the noetic effects of sin and judge the evidences rightly (John 6:44; Romans 8:7).

The effectiveness of a given approach may be person-relative; thus the apologist must be sensitive to the Spirit and to the individual. For example, someone who already accepts that the universe reflects design would be positively disposed to the cosmological argument for a Creator (see below). Someone who has gone through a painful divorce may be intensely aware that his or her non-Christian belief system is inadequate to provide a basis for love, honor, and faithfulness, and consequently may be more open to listen to the gospel than previously.

Not all the approaches described above are necessarily mutually exclusive; some may be used effectively in concert with each other. One does not know what the Holy Spirit may use to work through the mind (evidences and arguments) and through lived experiences (crises, relationships) to draw the unbeliever to Jesus Christ. Therefore, while apologists may debate the relative merits of various approaches, and while one may conceptually distinguish between common grace, the *imago Dei*, and the perspicuity of general and special revelation, each method seems to have its appropriate place in forming (and in sustaining) belief.

W. Gary Phillips

Arguments for the Existence of God

The arguments for the existence of God constitute one of the human mind's finest attempts to break out of the world and go beyond the sensible or phenomenal realm of experience.

Certainly the question of God's existence is the most important question of human philosophy. It affects the whole tenor of human life, whether man is regarded as the supreme being in the universe or whether man has a superior being whom he must love and obey, or perhaps defy.

There are three ways one can argue for the existence of God. First, the *a priori* approach argues from a conception of God as a being so perfect that

his nonexistence is inconceivable. Second, the *a posteriori* approach gives evidence from the world, from the observable, empirical universe, insisting that God is necessary to explain certain features of the cosmos. Third, the existential approach asserts direct experience of God by way of personal revelation. This approach is not really an argument in the usual sense, because one does not usually argue for something that can be directly experienced.

The A Priori *Approach*

This approach is the heart of the famous ontological argument, devised by Anselm of Canterbury though intimated earlier in the system of Augustine. This argument begins with a special definition of God as infinite, perfect, and necessary.

Anselm said that God cannot be conceived in any way other than "a being that which nothing greater can be conceived." Even the fool knows what he means by "God" when he asserts, "There is no God" (Psalm 14:1). But if the most perfect being existed only in thought and not in reality, then it would not really be the most perfect being, for the one that existed in reality would be more perfect. Therefore, concludes Anselm, "No one who understands what God is, can conceive that God does not exist." In short, it would be self-contradictory to say, "I can think of a perfect being that doesn't exist," because existence would have to be a part of perfection. One would be saying, "I can conceive of something greater than that which nothing greater can be conceived"—which is absurd.

The ontological argument has had a long and stormy history. It has appealed to some of the finest minds in Western history, usually mathematicians like Descartes, Benedict Spinoza, and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. However, it fails to persuade most people, who seem to harbor the same suspicion as Kant—that "the unconditioned necessity of a judgment does not form the absolute necessity of a thing." That is, perfection may not be a true predicate, and thus a proposition can be logically necessary without being true in fact.

The A Posteriori *Approach*

Popular mentality seems to appreciate better the *a posteriori* approach. The ontological argument can be made without ever appealing to sensation, but the cosmological and teleological arguments require a careful look at the world. The former focuses on the cause, while the latter stresses the design of the universe.

THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT. This has more than one form. The earliest occurs in Plato (*Laws,* Book X) and Aristotle (*Metaphysics,* Book VIII) and stresses the need to explain the cause of motion. Assuming that rest is natural and motion is unnatural, these thinkers arrived at God as the necessary Prime Mover of all things. Thomas Aquinas used motion as his first proof in the *Summa Theologica* (Q.2, Art.3). Everything that moves has to be moved by another thing. But this chain of movers cannot go on to infinity—a key assumption—because there would then be no first mover and thus no other mover. We must arrive, therefore, at a first mover, Aquinas concludes, "and this everyone understands to be God."

This argument from motion is not nearly as cogent for our scientific generation, because we take motion to be natural and rest to be unnatural, as the principle of inertia states. Many philosophers insist that the notion of an infinite series of movers is not at all impossible or contradictory.

The most interesting—and persuasive—form of the cosmological argument is Aquinas's "third way," the argument from contingency. Its strength derives from the way it employs both permanence and change. Epicurus stated the metaphysical problem centuries ago: "Something obviously exists now, and something never sprang from nothing." Being, therefore, must have been without beginning. An eternal Something must be admitted by all—theist, atheist, and agnostic.

But the physical universe could not be this eternal Something because it is obviously contingent, mutable, subject to decay. How could a decomposing entity explain itself to all eternity? If every present contingent thing/event depends on a previous contingent thing/event and so on *ad infinitum,* then this does not provide an adequate explanation of anything.

Hence, for there to be anything at all contingent in the universe, there must be at least one thing that is not contingent—something that is necessary throughout all change and self-established. In this case *necessary*

does not apply to a proposition but to a thing, and it means "infinite, eternal, everlasting, self-caused, self-existent."

It is not enough to say that infinite time will solve the problem of contingent being. No matter how much time you have, dependent being is still dependent on something. Everything contingent within the span of infinity will, at some particular moment, not exist. But if there was a moment when nothing existed, then nothing would exist now.

The choice is simple: one chooses either a self-existent God or a self-existent universe—and the universe is not behaving as if it is self-existent. In fact, according to the second law of thermodynamics, the universe is running down like a clock or, better, cooling off like a giant stove. Energy is constantly being diffused or dissipated, that is, progressively distributed throughout the universe. If this process goes on for a few billion more years —and scientists have never observed a restoration of dissipated energy— then the result will be a state of thermal equilibrium, a "heat death," a random degradation of energy throughout the entire cosmos and hence the stagnation of all physical activity.

Naturalists from Lucretius to Carl Sagan have felt that we need not postulate God as long as nature can be considered a self-explanatory entity for all eternity. But it is difficult to hold this doctrine if the second law is true and entropy is irreversible. If the cosmos is running down or cooling off, then it could not have been running and cooling forever. It must have had a beginning.

A popular retort to the cosmological argument is to ask, "If God made the universe, then who made God?" If one insists that the world had a cause, must one not also insist that God had a cause? No, because if God is a necessary being—this is established if one accepts the proof—then it is unnecessary to inquire into his origins. It would be like asking, "Who made the unmakable being?" or "Who caused the uncausable being?"

More serious is the objection that the proof is based on an uncritical acceptance of the "principle of sufficient reason," the notion that every event/effect has a cause. If this principle is denied, even if it is denied in metaphysics, the cosmological argument is defanged. Hume argued that causation is a psychological, not a metaphysical, principle, one whose origins lay in the human propensity to assume necessary connections between events when all we really see is contiguity and succession. Kant seconded Hume by arguing that causation is a category built into our minds

as one of the many ways in which we order our experience. Jean-Paul Sartre felt that the universe is "gratuitous." Bertrand Russell claimed that the question of origins is tangled in meaningless verbiage and that we must be content to declare that the universe is "just there and that's all."

One does not prove the principle of causality easily. It is one of those foundational assumptions made in building a worldview. It can be pointed out, however, that if we jettison the idea of sufficient reason, we will destroy not only metaphysics but science as well. When one attacks causality, one attacks much of knowledge *per se,* for without this principle, the rational connection in most of our learning falls to pieces. Surely it is not irrational to inquire into the cause of the entire universe.

THE TELEOLOGICAL OR DESIGN ARGUMENT. This is one of the oldest and most popular and intelligible of the theistic proofs. It suggests that there is a definite analogy between the order and regularity of the cosmos and a product of human ingenuity. Voltaire put it in rather simplistic terms: "If a watch proves the existence of a watchmaker but the universe does not prove the existence of a great Architect, then I consent to be called a fool."

No one can deny the universe seems to be designed; instances of purposive ordering are all around us. Almost anywhere can be found features of being that show the universe to be basically friendly to life, mind, personality, and values. Life itself is a cosmic function—that is, a very complex arrangement of things both terrestrial and extraterrestrial that must be obtained before life can subsist. The earth must be just the right size, its rotation must be just right, its distance from the sun must be within certain limits, its tilt must be correct to cause the seasons, its land-water ratio must be a delicate balance. Our biological structure is very fragile. A little too much heat or cold and we die. We need light, but not too much ultraviolet. We need heat, but not too much infrared. We live just beneath an air-screen shielding us from millions of "missiles" every day. We live just ten miles above a rock screen that shields us from the terrible heat under our feet. Who created all these screens and shields that make our earthly existence possible?

Once again we are faced with a choice. Either the universe was designed or it developed all these features by chance. The cosmos is either a plan or an accident.

Most people have an innate repugnance to the notion of chance because it contradicts the way we ordinarily explain things. Chance is not an explanation but an abandonment of explanation. When a scientist explains an immediate event, he operates on the assumption that this is a regular universe where everything occurs as a result of the orderly procession of cause and effect. Yet when the naturalist comes to metaphysics, to the origin of the entire cosmos, he abandons the principle of sufficient reason and assumes that the cause of everything is an unthinkable causelessness, chance, or fate.

Suppose you were standing facing a target and you saw an arrow fired from behind you hit the bull's-eye. Then you saw nine more arrows fired in rapid succession all hitting the same bull's-eye. The aim is so accurate that each arrow splits the previous arrow as it hits. Now, an arrow shot into the air is subject to many contrary and discordant processes—gravity, air pressure, and wind. When ten arrows reach the bull's-eye, does this not rule out the possibility of mere chance? Would you not say that this was the result of an expert archer? Is this parable not analogous to our universe?

It is objected that the design argument, even if valid, does not prove a creator but only an architect, and even then only an architect intelligent enough to produce the known universe, not necessarily an omniscient being. This objection is correct. We must not try to prove more than the evidence will allow. We will not get the 100 percent Yahweh of the Bible from any evidence of natural theology. However, this universe of ours is so vast and wonderful we can safely conclude that its designer would be worthy of our worship and devotion.

Many object that the theory of evolution takes most of the wind out of the design argument. Evolution shows that the marvelous design in living organisms came about by slow adaptation to the environment, not by intelligent creation. This is a false claim. Even if admitted, evolution only introduces a longer time frame into the question of design. Proving that watches came from a completely automated factory with no human intervention would not make us give up interest in a designer, for if we thought a watch was wonderful, what must we think of a factory that produces watches? Would it not suggest a designer just as forcefully? Religious people have been overly frightened by the theory of evolution. [A distinction must be made between macroevolution (i.e., evolutionary processes above or between species) and microevolution (i.e., evolutionary

processes within species). The latter, observable and verified, is not the issue; the former, unobserved and theoretical, is the real matter of debate.]

Even the great critics of natural theology, Hume and Kant, betrayed an admiration for the teleological argument. Hume granted it a certain limited validity. Kant went even further:

> This proof will always deserve to be treated with respect. It is the oldest, the clearest, and most in conformity with human reason. . . . We have nothing to say against the reasonableness and utility of this line of argument, but wish, on the contrary, to commend and encourage it.[3]

The Moral Argument. This is the most recent of the theistic proofs. The first major philosopher to use it was Kant, who felt that the traditional proofs were defective. Kant held that the existence of God and the immortality of the soul are matters of faith, not ordinary speculative reason, which, he claimed, is limited to sensation.

Kant reasoned that the moral law commands us to seek the *summmum bonum* (highest good), with perfect happiness as a logical result. But a problem arises when we contemplate the unpleasant fact that "there is not the slightest ground in the moral law for a necessary connexion between morality and proportionate happiness in a being that belongs to the world as a part of it." The only postulate, therefore, that will make sense of man's moral experience is "the existence of a cause of all nature, distinct from nature itself" (i.e., a God who will properly reward moral endeavor in another world). In a godless universe, man's deepest experience would be a cruel enigma.

In his *Rumor of Angels,* Peter Berger gives an interesting negative version of the moral argument, which he calls "the argument from damnation." The absolute certainty with which we condemn such immoral men as Nazi Adolf Eichmann seems to transcend tastes and mores; it seems to demand a condemnation of supernatural dimensions. Some deeds are not only evil but monstrously evil; they appear immune to any kind of moral relativizing. In making such high-voltage moral judgments, as when we condemn slavery and genocide, we point to a transcendent realm of moral absolutes. Otherwise, all our moralizing is pointless and groundless. A "preaching relativist" is one of the most comical of self-contradictions.

Most modern thinkers who use the moral argument continue Kant's thesis that God is a necessary postulate to explain moral experience. Kant thought

the moral law could be established by reason, but he called on God to guarantee the reward for virtue. Modern thinkers do not use God so much for the reward as for providing a ground for the moral law in the first place.

The moral argument starts with the simple fact of ethical experience. The pressure to do one's duty can be felt as strongly as the pressure of an empirical object. Who or what is causing this pressure? It is not enough to say that we are conditioned by society to feel those pressures. Some of the greatest moralists in history have acquired their fame precisely because they criticized the moral failings of their group—tribe, class, race, or nation. If social subjectivism is the explanation of moral motivation, then we have no right to criticize slavery or genocide or *anything*.

Evolutionists attack the moral argument by insisting that all morality is merely a long development from animal instincts. Men gradually work out their ethical systems by living together in social communities. But this objection is a two-edged sword: if it kills morality, it also kills reason and the scientific method. The evolutionist believes that the human intellect developed from the physical brain of the primates, yet he assumes that the intellect is trustworthy. If the mind is entitled to trust, though evolved from the lower forms, why not the moral nature also?

Many people will go partway and accept moral objectivism, but they want to stop with a transcendent realm of impersonal moral absolutes. They deny that one must believe in a Person, Mind, or Lawgiver. This seems reductive. It is difficult to imagine an "impersonal mind." How could a *thing* make us feel duty-bound to be kind, helpful, truthful, and loving? We should press on, all the way to a Person, God, the Lawgiver. Only then is the moral experience adequately explained.

The Question of Validity

How valid are all these theistic proofs? This question raises issues in a number of fields: logic, metaphysics, physics, and theory of knowledge (epistemology). Some, like Aquinas, feel that the proofs reach the level of demonstration. Others, like Hume, say we should just suspend judgment and remain skeptics. Still others, like Blaise Pascal and Kant, reject the traditional proofs but offer instead practical grounds or reasons for accepting God's existence. Pascal's famous wager is an appeal to

pragmatism; it makes sense, in view of the eternal consequences, to bet on the existence of God.

Paul seems to demand a high view of the theistic proofs when he says that unbelievers are "without excuse."

> What may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature —have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

<div align="right">Romans 1:19–20</div>

The arguments, in their cumulative effect, make a very strong case for the existence of God, but they are not logically inexorable or rationally inevitable. If we define proof as probable occurrence based on empirically produced experiences and subject to the test of reasonable judgment, then we can say the arguments prove God's existence.

If God truly exists, then we are dealing with a factual proposition, and what we really want when we ask for proof of a factual proposition is not a demonstration of its logical possibility but a degree of evidence that will exclude reasonable doubt. Something can be so probable that it excludes reasonable doubt without being deductive or analytical or demonstrative or logically inevitable. We feel that the theistic proofs—excluding the ontological argument—fall into this category.

Natural theology, however, can never establish the existence of the biblical God. These proofs may make one a deist, but only revelation will make one a Christian. Reason operating without revelation always turns up with a deity different from Yahweh, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. One can confirm this easily by comparing Yahweh with the deities of Aristotle, Spinoza, Voltaire, and Thomas Paine.

<div align="right">Arlie J. Hoover</div>

The Problem of Evil

1. The Problems of Evil

The existence, magnitude, and distribution of evil represent a complex and multilayered theological and apologetic conundrum for the Christian

tradition. While it is common to speak of "the problem" of evil, doing so is misleading at best. Rather, there are no less than three different problems of evil—all related in some sense, but also all conceptually distinct from each other. And, most important, each of these problems require different kinds of answers. In addition, there are at least three extensions of the problem of evil—important theological issues that are connected with the problems of evil in various ways.

The first has been commonly called the *philosophical problem of evil*. The question at the heart of this problem is "Why would God allow any evil at all in his creation?" This is a question for all worldviews or religious systems of belief, but it is particularly pressing for Christian theism. Since Christians believe both that God created everything that exists other than himself and that God is perfectly good, the question of why he would have chosen to create a world with evil is a pretty natural one.

The second is called the *existential problem of evil*. The primary difference between the existential and philosophical problems of evil is that where the philosophical problem considers why any evil would exist in God's creation, the existential problem asks, "Why *this* evil?" As such, in the existential problem, the definition of evil shifts from abstract to concrete and the focus shifts from the makeup of God's creation ("Why did God create this way?") to the governance of God's creation ("Given that God is in control of creation, why doesn't he stop or eliminate at least certain egregious evils?"). The existential problem, in effect, says, "Even if it could be explained that God would allow some evil in creation, there are certain egregious evils that cannot be explained." The central question in the existential problem of evil is whether gratuitous evil exists. Some evils are associated with good, such that we would say that the evil is justified given the presence of the associated good. For example, the pain of receiving a shot is justified by the immunity from a potentially life-threatening disease. The existential problem of evil, however, highlights cases where it does not seem that there is any associated, outweighing good. These evils seem to be gratuitous, and therefore the question of why a perfectly loving God would allow them is raised forcefully.

The final problem of evil is a different sort of thing than either the philosophical or the existential problems. Both of the preceding problems are intellectual in nature—that is, they involve a search for an answer to a question. The final problem is not a search for an answer, but a cry for help.

This is called the *problem of suffering*, and it occurs when a person is in the middle of deep anguish. Persons in such situations do not benefit from explanations or answers—those may be helpful later, but not at the moment, in the midst of suffering. In fact, the attempt to give "answers" to those experiencing the problem of suffering is to replicate the mistake of Job's friends. Initially, Job's friends were helpful: "Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was" (Job 2:13). But eventually the difficulty of seeing their friend suffer was too great and they started "helping" him by giving answers to questions they guessed he might have been asking.

In addition to these three problems of evil, there are a number of closely related problems or objections. These are probably best seen as extensions or applications of one or more of the problems of evil.

The first is the *soteriological problem of evil*. As the name suggests, this is the problem applied to salvation. It is not just "who can be saved?" It concerns more specifically whether there are some people who do not have the opportunity to be saved.[4] Often called the "destiny of the unevangelized problem," the soteriological problem of evil seeks to reconcile the reasonable expectation that God would desire all people to have an opportunity to be saved with the apparent fact that some do not have this opportunity.

The second related problem is the *problem of divine hiddenness*. There are two senses in which God's putative hiddenness could be a problem for Christianity. The first is the "dark night of the soul" associated with the problem of suffering in which the person who is suffering cannot sense God's love or guidance or providential care. The second is the argument that reasonable nonbelief on the part of those who are genuinely open to relationship with God is both possible and evidence of God's nonexistence.[5]

The *problem of unanswered prayer* is the final related problem. It is not merely that some prayers go unanswered, for some of our prayers are frivolous. The problem is that some of our prayers are such that we cannot imagine a loving God refusing to answer them—a prayer to relieve the suffering of a child with terminal cancer, for example. Even worse, according to C. S. Lewis, "The New Testament contains embarrassing promises that what we pray for with faith we shall receive. . . . I'm not

asking why our petitions are so often refused. . . . The real problem is [why their fulfillment] is so lavishly promised."[6]

One final issue should be addressed before we take a closer look at each of these problems of evil. Christians are often tempted to give easy answers —answers that make sense to comfortable Christians but are gibberish at best and dismissive at worst to, for example, Jews in Dachau. These easy answers may be offered with full sincerity, but they are dangerous, for not only do they run the risk of diminishing or dismissing people's experience of evil, they offer "answers" that are easily defeated. And the only thing worse in apologetics than giving no answer is giving bad answers.

2. The Philosophical Problem of Evil

The classic expression of the philosophical problem of evil is called the "Trilemma" and goes back to Epicurus (341 BC–270 BC). The Trilemma is the following inconsistent set of statements:

1. Since God is all-powerful, he should be able to eliminate evil.
2. Since God is all-good, he should desire to eliminate evil.
3. Evil exists.

The logic linking these statements is pretty clear and can be stated in one of two ways. First, if God is all-powerful and perfectly good, then logically, evil should not exist. Second, if evil exists, then logically, an all-powerful, perfectly good being should not.

Of course, in addition to raising the question of God's existence, this argument raises the question of the existence and definition of evil. Does evil exist, and how is it to be defined? These are fraught questions to which there is no easy worldview-neutral answer. The Christian will naturally define evil as that which goes against God's moral will, but such a definition is difficult to apply here because the existence and perfectly good nature of God are the issues being raised and questioned by the philosophical problem of evil. Similarly, the atheist might be tempted to offer a definition of evil that the Christian would not (or should not) accept, but the atheist can hardly use that definition in an argument against Christian theism, for doing so would beg the question against the theist. The

way forward here is to acknowledge the existence of evil and work with a commonsense definition of it. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart (1915–1985) once said of pornography, "I cannot define it, but I know it when I see it."[7] Similarly, even if a definition of evil is illusive, it seems difficult to deny that evil exists. We can all agree that Auschwitz is evil, even if we cannot agree on a clear, formalized definition of evil.

The philosophical problem of evil has two variants. The first—often called the "logical" or "deductive" version—is that the existence of God is logically incompatible with the existence of any evil at all.[8] In a landmark argument, Alvin Plantinga developed the "free will defense" to answer this challenge.[9] Plantinga argues, first, that there is actually no strict logical contradiction in the Trilemma; to make it a logical contradiction, the atheist objector must add additional premises. Second, Plantinga argues that God's omnipotence does not entail that he can do anything. In fact, Scripture says explicitly that God cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18). In addition to being unable to act contrary to his nature, Christians argue that God cannot create square circles or, more relevant to the topic of evil, create persons with free will who would never choose evil. Finally, Plantinga argues that even if God is omnipotent, it is possible that he was unable to create a world with a better overall balance of good relative to evil.

While the debate over the success of Plantinga's free will defense continues, perhaps the clearest indication of the strength of Plantinga's argument has been the response of atheists. Plantinga's argument represents a watershed moment in the discussion of the philosophical problem of evil in which some atheists have shifted their attention to the existential problem of evil. Others have continued to press the philosophical problem but have shifted from the logical version to what is called the evidential or inductive or empirical version. The evidential version of the objection continues to be to the existence of any evil in God's creation, but the claim shifts from "Evil is logically incompatible with God's existence" to "Evil is evidence of God's nonexistence."

Christian responses to the claim that the existence of any evil is evidence against God's existence typically fall under the general heading of "greater good" theodicies. A theodicy is an "answer to the question of why God permits evil."[10] Just as I am willing for my kids to endure the pain of receiving shots because they are a necessary part of the greater good of

immunity from various diseases, so God allows evil in his creation because it is a necessary part of greater good. But what are the greater goods that God desires? There are a variety of candidates, and Christians will prefer one over the others based on their theological commitments. I will briefly mention four, each associated with a different theodicy.

The first greater good is the presence of character or virtues in human beings. Irenaeus (ca. 130–202 AD) proposed that God's fundamental purpose in creation was to make it such that human beings would develop certain fundamental virtues. But what is required for humans to develop the virtue of, for example, perseverance? Can one learn to persevere if there is no evil in creation? This theodicy has come to be known as the *Soul-building Theodicy*.[11] In response to this theodicy, one might ask why God could not create beings with these virtues already intact or "preloaded"? The answer to this very good question is that a being who possessed perseverance intrinsically, rather than developing it over time, would with respect to that virtue, be like God. And one of the things that God cannot do, omnipotent though he is, is create a being that is his equal with respect to any morally significant property.[12]

A second possible greater good is the appreciation of good itself. If one has never known or experienced evil, can one really appreciate how good they have it? Is a person who has never questioned whether they will get a meal that week really thankful for the food they have? This theodicy is called the *aesthetic theodicy*, so named because of an example used by Augustine (354–430 AD). He referenced the colors in a beautiful painting. While the dark colors are not intrinsically beautiful, they provide tone, contrast, and depth to the painting and draw our eyes to the bright colors. Therefore, just as a painting with no dark colors is not as beautiful as a painting with both bright and dark colors, so a world with no evil is not appreciated as much as a world in which the evil causes us to appreciate the presence of love, goodness, and virtue.

Perhaps the most widely referenced greater good is love. The *free will theodicy*, also first proposed by Augustine, argues that the reason evil exists in the world is because God created human beings with free will and that he did so because he wanted humans to have the capacity to choose love. Just as with the soul-building theodicy, a being can possess the virtue of love in one of two ways: one can be intrinsically loving or one can choose to love. God cannot create beings who are intrinsically loving, so if love is going to

exist among his creation, it must be chosen. But since love cannot be coerced or forced in any way, beings who are capable of love are also capable of love's opposite—rejecting God and choosing evil. So, in short, love requires freedom, and freedom requires at least the possibility of evil.

The final theodicy appeals to the same greater good as the free will theodicy: love. But this theodicy, called the *warfare theodicy*, emphasizes that God did not only give free will to human beings. He also gave free will to supernatural beings called angels. The most powerful of these was Lucifer, and he and one-third of the angels rebelled against God and began a spiritual warfare that has continued throughout human history. This theodicy, championed by Origen (185–254 AD), and more recently by Greg Boyd,[13] explains the existence of evil with reference to the ongoing spiritual warfare that plagues humanity and creation. This is not, however, to resort to a metaphysical dualism that makes Satan God's equal. It is rather a realization that the freedom granted by God to angels and demons results in genuine and ongoing evils, and will do so until the eschaton when these evils will be eradicated.

One final issue must be mentioned. The last two theodicies use free will to explain the existence of evil. In so doing, they invite what might be called the *problem of natural evil*. Even if the free will of sinful people can explain the existence of various instances of moral evil, what explains the existence of natural evils such as earthquakes and hurricanes—evils that do not seem to depend on free will?

Answering this challenge requires two lines of argument. The first is that creation itself is fallen and not the way God intended it to be. As a result, human activity has had a negative effect on many aspects of creation. Second, we need to make a distinction between the natural event itself—the earthquake, for example—and the destruction caused by it. Natural events are not evil. It is when those natural events intersect with human activity that they become what we call natural evils. Take, for example, the earthquake in Haiti in 2010 that killed an estimated 150,000 Haitians. What made that a deadly event was not merely the movement of the earth's crust and the resulting shaking of the island; what made it a deadly natural evil was the fact that the earthquake struck a densely populated part of the world in which people lived in poorly constructed housing. Why were these buildings poorly constructed? The answer lies in four hundred years of government corruption and economic exploitation by other countries and

multinational corporations. This earthquake was evil in the sense that it occurred because of the choices that created its context. In other words, it can be questioned whether there is any such thing as a purely natural evil. Purely natural events are not evil and evils are not purely natural.

3. *The Existential Problem of Evil*

The existential problem of evil differs from the philosophical problem in that it asks not about why evil in general exists, but rather inquires about a particular evil. One might imagine a question being stated this way: "I understand why God might allow some evils in his creation, but I don't get why God would allow my friend's baby to die a painful prolonged death of a rare childhood disease." This problem inquires not into the structure and content of God's creation, but into the reality of God's providence. Doesn't God care that people are suffering from terrible illnesses and that seemingly gratuitous evils abound? Why doesn't he act? These questions express the existential problem of evil.

The first thing to see is that the answer to the philosophical problem of evil will not work here. Suppose one accepts the free will theodicy and believes evil is a result of humans choosing evil instead of love. Even if this were true, God could step in and stop a particular evil from happening. He could act miraculously and halt a murderer's bullet or destroy a tumor without undercutting human freedom. Now, God could not do this for every evil because doing so would eliminate the consequences of choices and thereby destroy the meaningfulness of free choice. But the existence of human freedom does not eliminate the possibility of divine action and therefore God can, with respect to any particular evil, act to stop it. So, unsurprisingly, the success of the various theodicies in answering one question, "Why is there any evil?" does not carry over to answering a very different question: "Why *this* evil?"

So what is the answer to "Why *this* evil?" Frustrating though it is, the best answer is "We don't know." We don't know why God allows one evil and stops another. We don't know why God answers one prayer and apparently does not answer another. It is important to note that this is not a thoughtless answer. Sometimes "I don't know" is a result of avoidance or a lack of engagement with the question itself. Rather, this is a thoughtful agnosticism; we have thought about this matter a great deal and have come

to see that we have good reasons to believe that humans could not answer this question. This answer to the existential problem of evil has come to be called *skeptical theism*. Those who take this approach are not skeptical about theism. Rather they are theists who are skeptical about our ability to answer the question "Why does God allow *this* evil?"

The reason for the skeptical theist's skepticism is that there is a huge difference between the following statements:

1. This particular evil seems to be gratuitous. That is, there seems to be no outweighing good associated with this evil that would explain why God would allow its existence.
2. This particular evil is gratuitous. That is, there is no outweighing good associated with this evil that would explain why God would allow its existence.

It is absolutely true that there are some evils that appear to be gratuitous, but there are rather insuperable difficulties in bridging the gap between the claim that an evil seems to be gratuitous and is gratuitous. The reasons for this difficulty are not hard to come by. First, our awareness of the network of causal connections surrounding events is incredibly superficial. Imagine a car accident at an intersection. When we see such an accident, we only see that two cars entered the intersection at the same time and resulted in a collision. We do not see the myriad factors that brought those cars together at that point in time, and the drivers both being distracted enough to cause the collision. Our "explanation" of that event only speaks to the last few of an immense series of events. Leading up to the accident is a series of contingent influences, events, and decisions spilling back into time. Not only do we ask questions like "Why were the drivers distracted? Why were they driving at that speed? Why were they heading in that direction?" We also need to ask "Why did each of those drivers exist?" After all, if past events were slightly different, their parents might not have even met. The point of all of this is that when we claim that "God should not have allowed that event," we are failing to acknowledge our lack of awareness of the incredible complexity of events leading up to and surrounding that accident.

Second, some of the justifying good—reasons that explain why God allowed the evil in question—is in our future and therefore unknown to us.

Many examples could be offered here. In my own life, there have been numerous events that made no sense at the time and seemed to be gratutitous, but in hindsight are seen very differently. Does this mean that the events in question were not evil? Not necessarily. Do I thank God for those events? Most often, no. They remain painful, but I understand why God permitted them, and if I were given the ability to go back in time and change them, I would be extremely hesitant to do so, being unaware of what else might occur.

Finally, we never see what would have happened. It is easy to look at a particular evil and assume that the alternative is the exact same sequence minus the evil event. The problem is that the sequence of events minus that evil might result in an evil that is even worse. One speculative example: It is obvious that the Holocaust of World War II is one of the great evils of the twentieth century, raising the question, Could God have stopped this event? Suppose God could have stopped or cut short World War II? There were more than two dozen assassination attempts on Adolf Hitler's life, the most famous of which took place on July 20, 1944. Any number of these could have been successful with even minimal divine providential assistance, raising the question, Why did God not take the opportunity to save the lives of millions of people? It is impossible to say for sure, but consider the very real possibility that World War II as it played out was not the worst possible state of affairs. Historians speculate that if World War II could have been prevented or were cut short by a conditional surrender, the sociopolitical tensions left unresolved by World War I would have continued to fester and possibly come to a head sometime in the next century, after which the major national powers would have developed nuclear weapons. If so, it is highly likely that such a conflict would have caused a nuclear holocaust, resulting in the death of billions of people, possibly the extinction of humanity. Do we know that this would have happened? No. But that's precisely the point. We don't know what would have happened and so we cannot with any degree of confidence say that there is no justification for God's allowing the evil in question.

4. The Problem of Suffering

The problem of suffering occurs when a person is experiencing evil and suffering. For the one in the middle of the trauma, philosophical and

theological reflections on gratuitous evil, divine providence, and justified reasons are not only unhelpful, they can be seen as dismissive of their personal experience. Telling a person who is experiencing tremendous suffering that there are justifiable reasons for the evil they are experiencing is to dismiss the severity of their suffering or to justify the perpetrator of their suffering, and neither of those are remotely helpful.

Consequently, the problem of suffering is not really a problem that can be answered. Suffering is resolved through time and relationship. A person in the midst of suffering does not need an explanation; they need love, support, and understanding. Perhaps someday they will arrive at a place where explanations and answers are apropos, but getting to that place will take a while.

This does not mean that the problem of suffering has no apologetic relevance. It is crucially important from an apologetic point of view because it is possible to look at the experience of suffering from a Christian point of view and compare it to an atheistic point of view. Given atheism's view, what meaning is there in suffering when "life sucks, and then you die"? In comparison, Christianity has a God who understands suffering and who suffered himself for our sake. Moreover, because of that suffering, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Suffering is finite and evil has been conquered. So the problem of suffering powerfully highlights some of the important differences between Christian and atheistic ways of understanding the world. The resources for dealing with suffering are substantially more robust in Christianity than in atheism.

5. How to Approach "Answering" the Problem of Evil

One final issue is relevant to the apologetic discussion of the problem of evil. Apologetics must not be just about the answers to various skeptical questions. We must also pay attention to how we say what we say. Consequently, Christian apologists must be careful that their approach to the problem of evil is appropriate and that it doesn't create or exacerbate additional objections to the Christian faith.

The fundamental principle is straightforward: would-be Christian apologists must answer the question that their interlocutor actually has, not the question that it initially sounds like they have. This is important because

often people who are wrestling with the problem of suffering—if they raise the issue of evil at all—may seem like they are asking about the philosophical problem of evil. This is because people are often reticent to open their heart and share their deep pain and suffering. And when one gives a philosophical problem of evil answer to one dealing with the problem of suffering, the result is often felt to be dismissive. Therefore, the best strategy is to assume that a person is wrestling with the problem of suffering until it becomes patently clear that their questions are the sort that can be "answered."

When a person I do not know well raises the problem of evil—"Why does God allow evil and suffering in the world?"—my answer acknowledges the difficulty of the problem and validates the importance of their question. If they are actually wrestling with the problem of suffering, then hopefully my response does not feel dismissive in any way. If they are actually asking about the philosophical or existential problems, then they can follow up and press the question, allowing me to ask questions in order to determine the specific nature of their inquiry. In addressing the problem of evil—as with other apologetic questions—one's approach to the question itself is even more important than what one actually says.

<div align="right">James Beilby</div>

It's All Relative—or Is It?

What do postmodern philosophies and postliberal theologies hold in common with the Enlightenment thought they seek to replace? Relativism. You know your truth, I know my truth, but neither of us knows *the* truth. "There's no such thing as objective truth," argues Philip Kenneson, "and it's a good thing, too."[14] If Kenneson expects "it's a good thing, too" to appeal to people from different communities than his own, does he not appeal to an objectively valid concept of the "good"? To insist objectively that there is no such thing as objective truth is self-contradictory.

Postmodern communalism[15] faces problems similar to the teachings of modern confessionalists like H. Richard Niebuhr. Rejecting the objective validity of revealed truths and virtues, Niebuhr lacked a base for communication with communities whose confessions maintained conflicting claims. As Philip Johnson has observed, "Relativism about truth

does not lead to tolerance. Rather, it leads to the conclusion that social conflicts cannot be resolved by reason or even compromise, because there is no common reason that can unite groups that differ on fundamental questions."[16]

The existence of God is true (Romans 1:20) and moral norms are obligatory (2:14), not just because Christians believe in a theistic worldview and life view, but because those facts cohere with realities with which all have to do in all times and contexts. All are accountable for believing in God and avoiding murder, for example. By undercutting the objective validity of God's general revelation, postmodernist contextualization sabotages respect for human rights. Having destroyed all reverence for universally obligatory moral principles on Monday, postmodern relativists need not imagine that others will respect their human rights on Tuesday. They dislodge the base for educating all children morally, communicating with intellectual honesty in academia, and reasoning for purposes of preevangelism, evangelism, and missions from common ground.[17] God forbid that in the name of rejecting enlightenment assumptions, moderns or postmoderns should reject the truths of God's general revelation.

Postmodern thought also joins modern Enlightenment denials of an objectively valid informative special revelation in Jesus Christ and inspired Scripture. It is hardly "a good thing" for a postmodernist to deny any objective validity of Jesus' explicit teaching concerning his own instruction.[18] Although the grass of relative human opinion flourishes today, it disappears tomorrow. The Word of God the Father through God the Son and inspired prophetic and apostolic writers endures forever. It is far from "a good thing" to deny the objective historicity of the incarnate Logos. The good news of Christianity, in contrast to Hindu and Greek myths, reports that the Messiah was born, lived, suffered, died, and rose "in the flesh." To deny that the Logos came in the flesh is to teach against (anti-) Christ. Because the gospel message is objectively true of the actual world, it must necessarily be preached to every person in every context. And because of its objective truth, his Spirit-led followers "do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Galatians 6:10).

The relativism of both modernism and postmodernism is totalistic. Totalistic relativism is (1) an epistemological theory denying any objective, universally valid human knowledge, and affirming that meaning and truth vary from person to person, culture to culture, and time to time; (2) a

metaphysical theory denying any changeless realities such as energy, space, time, natural laws, persons, or God, and affirming that all conceivable meaning rests on activities, happenings, events, processes, or relationships in which observers are changing participants; and (3) an ethical theory denying any changeless moral principles normative for all people in every situation. From these three fields relativism pervades every area of meaningful human experience and knowledge.

Limited relativism considers totalistic relativism self-contradictory and wrong in its absolute denials of any absolute truth and yet accurate in its assertion that much human knowledge is conditioned and slanted by innumerable variables: subjectively (Kierkegaard), psychologically (Freud), morally (Fletcher), economically (Marx), politically (Reinhold Niebuhr), historically (H. Richard Niebuhr, W. Dilthey), educationally (Dewey), religiously (Cobb, Starcke, Watts), anthropologically (Kraft), and stylistically (Ricoeur). As a result of the kaleidoscopic impact of these and other influential variables, totalistic relativists have denied any invariable, absolute truth about things in themselves.

Increased consciousness of these cultural variables has generally been of significant value to the fields of interpretation and communication. To grasp the *meaning* of people from other cultures, interpreters now realize how crucial it is to seek sympathetic identification with them in terms of their own presuppositions and historical roots. Such cross-cultural understanding is equally indispensable if one seeks to communicate to those of other cultures in terms of their own categories of thought and verbal expressions. Improved ways of grasping and communicating meaning, however, do not settle issues of objective validity.

Agreement has not been reached in regard to the degree of influence the cultural variables bring to bear upon human knowers. According to determinists, given a specific set of conditions present to a person's brain, nothing else could happen. All knowledge is relative to and determined by these situations.[19] For others, although all of human knowledge and behavior is predisposed to habitual responses by given sets of stimuli, this conditioning "falls somewhat short of total determination." All prepositional assertions are nevertheless held to be time- and culture-bound.[20]

Others view persons not only as physical organisms but also as minds, souls, or spirits, with the powers of self-determination and self-

transcendence. Hence, their knowledge is not all time-bound, and they are agents responsible for their own actions (Thomas Reid, J. Oliver Buswell Jr.).

Existentialists affirm that humankind is free from both external determination and internal self-determination by a self with a given, unchangeable nature. To be authentically free, an existentialist must, in fact, exercise an arbitrary freedom independent of cultural predispositions and past habitual choices. It seems more likely that some knowledge is predisposed by one's cultural influences and creative knowledge simply occasioned by one's situation. Knowledge can be context related without being context determined.

Totalistic Relativism

Whether the cultural and psychological variables determine, predispose, or occasion certain metaphysical beliefs, totalistic relativists know little about the nature of persons or things as terms or entities in themselves, and much about relationships, functions, and processes. Things and persons are what they do. Distinct, unique persons are reduced to influences, relations, events, or happenings.[21] Relational theology also intends to free people from the tyranny of absolutes but may diminish the value of a person as such.

In Eastern monistic relativism, persons are not real but mere *maya* (the power that unites mind and matter) insofar as they are distinguishable from the One. Differentiations of distinct persons with whom to have relationships are said to be made not by nature, but by human conceptual assertions distinguishing subjects from predicates. Hence, all propositions are illusory and relative to the viewpoints of those who assert them. In "reality," persons, like dewdrops, slip into the shining sea, the part never again to be differentiated from the whole. Since all that can be conceived is relative, no permanent objective remains for which to strive, and nihilism results. No self-nature can stand by itself, and no lasting distinction can be made between right and wrong. Moral conflicts are a sickness of the mind that should have cultivated a bland indifference. Decisions are to be made without having the faintest understanding of how one decides (Alan Watts).

Totalistic relativism, relationalism, or contextualization ends in amorality, "Asiatic fatalism," meaninglessness, and nihilism. Furthermore, radical

relativism is self-contradictory. Every human assertion is said to be time-bound and culture-bound, but the assertion that "all is relative" is taken to be universal and necessary. Total relativism absolutely denies any absolutes —and it absolutizes relativity.

Limited Relativism

Less reductive and more open approaches to meaningful human existence acknowledge not only differences among cultures but also similarities. Charles Kraft alludes to over seventy-three constants in human societies in a chapter on human commonality, but he concludes the chapter with only one criterion for evaluating cultural systems: their efficiency or adequacy in meeting people's personal, social, and spiritual needs. The forms of a culture are judged solely in terms of their pragmatic usefulness. Usefulness for what? It sounds good to say, "for properly relating human beings to God." But having held that 100 percent of human conceptual thought is time-bound, Kraft offers no changeless criteria by which to distinguish counterfeit religious experience from authentic conversion to Christ. Apparently dynamically equivalent experiences may be of Satan, who changes himself into an angel of light. The tests of authentic Christian experience, according to Scripture, include conceptually equivalent assertions about the nature of Christ, the eternal Word who became flesh (John 1:1–18; 20:31; 1 John 4:1–3; 2 John 7–9). Relational and functional theologians, succumbing to relativism, undermine the changeless conceptual validity of God's universal revelation in nature and special revelation in the teaching of the incarnate Christ and inspired prophetic and apostolic spokesmen.

What transcultural truths, then, are known through general revelation? First, people are human. Persons everywhere in all cultures have been, are, and will be human. Dehumanizing and depersonalizing tendencies to the contrary, persons are subjects, not mere objects, and as agents responsibly participate in communities to achieve common, objective goals.

Second, people have inalienable human rights and responsibilities. However different physically, economically, educationally, politically, socially, or religiously, people have a right to equal concern and respect.

Third, people deserve justice. Whatever the situation, and whenever people are treated unjustly, they cry out against injustice.

Fourth, unjust people need a just amnesty and forgiving, holy love.

Fifth, people ought to be intellectually honest and faithful to the given data of reality. They ought not to bear false witness against others.

Sixth, if human society, mutual trust, and communication are to be meaningful, people ought to be logically noncontradictory in their thought, speech, and writing. Human knowledge and experience are related not only to cultural variables but also to these invariables of morality, fact, and logic.

To argue for but one absolute love, as did Joseph Fletcher, is to ignore the breadth of the Creator's intelligence and wisdom. To argue for the absoluteness of factual data alone, as with scientism and positivism in their varied forms, overlooks the faithful words of the Logos regarding morality, sin, and salvation, and his own integrity as one who cannot deny himself or contradict himself. But to argue for logical absolutes alone, as rationalists may, blinds one to the given data of experience, the danger of self-centeredness, injustice, and irresponsibility.

The Need for Absolutes

Claims to truth, as distinct from mere uninformed opinion, must be justified on the basis of something more than subjective or community feelings of certitude. As Gordon Kaufman has argued, any claim to truth involves the claim to objective validity. Although hesitating to affirm belief in absolutes, Kaufman admits that objectively valid knowledge transcends actual thinking and feeling in three directions—givenness, universality, and logical interconnectedness. These he calls "functioning absolutes." Since they function as absolutes along with justice and love, intellectual honesty, and human worth to make life possible and meaningful, why not call them absolutes?

To acknowledge changeless truths in the midst of changing human experiences, as Augustine realized, is to acknowledge their changeless source and referent ontologically. Paul Tillich also saw that all such absolutes point beyond themselves to an all-inclusive Absolute. Unfortunately, Tillich's concept of Being itself depersonalized the living and dynamic Logos of Scripture.

The most coherent account of both the variables and the invariables in meaningful human experience, Christians may argue, is the personal, living, moral, just, loving, faithful, and true God revealed not only in the world, history, and human nature, but even more significantly in the Jesus of history and the teachings of Scripture. Although finite, fallen people may not discover objectively valid, normative truths for themselves, as divine image bearers they may be enabled by common or special grace to receive them. Through general revelation from the absolute God, people find out about God's moral principles for justice in society and, through special revelation, about God's loving plans and purposes for unjust people. The living God is not determined by the relative processes of time, space, energy, and humanity. People and nature are relative to, dependent upon, and conditioned by God.

It is commonplace for radical religious relativists to affirm that people can experience God even though no conceptual or propositional truth about God is possible. Even the words of Jesus and the Bible, they hold, are time-bound and culture-bound. They can be taken only noncognitively, as pointers. Such religious relativism, however pious, misses the mark because it fails to take adequate account of humankind's creation in the image of God and renewal in the divine image to know God conceptually (Colossians 3:10). Because they are created to know and commune with the Creator and Redeemer who is changeless in essence, attributes, and plans for space and time, humans in a sea of relativism can receive some effable absolutes by divine revelation and illumination.

Denials of propositional revelation may also result from a failure to grasp the relatedness of everything in changing and changeless experience to the Logos of God (John 1:1–3). The divine Logos is eternal and distinct from the universe but not limited to an intellectually other eternity as in Eastern mysticism. The divine Logos is immanent, governing nature and people, but not limited to natural processes as in liberalism. The divine Logos became incarnate as a truly human person, but is not limited to noncognitive personal encounters as in neo-orthodoxy. The divine Logos was inscripturated but is not limited to a mere Biblicism as in some extreme fundamentalism. In sum, the Logos of God is transcendent and immanent, incarnate, and inscripturated as in classical orthodox theology.

A verificational apologetic for the absolutes of the divine Logos, general revelation, incarnate revelation, and inscripturated revelation is not itself

another absolute. It is not necessary to be divine or an inerrant spokesman for God to verify God's wisdom, power, and morality in the world, divine sinlessness in Christ, or divine revelation in Scripture. The Israelites did not make themselves autonomous by distinguishing between true and false prophets. To check the credentials of one's surgeon is not to presume oneself more wise and capable in practicing surgery than the specialist. Acquainted with the countless variables every human knower faces, we are not surprised that Christian apologists frankly claim no more than an overwhelming probability beyond reasonable doubt.

Similarly, Christians claim only degrees of probability for their interpretations and applications of divinely revealed propositional truths. To affirm the absoluteness of God's understanding in eternity is not to affirm the absoluteness of any believer's understanding of revelation at any given time in his growth in knowledge and grace. Precisely the opposite result follows. To assert the absoluteness of divine revelation in terms of its intended purpose and the standards of accuracy when written for that end is to deny absoluteness to the pronouncements of governments, public schools, the United Nations, and religious institutions. Divine illumination, as distinct from inspiration, does not result in inerrancy.

Although no interpretation of the Scriptures as given can be regarded as absolute, some interpretations are better informed than others by relevant data, valid hermeneutical principles, and sound criteria of truth. The most reliable checks and balances upon varied interpretive hypotheses are criteria drawn from the invariables found in general revelation. A true interpretation consistently accounts for such relevant data as grammar, literary context, author's purpose, historical and cultural setting, and broader theological context. Furthermore, one must be able to live by that interpretation with integrity while treating people as persons, not things, respecting their rights, treating them justly, and forgiving their injustices.

Untold harm has been done in the name of Christianity by people who have absolutized their relative interpretations of life or of Scripture. Presumptuous prophets in the Old Testament administration who claimed to speak God's Word to people without divine authorization were subject to the most severe penalties. May God deliver evangelicals today from prophetic ministries not validly drawn from divine revelation. This case for revealed absolutes must not be taken to justify absolutizing merely human ideas, however good.

Similarly, inestimable damage has been done to the cause of Christ and Scripture by those who relativize divinely revealed absolutes, which have objective validity for all people of all cultures. Either Christianity is true for all people, or it is true for no one. We can be assured of our view of the major doctrines of Christianity and the realities to which they refer when our interpretations are based on numerous relevant and extensive passages of Scripture, supported by interpreters throughout the history of the church, and attested to us personally by the internal witness of the Holy Spirit to the teaching of the Word. Then we can confidently relate to the realities designated and preach the great doctrines of the faith with joy.

In a day when radical relativism reigns, disciples of the Lord—who is the same yesterday, today, and forever—stand guard against attacks upon the cognitive faith once for all entrusted to the saints (Jude 3) with gentleness, respect, and a clear conscience (1 Peter 3:15–16).

<div align="right">Gordon R. Lewis</div>

For Further Reading and Study

Francis Beckwith, et al., *To Everyone an Answer*

Kenneth Boa and Robert Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*

William Lane Craig, *Apologetics: An Introduction*

C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, *Mere Christianity*, and *The Problem of Pain*

Dennis McCallum, ed., *The Death of Truth*

T. R. Phillips and D. L. Okholm, eds., *Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World*

Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*

James Sire, *The Universe Next Door*

Gene Edward Veith Jr., *Postmodern Times*

chapter 17
World Religions

✦

We all have a philosophy or vision of life, a "worldview," whether we're aware of it or not. It's the story line or road map or lens with which we interpret all our experience of life. It determines how we see reality and our own identity and how we decide issues of morality.[1]

—Os Guinness

While Christianity, as an institution, dominates the religious landscape of much of the Western world, there are many parts of the globe where Christians, regardless of how broadly or narrowly one defines the term, represent only a tiny fraction of the population. In an age of high mobility, many belief systems are now represented in regions where they were not historically present. Believers in "Christianized" countries who once "contended for the faith" mainly with agnostic, apathetic, or simply uninformed neighbors now find that many in their communities actively subscribe to other religions—and your community is probably no different.

In some areas of the world, Buddhism may represent the majority worldview, while in others, its influence may be seen largely in the media (celebrity adherents, movie references, popular fascination with the Dalai Lama, etc.). The same may be true of Islam, which dominates the collective life of certain cultures, yet is viewed in some other cultures in terms of fanaticism and terrorism.

Western Christians, especially, often have relatively limited knowledge about other religions; that is, they may understand a religion's cultural significance without having a firm grasp on what it actually teaches. This, of course, makes it difficult to articulate the differences when asked what makes Christianity unique or true.

What follows is not a detailed discussion—or even a list—of all the religions of the world. Rather, the major religions of the world are briefly considered: Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam. It should be understood that just as we recognize many denominations in Christianity, each of these world religions has its own streams and sects, with corresponding differences in beliefs and practices.

African traditional religions (as a group) are also introduced, in addition to atheism, the New Age movement, and the most prominent new "Christian" religions—offshoots of traditional, orthodox Christianity that are growing around the world.

Finally, we will outline some key claims of Christianity that set it apart from other religions.

Zen Buddhism

Like Hinduism, from which it sprang, Buddhism is not a monolithic religion. It too encompasses many beliefs and even different worldviews. All, of course, claim Gautama Buddha (563–483 BC). Buddha, who was raised in India, left his home and family in search for enlightenment, which he is said to have found while meditating under a bo tree. Buddhists look to him as their source of enlightenment.

The two main branches of Buddhism are called *Mahayana* ("the greater vehicle") and *Hinayana* ("the lesser vehicle"). The former claims enlightenment is available to all and the latter to only a few of the committed. Being aware of the negative connotation of the term, Hinayana Buddhists began to call themselves *Theravada* ("the teaching of the elders").

Basic Beliefs of Buddhists

Both groups of Buddhists accept the "Four Noble Truths" and the "Eightfold Path" to enlightenment.

The First Noble Truth is that life consists of suffering (*dukkha*), which entails pain, misery, sorrow, and the lack of fulfillment.

The Second Noble Truth is that nothing is permanent or unchanging in the world (the doctrine of *anicca*). And we suffer because we desire what is

not permanent.

The Third Noble Truth is that the way to liberate oneself is by eliminating all desire or craving for what is temporal.

The Fourth Noble Truth is that desire can be eliminated by following the Eightfold Path:

Wisdom:
(1) Right Understanding
(2) Right Thought

Ethical Conduct:
(3) Right Speech
(4) Right Action
(5) Right Livelihood

Mental Discipline:
(6) Right Effort
(7) Right Awareness
(8) Right Meditation

These are not steps to be taken in sequential order but attitudes and actions to be developed simultaneously.

In addition to these teachings, Buddhists believe in reincarnation and Nirvana (Buddhist "heaven"), which is the final state of "nothingness," where there is no more desire or frustration.

By far, however, the most influential form of Buddhism is known as Zen Buddhism. Its origins are found in Tao-sheng (AD 360–434), a Mahayana Buddhist, and in Bodhi-dharma (d. AD 534), who migrated from China to Japan, where his form of Buddhism combined with Taoism's emphasis on oneness with Nature. This eclectic blend is known as Zen ("meditation"). Since Zen has made the deepest inroads into Christianity, it is of the greatest interest to Christian apologists.

One of the most influential advocates of pantheism in the West was Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki. Through his long-term activity as a professor at Columbia University and at various other American universities, as well as his lectures throughout the Western world, Suzuki furthered the cause of Zen in its Western interpretation. D. T. Suzuki has influenced and convinced such Westerners as Christmas Humphreys and Alan Watts.

The Nature of Zen

In order to understand Suzuki's form of pantheism, one must seek to grasp the nature of Zen. First, we shall note what Suzuki believes Zen is not, and then what he believes Zen is.

Wʜᴀᴛ Zᴇɴ Iꜱ Nᴏᴛ. According to Suzuki, Zen is not a system or philosophy "founded upon logic and analysis." Zen is opposed to any form of dualistic thinking—that is, making any kind of subject-object distinction.[2] Instead, Suzuki calls us to "Hush the dualism of subject and object, forget both, transcend the intellect, sever yourself from the understanding, and directly penetrate deep into the identity of the Buddha-mind; outside of this there are no realities."

Neither is Zen a set of teachings: "Zen has nothing to teach us in the way of intellectual analysis; nor has it any set doctrines that are imposed on its followers for acceptance." As such, Zen has "no sacred books or dogmatic tenets." Indeed, "Zen teaches nothing." It is we who "teach ourselves; Zen merely points the way."[3]

Nor is Zen a religion as "popularly understood." It has no god to worship, no ceremonial rites, no afterlife, and no soul. When Suzuki says there is no god in Zen, he neither denies nor affirms existence of some deity. "In Zen, God is neither denied nor insisted upon; only there is in Zen no such God as has been conceived by Jewish and Christian minds."[4]

Zen claims not to be theistic or pantheistic as such, denying such metaphysical designations. Unlike the God of Christian theism or Vedanta Hinduism, "there is no object in Zen upon which to fix the thought" of the disciple. "Zen just feels fire warm and ice cold, because when it freezes we shiver and welcome fire. The feeling is all in all. . . . All our theorization fails to touch reality."[5]

Wʜᴀᴛ Zᴇɴ Iꜱ. So what may we say Zen is? According to Suzuki, "Zen is the ocean, Zen is the air, Zen is the mountain, Zen is thunder and lightning, the spring flower, summer heat, and winter snow; nay, more than that, Zen is the man." Suzuki recounted a story in which a Zen master defined Zen as "Your everyday thought."[6] Suzuki puts it another way: "When a hungry monk at work heard the dinner-gong he immediately dropped his work and

showed himself in the dining room. The master, seeing him, laughed heartily, for the monk had been acting Zen to its fullest extent."[7] In other words, Zen is life. "I raise my hand; I take a book from the other side of this desk; I hear the boys playing ball outside my window; I see the clouds blown away beyond the neighboring woods—in all these I am practicing Zen, I am living Zen. No wordy discussion is necessary, nor any explanation."[8] Zen is the personal experience of life, unencumbered by any abstractions or conceptualizations.[9]

God and the World

In Zen Buddhism, God is man, and man is God. Citing the Western mystic Meister Eckhart with approval, Suzuki states: "'Simple people conceive that we are to see God as if he stood on that side and we on this. It is not so; God and I are one in the act of my perceiving Him.' In this absolute oneness of things, Zen establishes the foundations of its philosophy."[10] Not only is a human being God, but all is God and God is all. Everything and everyone are really One. "Buddhas [i.e., enlightened Ones] and sentient beings [i.e., those still ignorant] both grow out of One Mind, and there is no other reality than this Mind."[11]

What this all-embracing Mind is, is no-mindedness, which is the human spiritual nature. Says Suzuki: "This Nature [i.e., the human spiritual nature] is the Mind, and the Mind is the Buddha, and the Buddha is the Way, and the Way is Zen."[12] The Mind may be described as having "been in existence since the beginningless past." Mind is not born and does not die; it is beyond the categories of age or being.[13] Mind is all and all is Mind.

Suzuki is quick to point out that this form of monism is not a denial of the world we perceive and feel around us. However, the world we do sense, which is Outside of us, is a "relative world" that has no final reality. Individual beings exist, but they are real "only insofar as they are considered a partial realization of Suchness." Indeed, Suchness "exists immanently in them. Things are empty and illusory so long as they are particular things and are not thought of in reference to the All that is Suchness and Reality."[14]

Ordinary experience, then, takes the world for something that exists in itself, but it is an illusion. What really exists is Mind.[15]

Buddhists do not like to call Suchness or Mind by the word *God*. The very term is offensive to most Buddhists, "especially when it is intimately associated in vulgar minds with the idea of a Creator who produced the world out of nothing, caused the downfall of mankind, and, touched by the pang of remorse, sent down his only son to save the depraved." The variety of ways Buddhists describe this ultimate reality is partly an effort to avoid speaking of Deity.[16]

Further, Absolute Suchness or Reality cannot be grasped "as it truly is." It goes beyond categories, even of existence. Suzuki states: "We cannot even say that it is, for everything that *is* presupposes that which is *not*: existence and nonexistence are relative terms as much as subject and object, mind and matter, this and that, one and other: one cannot be conceived without the other. 'It is not so (*na iti*),' therefore, may be the only way our imperfect human tongue can express it. So the Mayahanists generally designate absolute Suchness as *Cunyata* or void."

This indefinable and unthinkable "void" may be more fully interpreted in this way: Suchness is neither existence or nonexistence; it is neither unity nor plurality.[17] This is God, and God is All, and All is Mind, and Mind is Buddha, and Buddha is the Way, and the Way is Zen.

View of Human Beings

Individual human beings, then, are simply a manifestation of this All or Mind or God. Individuals are not isolated entities anyway, as we imagine. By themselves, people are no more meaningful than soap bubbles. Particular existence acquires meaning only when thought of in terms of the whole oneness.[18] This is not precisely a denial of materiality. Human beings have both materiality and immateriality, and more.[19] It is a denial of individuality in any ultimate sense. People only appear to be individual beings, but in reality they are all one in the One. The goal of Zen is to help people go beyond egoism to realize their oneness in God and so become immortal.[20]

Eᴛʜɪᴄs. Fundamentally, Zen is primarily a "practical discipline of life."[21] From an ethical perspective, Zen is a discipline aimed "at the reconstruction of character."[22] This rebuilding of character is necessary to do battle with

egoism, the source of all evils and sufferings. "Buddhism concentrates its entire ethical force upon the destruction of the egocentric notions and desires."[23]

Basically, Zen's answer to egoism is to learn. This ignorance is the clinging that "man needs to detach himself from Ignorance" (i.e., dualism), thus transcending all duality. When this is accomplished, one "is said to be in harmony and even one with Suchness."[24] This goal can only be met through selfless labor and devotion to others, which requires the prior destruction of all selfish desires. The realization of this goal is called Nirvana. Destruction of self-orientation brings enlightenment, hence the ability to love others as ourselves.[25]

Involved in this process toward enlightenment and within enlightenment for a Zen monk is "a great deal of manual labor, such as sweeping, cleaning, cooking, fuel-gathering, tilling the farm, or going about begging in the villages far and near." The central principle by which the Zen monk is to live his life "is not to waste but to make the best possible use of things as they are given us."[26] The ethical teaching of Zen is succinctly summarized in "The Teaching of the Seven Buddhas":

> Not to commit evils
> But to do all that is good,
> And to keep one's thought pure—
> This is the teaching of all the Buddhas.[27]

Nature of History

Since the world is viewed as illusory, history is considered illusory as well. Past, present, and future are "unborn." They have no reality beyond being manifestations of Mind.[28]

Granting this illusory existence of history in no way rules out its role as part of *maya*, or Ignorance. Suzuki states that history is "a grand drama visualizing the Buddhist doctrine of karmic immortality." Just as in many forms of Hindu pantheism, so Zen Buddhism holds to the belief in *karma*. The Buddhist concept of *karma* is that "any act, good or evil, once committed and conceived, never vanishes like a bubble in water, but lives, potentially or actively as the case may be, in the world of minds and deeds."

Suzuki likens the doctrine of *karma* to "the theory of evolution and heredity as working in our moral field."[29]

As everything else in the world of duality, history must be transcended. This is done in the following way:

> Events past are already past; therefore have no thoughts of them, and your mind is disconnected from the past. Thus past events are done away with. Present events are already here before you; then have no attachment to them. Not to have attachment means not to rouse any feeling of hate or love. Your mind is then disconnected from the present, and the events before your eyes are done away with. When the past, present, and future are thus in no way taken in, they are completely done away with. . . . If you have a thoroughly clear perception as to the mind having no abiding place anywhere, this is known as having a thoroughly clear perception of one's own being. This very Mind . . . is the Buddha-Mind itself; it is called Emancipation-Mind, Enlightenment-Mind, the Unborn Mind, and Emptiness of Materiality and Ideality.[30]

Human Destiny

Human destiny is the achievement of Nirvana—that is, "the annihilation of the notion of ego-substance and of all the desires that arise from this erroneous conception" and the practical expression of "universal love or sympathy (*karuna*) for all beings."[31] Nirvana is sometimes spoken of as possessing four attributes: Nirvana "is eternal because it is immaterial; it is blissful because it is above all sufferings; it is self-acting because it knows no compulsion; it is pure because it is not defiled by passion and error."[32] Nirvana also is God, and to achieve it is to realize one's essential oneness with the absolute One.

Nirvana is not achieved easily. However, it does not involve asceticism, knowledge of certain books or doctrines, or even meditation divorced from life. Instead, the realization of Nirvana begins and ends in life itself. "Salvation (i.e., attainment of Nirvana) must be sought in the finite itself; there is nothing infinite apart from finite things; if you seek something transcendental, that will cut you off from this world of relativity, which is the same as the annihilation of yourself. You do not want salvation at the cost of your own existence."

"Nirvana is to be sought in the midst of Samsara (birth-and-death)." No one can escape Samsara. It is one's subjective perception of life. If a person will but change his inner awareness, he will see that reality is "absolutely one."[33] The awareness of this in the inner life is Nirvana.

The road to Nirvana involves many things. However, the most fundamental aspect is the ridding of all dualistic thinking. And the root of all such thinking is logic. Suzuki acknowledges that "we generally think that 'A is A' is absolute, and that the proposition 'A is not A' or 'A is B' is unthinkable." But such thinking only keeps us in bondage so that we cannot comprehend the truth. We must therefore shed the shackles of logic and approach life from a new point of view. In this new experience, there "is no logic, no philosophizing; here is no twisting of facts to suit our artificial measures; here is no murdering of human nature in order to submit it to intellectual dissections; the one spirit stands face-to-face with the other spirit like two mirrors facing each other, and there is nothing to intervene between their mutual reflections."[34]

In order to help the Zen disciple beyond the logical interpretation of reality, the Zen masters created a whole approach to reality that included illogical sayings and questions as well as responses to questions—called the *koan*. For example, a very familiar question is "If you have heard the sound of one hand [clapping], can you make me hear it too?"[35] A famous saying from Fudaishi graphically illustrates the irrationality of Zen:

> Empty-handed I go, and behold the spade is in my hands;
> I walk on foot, and yet on the back of an ox I am riding;
> When I pass over the bridge, Lo, the water floweth not,
> but the bridge doth flow.[36]

For the attainment of Nirvana, one must transcend all the things that keep one from seeing life in its fullness. This step is called *satori*, which is achieved through the *koan*. It is this process from the *koan* to *satori* and then to Nirvana that is the road to spiritual happiness.[37]

The essence of Suzuki's absolute pantheism is that the world of particulars is both finite and infinite, relative and absolute, illusory and real. What one needs to do in order to see reality in all its fullness is to free oneself from logic, words, concepts, abstractions—anything that keeps one from personally experiencing what is neither being nor nonbeing. When this occurs, Nirvana is attained—one becomes one with the One.

<div align="right">Norman L. Geisler</div>

Vedanta Hinduism

Hinduism represents a broad category of religious beliefs, most of which are pantheistic or panentheistic. One of the oldest forms of pantheism is found in the last section of the Vedas, the Hindu scriptures. This final section is called the *Upanishads*. Because the *Upanishads* came at the end of each of the four Vedas, the *Upanishads* came to be spoken of as the Vedanta, meaning end or goal of the Vedas. "Thus it is that when a modern Hindu speaks of the Vedanta he may have both senses more or less in mind, the scriptures referred to being for him that last part of the Vedas and at the same time their ultimate reason for existence, their perfect culmination—in a word, their highest wisdom."[38]

The author and date of the *Upanishads* are unknown. They consist of the recorded experiences of Hindu sages.[39] The *Upanishads*, along with the *Bhagavad-Gita*, lay the foundation for Vedanta Hinduism.

Vedantic View of God

Not all forms of Hinduism believe in an impersonal God. Bhakti Hinduism does not. Nor does Hare Krishna. However, Vedanta pantheism teaches that only one God (Brahman) exists. This God is at once infinite in form, immortal, imperishable, impersonal, all-pervading, supreme, changeless, absolute, and indivisible, and at the same time none of these. For God is beyond all thought and speech:

> Him [Brahman] the eye does not see, nor the tongue express, nor the mind grasp. Him we neither know nor are able to teach. Different is he from the known, and . . . from the unknown. He truly knows Brahman who knows him as beyond knowledge; he who thinks that he knows, knows not. The ignorant think that Brahman is known, but the wise know him to be beyond knowledge.[40]

Brahman is inexpressible and indefinable. Nothing can be truly said or thought of Brahman. This is graphically illustrated by the Hindu philosopher Sankara in his commentary on the *Upanishads*: "'Sir,' said a pupil to his master, 'teach me the nature of Brahman.' The master did not reply. When a second and a third time he was importuned, he answered: 'I teach you indeed, but you do not follow. His name is silence.'"[41]

Vedantic View of the World

Vedanta pantheism also teaches that all is God and God is all. There is only one reality. The world that we see, hear, touch, taste, and smell does not actually exist. It appears to exist, but it is in fact an illusion, or *maya*. The universe we perceive is like walking through a dense forest at night and seeing what appears to be a snake. But when we return to the same spot in the light of the day, we see that the snake really was a rope. The rope looked like a snake, but it actually was not a snake. Just as the snake appeared to exist, so the universe appears to exist but it actually does not. Instead, the universe is an illusion superimposed upon the only true reality, Brahman.

As the *Upanishads* state: "Brahman alone is—nothing else is. He who sees the manifold universe, and not the one reality, goes evermore from death to death."[42] "Meditate, and you will realize that mind, matter, and *maya* (the power that unites mind and matter) are but three aspects of Brahman, the one reality."[43]

Vedantic View of Humanity

Vedanta pantheism says that humankind is Brahman. *Maya*, or the illusory universe, has deceived us into thinking that each person is a particular in the universe. But if the person would clear the senses and mind of *maya* and meditate upon the true Self (*Atman*), then the realization would come that *Atman* is Brahman, the one true reality. The depth of a person's soul is identical to the depth of the universe. Having attained to Brahman, a sage declared: "I am life. . . . I am established in the purity of Brahman. I have attained the freedom of the Self. I am Brahman, self-luminous, the brightest treasure. I am endowed with wisdom. I am immortal, imperishable."[44]

Vedantic View of Ethics

According to Vedanta pantheism, people must transcend the world of illusion to discover the true Self.[45] This is accomplished by going beyond good and evil. "When the seer beholds the Effulgent One, the Lord, the Supreme Being, then, transcending both good and evil, and freed from impurities, he unites himself with him."[46] When a person unites himself

with Brahman, he no longer will be plagued by such thoughts as "I have done an evil thing" or "I have done a good thing." For to go beyond good and evil is to be troubled no more by what has been done.[47] It is to become unattached to personal (or anyone else's) past, present, or future actions. Even the results of any actions will be viewed with indifference. "When your intellect has cleared itself of its delusions, you will become indifferent to the results of all action, present or future."[48]

This drive toward indifference to any action is explained most clearly in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. In the *Gita*, a long dialogue occurs between Krishna, a manifestation of Brahman, and his friend and disciple, Arjuna. Arjuna tells of his reluctance to fight against a people among whom he has many friends. He asks how killing his friends could possibly be justified. Krishna says he must detach himself from the fruits of his actions, no matter what they are. Thus states Krishna:

> He whose mind dwells
> Beyond attachment,
> Untainted by ego,
> No act shall bind him
> With any Bond:
> Though he slay these thousands
> He is no slayer.[49]

Krishna explains that this state of union with Brahman can be achieved by following one or any combination of the following paths:

1. *Raga Yoga*—the path of union through meditation and mind control
2. *Karma Yoga*—the path of union through work
3. *Jnana Yoga*—the path of union through knowledge
4. *Bhakti Yoga*—the path of union through love and devotion[50]

But any path one follows must be accompanied by unattachment or indifference to any action. Only then will good and evil be transcended and union with Brahman attained.

Vedantic View of Human Destiny

Realizing one's oneness with Brahman is essential in Vedanta pantheism, for apart from this realization one is doomed forever to the cycle of *samsara*: the wheel of time and desire, or birth, death, and rebirth. It is the wheel to which everything in the world of illusion is shackled. And *samsara* "itself is subject to and conditioned by endless cause, the dharma of the universe."[51]

One's life is also determined by the law of *karma* or action. This is the moral law of the universe. Huston Smith explains that *karma* is "the moral law of cause and effect." It is absolutely binding and allows no exceptions. *Karma* says that every decision made by an individual in the present is caused by all prior decisions in past lives and will in turn affect every future decision.[52]

A person whose *karma* is good may follow one of two possible paths. One who manages to free self from *samsara*—the cycle of birth and rebirth —will attain to higher planes of existence or consciousness until becoming one with the divine being "in his impersonal aspect, and so reaches at last the end of his journey."[53]

One who has been good but not good enough to become free from *samsara* will go "to one or another heaven, where he enjoys the fruits of his good deeds which he has done in the body . . . and when these fruits are no more, he is born again, that is, reincarnated" on earth in "a new body appropriate to a new and higher realm of being."[54] If a person's *karma* is largely evil, then he "goes to the regions of the wicked, there to eat the bitter fruits of his deeds. These fruits once exhausted, he too returns to earth in a reincarnated state."[55]

Concerning the law of *karma* and the cycle of *samsara*, "It is on this earth that a man determines his spiritual destiny and achieves his final realization."[56] Salvation is solely of personal efforts. Higher states of existence offer rewards of happiness and lower states are punishments that each person earns on his own. "The history of a particular individual, the number of times he experiences rebirth, or reincarnation as it is called, depends entirely upon the quality of his will, upon the moral effort he puts forth."[57]

Ultimately, all humankind will achieve liberation from *samsara* and union with *Brahman*. Some people may return to earth often, but eventually they will all earn their salvation. As Prabhavananda says, "The *Upanishads*

know no such thing as eternal damnation—and the same is true of every other Hindu scripture."[58]

Vedanta pantheism is the absolute pantheism of the East. Hinduism has found more popular expression and favor in the West through such religious groups and practices as Transcendental Meditation and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Vedanta pantheism is an absolute monism, declaring that God is all and all is One.

<div style="text-align: right">Norman L. Geisler</div>

Islam

The word *Islam* means "submission." A follower of this religion is called a *Muslim*, "a submitted one." Muhammad, the founder of the Islamic faith, was an Arabian trader from Mecca who was born around 570 and died in 632. As Christians measure history from the birth of Christ, so Muslims set the hinge date of history at 622, the year Muhammad fled from Mecca to Medina. This *Hijra* (*hijj* means "flight" in Arabic) marked Muhammad's turning point of submission to God and his proclamation of a new revelation from God. Muslims believe Muhammad to be God's last prophet, superseding Christ, the prophet who was before him.

Muslims believe in submitting to the one and only God, named *Allah*. They are categorically opposed to the Christian belief in the triunity of God. To believe that there is more than one person in God is an idolatry and blasphemy called *shirk*.

Islamic Beliefs

The Word of God. Although Muslims hold that God revealed himself in the Jewish Law (*tawrat*), the Psalms (*zabur*), and the Gospels (*injil*), they claim that today's Christian Bible is corrupted, or *tahrif*. They assert that the Qur'an is the final Word of God. It is divided into 114 chapters, or *suras*, and is about the size of the New Testament.

Doctrines. There are five basic Muslim doctrines:

1. There is one and only one God.

2. There have been many prophets, including Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad.
3. God created angels (*jinn*), some of which are good and others evil.
4. The Qur'an is God's full and final revelation.
5. A final day of judgment is coming, followed by heaven for the faithful and hell for the lost.

Besides these five central beliefs, there are five basic pillars of Islamic practice:

1. All that is necessary to become a Muslim is to confess the *shahadah*: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger."
2. One must pray the *salat*, usually five times a day.
3. One keeps an annual fast (*sawn*) through the ninth lunar month of *Ramadan*.
4. One gives alms (*sakat*) to the needy, one-fortieth of one's income.
5. Every able Muslim must make one pilgrimage to Mecca during his life.

Muslims also believe in *jihad* or holy war, which some radical groups have exalted to the level of a pillar. While this may involve killing infidels for their faith, more moderate Muslims think of it as being a sacred struggle with the world, not necessarily with the sword.

Many doctrines are shared with Christianity, such as creation, angels, heaven, hell, and the resurrection of all people. As for Christ, they affirm his prophethood, virgin birth, physical ascension, second coming, sinlessness, miracles, and messiahship.

Muslims deny the heart of the Christian message, namely, that Christ died on the cross for our sins and that he arose from the grave physically three days later.

GOD AS ABSOLUTE ONE. Allah is described by Muslims in terms of several basic attributes. Fundamental to all is the attribute of absolute unity. Of all the Islamic God's attributes, the most important is his absolute and indivisible unity. To deny this is blasphemous. In sura 112, Muhammad defines God in these words: "Say: He is God, The One and Only; God, the

Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, Nor is He begotten; And there is none Like unto Him." This sura is held to be worth a third of the whole Qur'an; the seven heavens and the seven earths are founded upon it. Islamic tradition affirms that to confess this verse sheds one's sins "as a man might strip a tree in autumn of its leaves."[59]

Two words are used in the Qur'an to describe the oneness of God: *ahad* and *wahid*. *Ahad* is used to deny that God has any partner or companion. In Arabic, this means the negation of any other number. *Wahid* may mean the same as the first word or it may also mean "the One, Same God for all." That is to say, there is only one God for Muslims, and he is the same God for all peoples. God is a unity and a singularity.

God's oneness is such a fundamental aspect of Islam that, as one Muslim author put it, "Islam, like other religions before it in their original clarity and purity, is nothing other than the declaration of the Unity of God, and its message is a call to testify to this Unity."[60] Another adds, "The Unity of Allah is the distinguishing characteristic of Islam. This is the purest form of monotheism, that is, the worship of Allah, Who was neither begotten nor beget nor had any associates with Him in His Godhead. Islam teaches this in the most unequivocal terms."[61]

It is because of this uncompromising emphasis on God's absolute unity that the greatest of all sins in Islam is the sin of *shirk*, or assigning partners to God. The Qur'an sternly declares, "God forgiveth not (the sin of) joining other gods with Him; but He forgiveth whom He pleaseth other sins than this: one who joins other gods with God, hath strayed far, far away (from the Right)" (sura 4:116).

GOD AS ABSOLUTE RULER. In the words of the Qur'an,

> God—there is no god but He—the Living, The Self-subsisting, Eternal. No Slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on the earth. Who is there that can intercede in His presence except as He permitteth? He knoweth what (appears to His creatures As) Before or After Or Behind them. Nor shall they compass Aught His knowledge Except as He willeth. His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is Most High, The Supreme (in glory).
>
> Sura 2:255

God is self-sustaining and does not need anything, but everything needs him. This attribute is known as aseity, or self-existence. God is the Mighty

and the Almighty. He is the Willer of existing things and the things that will exist; nothing happens apart from his will. He is the Knower of all that can be known. His knowledge encompasses the whole universe he has created and he alone sustains. God is completely sovereign over all his creation.

Many of God's ninety-nine Islamic names speak of his sovereignty. He is:

- *Al-Adl*, the Just, whose word is perfect in veracity and justice (6:115)
- *Al-Ali*, the High One, he who is high and mighty (2:225–26)
- *Al-Aziz*, the Sublime, mighty in his sublime sovereignty (59:23)
- *Al-Badi*, the Contriver, who contrived the whole art of creation (2:117)
- *Al-Hakim*, the Judge, who gives judgment among his servants (40:48–51)
- *Al-Hasib*, the Accounter, who is sufficient as a reckoner (4:6–7)
- *Al-Jabbar*, the Mighty One, whose might and power are absolute (59:23)
- *Al-Jalil*, the Majestic, mighty and majestic is he (7:143)
- *Al-Jami*, the Gatherer, who gathers all men to an appointed day (3:9)
- *Al-Malik*, the King, who is King of kings (59:23)
- *Al-Muizz*, the Honorer, who honors or abases whom he will (3:26)
- *Al-Muntaqim*, the Avenger, who wreaks vengeance on sinners and succors the believers (30:47)
- *Al-Muqsit*, the Observer of Justice, who will set up the balances with justice (21:47–48)
- *Al-Mutaali*, the Self-Exalted, who has set himself high above all (13:9–10)
- *Al-Qadir*, the Able, who has the power to do what he pleases (17:99–101)
- *Al-Quddus*, the Most Holy One, to whom all in heaven and on earth ascribe holiness (62:1)
- *Al-Wahid*, the One, unique in his divine sovereignty (13:16); the Unique, who alone has created (74:11)

- *Al-Wakil*, the Administrator, who has charge of everything (6:102)
- *Malik al-Mulk*, Possessor of the Kingdom, who grants sovereignty to whom he will (3:26)

GOD AS ABSOLUTE JUSTICE. Several of God's names bespeak his absolute justice: the Majestic, the Gatherer, the Accounter, the Judge, the Just, the Most Holy One, to whom all in heaven and on earth ascribe holiness, the Observer of Justice, and the Avenger.

GOD AS ABSOLUTE LOVE. Contrary to a popular misunderstanding, Allah is [said to be] a God of love. Indeed, some of God's names depict this very characteristic. For example, God is *Ar-Rahman*, the Merciful, the most merciful of those who show mercy (1:3; 12:64), and *Al-Wadud*, the Loving, compassionate and loving to his servants (11:90, 92). He has imposed the law of mercy upon himself (6:12). He says, "My mercy comprehends all" (7:156). Muhammad said, "If you do love God, Follow me: and God will love you and forgive you your sins. For God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (3:31).

GOD AS ABSOLUTE WILL. There is a certain mystery about God's names. Historian Kenneth Cragg affirms that these "are to be understood as characteristics of the divine will rather than laws of his nature. Action, that is arising from such descriptives, may be expected, but not as a matter of necessity." What gives unity to all God's actions is that he wills them all. As Willer, he may be recognized by the descriptions given him, but he does not conform to any. The action of his will may be identified from its effects, but his will, of itself, is inscrutable. This accounts for the antithesis in certain of God's names. For example, God is "the One Who leads astray" as well as "the One Who guides."

GOD AS ABSOLUTELY UNKNOWABLE. Since everything is based in God's will and since his effects are sometimes contradictory and do not reflect any absolute essence, God's nature is utterly unknowable. Indeed, "the divine will is an ultimate beyond which neither reason nor revelation go. In the Unity of the single will, however, these descriptions coexist with those that relate to mercy, compassion, and glory."[62] God is named from his effects, but he is not to be identified with any of them. The relation between the Ultimate

Cause (God) and his creatures is extrinsic, not intrinsic. That is, God is called good because he causes good, but goodness is not part of his essence.

The attitude of God's absolute control over every aspect of his creation profoundly influences Islamic theology and culture. Persian poet Omar Khayyam reflected the fatalistic strain of Muslim theology when he wrote:

> 'Tis all a chequer-board of night and days
> where destiny with men for pieces plays;
> Hither and thither moves and mates and slays,
> And one by one back in the closet lays.
>
> Norman L. Geisler

Expressions of Islam

Muslims developed a strong sense of community governed by divine law (Shari'ah), which in both its quranic form and subsequent development resembled Jewish oral Torah and rabbinic law. It developed to include all human duties to God and society from religious observances to family, penal, and international law.

As Islamic law developed to guide the outer paths of Muslims, mysticism (Sufism being an example) developed to guide the inner path of piety, with emphasis on the experience and devotional love of God. Being more inclusive in nature, it borrowed freely from Christians and Hindus and others and facilitated the spread of Islam from North Africa to Southeast Asia through a network of brotherhoods. Its expressions range from devotional dimensions of many orthodox (or orthoprax) Muslims, to beliefs and practices of some orders that are removed from formal Islam. In the latter cases, it blends into "folk Islam," that mixture of indigenous animistic elements into the beliefs and practices of many who consider themselves Muslims.

The major division within formal Islam is between the Sunnis (85 percent worldwide) and the Shi'is (15 percent worldwide). It was occasioned by differences over who should lead the community after the death of Muhammad. The Sunni majority followed the Arabian pattern for choosing a chief: the elders elected a caliph as a political leader. The Shi'ites, reflecting ideas closer to those of divine kingship of the previous empires of

West Asia, believed leadership should pass to the senior male of Muhammad's family, called an imam. He was not only to be a political leader like the Sunni caliph but also a religious leader as a vehicle of divine guidance.

Various trends have been discernible in the Muslim community up to the present day. One is the adaptionists, who have advocated a process of Islamic acculturation. They include today's modernists who advocate religious, legal, educational, and social reforms. The second are the conservatives, who feel that the boundaries of legitimate religious interpretation ceased [to change] in the ninth century after the four orthodox schools of Sunni law were established.

Finally, there are the fundamentalists, who reject the accretions of Islamic history and seek to return to the fundamentals of the Quran and practice of Muhammad (Sunna), believing that they exhibit a pattern of values and law adequate for modern life. They do not reject modern technology, but only the secular values that frequently accompany it. Some have radical social programs and others conservative. Some are militant while others support the status quo. Many of these expressions of Islam are experiencing a resurgence.

<div style="text-align: right">J. Dudley Woodberry</div>

Judaism

Judaism is the religion and culture of the Jewish people. Jewish civilization includes historical, social, and political dimensions in addition to the religious. The word *Judaism* derives from the Greek *Ioudaismos*, a term first used in the intertestamental period by Greek-speaking Jews to distinguish their religion from Hellenism (see 2 Maccabees 2:21; 8:1; 14:38). In the New Testament, the word appears twice (Galatians 1:13–14) in reference to Paul's prior consuming devotion to Jewish faith and life.

Judaism's Development

Hebrew religion began to give rise to Judaism after the destruction of the temple and the exile of Judah in 586 BC. The term *Jew*, in its biblical use, is almost exclusively postexilic. The Jewish religion of the biblical period

evolved through such historical stages as the intertestamental, rabbinic, and medieval to the modern period of the nineteenth century with Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Judaism.

Along the way, Jewish religion took on new teachings and practices. But with the lengthy development of Judaism and its many changes, it is incorrect to posit, as some have done, that Jewish history produced two separate religions: an Old Testament religion of Israel and the postexilic religion of Judaism. Despite the shifting phases of its history, the essence of the religious teaching of Judaism has remained remarkably constant, firmly rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). Judaism is a religion of ethical monotheism. For centuries, many Jews have sought to distill its essential features from one biblical verse that calls Israel "to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

The Babylonian exile brought certain modifications in Jewish religious life. Deprived of land, temple, and cultic priestly ministrations, Judaism began to adopt a nonsacrificial religion. Jews began to gather in homes for the reading of Scripture, prayer, and instruction. Here may be traced the earliest roots of the synagogue. Now "lip sacrifice" (prayer and penitence) rather than "blood sacrifice" (sheep and goats) became central to the life of piety.

There was one thing Israel carried to Babylon and clung to dearly. It was the law, the Torah, for by it Israel was assured of its divine calling and mission. In the fifth century, the "father of Judaism," Ezra the scribe, enacted religious reforms by appealing to the Torah. The priesthood was purified and mixed marriages were dealt with as the principles of the law became applied to every detail of life. Gradually, many Jews came to believe that here lay the only real proof of who was a true Jew: vigorous, unflinching obedience to the teachings of the Torah.

Scribes became the priestly interpreters of the Torah, setting forth their own authoritative teachings. By the second century BC, the Pharisees taught that the oral law carried the same authority as the Law of Moses. Later Jesus denied that the traditions of men were equal in authority to the written law (Mark 7:1–23); in addition, Paul denied that man could be justified before God by obedience to that law (Galatians 3).

The destruction of the temple in AD 70 and the scattering of thousands of Jews from the land brought a sudden demise to the priesthood. Johanan ben Zakkai, a Pharisee, was soon permitted by the Romans to open an academy

at Jabneh. He took it upon himself to install rabbis as the keepers and legislators of the Torah. By word of mouth, the rabbis passed their teachings from generation to generation, until the oral law (Mishnah) was written down about AD 200, Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi being its chief editor. By 500, the Talmud was completed with the issuing of the Gemara, a rabbinical commentary on the Mishnah. The Talmud contains more than six thousand folio pages and references to more than two thousand scholar-teachers. It became the basic document of rabbinic Judaism and still holds a major place in shaping Jewish thought.

Judaism's Basic Doctrines and Beliefs

According to Judaism, there is no set of beliefs upon the acceptance of which the Jew may find salvation. Even Maimonides' thirteen articles of faith—as close as Judaism ever came to a catechism—is not binding on the conscience of Jews. Judaism has historically put more stress upon the deed (*miswa*) than the creed (*'ani ma'amin*, "I believe"). Nevertheless, from Talmudic times, as a way of life, Judaism has been distinguished by giving special emphasis to certain beliefs and ethical values.

In the Mishnah (Abot 1:2), one sees the broad philosophy that governed the minds of the early rabbis: "By three things is the world sustained: by the law, by the [temple] service, and by deeds of loving-kindness." This basic teaching is further underscored by the threefold function of the synagogue as a "house of study" (for learning of Torah), "house of prayer" (for worship of God), and "house of assembly" (for the care of community needs).

Contemporary Judaism often speaks of four foundational pillars of the Jewish faith, each interacting as a major force as part of the covenant: (1) the Torah, always a living law, as the written Torah is understood in light of the oral Torah; (2) God, a unity (one), spiritual (not a body), and eternal; (3) the people (Israelites/Jews) called into being by God as members of one family, a corporate personality, a community of faith; and (4) the land (known today as Erez Yisrael), a bond going back to Abraham, the "father of the Hebrew people" (Genesis 17:7–8).

In its modern expression, Judaism is also shaped by the following traditional beliefs.

1. Man is pivotal in the universe. He sees himself as partner with God in the unending process of creation. In rabbinic thought, "God needs man as much as man needs God."
2. Man is a responsible moral agent, fully accountable for his acts. He is free to shape his own destiny.
3. Human progress is possible as man realizes the great potential within him. The nature of man is basically good, or neutral, free from the encumbrance of original sin. Thus man may be optimistic and hopeful about his future.
4. "This-worldliness" is a distinguishing mark of Judaism. The Hebrew Scriptures focus more on earth and man than upon heaven and God. Hence, lengthy speculation about the afterlife and otherworldly realities has never occupied a major position in Jewish thought.
5. All of life must be regarded as sacred. Man is to seek to imitate God in sanctifying his every action. Time must be imbued with the seeds of eternity.
6. Man is to pursue peace, justice, and righteousness. Salvation is dependent upon the betterment of society through good deeds. Historically, Jews have seen the Messiah as God's anointed human representative (not a God-man) who would usher in a golden age of societal and spiritual redemption. Today, however, Reform Judaism teaches that the messianic age will appear when humankind collectively, by its acts, reaches a level of true enlightenment, peace, and justice.

M. R. Wilson

African Traditional Religions

By using expressions such as *African Traditional Religions*, *African Primal Religions*, or *African Religion*, scholars seek to distinguish the indigenous religions of Africa from foreign and imported ones, such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, or Buddhism. *African Traditional Religions* does not describe a specific religion. It does not refer to the religious system of any particular group.

Scholars of religion in Africa do not agree among themselves on the use of the plural for the term chosen to group together and describe the indigenous religious beliefs of African peoples. They also disagree on the necessity of keeping adjectives like *traditional* and *primal*. There is, however, near unanimity that certain terms used in the past are no longer adequate or appropriate. For example, African religions have been called primitive, savage, native, tribal, pagan, animistic, or heathen. This way of describing African religions is now found mostly in older studies. Occasionally, in polemical literature, one may still see references to idolatry and fetishism as the main characteristics of African religions. *African Traditional Religions* and *African Religion* are, nevertheless, the terms most commonly used in current studies.

The preference for *African Traditional Religions*, *African Religion*, or an equivalent term represents an important shift. This shift in understanding and depicting the religions of Africa is recognition that these religions must be studied in their own right. They are not varieties of primitive religions. They must be viewed as major living religions. In that sense, African religions belong in the category *world religions*. One should not think, therefore, that *traditional* in African Traditional Religions indicates that these are dead or dying; they are the beliefs and practices of contemporary Africans. Their present vitality is best suggested by the use of *African Religions* or *Religion* since the adjective *traditional* may imply that these religions are either past or practiced by non-modern Africans.

Should one approach the study of religion in Africa with the assumption of unity or multiplicity? Are we faced with many ethnic religions, or are these religions different manifestations of a coherent African religion? If a single coherent African religion does not exist, how useful is the linking together of all indigenous African religions? These questions have fueled much debate among students of religion in Africa. There seems to be a growing consensus that unity is a better way of conceptualizing the religious beliefs and practices of Africans. One must, however, use caution in generalizing. One should neither proceed too quickly to make comparisons nor refrain from noting similarities.

General and comparative studies of religion in Africa are indicated when one deals with questions of religious presuppositions, worldview, and structure. This kind of study is useful in its description of broad and general characteristics, which may be common to the majority of African religions.

For concrete everyday religious life and practice, though, there is a need to be as specific as possible: for example, one may investigate the doctrines and practices of Yoruba or Akamba religion. Numerous monograph studies of African religions by anthropologists and others are representative of this approach. These and other specific studies provide the necessary complement to general comparative descriptions of African religion. They elucidate the ethnic grounding of these religions, thereby depicting the particular African traits.

Whether one studies the religion of a particular ethnic group or attempts to understand the characteristics of African religions, one faces an important challenge: African religions do not have known founders or sacred books preserving their teachings and doctrines. Oral narratives and rituals are therefore the main materials from which scholars derive the beliefs of African peoples.

The examination of African religious ceremonies and narratives reveals that they focus on the importance of affirming life. A basic assumption seems to be that life is essentially good and that, ideally, people should have health and prosperity and enjoy fulfillment, honor, and progeny in the world. Yet, in their experience in the world, people seldom attain this ideal good life. Evil forces tend to frustrate people's destiny or prevent the enjoyment of a full life. Since evil forces, visible and invisible, destroy life, people need to find ways to protect themselves and maximize life. This seems to be one of the foundational principles undergirding African religious practices. It provides the basis for understanding the purpose of religion as the prevention of misfortune and the maximization of good fortune.

The focus on preventing misfortune and maximizing good fortune makes African religions anthropocentric; that is, a major goal of African religions is to ensure the present well-being of humans and their communities. Harmony between spiritual and physical forces, the environment, and humans is the prerequisite for the well-being of the individual and the community. God, the all-powerful Creator of all things, is believed to be benevolent. In that sense, harmony, success, and abundant life come from him. But God is rather uninvolved in the daily lives of humans. He has given the responsibility of regulating human lives to spiritual entities that can be called "minor deities." In this regard, Joseph Osei-Bonsu notes that "the idea of minor deities is found among our people. These are believed to

be the sons of the Supreme Being, created by him, and to whom he has delegated the supervision of the affairs of this world."[63]

The purpose of religion [is] the prevention of misfortune and the maximization of good fortune.

Mediation between God and humans is the chief religious role of the minor deities. They share this role with the ancestors, the elders, and the various religious functionaries of African societies. Harmony in the world and all the conditions for health, prosperity, and abundant life are achieved by the mediation of these multiple intermediaries. This conception of mediation is crucial for understanding the essence of African religions. Mediation is also one of the fundamental points of divergence between African religions and Christianity, since "the idea of intermediary divinities has no place in Christianity."[64]

The relationship between God and the mediators, taken together with the focus on the "lesser divinities," helps explain why it is nearly impossible to solve the nature of theism in African religions. One cannot categorically state that African religions are either monotheistic or polytheistic. Belief in God, the One and Supreme High Being, is widespread. Yet the Supreme Being may not be approached without the help of intermediaries. This means that theism in African religions can be described as ontological monotheism with liturgical polytheism. It is liturgical polytheism that makes African religions pragmatic, anthropocentric, and resilient.

The utilitarian characteristic of African religions and their anthropocentric spirituality make them appealing to many modern Africans, especially those who want to live in continuity with Africa's indigenous cultures and religions while embracing modernity. African religions have shown a remarkable ability for adapting to change. They have not disappeared in the encounter of African peoples with modernity, secularization, and missionary religions such as Christianity or Islam. The capacity for adaptation has assured survival for African religions over the years. More recently, survival has given way to resurgence. The resurgence of African religions means that they will continue to be an important dimension of the context of Christian mission in Africa for the foreseeable future. Christian missionaries, evangelists, and theologians who are interested in Africa cannot, therefore, afford to ignore or neglect the study of African religions.

The New Age Movement

The New Age Movement is a widely divergent, non-Christian belief system borrowing directly or indirectly from many sources. It affirms that humans can resolve all personal and social problems with the help of unseen forces accessible through spiritual insight, meditative techniques, and other psychological and sometimes technological means.

The movement is not institutionally unified. Participants might identify with Eastern religions, Wiccan (witch) spirituality, astrology, channeling (receiving messages through spirits), or parapsychology. Homeopathic healing, animal rights, "deep ecology," or UFOs might likewise signal underlying New Age convictions.

Unifying such disparate interests is the conviction that the two-thousand-year Piscine period, to use astrological language, is coming to an end, to be followed by the Aquarian or "New" Age, a time of utopian fulfillment. Historical foreshadowing of New Age views in the West can be traced to Hinduism, Buddhism, nineteenth-century spiritism, and New England Transcendentalism (Whitman, Thoreau, Emerson). New Age conviction regarding the power of the mind in healing may be traced to such figures as Phinehas Quimby and Mary Baker Eddy (Christian Science) and such organizations as the Unity School of Christianity.

New Age views have gained popularity in the fields of medicine (holistic health), politics (globalism), education (values clarification), religion (meditation), ecology (Green movement), science (Capra's *Tao of Physics*), music (Yanni), psychology ("fourth force" psychology), and business (transformation technologies). Prominent figures contributing to New Age views include Joseph Campbell, Deepak Chopra, Marilyn Ferguson, Matthew Fox, Shirley MacLaine, and David Spangler.

Chief New Age convictions include the following:

(1) Humanity's problem is perception. A Christian or secular naturalist view of humanity and nature that regards humanity as distinct within creations must be replaced by an Eastern spirituality that views humanity as one with the totality of all existence.

(2) God is not the personal, holy, and transcendent being of the Bible. "God," rather, describes the totality of an impersonal cosmic reality, a oneness possessing neither individual personality nor moral distinction. "God" is thus an energy field to be tapped into, not a being to be reconciled with and worshiped. "God" is, moreover, conceived in pantheistic terms, since he is ultimately the sum of all that exists, whether mind or matter.

(3) Humans have somehow come to be cut off from their inherent organic oneness with "God." Through mind expansion and transformed consciousness, this link can be regained.

(4) Through experiences in this life and reincarnation in successive lifetimes, humans are enlightened and thereby brought nearer to the Oneness that is their destiny. In essence, at least potentially, humans are divine. After death they face spiritual progression in some form, not a Christian heaven or hell.

(5) Spirit guides can and should be utilized to assist in spiritual self-fulfillment.

(6) The goal of sought-for New Age awareness is loss of individual ego and incorporation into the Universal Self that is "God." Movement in this direction will make for a better temporal world, presumably because it foreshadows the eternal order. Why the eternal order must be an improvement on the present one is not clear.

It is difficult to deny that "rather than being a mere fad, the New Age movement is a substantial cultural trend that is not destined quickly to blow away in the wind."[65] Arthur Beisser's *Flying Without Wings* offers an example of New Age views more subtle and less wacky-sounding to non-initiates than those stated by its gurus and intentional popularizers. Something of a secularist, Beisser was a medical school graduate, military officer, and tennis champion before polio struck him down in the early 1950s. Nevertheless, he eventually completed his doctorate in clinical psychology. His story is one of resilience, courage, and determination. Yet New Age convictions and lingo have crept into his formerly secular humanist outlook: he adopts New Age use of Einstein, the idea of *karma*, egocentrism, monism, an "elevated plane" from which to see that all is One, and uncritical faith in evolution. Beisser represents Western secular religion in transition. Secularism is giving way to neopaganism, the return of "ancient wisdom" (a term he uses more than once) about the divine awareness innate to humans apart from any special revelation or the cross

of Christ. Western spirituality that is chic in the twenty-first century is predominately New Age in nature.

New Agers' commendable spiritual interest can often be turned in a gospel direction through compassion, dialogue, prayer, and effective communication.[66] Conspiracy theories of the New Age movement's role in society are overblown. But the wide dissemination of New Age views in the United States (and they are even more rampant in Western Europe), where church or synagogue attendance is common, is a standing indictment of the theological education taking place in homes and churches. While world evangelization is surely a priority of the Western church, the New Age movement is a tacit call to repentance and renewal in its own backyard.

<div style="text-align: right">Robert W. Yarbrough</div>

Atheism

The Greek word *atheos* (without God) is found only once in the New Testament, Ephesians 2:12, where it is used in the plural form to designate the condition of being without the true God. It refers to the deepest state of godless misery (cf. Romans 1:28). It is not found in either the Septuagint or the Apocrypha. Both the Old Testament and New Testament begin with or assume the reality of God, not as some speculative premise, but as universally manifest in nature, humankind's reason and conscience, and divine revelation. The normal human state includes the knowledge of God; atheism is thus viewed as abnormal. Hebrew has no equivalent word for atheism. In the Old Testament, the form of atheism that one encounters is practical atheism—human conduct carried out without consideration of God (Psalm 10:4; 14:1; 53:1; cf. Isaiah 31:1; Jeremiah 2:13, 17–18; 5:12; 18:13–15).

The Greeks used *atheist* in three senses: (1) impious or godless, (2) without supernatural help, and (3) not believing in any god or the Greek conception of god. Because Christians denied the popular gods of the day, they were often accused of atheism by pagans. More and more in speculative circles the term came to mean a denial of God or the negation of the spiritual idea.

Just as the first century introduced a devotion to theism unique in its scope and depth, so the twentieth century produced a somewhat parallel

commitment to atheism. This century saw the development of Communism with its devotion to atheism, as well as the establishment in 1925 of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism. The latter was formed to attack all religions through the distribution of atheistic literature. In 1929, its successor, the League of Militant Atheists, was formed with the goals of undermining the religious foundations of Western society, establishing centers for atheistic lectures, placing atheistic professors, and sponsoring lectureships. By 1932, this organization claimed a membership of five and a half million.

Twentieth-century atheism may be contrasted with older forms in two ways. (1) Today's atheism claims to be the logical consequence of a rational system that accounts for all human experience without the need to appeal to God. Communism is such an organized and integrated system. At its heart is a materialistic view of history and the complete secularization of life. (2) Earlier atheists were thought to be vulgar and depraved. Today, many serve on the faculties of the most prestigious universities, and more often than not the theist seems to be the obscurantist.

Thus, in modern usage four senses of *atheism* may be identified.

(1) Classical atheism is not a general denial of God's existence, but the rejection of the god of a particular nation. Christians were repeatedly called atheists in this sense because they refused to acknowledge heathen gods. It was also in this sense that Cicero called Socrates and Diagoras of Athens atheists.

(2) Philosophical atheism may be contrasted with theism, which affirms a personal, self-conscious deity (not a principle, first cause, or force).

(3) Dogmatic atheism is the absolute denial of God's existence. This position is rarer than one might think, as people more often declare themselves agnostics or secularists. There have, however, been those who claimed to hold this view (the eighteenth-century French atheists, for example).

(4) Practical atheism does not deny God, but life is lived as if there is no God. There is complete indifference to his claims, and often there is outspoken and defiant wickedness (Psalm 14:1). This form of atheism is widely prevalent, as can be seen from the Scriptures cited above.

The worst moment for an atheist is when he is genuinely thankful, but has nobody to thank.[67]

Numerous arguments for atheism have been given. (1) The onus of proof is on the theist, since atheism is *prima facie* a more reasonable position. (2) Closely related is the belief that theistic proofs are inadequate. (3) Theism is harmful to society as it leads to intolerance and persecution. (4) With advances in modern science, there is no need for God as an explanatory hypothesis. (5) Belief in God is psychologically explainable. (6) Logical positivists argue that theism is neither true nor false because it is unverifiable (e.g., nothing counts for *or* against it) by sense experience. (7) Classical theism is logically contradictory or incoherent. For instance, it is claimed that the notion of necessary existence is incoherent and that the existence of an omnipotent, perfectly good God is inconsistent with the presence of evil in the world.

Finally, objections have been raised to atheism in its theoretical form. (1) It is against reason; the existence of something rather than nothing requires God. (2) It is contrary to human experience, where some knowledge of God, no matter how suppressed and distorted, has universally existed. (3) Atheism cannot account for design, order, and regularity in the universe. (4) It cannot explain the existence of humans and mind.

Paul D. Feinberg

New Religious Movements

Many Christian sects or pseudo-Christian religions have been founded over the centuries, at least in part due to some disillusionment with traditional, orthodox Christianity. Some founding events have been accompanied by claims of a new "revelation" or other enlightenment. The nineteenth century gave birth to several such groups, which share some external resemblance to traditional Christianity. Theological terminology often sounds similar to Christianity, though meanings may differ substantially. Prominent reference to Jesus Christ is common in these groups, though his origins and role may be seen quite differently. And while the Bible may be viewed as an inspired text, some groups recognize other sacred texts, some superseding the Bible in importance. Since some of these groups tend to emphasize their similarities to mainstream Christianity, many people are led to believe they

are merely Christian "denominations." Regardless of the similarities, to say that these religious groups are Christian in the historic sense of the word would be highly inaccurate.

Following are brief descriptions of the two most prominent examples.

Mormonism

The Mormons, as they are usually known, represent one of the most successful new religious movements of the nineteenth century. Today they are divided into two main groups, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, organized from Salt Lake City, Utah, and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, based in Independence, Missouri. In addition to these major groups, a number of smaller "fundamentalist" groups exist. Today the Utah church claims nearly sixteen million members, while the Reorganized Church [which now publicly uses the name "Community of Christ"] claims about two hundred fifty thousand adherents.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was first organized on April 6, 1830, at Fayette, New York, by Joseph Smith. Soon after its formation, its members moved to Kirtland, Ohio, and then Jackson County, Missouri, as a result of the intense opposition they encountered. They finally settled at a place they called Nauvoo on the Mississippi River in Illinois. Here they prospered and built a thriving city.

On July 12, 1843, Smith received a revelation allowing polygamy, which caused four disillusioned converts to found an anti-Mormon newspaper. Smith was denounced on June 7, 1844, in this paper, the Nauvoo *Expositor,* in its single publication. For that, Smith's brothers burned down the newspaper office. As a result, Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were placed in the Carthage jail, where on June 27, 1844, they were brutally murdered when a mob stormed the jail.

Following the assassination of Joseph Smith, the majority of Mormons accepted the leadership of Brigham Young. A minority rallied around Joseph's legal wife and family to form the Reorganized Church. Under the leadership of Young, the Mormons left Nauvoo in 1847 and trekked westward to Utah. Here, for more than thirty years, Brigham Young ruled the Mormon Church and laid the foundation of its present strength. He also served as the first governor of Utah (1850–1857).

Mormonism has a dual foundation. The first is the claim of Joseph Smith to have received golden plates upon which ancient scriptures are alleged to have been written. Smith claimed to have translated these plates and subsequently published them in 1830 as the *Book of Mormon*. The second foundation is Smith's claim to have had an encounter with the living Jesus and subsequently to receive continuing revelations from God. The substance of these continuing revelations is to be found in the Mormon publication *Doctrine and Covenants*, while an account of Joseph Smith's encounter with Jesus and the discovery of *Book of Mormon* is found in *Pearl of Great Price*.

Pearl of Great Price also contains the text of two Egyptian papyri that Joseph Smith claimed to have translated, plus his translation of certain portions of the Bible. Together, *Book of Mormon*, *Doctrine and Covenants*, and *Pearl of Great Price* form the basis of the Mormon continuing revelation. Since the death of Smith, these revelations have been supplemented by what the church claims to be further revelations given to its leaders.

Book of Mormon itself is a fairly straightforward adventure story written in the style of biblical history. The tale concerns two ancient civilizations located on the American continent. The first was founded by refugees from the Tower of Babel. These people crossed Europe and emigrated to the eastern coast of central America. The founders of the second civilization emigrated from Jerusalem around 600 BC. This group is said to have crossed the Pacific Ocean in ark-like boats.

After their arrival in America, both groups are said to have founded great civilizations. The first was known as that of the Jaredites, which was totally destroyed as a result of their corruption. The second were righteous Jews under the leadership of a man named Nephi. Initially, Nephi's group prospered and built great cities. But like their forefathers in Palestine, many apostatized and ceased to worship the true God. As a result, their civilization was plagued by civil wars and eventually destroyed itself. The descendants of the apostates remained on the North American continent as native Indians. In the *Book of Mormon*, the Indians are known as the Lamanites, who, as a result of the apostasy, received the curse of dark skin.

Book of Mormon claims that Christ visited America after his resurrection and revealed himself to the Nephites, to whom he preached the gospel and for whom he founded a church. The Nephites were eventually destroyed by

the Lamanites in a great battle near Palmyra, New York, around AD 428. Almost fourteen hundred years later, according to Mormon claims, the record of these civilizations was revealed to Joseph Smith in the form of "reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics" written upon golden plates. With the aid of supernatural spectacles, known as the urim and thummim, he translated the unknown language into English and it became *Book of Mormon*.

According to the Articles of Faith of the Mormon Church and to the theology of *Book of Mormon*, Mormonism is essentially Christian. These sources present views that are similar to those of many other Christian churches, but this similarity is misleading. Mormon theology is not based upon its declared Articles of Faith or the teachings of *Book of Mormon*. Rather, the essence of Mormon theology comes from the continuing revelations received by Joseph Smith and later Mormon leaders.

Mormonism teaches that God the Father has a body and that man's destiny is to evolve to Godhood. This teaching is summed up in the popular Mormon saying "As man is, God once was: as God is, man may become." This belief includes the notion of preexisting souls who gain a body on earth and become human as part of the probationary experience that determines their future heavenly existence. Contrary to the teachings of the Bible, humanity's rebellion against God, known in Christian theology as the fall, is considered necessary. Mormon theology teaches that if Adam had not eaten the forbidden fruit, he would never have had children. Therefore, to propagate the race and fulfill his heavenly destiny, Adam had to disobey God. Thus, in a very real sense, it is the fall of humanity that saved humanity.

This doctrine is built into an evolutionary view of eternal progression that reflects popular thinking and scientific speculation at the time of Joseph Smith. In keeping with the idea of a probationary state, the doctrine of justification by faith is rejected in Mormon theology in favor of salvation by works as the basis of determining one's future mode of existence. The purpose of Christ's atonement is then said to be the assurance that humans will be raised from the dead. At the resurrection, however, human beings will be assigned a place in one of three heavenly realms according to the life they have lived on earth.

The Mormon Church claims that it is the only true church because its leaders continue to receive revelation from God. In addition, it claims to

possess the powers of the priesthood of Aaron and Melchizedek, into which its male members are expected to be initiated.

As a social organization, the Mormon Church exhibits many admirable qualities. It promotes extensive welfare programs for members, operates a large missionary and educational organization, and promotes family life. Mormons are expected to participate in what is known as "temple work." This involves proxy baptism for deceased ancestors and "celestial marriage"; in addition to temporal marriages, church members may be sealed to their families "for time and eternity" through celestial marriage.

During the 1960s, the Mormon community was troubled by its denial of the priesthood to blacks. However, in 1978, the president of the church declared that he had received a new revelation that admitted blacks to the priesthood. Today, one of the most troublesome issues within the Mormon Church is the place of women, who are also excluded from the priesthood. In addition, a number of historical challenges have rocked Mormon intellectual life of the past two decades. These include serious questions about the translation of *Book of Abraham* and *Pearl of Great Price* and about Joseph Smith, visions, and historical claims.

Much of the criticism has come from ex-Mormons disillusioned by what they see as the refusal of the church hierarchy to face serious questioning. Among the more important ex-Mormon critics are Fawn Brodie, whose biography of Joseph Smith, *No Man Knows My History*, seriously undermines official Mormon histories, and Gerald and Sandra Tanner, whose Modern Microfilm Company has produced numerous documents challenging the official version of early Mormon history and the development of Mormon doctrine. Within the Mormon Church itself a vigorous debate has been conducted in journals such as *Dialog* and *Sunstone*. The rigor with which younger Mormon scholars have addressed the study of their own history in these journals is clear indication of the power of Mormonism to survive sustained criticism.

Although young Mormon missionaries may often present Mormonism as a slightly modified American form of Christianity, this approach does little justice to either Mormon theology or the Christian tradition. As a New Religious Movement, Mormonism represents a dynamic synthesis that combines frontier revivalism, intense religious experience, and popular evolutionary philosophies with a respect for Jesus and Christian ethics. This

combination of beliefs holds strong attraction for many people uninterested or unschooled in Christian history and theology.

<div align="right">Irving Hexham</div>

Jehovah's Witnesses

The name *Jehovah's Witnesses* was adopted in 1931 by the movement founded by Charles Taze Russell (1852–1916) in the 1870s. Russell was born in Pittsburgh. His family were Congregationalists, but Russell reacted strongly against his religious upbringing. At the age of eighteen, he started a Bible class in Pittsburgh, and his group grew into the organization we now know as the Jehovah's Witnesses. In 1876, Russell became the group's pastor, and in 1879, he started a magazine, *Zion's Watchtower*, the forerunner of today's *Watchtower*. The organization became the Zion's Watchtower Tract Society in 1884. In 1908, Russell moved the headquarters to Brooklyn, New York, where the organization has been based ever since.

In 1886, Russell published the first of a series of seven books entitled *Studies in the Scriptures*. The sixth volume appeared in 1904 and the seventh in 1917, a year after Russell's death. The publication of volume seven led to a schism in the organization. The majority of members followed Joseph Franklin Rutherford (1869–1942), while a smaller group formed itself into the Dawn Bible Students Association. This organization is still in existence and publishes the *Dawn* magazine, which has a circulation of about thirty thousand. The larger group following Rutherford became today's Jehovah's Witnesses. The magazine *Watchtower* has a worldwide circulation of around twenty-seven million. [The magazine *Awake!* has a circulation of about thirty-two million.] As the Jehovah's Witnesses maintain no professional clergy, the Watchtower also functions as a primary mouthpiece of the Brooklyn headquarters, relating matters of doctrine and practice to the faithful.

Rutherford, an able administrator, developed the group into its present organization. He wrote more than a hundred books and fundamentally shaped the group's theology. He increased its hostility toward organized religion and developed a variety of highly successful missionary methods. At his death, Rutherford left behind an organization that has continued to grow at a remarkable rate.

In 1981, the Jehovah's Witnesses were shaken by a series of schisms that led to a large number leaving the organization. The leader of the opposition to the Brooklyn headquarters group was Professor James Penton, a Canadian whose family had been among Russell's earliest converts. Penton and those who sided with him sought to reemphasize the doctrine of justification by faith and return the group to its original interest in Bible study. The intention of Penton and other Witnesses who shared his ideas appears to have been to reform the group from within. The Brooklyn leadership strongly rejected their arguments and expelled anyone who supported their views. Although this division was a serious one, it appears that the majority of Witnesses remained within the official organization, which retained control over all the group's assets.

As a religious organization, the Jehovah's Witnesses are typical of many nineteenth-century groups. Although their theology bears some resemblance to that of the Arians in early church history, they are essentially a modern group strongly influenced by rationalism. Like many other new religions in the nineteenth century, the Witnesses represent a strong reaction to the scientific worldview. The rationalism of the group can be seen in their rejection of Trinitarian doctrines and traditional teachings about the person and work of Jesus Christ. Their rationalistic attitude toward the Bible comes out in their literal interpretation of prophecy and failure to appreciate symbolic character in biblical language. Their rejection of blood transfusions reflects their rejection of modern science as well as the extreme literalism of their exegesis.

In attempting to justify their interpretation of Christianity and rejection of orthodoxy, the Witnesses produced their own version of the Bible—*New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*, and *New World Translation of the Hebrew Scriptures* in 1950. Although this work claims to be a translation, the Witnesses have yet to name the translators or their credentials as competent scholars. What one finds, in fact, is a rendering of the Bible in terms of the theology of the organization.

Probably the best introduction to the theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses is their book *Let God Be True*. In addition to their rejection of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, they teach a number of distinctive doctrines. For example, their doctrine of Christ says that Jesus was not coeternal with God the Father but the first and greatest of Creation and the incarnation of Michael the Archangel. The Holy Spirit is not a person but the impersonal

force or power of God. The Watchtower doctrine of salvation starts with the grace of Christ and then relies upon one's own works. In their view, the atonement is a ransom paid to God Jehovah by Jesus Christ that removes Adam's sin, laying the foundation for a new righteousness and enabling men to save themselves by their good works. This ransom was paid not upon a cross, however, but through his being impaled upon a "torture stake." They teach that Jesus was resurrected a divine spirit after offering this ransom to God.

At death, humans either sleep until the resurrection, or, if they are evil, suffer annihilation. In their view, Jesus Christ returned to earth spiritually in 1914. In 1918, Jesus then entered and began cleansing the spiritual temple. Those among a select 144,000 who up to that point had died were resurrected. Also in 1918 began the judgment of the nations. This judgment continues, overthrowing satanic forces ruling the nations and establishing the millennial theocratic kingdom. This kingdom will arrive in the near future with the battle of Armageddon. After Armageddon, true believers will be resurrected to a life of bliss on earth while the select group of 144,000 will rule in heaven with Christ. In addition to holding these doctrines, Jehovah's Witnesses reject a professional ministry and, until recently, the idea of church buildings, now known as Kingdom Halls. They are pacifists and call upon their members to have nothing to do with worldly politics.

Today, there are more than eight million Witnesses worldwide. They have an extensive missionary network and operate in most countries, bringing in nearly two hundred fifty thousand new members a year. In some places, particularly in Africa, the Witnesses have suffered severe persecution. In others, especially North America, they are rapidly coming to resemble a reasonably sized denomination.

<div align="right">Irving Hexham</div>

How Does Christianity Compare with Other Religions?

Orthodox Christianity claims to be the true religion. So does Islam, and so do other religions. Even Hinduism and Buddhism, in spite of their eclectic

veneer, claim to be true. Since there are mutually exclusive truth-claims among these religions, it is obvious that they cannot all be correct. For example, some religions are monotheistic, such as traditional Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Others are pantheistic, such as Hinduism, Zen Buddhism, and Christian Science. Paganism, neopaganism, and Mormonism are polytheistic. These have incompatible views of God. In the final analysis, only one can be true, and the others must be false.

Uniqueness of Christianity

The uniqueness of Christianity is found in its singular claims about God, Christ, the Bible, and the way of salvation. While there are other monotheistic religions, Christianity claims to have the true view of God—Trinitarianism.

A Unique View of God. No other religion in human history is explicitly Trinitarian. Plato had a triad in ultimate reality of the Good, the Demiurges, and the World Soul. But the Good was neither personal nor God. The World Soul was not personal. The three did not share one nature. Neoplatonism had a One, a Nous (Mind), and a World Soul. But this series of emanations is not three distinct persons in one essence. Neither the One nor the World Soul is personal. The One has no essence or being. Only in the Christian Trinity is there one God in essence who is expressed eternally in three distinct persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18–19).

Christians claim that this view of God is the true view of God and that there is no other God (1 Corinthians 8:4, 6). Other views are either false views of the true God (as Judaism) or false gods (as in Hinduism). The Islamic view of God is false because it insists that there is only one person in the godhead.

The Jewish (i.e., Old Testament) view of God is of the true God, but it is incomplete. It rightly insisted that there is only one God (Exodus 20:2–3; Deuteronomy 6:4). The Old Testament allowed for a plurality within the unity of God (Psalm 110:1) and sometimes spoke of God's Son (Proverbs 30:4). Once all three members of the Trinity are mentioned in one passage (Isaiah 63:7–10). But the Old Testament never explicitly delineates the members of the Trinity as three persons in one God. The Old Testament Jewish God is the true God revealed explicitly in his unity. It is revelation in

progress. The God represented in all other religions is false. These gods are incompatible with the Bible's view of God. It is the exclusivity of Christianity that this view alone is true.

A Uɴɪϙᴜᴇ Vɪᴇᴡ ᴏꜰ Cʜʀɪsᴛ. No other world religion believes that Christ is the unique Son of God, God himself manifested in human flesh. Orthodox Christianity alone confesses that Jesus is fully God and fully human, two natures in one person. Other religions pay homage to Christ, but none considers him to be God incarnate. To Buddhism and Hinduism, he is a guru showing a path to ultimate reality (Brahman). Islam acknowledges him as one of several prophets. To Hinduism, the incarnation is really a reincarnation of Krishna. But there are significant differences between Krishna and Christ. Krishna is only a temporary incarnation. He is not an incarnation of a monotheistic God but of a pantheistic God. There is no real comparison between the Christian concept of Christ and that of any other religion. Some religious movements and cults have adopted a view of Christ's deity, but each has added its own unorthodox beliefs to destroy the truth-claims of Scripture. One form of Buddhism even has Buddha dying for our sins. But this is far from Christianity and is foreign even to the nature of indigenous Buddhism.

Speaking of the mystery religions, British scholar Norman Anderson explains,

> The basic difference between Christianity and the mysteries is the historic basis of the one and the mythological character of the others. The deities of the mysteries were no more than "nebulous figures of an imaginary past," while the Christ whom the apostolic *kerygma* proclaimed had lived and died only a few years before the first New Testament documents were written. Even when the apostle Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, the majority of some five hundred witnesses to the resurrection were still alive.[68]

A Uɴɪϙᴜᴇ Vɪᴇᴡ ᴏꜰ ᴛʜᴇ Wʀɪᴛᴛᴇɴ Wᴏʀᴅ ᴏꜰ Gᴏᴅ. Most religions, including all the major world religions, have holy or wisdom books. Judaism has the Torah, Islam the Qur'an, and Hinduism the *Bhagavad-Gita*. In comparison with these and other writings, the Christian Bible is unique.

- Only the Bible claims to have come by the unique process of divine inspiration. The Qur'an claims to have come by verbal dictation from

the angel Gabriel to Muhammad.

- Only the Bible has supernatural predictive prophecy. Other religions claim predictive prophecy but fail to provide examples of clear predictions hundreds of years in advance that have been literally fulfilled, such as the Bible has. Muslims, for example, claim that Muhammad made predictions in the Qur'an, but upon closer examination, they fail to measure up to their billing.
- Only the Bible has been supernaturally confirmed, for only the Bible was written by men of God who were confirmed by special acts of God (cf. Exodus 4:1ff.; Hebrews 2:3–4) to be telling the truth about God.

UNIQUENESS OF THE WAY OF SALVATION. While some other religions (e.g., "Cat" School of Bhakti Hinduism) employ grace, Christianity is unique in its plan of salvation:

- It declares humankind sinful and alienated from a holy God (Genesis 6:5; Psalm 14; Ecclesiastes 7:28; Luke 13:2–3; Romans 3:23).
- It insists that no amount of good works can get a human being into heaven (Isaiah 64:6; Romans 4:5; Ephesians 2:8–9; Titus 3:5–7).
- It declares that there is only one way to God—through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our sins (John 10:1, 9; 14:6; 1 Corinthians 15:1–6). One must believe from his heart and confess with his mouth to be saved (Romans 10:9). There is no other way. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6; cf. John 10:1; Acts 4:12).

Salvation and Other Religions

Christianity, therefore, admits salvation through no other cult or religion, for Christ is not considered to be the Son of God who died for our sins and rose again in any non-Christian religion.

It is important not to draw false implications from this exclusivity:

It does not follow that God does not love the unbelievers in the world. "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever

believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Paul said that God wants all to know the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).

It does not follow that God did not provide salvation for all. John informs us that Christ is the atoning sacrifice for both our sins and "the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). Christ died not only for the elect but for all the "ungodly" (Romans 5:6). He even died for those who "deny" him (2 Peter 2:1).

It does not follow that only a few select nations will be evangelized. John declared: "After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands" (Revelation 7:9).

It does not follow that no salvation is available to those who have never heard of Christ. Anyone anywhere who seeks God will find him. Peter insisted that God "accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right" (Acts 10:35). The writer of Hebrews says, "He rewards those who earnestly seek him" (11:6).

All have the light of creation (Romans 1:18–20) and conscience (2:12–15), which is sufficient for condemnation but not salvation. There are many ways by which God could get the gospel to those who will to be saved. The normal way is through a missionary (10:14–15). But God can save through his Word (Hebrews 4:12), which he can convey through a vision, a dream, a voice from heaven, or an angel (Revelation 14:6). God is not limited in the ways in which he can get the saving message to those who seek him (cf. Hebrews 1:1). But if men turn from the light they have, God is not responsible to give more light (John 3:19).

Truth and Other Religions

Many Christians are willing to accept that there is truth or value in other religions. All humanity receives general revelation (Psalm 19; Acts 17; Romans 1:19–21; 2:12–15). God has revealed truth to them, so it is no surprise that their beliefs express both good and truth.

There is, however, an important difference between truth as Christians hold it and truth as embraced by non-Christians. The Christian system is a system of truth with some error in it. All non-Christian religions are systems of error with some truths. The only system of truth is the Christian

system. Since Christians are finite, our understanding of this system of truth will have some error in it. This is why we must continue to grow in the truth (2 Peter 3:18), knowing that now we understand imperfectly (1 Corinthians 13:9, 12). By contrast, no non-Christian system is true as a system, and although there are truths within the system, the system itself obscures and taints these truths so that even they are distorted. And no non-Christian system provides the light of salvation.

The unique claims of Christianity are offensive to the unbelieving mind. "The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). Nonetheless, the offended critic deserves an answer (Colossians 4:5–6; 1 Peter 3:15).

The Charges of Narrowness, Exclusivity, and Injustice

Nothing sounds worse to the contemporary mind than narrow-mindedness, but arguments along this line are more emotional than rational.

ONLY ONE WORLDVIEW CAN BE TRUE. If the various worldviews have mutually exclusive truth-claims, only one can be true. A true system of thought must be comprehensive of thought and life. It must possess consistency and coherence in its overall claims. But most important, the system must correspond to reality, past, present, and future, natural and supernatural. All major systems of thought contain key truth-claims that are contrary to those of all other systems. Either Christianity teaches true precepts about the Trinity, the deity of Christ, and the one way of salvation, or else another system is true, and Christianity is false.

TRUTH, BY NATURE, IS NARROW. It is narrow to claim that $3 + 3 = 6$ is the only answer, but every other answer is wrong. The unbeliever's viewpoint is just as narrow. No truth-claim is all-inclusive.

This does not mean that minor truths within opposing systems of thought cannot both be true. Non-Christians hold that murder is wrong and that the earth is spherical. But only Christians (and Judaism from which it emerged)

believe that the world was created *ex nihilo* by a triune God. Christians and non-Christians can believe that Jesus was a good man. But only Christians believe that he was the God-man. So while there can be agreement between truths, there is no agreement on the major truths unique to the Christian system.

ALL RELIGIONS CLAIM TO HAVE THE TRUTH. As noted, the claim to unique truth is shared by every religious system that makes truth-claims. This is true even of "broad," "eclectic" religions. Hindus claim that it is true that "There are many ways to God." This appears open-minded, but it is just as narrow as the Christian claim. It excludes all opposing views.

GOD IS JUST. God provided salvation for everyone (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2). Everyone who really wants it will get it (Acts 10:34–35; Hebrews 11:6).

Conclusion

Any truth-claim is exclusive. A system that is all-inclusive makes no truth-claim. And every proposition that affirms something denies something else by logical implication. Statements such as "God is all" are opposed by statements such as "God is not all." They cannot both be true. All truth-claims exclude what is contradictory to them. Indeed, all religions claim to have *the truth*—even if that truth is that they believe other noncontradictory religious systems are true also. But if two or more religions embrace the same truths, then they are really one, and that one basic religious system behind them claims to be the true religion to the exclusion of all opposed religious systems.

Norman L. Geisler

For Further Reading and Study

Norman Anderson, *Christianity and World Religions*

Colin Chapman, *Cross and Crescent*

Hayim Donin, *To Be a Jew: A Guide to Jewish Observance in Contemporary Life*

Norman L. Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam: The Crescent in the Light of the Cross*

Norman L. Geisler and William Watkins, *Worlds Apart: A Handbook on World Views*

Douglas R. Groothuis, *Unmasking the New Age*

Dean Halverson, ed., *Compact Guide to World Religions*

C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*

Walter R. Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*

John S. Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa*

J. Isamu Yamamoto, *Beyond Buddhism: A Basic Introduction to the Buddhist Tradition*

Ravi Zacharias, *The Real Face of Atheism*

chapter 18
The Christian Church: The First 500 Years

✦

One of the more remarkable aspects of Christianity today is how few . . . professed believers have ever seriously studied the history of their religion.

—Bruce L. Shelley

Why Study the History of the Christian Church?

Many evangelical Christians are fond of saying that "true Christianity is not a religion, it's a relationship." It might be more accurate to say that it is not *merely* a religion, but it is indeed a relationship—with God the Father through his unique Son Jesus Christ, and by extension, with his church. Unfortunately, too many who identify as Christian seem to accept that while their relationship with Christ is necessary, their association with the church is at best optional, at worst irrelevant. For some, the church is an anachronism, splintered by theological differences, characterized by judgmentalism, enmeshed in partisan politics, and lacking any will or ability to truly impact the problems and issues of modern society. And if one takes that view, it is perhaps understandable that one would not be terribly interested in devoting time to studying its history.

But as birth initiates one's entry into a human family, so the new birth initiates one's entry into the church, God's spiritual family. The apostle Paul says we "are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it,"[1] and in another passage he describes us as "members of [God's] household."[2] The apostle Peter calls us "the family of believers."[3] Christ loves the church dearly, even to the point of sacrificing his life for her.[4]

If we only think of the church as a flawed institution (and flaws there are!), we really miss the point. Though made up of people from every "tribe and nation," the church is a household, a beloved family, an interconnected community with a divine purpose, the very body of Christ. Doesn't it seem strange to think that we can have a relationship with Christ, and not with his body, the family he suffered and died for?

It is that very connection that should give us some level of interest in knowing something of our spiritual family tree, our shared history and heritage. Just as the choices, however heroic or faltering, of our physical forebears often affect who we are today, so the choices of Christians in times gone by affect how we see our faith, ourselves, and our purpose in the world around us. Like any family tree, the picture of our shared history is not always triumphant, or even pretty. Church history has more than its share of political intrigue, power clashes, family feuds, cowardice, and just plain bad behavior. Fortunately, it also has more than its share of heroism in the face of tyranny, selflessness and self-sacrifice, peacemaking, social improvement, and taking the mission and message of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth.

Studying church history has other benefits, as well. History often repeats itself, and understanding the missteps of long ago can alert us to potential pitfalls on the path ahead. Current perversions of the truth are often just recycled heresies of the past, but without any historical knowledge, it is difficult to be forearmed. The mistakes of the church are useful as cautionary tales, as are the errors of secular governments and institutions that opposed the church in days gone by. In those places and times where it seems that the church is under siege, we do well to understand the lessons of our spiritual forebears. There is much to be learned and remembered, even from the "internal" squabbles and schisms of the historical church.

Just as reading the Old Testament helps to give us perspective on the New Testament and to see how God was at work to fulfill his covenant with Israel, so reading church history is a great way to see God at work in the world over the past two thousand-plus years and how God has been at work fulfilling his new covenant to both Jews and Gentiles.

These next five chapters will give you an overview, a taste, if you like, of the history of the church. Our hope is that in devoting a little time to this topic, your view of the church will be enlightened and enriched.

(Note: In the following articles, the authors pursue different agendas. The first article offers the reader an overview of the church during the first five

hundred years following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The second undertakes an overview of major themes occurring within the church during the political reign of Rome and its emperors. While the purposes of the two articles differ, there is some overlap in information.)

The First 500 Years: Introduction and Overview

In the early seventeenth century, the Lutheran theologian Georg Calixtus came up with a plan to reunite divided Christians. Lutherans, Reformed, Catholics, Orthodox—all agreed that the beliefs and practices of Christians in the first five hundred years were correct. Beyond all our differences, we should be able to come together based on this "500-year consensus." This idea was rooted in the way Christians had historically appealed to the church fathers of the first few centuries as authorities. The Protestant Reformers, while questioning many aspects of traditional belief and practice, respected the church fathers highly and cited them as often as possible in support of their positions. More conservative Lutherans derided Calixtus's suggestion at the time as too wishy-washy, but his concept of a "unified early church" has gained in popularity over the centuries. Many contemporary Protestants appeal to the "Great Tradition" of the early church as a basis for Christian unity, and the reforms of Vatican II in the Catholic Church were rooted in a return to early Christian sources.

In fact, as modern scholars have pointed out, early Christianity was highly diverse. The idea that there was "one church" that later divided is an illusion arising from the fact that all existing Christian churches today are the heirs of one particular early Christian group, which called itself the "Catholic Church." Scholars disagree on how quickly this version of Christianity became the dominant, mainstream form. But by the end of the second century, its basic outlines were in place.

At the core of this early Catholic Christianity was a claim about who Jesus is: that he is the Son of God, who made heaven and earth. This may seem obvious to us today, but in the second century, it was anything but obvious. Most people, whether pagan or Jewish, believed that there was one single divine Being above and beyond all others, far removed from the mess and torment of this world. Between the supreme God and human beings stood rank on rank of heavenly beings (called "gods" and "daemons" in paganism,

and "angels" in Judaism) who brought us knowledge of God. Many people saw Jesus in this light—as a heavenly being who brings us the true spiritual knowledge that sets us free from this world of pain and sorrow and blood and death. (This interpretation of Christianity has often been called "Gnosticism.")

"Catholic" Christians, on the other hand, believed in the words of Ignatius of Antioch (c. 108), that "God himself [was] manifested in human form for the renewal of eternal life." Following the Gospel of John, Catholic theologians described Jesus as the "Logos," the Word of God the Father, fully expressing God in the world. They preserved a paradox that they were not able to fully explain. But they were convinced that Jesus' real, physical birth and death and resurrection were at the heart of God's saving purposes for the world. Jesus did not simply teach us the way to God—he *is* the way. As Irenaeus of Lyons (late second century) put it, Jesus "recapitulated" all of human life, summing it up in himself and uniting it to God.

This meant that the physical world mattered, and that to be a Christian involved concrete practices and membership in a disciplined community of believers. Baptism and the Eucharist were the two central ritual practices, one of them washing away sins and the other feeding believers with the heavenly food of Jesus' glorified body and blood. Being a Christian meant, at least in some communities, giving up certain professions. It meant committing to a life of sexual purity and nonviolence. And it meant submission to the authority of community leaders. By the late second century, three ranks of clergy had developed: bishops ("overseers"), presbyters (or "elders"), and deacons ("servants"). Early on, it's possible that in some areas (including Rome) there may have been no distinction between bishops and presbyters, though the letters of Ignatius of Antioch (c. 107) testify that the distinction was important in some areas by the beginning of the second century. The bishop led the community and presided at the Eucharist, assisted by the council of presbyters. Irenaeus (late second century) argued against the Gnostics that bishops received their authority from the apostles, whom they had succeeded as leaders of the major Christian communities.

The embodied, "incarnational" nature of Catholic Christianity had consequences for its relationship with the Roman Empire as well. The Romans did not care about people's beliefs *per se*. What mattered was participation in the public rituals that held the empire together. Jews got a

pass because of their ancient tradition. But Christians, once it became clear that they were in some way distinct from mainstream Judaism, came under suspicion as a cult. Their worship of a crucified criminal, of course, made them suspect, but what Romans found most disturbing was the stubbornness with which Christians clung to their identity. In the early second century, the emperor Trajan and his friend Pliny, governor of Bithynia in present-day Turkey, exchanged several letters about Christians. Pliny found them puzzling because none of their activities seemed actively malicious—he recognized that the stories many people told about orgies and cannibalism were slanders. But at the same time, he sentenced them to death for their "obstinacy" in asserting their Christian identity after being asked three times. This became standard Roman policy, leading the Christian apologist Tertullian to point out that Christians were treated fundamentally differently from all other criminals. While thieves and murderers were tortured to get them to confess, Christians were tortured to get them to deny their alleged crime.

Following Pliny's example, Roman authorities generally did not hunt Christians down. The persecution of Christians was sporadic and usually a response to popular outcry. Sometimes Christians actively sought martyrdom, since martyrdom was seen as the most perfect way to follow Jesus and a guarantee of one's final salvation. Sometimes, as in the martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas in North Africa in AD 203, they seem to have been rounded up to fill out a quota of victims for public "games" to celebrate the emperor's birthday or some other occasion. Later, in the third century, as strong military leaders sought to restore the empire after decades of unrest and civil war, the persecution became more systematic. Decius, in the 250s, and still more Diocletian, in the early fourth century, did attempt to wipe out Christianity through measures such as destruction of churches, arrest of clergy, confiscation of copies of the Scriptures and other Christian books, and forcing people to show a certificate saying that they had offered sacrifice to the gods. Both of these persecutions were relatively short-lived, however, and in 313, the joint emperors Constantine and Licinius issued the Edict of Milan offering general religious toleration. Constantine, who eventually became sole emperor, favored Christianity and identified himself with it, though he was not baptized until he was on his deathbed. Christianity did not become the sole official religion of the empire until the reign of Theodosius at the end of the fourth century.

An inscription featuring early Christian symbols

While the persecutions of Decius and Diocletian did not wipe out Christianity, they did create a huge problem for the church in the form of large numbers of "lapsed" people—those who complied with the government's demands in one way or another. When Decius issued his edict compelling sacrifice in AD 250, many Christians obeyed immediately. Others sought ways to avoid the decree without actually sacrificing, such as bribing an official to give them a certificate. Under Diocletian, one of the most common "lapses" was handing over copies of the Scriptures. Again, some sought to avoid persecution without denying the faith by handing over other books (such as the writings of heretics), which the Roman authorities would take for sacred texts. Apostasy was considered one of the most serious sins a Christian should commit, and Christians had been debating for

some time whether and how those who committed serious sins after baptism could be reconciled with the church. Hence, when Bishop Cyprian of Carthage, in the 250s, began to allow some repentant "lapsed" to receive Communion, many rigorous Christians in North Africa (along with a small group in Rome) refused to accept his authority and founded their own church, dubbed the "Novatians." Cyprian responded by arguing in his treatise "On the Unity of the Church" that those who separated themselves from the Catholic Church separated themselves from Christ, however pious and orthodox they might be in other respects. He clashed with Rome over his view that such people did not even have valid baptism.

The Diocletian persecution led to another split, also in North Africa, this time over accusations that the new bishop of Carthage had failed to support imprisoned Christians during the persecution. The new "schismatics," the Donatists, appealed to the example of Cyprian and claimed to be the true church. Against them, St. Augustine (354–430) maintained the principle that the holiness and unity of the church came from the sacraments, not from the quality of church leaders. Even if the Catholic bishops were as sorry a lot as the Donatists claimed, God's grace could still work through them. To separate from the church was to "break the bonds of charity"—it was an act of violence against the holy bride of Christ. That is why Augustine saw nothing inconsistent about calling in the assistance of the Roman authorities to compel the Donatists to return to unity through punishments such as fines and exile. Such actions were a form of "tough love" against people whose zeal for purity had caused them to sin against the love that should bind all Christians together.

Constantine's acceptance of Christianity as a tolerated and indeed favored imperial religion also brought to a head the long-standing question of just what Christians meant by referring to Jesus as the Son of God. That Jesus was in some sense divine had been beyond dispute for Catholic Christians since at least the second century. But as Christians became more concerned with working out the intellectual ramifications of their faith, it became increasingly urgent to decide just what they meant by this. One position that had been ruled out for Catholics was "Sabellianism" or "modalism"—the view that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were just names for one divine being, with no real, eternal distinction between them. A more respectable view was that the one eternal God expressed his thought at a moment in time as the "Word" or "Son," who then began to take on an identity distinct from the

Father and who functioned as an intermediary between the Father and creation.

Around AD 320, a presbyter in Alexandria named Arius objected to a sermon by his bishop, Alexander, which he thought implied that there was really no difference between the Father and the Son ("Sabellianism"). Arius wrote to Alexander articulating his view that the Father created the Son at the beginning of time, and that the Son, while in a sense divine, was not eternal as the Father was. A deacon named Athanasius, who had recently written a treatise on "The Incarnation of the Logos," defended the bishop's position. The resulting controversy led to the calling of a council of bishops at Nicea, in 325, presided over by Constantine. The council affirmed the view of Alexander and Athanasius and condemned Arius and all those who agreed with him that "there was [a time] when the Son was not." Rather, the Council affirmed, the Father and the Son are of the same "substance" ('homoousios"). This did not end the controversy. Many Christians thought that both Arius's position and the "homoousios" was wrong, and sought to maintain a middle ground, which they argued was the truly traditional position.

After Constantine's death, his sons tended to favor the "Arian" or at least "Semi-Arian" position. Only in 381, at a second council called by Emperor Theodosius in the new capital, Constantinople, did the "Nicene" position finally triumph. Theologically, the architects of this victory were the "Cappadocian" theologians, a group of closely related figures from southeastern Asia Minor: Basil, his brother Gregory of Nyssa, his sister Macrina, and their friend Gregory of Nazianzen. Nazianzen eventually became bishop of Constantinople and presided over the 381 Council. The Cappadocians were able to articulate more clearly than Athanasius had done the distinction between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They also paid more attention to the Holy Spirit, articulating a clearly Trinitarian theology. The Trinity would be, henceforth, the hallmark of orthodox or "Catholic" teaching.

While the Trinity often seems to be a highly abstruse doctrine, the Arian controversy was not simply a quarrel about abstract metaphysics, but about the way in which human beings are saved. Athanasius's treatise "On the Incarnation," one of the most powerful summaries of Christian faith ever written, argued that sin had cut human beings off from our source in God's life. By uniting himself to our nature and dying the death that we deserved to

die as a result of our sins, Jesus overcame the powers of death that enslaved us and reconnected us to the divine life. To do this, Jesus needed to be fully divine. Similarly, the great Cappadocian Gregory of Nyssa suggested that Jesus rescued humanity from the jaws of Satan by hiding his divinity as a "hook" inside the "bait" of his humanity. As the great Easter homily by John Chrysostom (347–407) put it, "Hades . . . seized a body, and, lo! it encountered heaven; it seized the visible, and was overcome by the invisible." Trinity and incarnation were important for early Christians because it was in the union of Jesus' humanity and divinity that we, sinful and mortal as we are, encounter the divine life that saves us. The great North African theologian Augustine modified the picture for Western Christians by his darker view of human sinfulness and helplessness and his teaching that God sovereignly chooses some people from the "condemned mass" of fallen humanity. But his understanding of how the incarnation saves us remained fundamentally the same as that of his Greek-speaking counterparts.

After AD 381, the focus of doctrinal debate shifted from the relationship between Father and Son to the relationship between humanity and divinity in the incarnate Son. There were two basic ways to approach the incarnation, traditionally identified with the two great intellectual centers of Antioch and Alexandria respectively. The "Antiochenes" saw the incarnation as a union between the man Jesus and the eternal Logos. In the incarnation, the Logos united himself to a particular human being. The "Alexandrians," on the other hand, saw the incarnation as the act of the divine Logos taking on humanity, with less emphasis on the individual humanity of Jesus.

The controversy began before the first Council of Constantinople with the ultra-"Alexandrian" teaching of Apollinaris that the Logos united himself to a human body and "animal soul," so that the divine nature of Jesus replaced the human "rational soul" that other people possessed. Gregory of Nazianzen responded that anything the Logos did not "assume" in the incarnation was not saved. Early in the fifth century, Bishop Nestorius of Constantinople defended the "Antiochene" position, denying that it was proper to call Mary *Theotokos*, or "God-bearer." While the one whom Mary bore was God, Mary was not the mother of God but only of Christ. Cyril, bishop of Alexandria, denounced Nestorius as a heretic. To say that Mary did not give birth to God was, Cyril argued, to say that the Logos and the human being Jesus remained essentially distinct, which, again, would mean that humanity was not truly united to God and thus not saved. Cyril persuaded the Council of Ephesus

(431) to condemn Nestorius, though Nestorius protested that he had been treated unfairly and that Cyril had dominated the Council. Nestorius was deposed from his position as bishop of Constantinople, and his ideas were rejected within the Roman Empire, although his followers continued to flourish in Persia and spread Christianity throughout central Asia as far as China.

One of the fiercest opponents of Nestorius within the church of Constantinople was a presbyter named Eutyches. Following language used by Cyril, Eutyches taught that there was "one incarnate nature of God the Logos"—that while humanity and divinity were separate in the abstract, in the person of Jesus they were united so as no longer to be in any sense distinct. He was condemned by the bishops of both Antioch and Constantinople, but a second council, held at Ephesus in 449, led by the bishop of Alexandria, reversed the condemnation and instead condemned Eutyches's opponents as Nestorians. As in the Trinitarian controversy, the accession of a new emperor turned the tide, and the Council of Chalcedon in 451, heavily influenced by a letter (the Tome) written by Bishop Leo of Rome, condemned Eutyches and affirmed that Christ had one "hypostasis" or "person" with two natures, divine and human. The Christological controversies would continue for another two centuries, with various attempts to reconcile the supporters of Chalcedon with their "miaphysite" opponents. The "miaphysites" were strongest among the non-Greek speakers in Syria and Egypt, and the Armenians and Ethiopians also adopted this position outside the empire. Today, these Christians are referred to as "Oriental Orthodox" as distinct from the Chalcedonian "Eastern Orthodox."

In 434, at the end of the first major phase of the Christological controversy, and shortly after the death of Augustine of Hippo, the Latin theologian Vincent of Lerins wrote a book called the *Commonitorium*, attempting to provide a method for distinguishing doctrinal truth from error. Orthodoxy, according to Vincent, was that which was taught "always, everywhere, by all." Scripture was the primary rule of faith, but on points where the meaning was in dispute, one should follow the teaching with more claim to antiquity and universality, particularly as witnessed by the councils of the church. Vincent's principle has been often quoted, and is probably the source of Calixtus's appeal to the first five centuries. But it is easier to repeat than to apply. Ironically, he was an opponent of Augustine's ideas about grace and free will, which were indeed innovative in many ways and quite

different from the ideas common in the Eastern Church. Yet Augustine's brilliant and creative theology would carry the day in the West, so that even to this day many Christians think first of Augustine when they think of the church fathers.

However complex the application of Vincent's principle (or Calixtus's reworking of it) may be, the first five centuries of Christian history remain a common reference point for the many churches descended from the early Catholic Church. The Creed formulated at Nicea and revised at Constantinople remains the most universally accepted summary of basic Christian doctrine. And the theologians of the first five centuries remain sources of renewal for Catholics, Protestants, and Eastern Orthodox alike. Underneath the many varieties of Christian faith is the fundamental narrative that in Jesus Christ, as the fourth-century hymn writer Ephrem the Syrian put it, God has imprinted himself on humanity as a seal is stamped on wax, and that, as the Orthodox Easter liturgy expresses it, Christ has overcome death by death and has given life to those in the tombs.

<div align="right">Edwin Tait</div>

Christianity in the Roman Empire

According to Acts, Christianity was carried immediately across the Roman Empire (and beyond) when three thousand pilgrims were converted at Pentecost (Acts 2:9–11; 41). The spread of larger church communities, however, took time. The book of Acts also tells how Christianity spread from Jerusalem to Rome through Paul's missionary journeys. While Paul ministered in only the northeast quarter of the Roman Empire, his experiences anticipated the next few hundred years of church history in the Roman Empire in three ways. First, Paul evangelized and planted churches, activities that continued (and continue today). Second, various controversies necessitated he clarify and develop theological ideas; the development of theology also was often the result of controversies over various ideas or practices or accusations from non-Christians. Third, Paul attracted the attention of the Roman government; at times it helped protect him, but it also imprisoned, beat, and ultimately executed him. Likewise the church faced a changing relationship to the empire.

Christianity initially spread among Jewish social networks, which spanned much of the known world, as the book of Acts describes. Paul, who called himself the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13), always began his evangelism in a city at the synagogue, preaching to Jews and Gentile converts to Judaism. Several factors eased the spread of Christianity across the Roman Empire. First, this was the period known as the *Pax Romana*, where the empire was at peace (for the most part) and trade and transportation were safe and easy by ancient standards. This aided Paul and other Christians in bringing the gospel far and wide and in staying in contact with established churches for guidance, reproof, or encouragement. Across the empire there were many different people groups, yet there was a shared knowledge of the Greco-Roman culture, allowing for a common language and cultural context with which Christians could interact and explain the gospel. Christianity had a wide appeal, in that anyone could join. It appealed to the philosophical elite who were moving toward monotheism on philosophical grounds and because Christianity had high ethical standards. Philosophers often deplored paganism for lacking such standards. Christianity appealed to many because of the charity practiced by the church community, because it had ancient Scriptures (and wasn't a novel invention), and because it practiced a rational form of worship (praying and singing, as opposed to sacrifices and magical rites). For Christianity to grow from a few thousand followers in the early first century to nearly half of the population (approximately 33 million Christians) by AD 350, it would have only needed to grow by about 3.4 percent per year.

In Paul's letters we can see how he articulates and develops theological points in response to various issues that arose in particular churches, such as questions of proper Christian lifestyle (1–2 Corinthians), questions of how exactly we receive salvation (Galatians), questions about death, the resurrection, and Christ's return (1–2 Thessalonians), or how to organize and teach the church (the Pastoral Letters). Likewise, early Christian theology was developed and more clearly articulated, often in response to the needs of the church. The exegesis of the Bible in homilies (sermons) as well as catechistical needs for educating young Christians led to more elaborate and organized understandings of theology.

Written attacks from pagans or Jews against Christianity were met with apologetic writings, or writings in defense of the faith, which elaborated and explained what the Bible teaches in response to Christianity's perceived

shortcomings or inconsistencies. One of the most important apologists was Justin Martyr (c. AD 100–165), a Christian philosopher. In his first two apologies, written to Roman emperors, he argued that Christians should not be punished for simply being Christians, nor were they likely to commit any crimes worthy of punishment. He went on to describe what Christians believe and articulated teaching about how the Son of God existed even before the incarnation. In another work, his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, he discussed things relating Christianity to Judaism, such as why Christians don't follow the Jewish law, proof that Jesus is the Messiah and explanations of what this means, and he explained how the prophets predicted the conversion of Gentiles.

Disputes within the church about theology and practice also forced theologians to develop and better articulate doctrines. One of the biggest early disputes came from Gnosticism. This was not a uniform or consistent religion, but was a movement that became syncretic with Christianity (as well as some other religions). It was characterized by the idea that certain secret teachings, which Jesus brought from the true God of light, could give *knowledge* (the Greek word from which Gnosticism gets its name) that would allow escape from the dark, evil material world (created by the lesser God of the Old Testament). They saw the body (which is material) as evil, so some felt free to indulge its desires since it wouldn't affect the soul (which is immaterial), but some denied its desires, since it was evil. Marcionism was similar to Gnosticism, in that its founder, Marcion, taught that the God of the New Testament was different from the God of the Old Testament.

Another heresy, similar in some ways to Gnosticism, was Docetism, which taught that Jesus was divine, but his body was an illusion and immaterial (some Gnostics also believed this). Another heresy, Monarchianism, denied the divine nature of Jesus, believing he was only adopted into Divinity at his resurrection. Montanism was an apocalyptic movement that encouraged rigorous morality and fasting. It was founded by Montanus, a Christian convert, who claimed to be the mouthpiece of the Spirit promised by Jesus. The North African theologian Tertullian (ca. 160–225) provided the Latin church with its theological vocabulary in his writings, including an apology against the Marcionites, arguing that pagans should tolerate Christianity; later in life, his passion for strict morality led him to become a Montanist.

Besides forcing Christianity to define its theology, heresy spurred the establishment of church institutions. Irenaeus of Lyons (b. circa AD 135) countered Gnostic claims of receiving secret knowledge from Jesus by pointing out that the orthodox church's bishops, in places the apostles founded churches (such as Rome and Alexandria), could trace who they were trained and ordained by back to the apostles, and so they were the heirs of the teachings of Christ. The threat of heresy also required the church to carefully articulate theology in hymns, liturgy, and baptismal formulas to ensure people were learning theology properly. Also, what books were considered authoritative had to be delineated, since Gnostics and others began writing their own scriptures. Marcion was the first to make a list of authoritative Scripture, which included his edited version of Luke and ten Pauline epistles.

Christianity did not concern the Roman State, for the most part, except to the extent that it occasioned local disturbances. Paul was arrested several times as the cause of civil unrest, and not because he was doing anything illegal; the same was generally true of persecutions. Initially, it was Jewish authorities who persecuted the church, as we read in Acts. In the first century, as far as Rome was concerned, Christianity was a sect of Judaism and so was a legal religion. By AD 64, however, it was distinguished from Judaism and so was seen as an illegitimate and illicit superstition. For this reason, Emperor Nero targeted Christians for persecution (blaming them for a huge fire in Rome). Most persecutions were localized and unsystematic, resulting mainly from the pressure of the local populace. Christians were viewed with suspicion due to their private worship and were seen as atheists (since they didn't believe in the pagan gods), as disloyal subjects (for not worshiping in the public cult or offering sacrifices to the emperors), as cannibals (for eating the Lord's Supper), and as the reason the gods were pouring out various troubles on the local area or on the empire.

Christians saw martyrdom as sharing in the sufferings of Christ, and didn't let persecution undermine their submission to the Roman authorities. The worst persecutions were under the emperors Nero (AD 60), Decius (AD 249–251), and Diocletian (AD 284–305), though only that of Decius was empire-wide. In AD 250, he rounded up what Christian leaders he could, and issued a decree that all inhabitants of the empire must sacrifice to the pagan gods and get an official document certifying that they had done so. Some Christians fled from this persecution, others refused to comply, others

recanted their faith, and still others bought certificates without sacrificing. This persecution was cut short by Decius's death a year later, but was resumed briefly near the end of his successor's reign, in AD 260. Diocletian began a persecution of Christians aimed at removing them from the court, the army, and the empire, under the assumption that Rome was losing the favor of the gods due to so many Christians refusing to recognize them. He ordered the destruction of churches and the confiscation of sacred books. He ordered clergy imprisoned and forced them to sacrifice to the gods, and later ordered that all Christians be forced to make these sacrifices. This persecution, most intense in the east of the empire, but also felt in North Africa and Italy, ended in AD 311 with an edict of toleration issued from the emperor Galerius's deathbed.

A few years later, things changed dramatically for the church in the Roman Empire. On the eve of the battle of Milvian Bridge, a battle that would decide control of the Western Empire, Constantine said he had a vision that he would conquer in the sign of the Chi-Rho (the first two letters of Christ in Greek, which appears like an *x* and a *p*). After winning the battle, he celebrated only in the name of the Christian God and not the pagan gods (he had formerly participated in the rites of the sun cult). In 313, he, along with the emperor over the Eastern Empire, issued the Edict of Milan, which granted Christianity full legal status.

While now legal, Christianity was not the official religion of the empire, and in fact was a minority religion and beset by various heresies. In North Africa, a heretical group called the Donatists appealed to Constantine to recognize their group as legitimate, but the bishops appointed by Constantine to decide the matter ruled against them. The Donatists split over whether the baptisms officiated by clerics who had recanted the faith or fled persecution were valid. The orthodox position was that the baptisms were valid (since the work is done by God and not the priest), while the Donatists insisted they were invalid and needed to be repeated by a true cleric.

Once the threat of persecution subsided, the role model of the Christian life of self-denial shifted from the martyr to the monk. Individual ascetics had for centuries been moving to the desert to better deny themselves and draw near to God. Often they would collect disciples and form communities. One early such ascetic who became a model and inspiration for others was Pachomius. In the fourth century, rules for governing monastic communities were drawn up even as they became less about withdrawal from society and

more about offering examples and instruction for how to live for Christ. The Rule of Benedict of Nursia (AD 480–550) became the most popular monastic rule. In the West, the clergy came to be organized on the model of monks, taking oaths of poverty and celibacy.

Although free from official persecution, the church continued to struggle with heresies. In the fourth and fifth centuries, these heresies pushed the church to better articulate the doctrines of the Trinity and the nature of Christ. The Arian controversy began in Alexandria when Arius taught that the Son of God (or Logos) was created out of nonexistence (and so there was a time when he didn't exist) to be the mediator between God and creation. The Bishop Alexander rejected this, insisting that the Son of God was begotten of God, but Arius said Alexander's position would either mean there were two Gods or that there was no distinction between the Father and Son (as the Monarchian heresy taught). This idea split the church in the East and drew the attention of Constantine, who tried to resolve the conflict by holding a council of bishops in Nicea in AD 325. This council rejected propositions distinctive of the Arian position (and helped define and formalize church structure beyond individual cities), but did not end the Arian controversy. Arians gained influence with Constantine and began pursuing anti-Arian teachers (such as Athenasius, who was exiled five times), while persuading moderates that the anti-Arians denied the distinction between Father and Son. An adequate description of how God was one yet three came from the Cappadocian fathers: Basil of Caesarea, his brother Gregory of Nyssa, and their friend Gregory of Nazianzus. They taught that there is only one Divine Being, and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (whom the Pneumatomachi heresy had claimed was a creature) are three distinct persons or ways in which this same being exists.

The Arian controversy not only led to questions about how Christ was related to the divine nature, but how the Son of God could become flesh. The Arians took passages in the Bible where Jesus hungered, wept, or suffered to show that he was less than fully divine. Athenasius countered by saying that Jesus, while fully divine, had to become human to save humanity. Apollinaris attempted to describe how Jesus could be divine and human by arguing that he was human in terms of his body and soul, but had the divinity as his spirit or intellect. Gregory of Nazianzus rejected this, since humans sin also in spirit, so Christ must have had a human spirit to be fully human and atone for sin. As this theological discussion continued, two

schools of thought developed. In Alexandria, the unity of Christ was stressed, while in Antioch distinguishing the humanity of Christ from his divinity was emphasized. Nestorius taught the distinction between the human nature and divine nature was such that there were really two natures and two persons. Eutyches, on the other hand, taught that the two natures were fused or mixed into one composite nature, which was part human and part divine. The orthodox position was clarified at the council of Chalcedon in 451: Christ had a human nature and a divine nature, unconfused, undivided, and inseparable, but was only one person. This didn't end the controversy; the teachings of Nestorius continued on the Eastern frontier and beyond for several centuries. The idea of only one nature of Christ, held by so-called Monophysites, was spread in Syria by Jacob Baradaeus and developed into a separate Aramaic- (or Syriac) speaking church. Monophysite teachings also became the dominant theology of Egyptian Coptic churches, as well as in Nubia and Ethiopia.

Not all Christian writings were apologetic or polemics against heresies. Sermons were collected (by such as the great preacher John Chrysostom (347–407) and Bible commentaries were written. But Alexandria and Antioch were rivals also in how they interpreted the Bible; in Antioch, the literal meaning of the Bible was emphasized by writers such as Theodore of Mopsuestia (350–429) and John Chrysostom. In Alexandria, an allegorical method of interpreting the Bible was advocated by Origen (185–254), Clement of Alexandria (150–212), and Cyril of Alexandria (378–444).

Once Christianity became a permitted religion under Constantine, Eusebius of Caesarea wrote a history of Christianity up until his day. As Christianity spread beyond Greek-speaking urban centers, the need for vernacular Bible translations arose. An Old Latin translation of the Greek Bible was made somewhat early, but Jerome's (331–420) Latin translation made from the Greek and Hebrew, known as the Vulgate, came to be the Bible of the Western Church. Translations were also made into Syriac (known as the Peshitta) for Aramaic-speaking people in Syria, as well as into Coptic in Egypt. Missionaries to places like Armenia had to invent new alphabets before they could make translations.

Ambrose (c. 340–397)

Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, denies Emperor Theodosius entrance to the church

One of the most distinguished fourth-century church fathers, Ambrose was a talented Roman civil servant serving as governor at Milan when he, although not baptized, was elected bishop of Milan by popular acclamation. He was quickly baptized, turned over his wealth to the Church, studied theology, and devoted his administrative skills to managing the affairs of the Church. His persuasive writings, eloquent preaching, and ascetic living made him deeply respected. He rigidly resisted any Arian trends and won the accolade "Doctor" (or authoritative teacher) in the Roman Church.

His most famous moment came when he stood up to Emperor Theodosius, calling on him to repent publicly for ordering the massacre of the people of Thessalonica in 390 in reprisal for the murder of an official. Theodosius did publicly repent.

Ambrose's preaching so deeply influenced the then-pagan Augustine that Augustine sought baptism and began his career as a Christian leader. Many of our loveliest hymns came from Ambrose's pen.

—William P. Barker

The first Western autobiography was written by Augustine of Hippo (354–430) in which he describes his search for intellectual truth. He was trained as a rhetorician and became a Manichaean (in part since he found it intellectually satisfying, and rejected the Old Testament, with which he had problems), but wasn't completely satisfied with its answers to his questions. After learning more Neoplatonic philosophy and hearing the sermons and lectures of Ambrose (340–397 AD), he converted to Christianity. Augustine eventually became the bishop of Hippo in North Africa. His theological writings were very important to the development of Western Christianity.

In AD 411, the Visigoths sacked Rome and many refugees fled to North Africa. Augustine responded by writing *On the City of God*, in which he not only provided an apology of Christianity but also discussed human civilizations and their relationship to the church. While many since the days of Constantine had closely associated the church with the Roman State, Augustine argued that the church needs to be seen as the eternal and heavenly city of God, which includes all Christians and which should be the city Christians seek. The church as it exists on earth only anticipates the true heavenly city, since the church here includes sinners and saints.

The teachers Pelagius and his disciple Coelestius also fled to North Africa, bringing their teaching that no one inherits sin from Adam, and if Christians follow the teachings and example of Christ, they can achieve moral perfection in this life. Augustine wrote against this, showing how the Bible teaches that we have become sinful by nature because of Adam's sin and that we are saved by God's grace and not by our own efforts.

The barbarian invasions brought about the final decline of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century. The Saxons and Franks were pagans, but the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandals, and Burgundians had adopted Arian Christianity. Starting with the Franks in 496, the various barbarian nations converted to Catholic Christianity.

<div style="text-align: right">Benjamin Austin</div>

For Further Reading and Study

The Church in the Middle Ages

✦

Both swords, therefore, the spiritual and the temporal, are in the power of the Church.

—Pope Boniface VIII

The Rise of the Roman Catholic Church

There is a big difference between 250 and 1076. In the former year, the bishop of Rome was imprisoned by the emperor and died there; in the latter, the bishop of Rome, now the pope, kept the emperor waiting penitent outside a castle for three days while he deliberated on proper judgment. The difference is explained by the rise of a powerful institution, the Roman Catholic Church, in many ways the epitome of the Middle Ages.

The story of the bishops of Rome does not begin with Gregory I, the Great (r. 590–604), but he has been called with some justification the "first of popes." Foundations for papal authority had been laid during the great doctrinal controversies of the three preceding centuries, but not until the Roman empire dissolved in the midst of the barbarian invasions did the bishops of Rome come into their own as almost the sole surviving authority of any kind in the West. Whereas the Eastern patriarchs were repeatedly hampered by rivalries among themselves and by the continuing Roman imperial authority in Constantinople, the "patriarch of the West" was relatively free to operate in not only spiritual but also temporal affairs.

The position of Gregory I is illustrative. During his pontificate he had to look after the feeding of the people of Rome during famine, fend off the growing threat of the Lombards in northern Italy, administer the large and scattered papal lands—all in addition to his responsibilities as bishop of Rome, patriarch of the West (Italy, Gaul, Spain, Britain), and universal pope over the whole church.

Pope Gregory I (the Great)

This remarkable leader, pope from 590–604, perfected the organization, the discipline, and the doctrine of the Church, and left his mark permanently on Western Christianity. Prior to becoming a monk in 574, Gregory had a noble career as a government official, rising to become prefect of the city of Rome—the highest civil office—by the time he was thirty. He brought immense organizational experience and administrative ability to his assignments in the Church and quickly ascended from monk to abbot to pope.

As abbot of his monastery about 585, Gregory encountered flaxen-haired Anglo-Saxon slaves who so intrigued him by their appearance that he determined to start a mission program among the English. Thwarted from going in person as a missionary, he sent Augustine of Canterbury to England.

Gregory became pope at a time when floods, plagues, and famines had wracked Rome, but he restored order and skillfully administered programs for the poor and refugees. Gregory also issued a text on discipline for the Church that became the basis for subsequent official Roman Catholic government and procedures. Intolerant of laxity among the clergy, Gregory insisted on celibacy. He revised the liturgy for worship, instituting the Stations of the Cross and introducing the plain chant known as the Gregorian Chant.

During the Lombard invasions, in the absence of the emperor, Gregory assumed the function of governing the city of Rome and made his own peace arrangements with the invaders. Gregory at this period made moves that helped establish the Vatican as a separate temporal power and gained the bishop of Rome recognition as head of the entire Church. A generous and fair man, Gregory, although zealously opposed to pagan cults, refused to compel Jews to be baptized and gave away vast sums to help the needy. He was canonized by the Church.

—William P. Barker

The [concept of "universal pope"] was a touchy point, for the patriarch of Constantinople [head of the Eastern Church] had called himself "ecumenical patriarch." Gregory, with elaborate humility, took to himself the title "servant of the servants of God." His interests ranged from promotion of the Christian mission to England to negotiations with the church in the East. His influence was felt in all aspects of church life—in preaching, liturgy, church music; in the discipline of clergy and monks; in administrative organizations; in doctrine, especially popular belief and biblical interpretation; and in missionary expansion.

The mission to England under Augustine (not to be confused with the early-fifth-century bishop of Hippo) is one of the highlights. This Augustine planted Roman Christianity in Britain, where already a non-Roman form had been brought from Ireland. The casting of this bread upon the waters brought back returns within a century, when numerous missionaries from England moved to the continent for missions among the still-pagan people of Central Europe.

Gregory also helped set the tone of popular Roman Christianity for the Middle Ages and, to some extent, for the church in our own day, with the development of such aspects as saints, miracles, allegorization of the Bible, purgatory, angels and demons, and semi-Augustinian theology.

During the Middle Ages, monasticism was taking root in Western Europe. Originating in the ascetic, antisocial, and otherworldly atmosphere of the East, exemplified by the flight of Anthony to the desert in Egypt, in

the West it was transformed into a vigorous, active, and socially significant form of Christian devotion. Preserving the ideals of contemplation and escape from worldly sin, Western monasticism added the emphasis on communal living, scholarly study, work, and finally, with the appearance of the friars, religious and social service among men living in the sinful world.

In this Western development, Benedict, who founded the mother monastery of the Benedictine Order, Monte Cassino, about 529, is most important. His rule, with its balanced regimen of work, worship, study, and rest, became the model for monastic establishments in Europe. From this beginning sprang in the next centuries the Cluniac monastic reform, the austere Carthusians, the Cistercians famous for St. Bernard and for sheep-raising, and many lesser orders.

With some radical changes of fortune, ebb and flow, the Church of Rome developed down to the time of Gregory VII (r. 1073–1085), already famous as Hildebrand, ecclesiastical statesman. Under this vigorous pope, the Church was confirmed in its power and influence in society, and the papacy was confirmed in its authority, both within the Church and in secular affairs. Symbols of these achievements are (1) the institution of clerical celibacy, and (2) the humiliation of the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV at Canossa. Gregory did not invent celibacy, which had been advocated in some circles from early times. But he did effectively enforce this rule, thus demonstrating his growing disciplinary authority. The affair involving Henry IV concerned investiture—that is, the installation of ecclesiastical officials and investment with the symbols of their authority. The trouble lay in the question as to who should do the investing: the pope or the emperor.

This problem involved feudalism, a fundamental medieval institution that can be understood along three lines. It was at once a system of land tenure, a form of political organization, and a bond of personal loyalty. In its economic aspect it meant the separation of the functions of ownership and use of land. The owner, or overlord, did not actually work or control all his land; the user, or vassal, did not own the land he controlled and used. Each overlord and vassal, bound in mutual contract, owed certain services to the other. Out of this situation grew the typical fief, which was held and used by a vassal as a grant from his overlord in return for military and other services, and in the possession of which the vassal was protected by the overlord. In this way feudalism took on a political aspect, involving mutual relations from the lowliest vassal-knights to the mightiest king. Many

leaders figured as both overlord and vassal, subdividing fiefs they held from an overlord among vassals of their own. In the third place, the two were bound together in the personal bond of loyalty, in which the vassal became the overlord's "man" (not in the sense of servant or underling).

The church was deeply involved in this system. Bishops and abbots were overlords and vassals, not so much of each other as of secular princes. Now, the obvious question is, When a bishop is appointed to a *see* in Germany, who nominates, elects, and invests him? Aside from the cathedral chapter, what are the rights of the pope, his spiritual overlord, and the emperor, his temporal overlord? This issue lay beneath the conflict that led Henry IV to Canossa in the year 1077.

In this episode, after a series of denunciations from both sides, the pope, Gregory VII, excommunicated the emperor and released subjects from their bond of allegiance. Unable at the time to stand against this power, Henry crossed the Alps and sought a personal consultation with Gregory, who kept him waiting outside, barefoot, and in penitential garments for three wintry days while he decided what should be done. Canossa has become the symbol of the victory—temporary, it turned out—of papal authority over imperial. The stage was set for the great age of faith, the thirteenth century, in which papal authority in the person of Innocent III, dogmatic authority in the person of Thomas Aquinas, and monastic discipline in the forms of Franciscans and Dominicans combined to provide a glimpse of a majestic ideal, *respublica Christiana*, the universal Christian empire, in which all men, even emperors, should give prime allegiance to the vicar of Christ, the lord pope, who wielded the awful power of God himself.

The Rise of the Eastern Orthodox Church

Before this, however, an episode had occurred that damaged considerably the ideal of the Christian unity of civilization. This was the division between Eastern and Western churches. The trouble had long been brewing, ever since the seat of the empire had been transferred from Rome to Constantinople in the fourth century. There were doctrinal, political, economic, and purely personal aspects. The church in the East continued to be dominated by the authority of the Byzantine emperors, although the theory of coordinate spheres, temporal and spiritual, survived. In the West,

imperial authority disappeared, and, when revived from the ninth century on, never succeeded in completely dominating the church, over which the pope increasingly ruled supreme.

The mere fact that after 800 there were two empires, an impossibility in theory, suggests two churches. Economic disparity between the flourishing East and the barbarous West increased the differences. Doctrinal difficulties between the activistic, Latin-speaking West, with its concern for the doctrine of man and sin, and the passivistic, Greek-speaking East, with its concern for contemplation and the doctrine of the incarnation, took forms rather obscure to modern minds, but fundamental to the diverging theological paths at the time. And then the personal struggles for prestige and power, four-sided between Eastern and Western emperors and Eastern and Western prelates, led to hard feelings and then growing suspicion and hatred.

It all came to a head in 1054, when legates of the pope dramatically laid a bull of excommunication against the patriarch on the altar of the great church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. In turn, a few days later in a solemn assembly he excommunicated the legates. Although this did not mark the final breach, which was postponed until the middle of the fourteenth century, in practice there were now two major churches, and also the ancient heretical churches [the Nestorians, Donatists, Marcionites, Montanists, Gnostics, etc.].

The seamless robe of Christ had been rent! Here was no slight imperfection on the universal robe, such as ancient and medieval heresies marked. Here was a clear and complete division and separation.

Amazingly, the theory of the one true Church persevered, even as applied to earthly institutions, down to our own day. But from this time has existed in Christendom not one Catholic Church, but two, both claiming to be catholic—that is, universal. The dream of temporal catholicity might persist; the fact of division is irretrievable.

By the end of the eleventh century, the church already exhibited four forms of diversity:

1. schism between East and West
2. ancient, though small, schismatic churches springing from doctrinal and disciplinary controversies

3. non-institutionalized "heretical" movements
4. monasticism, with its principle of a double ethic, the higher for the monks who would follow the counsels of perfection, the lower for ordinary mortals who hoped for salvation through the sacraments and the ministry of the church in spite of their own sinfulness

More divisions were to follow from "heretical" movements of the high and late Middle Ages and from the final outworking of the monastic movement in the orders of friars—all these before the many and deep-reaching divisions of the Reformation.

<div align="right">Frederick A. Norwood</div>

The Crusades

Few events have shaped our picture of medieval Christianity like the Crusades, which, ironically, originated in a peace movement. In the eleventh century, leaders of the Western Church promoted two related movements to limit the destructiveness of warfare: the Peace of God and the Truce of God. These initiatives were part of a larger effort by the church to evangelize nominally Christian Europe and to bring secular rulers under the authority of the church. The eleventh-century popes saw themselves as prophetic figures, Christ's representatives on earth, with responsibility for building up his kingdom. The eminent historian of the Crusades, Jonathan Riley-Smith, has described this as the worship of a "political Christ"—Christ understood as the sovereign of a "Christian republic" whose political and military actions should be directed toward carrying out Christ's will on earth.[1]

Pope Urban II, one of a series of energetic reforming popes who transformed the Western Church in the eleventh century, convened a council at Clermont in 1095, where he issued a call to the French warrior class to use their martial prowess on behalf of their oppressed brothers and sisters in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Byzantine Empire had in recent years come under pressure from the Seljuk Turks who were pushing into Anatolia (now Turkey). But from the beginning, Urban and his warriors of the cross saw the holy city of Jerusalem as the ultimate goal.

Jerusalem was important to medieval Christians as the literal place where Jesus had died and risen again, but also as a symbol of the church, of the individual Christian soul, and perhaps most important, of the heavenly Jerusalem. In medieval Christian thought, all of life on earth was a pilgrimage to the heavenly City. These different senses of "Jerusalem" were not compartmentalized from each other. To make a literal pilgrimage to the earthly Jerusalem, as many Christians did, was not simply an act of religious tourism or an aid to devotion—it was a way of living out more dramatically the true meaning of the Christian life, in union with the sufferings and death of Jesus. Crusaders saw themselves as pilgrims—with swords. They "took the cross," wearing a representation of the cross on their bodies, because they believed that in taking up arms to free the Holy Land (and their fellow Christians) from unbelievers they were obeying Jesus' command to "take up your cross and follow me" in vthe fullest way possible. Urban summoned the knights of Europe to the Crusade in the words of Jesus, "Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." The Crusade was seen as an act of ultimate love for Jesus and for Jesus' oppressed and persecuted body on earth.

Peter the Hermit (with Pope Urban II) preaches in support of the First Crusade

The First Crusade, which resulted from Urban's appeal, was the only one of the Crusades to be fully, dramatically successful. Some of the initial groups of Crusaders, who set off without proper leadership or organization, met with disaster. The main army, however, led by several prominent members of the European aristocracy, fought its way from Constantinople through Muslim territory to capture first Antioch and then, on July 15, 1099, Jerusalem itself. The capture of a city by storm (as opposed to a negotiated surrender) was usually the occasion for wholesale rape and slaughter. Remarkably, for a medieval army, the Crusaders appear to have refrained from rape, indicating that they did in fact take the holiness of their cause seriously and were not just using it as an excuse. But they had no such compunctions about killing. According to both Christian and Muslim accounts, they slaughtered thousands of the inhabitants, without distinguishing between combatants and non-combatants or between Christians, Jews, and Muslims. (In fact, the Christian sources appear to exaggerate the completeness of the slaughter, while Islamic sources reveal that some of the defenders did negotiate a surrender and were spared.)

The killing had begun long before the Crusaders got to the Holy Land. The initial, undisciplined armies, on their way to catastrophe in Asia Minor, slaughtered thousands of Jews throughout Central and Eastern Europe, in the belief that this was part of the holy war against Christ's enemies. Church officials protested these massacres, and many bishops intervened to protect the Jews. But the incidents showed how easily the passions the pope had unleashed could get out of control.

Another ominous pattern apparent from the very beginning of the crusading movement was the tension between the Crusaders and the Eastern Christians, whom they were supposed to be protecting. The Byzantine Empire, the continuation of the ancient Roman Empire, saw itself as the most authentic representative of Christian civilization. The "Franks," as they called Western Christians, were barbarians who had taken over the Western Empire and set up their own upstart regime (the "Holy Roman Empire"). In the past, the papacy of "old Rome" had functioned as a link between East and West. But the reforms of the eleventh century had brought new popes to power who looked mostly north across the Alps rather than east across the Adriatic. The new conception of papal power that these reformers introduced had led to tensions with the East and, in 1054, to the bishops of Rome and Constantinople excommunicating each other. Pope

Urban may well have hoped that sending Western forces to the aid of the Byzantines would help mend relations with Constantinople. If so, he was disastrously wrong.

One fundamental problem with the Crusades was that medieval armies did not have well-organized supply trains. Armies were accustomed to getting their supplies from plundering the countryside. Any area through which a medieval army marched tended to be treated as enemy country—and if it wasn't already hostile to the army, it would soon become so. The only alternative was for the "hosts" to assemble vast quantities of supplies for the "guest" army, something that was extremely difficult to do. Hence, the mere presence of the crusading armies in Byzantine territory tended to undermine relations between the two Christian groups. The Byzantines naturally wanted to move the Crusaders on as soon as possible into Islamic territory, preferably after extracting oaths of allegiance from them and promises that territory they captured would be handed back to the empire.

Byzantines and Crusaders also had very different attitudes toward war. While the Byzantine Empire could certainly be ruthless, the East had preserved an older Christian ambivalence about war. Soldiers who killed an enemy were expected to do penance for three years. While the church blessed the empire's armies, prayed for them in the liturgy, and marched with them, holding icons, the concept of a "holy war," in which killing would actually be a meritorious act, was strange to the Eastern Christians. The Byzantines avoided war as much as possible, preferring to use diplomacy, deception, and bribery. These tactics seemed cowardly and immoral to the Western knights, just as the "Franks'" reckless bravery and glorification of violence seemed barbaric to the Byzantines. To the Byzantines, the Franks were mercenaries to be used for specific military aims, with the ultimate goal of establishing a more advantageous peace with a hostile neighboring power. To the Crusaders, the war was a holy pilgrimage to recapture sacred ground, and the Byzantines' pragmatic attitude revealed that they were at best only imperfectly Christian.

After the fall of Jerusalem, the Crusaders showed no interest in handing their territories over to the Byzantine Empire. Instead, they carved out independent states for themselves: the County of Edessa, the Principality of Antioch, the County of Tripoli, and most important, the kingdom of Jerusalem, ruled by Godfrey of Bouillon, one of the original leaders of the Crusade. The Crusaders justified violating their oaths to Emperor Alexius

by the fact that Byzantine armies had failed to help them at a critical point in the campaign for Antioch. Already the mutual trust the pope had hoped to build between East and West was unraveling.

The First Crusade was successful in part because of division among the Muslims—the Seljuk Empire had fragmented, and the Egyptian Fatimids, who ruled Jerusalem at the time, were slow to react to the invasion. But in 1144, the Turkish ruler of Mosul, Zengi, captured Edessa, capital of the most isolated of the crusading states. This provoked a second major Crusade, preached enthusiastically by the great theologian and monastic reformer St. Bernard of Clairvaux. The Crusade was a disaster, and the Byzantine emperor's alleged betrayal of the Crusaders helped worsen relations between Eastern and Western Christians. In the 1160s, a new Muslim leader, the Kurdish Salah ad Din (Saladin), overthrew the Fatimids in Egypt and proceeded to create an empire stretching from North Africa to present-day Iraq. In 1187, he smashed the army of the kingdom of Jerusalem at the Horns of Hattin and proceeded to besiege and capture Jerusalem. In response, the kings of England and France, joined by the Holy Roman Emperor, launched a third major Crusade, which succeeded in recapturing some territory, though not Jerusalem, and negotiating a peace treaty allowing free access to Jerusalem for Christian pilgrims and merchants. The Crusaders never recaptured Jerusalem, but they hung on for another century in Palestine and Syria, until the capture of Acre by the Mamluks in 1291.

In the thirteenth century, crusading strategy focused heavily on Egypt as the base of Islamic operations. The Fifth, Seventh, and Eighth Crusades all invaded Egypt unsuccessfully. The Fourth Crusade was intended for Egypt, but ran out of money to pay the Venetians for ship transport and was diverted first into attacking the Croatian town of Zara and eventually into an attempt to restore an exiled prince to the imperial throne in Constantinople. The Crusaders sacked Constantinople in 1204, and while the pope condemned their actions, he endorsed their control over the territory they had conquered, temporarily turning Constantinople and large parts of the Balkan Peninsula into yet more "Crusader states." The sack of Constantinople and the replacement of the patriarch by a "Latin" bishop under the authority of Rome was the culmination of long-standing tensions between the two halves of the Christian world, and Orthodox Christians still

look to it as a grievance and a reason to mistrust Roman ecumenical initiatives.

The two thirteenth-century Crusades that did make gains in the Holy Land did so more through negotiation than through fighting. In the Sixth Crusade of 1228–1229, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II managed to regain partial control of Jerusalem through negotiation. When the ten-year truce he negotiated expired, Pope Gregory IX launched what has become known as the "Barons' Crusade" (1239–1240). Although this Crusade has not traditionally been listed among the eight "major Crusades," it managed to play the two Muslim powers against each other and gain even more territory than Frederick had done, restoring the kingdom of Jerusalem to its greatest extent since before the Horns of Hattin. Only a few years later, however, in 1244, Jerusalem was recaptured and the final decline of the Crusader states began.

In spite of their general lack of success, the Crusades played a major role in the development of medieval Western Christianity. The high Middle Ages (twelfth–thirteenth centuries) saw a huge expansion of lay piety within the Western Church. The Crusades were one of the most dramatic and visible examples of this. Contrary to a common misconception, the Crusaders were not typically landless second sons using religion as an excuse for plunder and conquest. They were often wealthy landowners whose wills, drawn up before they departed, show how much they were giving up in what they believed to be the cause of Christ. During the First Crusade, the Crusaders were seen as a kind of "temporary monks," as pilgrims generally were. In the twelfth century, "military orders" developed, whose members did take monastic vows while also serving as warriors. But most Crusaders remained laymen, and the crusading theology that developed in the twelfth century saw them as modeling the distinctive role of the laity: to find holiness through employing "worldly" skills and training in the service of Christ and the neighbor. For knights, this meant fighting in a just cause and protecting the innocent.

The Crusades also helped develop the theology of penance—the acts of public repentance by which people who sinned after baptism were reconciled with the church. In the early Middle Ages, penance was expected to be very difficult and painful, and it was this difficulty that was thought to undo the effects of sin. When Pope Urban initially promised forgiveness of sins to the Crusaders, the assumption seems to have been that since

crusading was difficult and dangerous, it would suffice to wipe out the "temporal punishment" due to the Crusaders' sins. But in the twelfth century, a new understanding developed—that the "temporal punishment" (a demand of justice which had to be satisfied either by penance in this life or Purgatory after death) could be erased by the pope through the "power of the keys" given by Jesus to St. Peter. Penance came to be seen not so much as a prescription of painful medicine to overcome the effects of sin, but a legal declaration of what the penitent had to do in order to be forgiven. Hence, the pope had the authority to declare that particular acts, such as going on crusade, wiped out the effects of sin. This was the basis for the theology of indulgences, which would eventually help spark the Protestant Reformation. Indeed, Riley-Smith suggests that the key mark of a Crusade is the proclamation of indulgences for those who take part in a particular military action.[2]

The Crusades also, of course, marked a shift in the Church's attitude toward warfare. While the Church had sanctioned wars before (against Viking invaders, for instance), war had always been seen as a morally and spiritually dubious enterprise. Soldiers had traditionally been expected to do penance, and as we have seen, the Crusades themselves ironically resulted from the Church's attempt to get European Christians to stop fighting each other. The Crusades transformed warfare (under certain circumstances) from a cause of sin to a cause of the forgiveness of sins. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, in his book *Militia Christi*, told the members of the newly formed "Templar" military order that while normally knights faced the dilemma of killing and committing murder or dying and being damned, Christ's soldiers could not lose either way: if they won they gained merit, and if they died they went to heaven. This coincided with the Church's growing involvement in the persecution of heretics by the state, and, according to R. I. Moore, in the general transformation of Western Europe into a "persecuting society."

In 1209, Pope Innocent III further widened the scope of crusading when he called for a crusade against the Cathars or "Albigensians," a heretical group prevalent in Southern France. Later popes would follow his example, calling crusades against the Hussites in Bohemia in the fifteenth century and blessing Spain's attempted invasion of Protestant England in 1588 (the Armada) as a crusade. In the course of the thirteenth century, the papacy began to use crusades not only against non-Christians and heretics but

against rulers (such as Emperor Frederick II and his heirs) with whom they had political conflicts.

All these forms of crusading continued after the fall of Acre in 1291, as did attempts to recover the lost territory in the Middle East. Crusading enthusiasm, in fact, remained high throughout the fourteenth century—there were a number of expeditions to Palestine, Egypt, and Greece, where the Latins still controlled significant territory even after the Byzantines recovered Constantinople in 1261. In the second half of the fourteenth century, however, a new Turkish power, the Ottomans, invaded Europe and began to threaten Constantinople, bringing the Christian powers back together at last. Two major Crusades in 1396 and 1444 attempted unsuccessfully to halt the Turkish advance, and Constantinople fell in 1453. The Turks then pressed into Central Europe, threatening Vienna. The most successful and dedicated crusaders during this period were the Spanish, who drove the Muslims out of Spain in 1492 and carried the war into North Africa.

But the Protestant Reformation questioned the whole theological basis of crusading. The Protestants might fight alongside Catholics against the Turks, but they did not accept papal leadership and had no interest in the indulgences promised to Crusaders. While crusading language continued to be used after the Reformation, it had much less power. War between Christians and Muslims (and between Catholics and Protestants) continued, but it was increasingly secularized. The Napoleonic Wars in the early nineteenth century marked the end of the crusading era and the beginning of a new era of secular Western imperialism.

And yet we have never been able to escape the Crusades. We may romanticize them or vilify them, but they remain a remarkable, sustained effort to harness military force to the service of the Christian faith. By and large, the Crusaders were motivated by sincere piety. They saw what they were doing as a means of imitating Christ and showing love to their Christian neighbors, struggling for justice against hostile unbelievers. That they so often brought destruction on their fellow Christians, committed atrocities, and fell short of their own ideals in innumerable ways should not be surprising, given how often the well-meaning actions of Christians in our own culture backfire and cause scandal. Rather than demonizing the Crusaders, we should see in them, as in a mirror, how our most earnest

efforts may look to the unsympathetic gaze of outsiders to our faith or even to Christians of another place and time.

<div align="right">Edwin Woodruff Tait</div>

In spite of actual divisions, the Western Church continued to act as if the seamless robe were still whole. The claim to universal world domination in the name of Christ came closer to realization during the pontificate of Innocent III (1198–1216) than at any other time in history, before or since. Not only was the pope regarded as supreme in the church, which was one and indivisible, but also he was widely recognized as superior even in temporal authority over any kings or princes whatsoever. With few exceptions, the mere threat of excommunication was sufficient to bring even the most recalcitrant ruler to submission. The king of France, stubborn Philip Augustus, was forced to take back his divorced wife and restore confiscated church lands. The pope arbitrated between two claimants to the imperial crown. He reestablished and extended direct papal political control over much of Italy. He subdued, with excommunication and interdict, King John of England, who surrendered his entire kingdom to Innocent and received it back as a vassal ruling under the direction of papal legates. He was feudal suzerain over such exalted vassals as the kings of Aragon, Portugal, Poland, Hungary, and Serbia. His control of the hierarchy and the church at large was equally thorough. Papal monarchy was a reality under this able, vigorous, persistent, and ambitious prelate.

Francis of Assisi (1182–1226)

Francis of Assisi with his brotherhood, caring for the needs of the poor

This gentle lover of everyone and everything in God's creation possessed a contagious piety and unaffected goodness that endeared him to everyone from lepers to leaders.

Francis, son of a wealthy cloth merchant, spent a harmlessly frivolous youth and was transformed after a severe illness and a year's imprisonment as a prisoner of war. Recklessly giving away everything he owned and much of his father's stock (to his father's disgust and anger), Francis began begging to raise funds to restore ruined churches and help the poor. He had an affectionate regard for everyone in need, particularly loathed outcasts.

Francis's preaching centered on the need for penance. When he was finally granted permission by the pope to found a new order, it was first called the Preachers of Penance but later known, of course, as the Franciscans. Francis traveled widely in his preaching, including one celebrated trip to Egypt and Palestine, where he preached to the sultan.

Deeply ascetic and given to fasting and praying for long stretches, Francis [nevertheless] had . . . the brightest personality in history's dreary medieval period.

The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 set doctrinal structure of the Middle Ages. The culmination of the monastic movement came in this period with the formation of two orders of friars, the Franciscans and the Dominicans. Both Francis and Dominic were children of their age, both fully medieval. But the former has achieved universal appeal beyond the Roman Catholic Church and beyond the Middle Ages, whereas the latter has remained bound within the confines of both. The Franciscans became humble followers of Christ, trying by means of biblical primitivism to revive the Apostolic Way. In so striving, they released creative forces that led within a century to "heretical" movements, such as the Fraticelli, which broke with the church. The Dominicans, on the other hand, became *domini canes*, hounds of God, devoted to the principles of Roman Catholic truth and papal authority against heresy and schism. They were tailor-made agents for the contemporary institution for maintenance of orthodox belief, the Holy Office of Inquisition, whose awesome instrument for the suppression of heresy was soon to come.

The principle almost universally accepted in the Middle Ages was that there is but one true faith, that this faith is known and defined by the authority of the Church through the power granted to the popes through Peter, and that therefore all other faiths are false and heretical. If a murderer is detested and punished for killing the body, how much more heinous is he who kills the soul—the heretic! The instrument devised to preserve the uniformity of belief was the Inquisition, and the men most qualified to use this instrument were the Dominicans, with their great learning, preaching ability, and hatred of heretics. Free from any ecclesiastical restrictions, unlimited in the exercise of their authority except by the direction of the pope, the inquisitors struck terror into the hearts of laity and clergy, poor and rich, humble and mighty.

Although technically the papal inquisition was not founded by Innocent, it followed within a generation and truly belonged in the world of faith and authority he embodied. And although it was not established all over Europe, it imposed a seal of silence on most forms of independent thought and action in all matters relating to the Church and its dogma. With its secret agents, anonymous accusations, guilt by association, impressive judicial machinery weighted against the defendant, imprisonment without charge, torture, confiscation of goods, and sentence of heavy penance—or even death through the secular arm—it sought to eliminate any variation from orthodox doctrine. It stands as one of the most vigorous attempts ever made to enforce uniformity of thought and belief. It failed.

The Medieval Idea of "Christian Empire"

For over one thousand years Europe had been bemused by the dream of a universal Christian empire—*respublica Christiana*. In the late Middle Ages this dream was rudely broken. The idea, never fully realized at any time, that all Christendom was one, united under the dual sovereignty of the pope (the spiritual ruler) and the emperor (the temporal leader), dominated the political concepts of men from the days of Augustine of Hippo to those of Marsiglio of Padua. But after heretical movements, the Babylonian Captivity, and the Great Schism had rent the Church internally, after a few national monarchs had successfully defied the most vigorous popes, and after insistent demands for reform had led to repeated and largely

unsuccessful attempts at purification, never again could even the most starry-eyed visionary maintain the fiction of the seamless robe of undivided Christendom, one in spirit and authority. At one and the same time national subdivision and Protestant decentralization took the place of imperial unity and papal catholicity. The result of these tendencies, gathering force in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, was the Protestant Reformation.

Medieval Heretical Sects

Long before the full force of decline was apparent, ruptures appeared in the façade of Western Christianity. These took the form of "heretical" schisms. They were heretical with reference to the orthodox position of the Roman Church, but apostolic in their own interpretation. Insofar as they turned from the authority of the Church to the authority of the Bible and from the example of ecclesiastical tradition to that of Christ and his disciples, they may be described as forerunners to the Reformation. Yet they remained essentially medieval. Of them two were outstanding. One has survived to this day.

Most appealing to modern Protestants are the followers of Peter Waldo, who was very much like Francis of Assisi and anticipated him in the devotion to the idea of poverty with his "Poor Men of Lyon." He was familiar with those passages of the Bible advocating a simple life of faith in accordance with the teachings of Jesus. His offense was not so much that he taught poverty—so did Francis—as that he presumed to read and expound the Bible without guidance from the priests. If the scholars complained that the Waldenses stumbled over the text, the scholars themselves stumbled as much. G. G. Coulton tells the story of a young cowherd who had lived only one year with a Waldensian family but already knew by heart forty Sunday gospel lessons. As it was said of them, "Whatsoever is preached and not proved by the Bible text, they hold for fables." The Waldenses are among the few medieval sects that have continued unbroken to the present day. The modern Vaudois of the French-Italian Alpine region have maintained their fellowship as a Protestant group that looks behind Luther and Calvin to their medieval founder, 350 years before.

The *Cathari,* or Albigenses, were different from other heretics in that theirs was a religion essentially foreign to the tradition and spirit of Christianity, although it contained strong elements of it. No such

thoroughgoing dualism as theirs could be at home in Christian faith, with its Jewish background of God the Creator of heaven and earth and its cherished doctrine of the incarnation. The Cathari rejected all or part of the Old Testament as reflecting the work of the evil god, Satan, with whom was associated all that is of matter and flesh. The spirit is good; the flesh is bad. Christ could not truly have become man, could not truly have died on the cross. In their effort to withdraw as far as possible from the flesh, some Cathari even resorted to suicide. It is little wonder that other heretics denounced Catharism as vigorously as Catholicism. This heresy, of Manichaean origin, reflecting Persian dualism, was a stranger.

Decline of the Church

Pope Boniface VIII (r. 1294–1303) embarked on a vigorous program of supervision of the rulers of Europe patterned after the noble precedent established by Innocent III some one hundred years before. But soon he found himself in the position of one who, having corralled the sheep, is driven over the fence by the goats. In two famous bulls (papal letters sealed with a bulla), *Clericis laicos* and *Unam sanctam*, Boniface had attempted to forbid the taxation of the clergy by secular princes and to establish universal authority of the papacy. Said the pope:

> Both swords, therefore, the spiritual and the temporal, are in the power of the Church. The former is to be used by the Church, the latter for the Church; the one by the hand of the priest, the other by the hand of kings and knights, but at the command and permission of the priest. Moreover, it is necessary for one sword to be under the other, and the temporal authority to be subjected to the spiritual. . . . And we must necessarily admit that the spiritual power surpasses any earthly power in dignity and honor, because spiritual things surpass temporal things.[3]

When King Philip IV of France, called "the Fair," heard of this, he exploded. Calling his trusted aide, Nogaret, he set about putting Boniface in his proper place. The plot amounted to nothing less than the abduction of the pope, who was to be captured by Nogaret at Anagni, a small village near Rome. Taken prisoner to France, he was to be tried and deposed and replaced by a pope of Philip's choosing. The plan worked well until Boniface was rescued by his fellow townsmen and conducted to Rome, where, infirm with age and upset by his ordeal, he died about a month later. *Sic transit gloria mundi* [Thus passes the glory of the world]. If the symbol

of papal supremacy over temporal rulers is seen in the dramatic episode of Canossa, the symbol of the new independence of the national monarchs is observed in the equally dramatic episode of Anagni.

The effects of the disastrous collapse of papal authority under the rising powers in France and England were immediate and apparent. The death of Boniface opened the way for a general attack on the medieval church. When his immediate successor died soon after his election, the cardinals, at Perugia, finally settled on a Frenchman educated in France and, at the time, the bishop of Bordeaux, who assumed the title Clement V. Under the influence of Philip IV, the new pope, to the consternation of the Italians and to the outrage of much of the rest of Europe, refused to go to Rome for his coronation, but chose instead Lyon, where he was crowned in the presence of the French king and delegates from the king of England. This was in 1305, and in that year began the "Babylonian Captivity," as it was called by the Italians, for Clement never went to Rome, nor did his successors—with one brief exception in 1377. It is called the "Avignonese period" because in 1309 the popes took up residence in Avignon, a city along the Rhone River adjoining France, owned by the king of Naples, who later sold it to the popes. Christendom was treated to the sorry sight of a line of popes subservient to the line of kings who had humiliated the great Boniface and defied the authority of the Church.

And that was not all. At Avignon, the papacy took on some of its less spiritual aspects, especially the efficient expansion of papal finance under the able John XXII (r. 1316–34). His annual income compared favorably with that enjoyed by the king of England. During these years new voices of opposition to the old claims of universal papal authority were raised, and new national monarchies like England declared their independence in such statutes as those of provisors, which forbade the pope to make appointments to ecclesiastical offices in England, and praemunire, which forbade appeals from English ecclesiastical courts to the papacy. This ran directly counter to the Roman doctrine that the clergy were subject to no national law or king but were primarily under the authority of the supranational papacy.

One of the most direct consequences of the Babylonian Captivity was the Great Schism. Gregory XI, urged to return to Rome by Catherine of Siena and others, decided to end the exile, in 1377, by moving back to the eternal city. But having done so, he promptly died, to the confusion of everyone. The cardinals first elected Urban VI, who through utter tactlessness

alienated the whole body of cardinals. Repenting of their choice, they declared this election void and chose instead Clement VII, who now took up residence once again in Avignon. (Both of these popes were later declared antipopes and were not counted in the numerical succession.)

As Urban refused to accept the reversal, there were now two popes, one in Rome, the other in Avignon, both regularly elected by the same body of cardinals, both claiming universal authority over the whole church. Part of Europe acknowledged the Roman pope, the rest the Avignonese; this then was the final catastrophe, for how could anyone pretend to see spiritual unity in the midst of such great temporal confusion? By the time the Council of Constance got around to ending this scandalous duet, it had become a trio, with three popes discordantly singing the same tune. When the council deposed all three in 1417 and elected Martin V, it ended the Schism. But the damage had been done, and powers of dissolution were turned loose throughout the length and breadth of Christendom.

Catherine of Siena (1347–1380)

Catherine, an Italian mystic, was renowned for her works of mercy on behalf of the poor and the sick, her ability to reconcile opposing parties, and her calls for reform within the church.

Becoming a Dominican nun at an early age, Catherine survived the plague (Black Death) and went on to spend much of her brief life serving the ill and dying. She visited condemned prisoners in order to win their souls. She wrote many letters (some of which survive today) to both rich and poor, giving spiritual and practical advice. She offered spiritual counsel to high-ranking government officials and even the pope.

Dismayed by the papacy's absence from Rome, Catherine made no small matter of pleading for his return, even traveling to meet Pope Gregory XI at his seat in Avignon, France. Though he acquiesced and returned to Rome, Gregory died soon after. Catherine continued to work tirelessly for peace and unity during the ensuing Great Schism.

Loved for her inward piety and her merciful acts, Catherine held considerable influence in a time when women in general held little.

The fifteenth century saw further indications of decline. In the middle decade, there sat on the papal throne Nicolas V, the first in a series of humanist popes. Deeply influenced by the humanistic and secular interests of the Renaissance, he not so much denied or forgot his spiritual calling as added to it a host of extracurricular activities, ranging all the way from the accumulation of the first nucleus of the great Vatican library to the support of worldly secretaries who were busily engaged in undermining the prestige of the papacy and ultimately the validity of Christianity itself. The papacy was itself partially secularized, and in this process joined in an uneasy

alliance the very forces in the Renaissance that were opposed to a spiritual interpretation of life.

The net result was a decline in spiritual fervor, intellectual vigor, and moral integrity. The latter half of the fifteenth century displayed one of the most discouraging spectacles of religious decline in history, and the papacy led the way. The bottom was reached with Alexander VI, whose given name was Rodrigo Borgia. Secular, immoral, venal, with single-minded devotion he sought to transform the Papal States into an enlarged inheritance for his son, Cesare. All these fine plans, however, were brought to naught by his death in 1503 and the election of his bitter enemy, Julius II, one of the most successful generals ever to sit on the throne of St. Peter.

Following the lead of the papacy, yet always eager to show the way, high prelates and low servitors participated in the general decline of the church. Wealth, nepotism (favoritism shown to relatives, especially in patronage), simony (the buying and selling of church office or privilege; a term that comes from "Simon Magus"), avarice, and immorality, all became not universal but certainly widespread.

Denunciation of Evils and Demand for Reform

Desperate indeed were the voices raised in protest against the insidious decay. One crying in the wilderness was Catherine of Siena (d. 1380). She yearned for the return of the popes to their ancient seat in Rome and stood as the conscience of the church against the abuses and evils she saw everywhere about her. While urging Gregory XI to come home, she warned him to "drive out of the sheepfold those wolves, those demons incarnate, who think only of good cheer, splendid feasts, and superb liveries." Men of integrity like the great ecclesiastical statesmen Pierre d'Ailly and Jean Gerson struck hard blows at all the accumulated evils of their day—nepotism, annates, indulgences, jubilees, reservations (of revenues from vacant sees), simony, abuse of visitations, fees for everything, and of course, the injury wrought on France.

Less restrained and more bluntly to the point were the words of many critics in the fifteenth century. Quite early the author of *De Ruina Ecclesia* portrayed Christ judging his latter-day disciples. Laymen were no less vociferous in denunciation. Geoffrey Chaucer (d. 1400) more than once pointed the finger of scorn at the clergy. Extremely bitter were the

gravamina, or lists of grievance, submitted at meetings of the imperial diet in Germany from the middle of the fifteenth century. This spirit was still violent in 1518, when Cardinal Cajetan proposed to the Diet of Augsburg a tax on the clergy and laity to be used against the Turks. The sharp answer he received pointed out that the real enemy of Christianity was not the Turk but the "hound of hell" in Rome. This same attitude is clear in the famous *Letters of Obscure Men*, published 1515–1517 in Germany, a successful satire on sinful and obscurantist tendencies in the Church.

All the reformers before the Reformation, from Wyclif and Huss to Savonarola to Ximenes and Erasmus, were at one in their denunciation of the evils rampant in the church they all loved so much. These accumulated criticisms and demands for reform could not remain without effect. From time to time various attempts were made to correct abuses, purify the church from evil influences, raise the standards of the clergy, and generally improve the spiritual quality of life. With few exceptions, these efforts were without avail or of only local and temporary effect.

Two men at least, one an Englishman of the fourteenth century, the other a Bohemian of the fifteenth, set about starting something. John Wyclif (d. 1384) and John Huss (d. 1415) are symbols of the crying need for real root-and-branch reform—not a spring housecleaning, but reconstruction.

An Oxford scholar, teacher, priest, and theologian, Wyclif started by attacking some of the cherished privileges and practices of the medieval church. He began to criticize the clergy for their concern with secular affairs, especially their attempts to control magistrates and rulers. Rather, he said, it is for the clergy to attend to spiritual things, and if they fail in their high calling, the magistrates should discipline the priests. Later he attacked certain aspects of papal authority and denied any biblical foundation for the mendicant orders. In 1382–1384, he made English translations from the Latin Vulgate, against the express opposition of the hierarchy, to put the Bible into the hands of the common folk, whom, it was thought, it might corrupt.

The storms against him occasioned by these teachings, however, were as nothing to the gale loosed when he tampered with the doctrine of transubstantiation, which made every mass a miracle. The power to change the consecrated bread and wine of the Lord's Supper into the very body and blood of Christ was a central point of the medieval exaltation of the office of priest. Only the priest, through magical powers conferred by ordination,

could perform the miracle of the mass. Ordinary mortals could never hope to participate in this great wonder except through the service of the priest at the altar. Fortunate indeed was Wyclif now that he could count on the protection of mighty political figures in the England of Edward III, especially John of Gaunt. Wyclif bravely spoke of the "idolatry of the priests of Baal, who worship gods they have made," and of the presumptuous doctrine that granted to "sinners the power to make God."

The hatred engendered among the conservative hierarchy was cherished right down to the Council of Constance, which ordered Wyclif's bones be dug up and cast away. This was actually done in 1429, with an unexpected result described by one writer in these words: "They burned them to ashes and cast them into Swift, a neighboring brook running hard by. Thus this brook hath conveyed his ashes into Avon, Avon into Severn, Severn into the narrow sea, they into the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wyclif are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over."[4] Although he left no organized followers and no institutional monument, his influence is seen in two directions: down to the Reformation, and the Hussites of Bohemia, who made use of his teachings and writings.

In one way Huss took up where Wyclif left off, for Huss's first break with the authorities of Bohemia came over the question of Wyclif and his teaching. Educated at the University of Prague and preacher in its great Bethlehem Chapel, Huss is one of the most heroic and colorful figures in Bohemian history. When he became rector of the university in 1409, he was soon in deep water over the issue of Wyclif, whose ideas and writings had been brought in by students. Although Prague's archbishop complied with a papal bull ordering the burning of the Englishman's books, Huss refused and preached a sermon on the following theme:

> Now is fulfilled the prophecy of Jacob of Tamaro that in the year 1409 one should arise to persecute the Gospel and the faith of Christ, for the late Pope, I know not whether he be in heaven or in hell, has written on his wretched parchments to the archbishop to burn the books of Master John Wyclif, wherein are many good things.[5]

An interdict laid on Prague led to further conflict, culminating in the arrest and trial of Huss before the Council of Constance, which met in 1414. Appearing at Constance voluntarily and under safe-conduct from the emperor, Huss was imprisoned over the objections of his Bohemian supporters on the argument that safe-conducts did not apply to heretics. At

his execution, he suffered degradation and humiliation as well as extreme torture in the fire. His ashes, like those of Wyclif, were thrown into the river. Alexander Flick calls it the most momentous event of the century.[6] In commemoration long afterward, three medallions were struck in Prague, showing Wyclif striking a spark from a stone, Huss kindling a fire from the spark, and Luther lighting a torch from the fire. The Hussites continued in existence and contributed much to the Reformation.

   The reference to the Council of Constance draws our attention to another reform movement, genuine even though opposed to programs like those of Wyclif and Huss. The conciliar movement represents an attempt to establish —or reestablish—an authority in the church higher than the papacy and an effort to effect purification from above. Both failed. The original occasion for the calling of a general council was the Great Schism. Early in the fourteenth century, Marsiglio of Padua in his *Defensor Pacis* had set forth the supremacy of a general council, and now this principle was welcome as an ideal method of healing the split in the papacy. But the first council, that of Pisa in 1409, was a disappointment, for, although it deposed the two rival popes and elected another, the net result was three popes. The wise leadership in the Council of Constance successfully ended the Schism and sought to promote reforms badly needed. Successful in dealing with the popes, it was less so in tilting with the devil. Jealousies and vested interests prevented any serious housecleaning. The later councils of the fifteenth century accomplished little beyond this. In the midst of general disillusionment, the popes succeeded in restoring their supremacy and in repealing all conciliar legislation to the contrary.

   A less obvious and more introspective, but nonetheless significant, effort to purify the church came from late medieval mystics, who were anything but unrealistic dreamers. One of them was Meister Eckhart (d. 1327), a pantheist who taught that direct union with God through mystical experience was more important than ecclesiastical observances. His most distinguished disciple was John Tauler, a more practical teacher whose writings deeply affected Luther. From these beginnings sprang the loosely organized group known as the Friends of God, active in southern Germany and Switzerland, including both clergy and laity. And out of this group came the anonymous *German Theology,* setting forth a doctrine of complete surrender to the will of God. As this doctrine spread into the Netherlands,

another group developed under the name "Brethren of the Common Life," who added a semi-monastic discipline to the mystical doctrines of contemplation. Thomas à Kempis (d. 1471), reputedly the author of the famous *Imitation of Christ*, learned his simple, mystical, warm faith in this association. One should not lose sight of women mystics, most famous of whom was Catherine of Siena, referenced above. Indirectly, through their emphasis on personal religious experience as against ecclesiastical and liturgical observance, these people provided motivation for reform through the whole church. Unfortunately, too few were moved in the direction of real improvement, and the mystics remained individual voices isolated in the midst of a church deaf and blind.

By the end of the fifteenth century, therefore, a long process of trial and error had demonstrated not only the need for reform and widespread demand for it but also the failure of numerous attempts to accomplish it. Little wonder that some devout souls despaired of saving the church so sunk in iniquity and blinded by its own evil. Girolamo Savonarola (d. 1498), the evangelistic monk of Italian Florence, cried in anguish, "When I reflect upon the priests, I am constrained to weep. . . . A terrible chastisement awaits them. . . . O prostitute church, thou hast displayed thy foulness to the whole world and stinkness unto heaven!" This fiery Christian, who began preaching in the city of the Medici in 1482, led people in a movement that, before it had spent itself, had overthrown the Medici family, opened the gates to the ambitious Charles VIII of France, denounced the sins of the church from those of the notorious Alexander VI down to the evils rampant in Florence itself, and called down a scourge from God on all sinners. But, as the approach of the invading French army had signalized the rise of Savonarola to power, so its departure marked his fall. He was convicted of heresy and burned at the stake.

A more realistic but also more negative program of reform was promulgated in Spain by the redoubtable Franciscan monk and eminent Castilian statesman, Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros (d. 1517), coming to prominence in the days when King Ferdinand of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile, both strong Roman Catholics with a double devotion to the papacy and to their own royal interests, were forging a new national monarchy out of the separate kingdoms left over from the Middle Ages.

Ximenes rose to power in both church and state. In 1492, a year of many important events in Spain, he was appointed confessor to her majesty; three years later he became archbishop of Toledo, a position that carried with it not only the spiritual primacy of Spain but also the grand chancellorship of Castile. From this eminence, Ximenes proceeded to reform first his own order, with the result that some one thousand monks, unwilling to submit to the new rigor, are said to have left the country. His reforming zeal penetrated into all sides of the Spanish church, culminating in the reestablishment of the Inquisition in its uniquely Spanish form and efficiency. Influenced by the forces of humanism, which in Italy had been directed as often as not against the church and even Christianity, he supported the scholarly study of the Bible according to new principles, and thus turned this force to the service of the church rather than against it. The result of this effort was the notable Complutensian Polyglot (that is, a multilingual publication of the Bible from Alcala), finished in 1517 and published in 1520.

This early Spanish reformation, then, was characterized by the zeal of the Castilian and Aragonese monarchs in serving both royal and ecclesiastical interests, by the vigorous purification of both regular and secular clergy under Cardinal Ximenes, and by the very narrow and conservative outlook that Spanish Catholicism has demonstrated to this day. One notes the publication of a new Bible under scholarly and papal auspices in a country where reading the Bible by the laity was frowned upon. And one notes the culmination of this triumphant "reformation" in the often fanatical extremes of the Inquisition.

A more benevolent and irenic, although sometimes ironic, effort arose from a land far to the north of the Pyrenees, in the Netherlands, where was born Desiderius Erasmus (d. 1536). The greatest of all the Christian humanists, he became a cosmopolitan citizen of Europe and the most respected advocate of peaceful reform within the church. Broadly educated and well traveled, he drank in all the strong intellectual draughts of that volatile age and then poured out a heady and spicy literary punch of his own. He was not all things to all men, but his fame brought out all the varied facets of his character. In Italy, Basel, England, Freiburg im Breisgau, wherever he went, he brought a friendly and amicable spirit into the often bitter struggles raging over the question of reform. Writing in a smooth Latin style worthy of the ancients, he presented, now serious, now

in gentle satire, the needs and methods of reform peacefully within the framework of the church. Nothing was further from his mind than the tragic Schism, a rent in what he thought should be the seamless robe of Christ. When Martin Luther approached the point of separation and excommunication, Erasmus shrank back, unwilling to come forth in the front line of what was now becoming a spiritual war. Twitted over his lack of manly courage, he replied, "Were I a Swiss soldier, that might be a warranted reproof; but since I am a man of learning, and need tranquility for my labors, it harmeth me not."

Living safely rather than dangerously, he continued to exert a powerful influence on the forces of reform. Luther himself had to admit that Erasmus could drive home some shrewd blows, as in *Julius Excluded from Heaven*. He certainly personified a most successful marriage of Christianity with the new humanism, indicating one way in which the profound differences between the Renaissance and the Reformation could, in part at least, be resolved. A most happy and successful illustration of this interaction is found in the scholarly edition of the Greek New Testament, which Erasmus published in 1516, a landmark in biblical study.

<div align="right">Frederick A. Norwood</div>

For Further Reading and Study

Reform and Revival

✦

Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me.

—Martin Luther

The Reformation

Although Roman Catholicism had established religious and cultural hegemony over Western and Central Europe, it faced new challenges. The Crusades had resulted in the expansion of trade ties with the East, which in turn unleashed commercial impulses and a new spirit of acquisitiveness that began to displace religious fervor. The new wealth even found its way into the Roman Church. The popes spent much of the fourteenth century living in luxury in Avignon, France, while the lavish lifestyles and lax behavior of popes and bishops alike invited criticism. To meet its insatiable need for money, the papacy engaged in such dubious practices as requiring holders of church offices to purchase them and selling indulgences (a reduction of time spent in purgatory). In the fifteenth century, the pope functioned largely as a Renaissance prince in Italy, living in luxury, patronizing the arts, and engaging in warfare with other princes.

Figures such as John Wyclif (c. 1320–1384), in England, and the Bohemian cleric John Huss (c. 1373–1415) not only criticized the immoral behavior of the popes and bishops but also called into question a number of basic Catholic doctrines, including the role of the priest as a mediator between people and God. They supported the priesthood of *all* believers and the innate ability of common persons to read and understand Scripture. The Church responded to these and other criticisms with persecution and even execution.

An important by-product of the establishment of commercial ties with the East was the introduction of classical texts from antiquity that had been lost to the West. This contributed to the rising spirit of intellectual inquiry that was central to the Renaissance and an emphasis on textual study. Such study led scholars to question documents the Roman Church used to buttress its claims to supremacy in economic and political matters. The most famous revelation was that the Donation of Constantine, in which the great emperor gave the pope the right to rule over Rome after he moved his capital to Constantinople was actually a forgery. The news of this cast a dark cloud over the integrity of the Church. The publication of the original Hebrew and Greek texts of the Scripture furthered the tendency to question Church doctrine. The mystical devotional writings of Thomas à Kempis (1380–1471) and others and the works of the Christian humanists, above all [Desiderius] Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536), added to the spiritual ferment.

The Magisterial Reformation

In 1517, the German monk Martin Luther (1483–1546), who had discovered the concept of justification by faith through his study of Scripture, launched a reform of Roman practices. At that time, Germany was divided into a number of large and small political units over which the central governments of both pope and emperor had little more than nominal control. Like England and other European countries, Germany was groping toward national unity. The emergence of a middle class and a regional army fed this embryonic nationalism. Such a context, and the personal support of certain German princes, enhanced Luther's influence as he moved further and further from Rome. Eventually, territorial churches were formed under the sponsorship and control of various independent German states.

Others fanned into flame the spark Luther had ignited. Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531), in Zurich, and John Calvin (1509–1564), in Geneva, both carried out reform campaigns. Calvin, through the wide dissemination of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and his strong emphasis on divine sovereignty and representative church government, had far-reaching influence, particularly in England, Scotland, and ultimately, America. With uncontrollable rapidity, through pamphlet, sermon, and conversation, the

protest against Rome spread into nearly every corner of Europe within twenty years of Luther's initial challenge.

These three figures, Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, are often called the "magisterial" Reformers because of their willingness to link the church to the political magistrate of a region. This cooperation between civic and religious authority seemed desirable for both protection and mutual support. The notion of religious freedom in the modern sense was unthinkable to them. The church and the state were to work together—the one to foster righteousness, the other to bring about external peace and punish evil deeds.

The magisterial Reformers taught that Scripture alone is the final authority in a Christian's life. The pulpit took primacy over the altar and the sermon replaced the mass as they endeavored to introduce Bible preaching. This directly opposed the Catholic doctrine that truth is found through a combination of Scripture, tradition, and papal interpretation. A second major difference between the Reformers and the Catholic Church centered around the doctrine of salvation: How does one become a Christian? The Roman answer was again a combination. A person is saved through faith *supplemented by* good works, particularly partaking of the sacraments. The reformers proclaimed that one attains salvation by faith *alone,* that is, faith in the finished work of Christ. In his *Commentary on Galatians*, Luther wrote, "By this means we are delivered from sin and justified, and eternal life is granted to us, not for our own merits and works, but for our faith, by which we take hold of Christ."

The magisterial Reformers also emphasized the careful professional training of ministers as well as general education for the laity; a view that all work, not just the clerical ministry, is a divine calling; and a backward-looking orientation. This last feature is often forgotten. These leaders were attempting to return the church to its roots, and they scanned the early centuries of church history for principles and models to follow. They did not limit their inquiry to the first-century apostolic church. Luther, in particular, felt that the church had retained its pristine integrity until the tenth century. Lutherans thus retained a church polity led by bishops and acknowledged that one received divine grace through participation in the sacraments. The sorry spectacle of the Crusades and papal corruption had caused the church to drift. Thus, a respect for church tradition was found in the Lutheran and Reformed groups, which constituted the so-called right wing of the Reformation.

Martin Luther (1483–1546)

Martin Luther

"As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs." So went the jingle of Johann Tetzel, the man authorized to raise money to build a new basilica in Rome. His fund-raising gimmick—the sale of indulgences—was, quite simply, selling forgiveness. Get your dear departed loved ones out of purgatory for a fee and earn credit against your own sins.

The church was rife with corruption. Church offices were bought by wealthy nobles and used to gain more wealth and power. One such noble was Albert of Brandenburg, who borrowed money to buy himself the archbishopric of Mainz and needed a way to pay back the loan. The pope authorized the sale of indulgences in Albert's region, as long as half the money collected funded the construction of Saint Peter's Basilica. The rest went to Albert. Everyone was happy except for a number of devout Germans, among them Martin Luther.

Tetzel, a Dominican monk and a popular preacher, became commissioner of indulgences; he traveled from town to town, hawking their benefits: "Listen to the voices of your dear dead relatives and friends, beseeching you and saying, 'Pity us, pity us. We are in dire torment from which you can redeem us for a pittance.' Do you not wish to?"

Luther, a priest and professor at Wittenberg, strongly opposed the sale of indulgences. When Tetzel came around, Luther wrote up a list of ninety-five grievances and tacked them to the church door, which served as sort of a community bulletin board. Divine forgiveness certainly could not be bought or sold, Luther said, when God offers it freely.

Indulgences, however, were just the tip of the iceberg. Luther railed against the entire corruption of the church and pressed for a new understanding of papal and scriptural authority. Tetzel was soon out of the picture (he died in 1519), but Luther went on to lead a religious revolution that radically changed the Western world.

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Luther was born in 1483 to a peasant couple in Eisleben, Germany. His father, a miner, pushed him toward the study of law, sending him to the University of Erfurt. But a narrow escape from death by lightning made young Luther change course. He entered an Augustinian monastery in 1505, becoming a priest in 1507. His superiors, recognizing his academic abilities, sent him to Wittenberg University to earn a degree in theology.

The spiritual restlessness that harassed other great Christians through the ages fell upon Luther as well. He was deeply aware of his own sin, of God's holiness, and of his utter inability to earn God's favor. In 1510, he journeyed to

Rome and was disillusioned by the kind of mechanical faith he found there.

In a few years, he was back at Wittenberg as a doctor of theology, teaching courses on the Bible. In 1515, he began teaching on Paul's epistle to the Romans. Paul's words gnawed at Luther's soul.

"My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him," wrote Luther. "Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement 'the just shall live by his faith.' Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning. . . . This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven."

Then, more confident in his own beliefs, and with some support from colleagues, Luther was free to speak out against corruption. He had criticized indulgence-selling and the worship of relics even before Tetzel came along. Tetzel merely brought the conflict to a head. Luther's Ninety-five Theses were amazingly restrained, considering the upheaval they caused. They were really merely an invitation to debate.

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He got debate, first from Tetzel, later from the renowned scholar Johann Eck, who charged Luther with heresy. It seems that, at first, Luther expected the pope to agree with him about indulgence abuse. But as the controversy continued, Luther solidified his own opposition to the papacy. In 1520, the pope issued a bull (decree) condemning Luther's views, and Luther burned it. In 1521, the Diet (council) at Worms ordered Luther to retract his published views. There, as legend has it, Luther stated, "Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen."

Thereafter, Luther was excommunicated, his writings banned. For his own protection, he was kidnapped by his patron, Frederick the Wise, and hidden in Wartburg Castle. There he worked on further theological writings and a translation of the New Testament into popular German.

But the battle was just beginning. By daring to oppose the pope, Luther had set off feelings of independence in German nobles and peasants alike. Germany became a patchwork quilt, as certain nobles came out in support of Luther and others remained loyal to Rome. Reformation was brewing in Switzerland as well, led by Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531). The church and the Holy Roman Empire were distracted by political struggles throughout the 1520s. By the time they got tough with the reformers, it was too late.

A meeting at Augsburg in 1530 came close to bringing the Lutheran cause back under the Roman umbrella. Luther's colleague Philip Melanchthon prepared a conciliatory statement of Lutheran views, presenting their position as being true to historic Catholicism. But the Catholic council demanded concessions that Luther would not make, and the rift became final.

In retrospect, it appears that the events of the Reformation owe a great deal to Luther's unique personality. Without his brooding self-doubt, he might never have mined the truths of Scripture as he did. Without his zeal for righteousness, he might never have posted his protest. Without his boisterousness, he might not have attracted a sizable following. He lived in a time ripe for change, and he was ideally suited to bring it about.

—A. Kenneth Curtis, J. Stephen Lang, and Randy Petersen

The Radical Reformation

The left-wing groups, those of the "radical" Reformation were quite different. Two early representatives of radical reform stand out: the German extremist Thomas Muntzer (c. 1490–1525), a former follower of Luther who led the ill-fated Peasants' Revolt, and the Swiss Anabaptists, who began as a dissident group of Zwingli's followers led by Conrad Grebel (1498–1526). Dissatisfied with the slow and seemingly compromising actions of their mentors, these groups insisted on returning to New Testament patterns and seeking to restore what they considered to be the apostolic church. This is why they represented a more radical departure from Roman inheritance than the magisterial groups. Whereas Luther and

Calvin saw the church as territorial, encompassing all those in a certain region, the radicals viewed it as a voluntary body called out from society. Entrance into membership came through a new birth wrought by the Holy Spirit, registered by an individual's acceptance of God's grace, and attested to by the believer's baptism. While the magisterial Reformers viewed baptism as a "sign" of membership in the Christian society that could be bestowed on all, including infants, the radicals considered baptism the visible token of the inward regeneration that had taken place. Their foes derisively called them *Ana*baptists—those who baptize *again*.

John Calvin (1509–1564)

John Calvin

Called "the greatest theologian and disciplinarian of the greatest age of the reformers" and "the only international reformer," John Calvin (or Jean Cauvin) was born at Noyon, France, son of the secretary of the bishopric of Noyon. Calvin, a brilliant scholar, trained first for law and studied at Paris, Orleans, and Bourges. He sat under some of the most learned humanists and by 1532 published his erudite humanist book, *Commentary on Seneca's Treatise on Clemency*.

About the time Calvin was twenty-three, he experienced what he himself considered a "sudden conversion"—an experience he refused to elaborate on except to state that God addressed him through the Bible and had to be obeyed.

Calvin from then on was a fervent Christian.

After his conversion, however, Calvin had no immediate plans of breaking with the Roman Church but desired reform. In 1533, his close associate Nicholas Cop was installed as rector of the University of Paris. Cop's inaugural address (although not ghostwritten by Calvin, nonetheless deeply influenced by Calvin's thinking) asked for Church reform and stirred up a storm. Calvin and Cop were forced to flee from Paris and, after a brief jail term at Noyon, to get out of France and to safety in Basel, Switzerland. By this time, Calvin was compelled to break with Rome and take his stand with the reformers.

Early in 1535, when Calvin was still only twenty-six, King Francis I of France tried to excuse his persecution of French Protestants by trumping up charges of sedition and anarchy against them. Calvin, incensed at the slander being directed against his friends, completed the treatise on which he had been working since his flight from Paris. The *Institutes of the Christian Religion* was a comprehensive and orderly summary of a Christian Reformed doctrine. Calvin's *Institutes,* later to go through many editings and enlargements until the final edition (1559), was and is one of the most influential contributions to Christian literature and Western thought.

On his way to Strassburg, in 1536, shortly after the *Institutes* were published, Calvin was forced on a detour through Geneva because of fighting. He intended to stay the night in Geneva, continue to Strassburg, and settle down in a quiet library to devote his life in quiet, scholarly studies. Fiery William Farel, frantically trying to keep the Reformed cause alive in Geneva, insisted that Calvin remain.

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From the first, Calvin's stay at Geneva was packed with tension and controversy. Calvin, though, had an immediate impact on the city, getting the Little Council of Geneva to adopt his recommendations to stem immoral practices through rigorous church discipline, to impose a confession of faith on the citizenry, and to accept a catechism. An opposition party, however, undermined all that Calvin had accomplished by passing laws making civil authority binding on all church affairs. Calvin was banished.

Calvin's three years in banishment at Strassburg were happy and productive. He found time to woo a wife and to begin exegetical studies of Scripture. When the opposition party at Geneva was disgraced in 1541, and others invited him to return to Geneva, Calvin was reluctant to leave Strassburg.

Opposition to Calvin welled up a second time. By 1553, his fall was imminent when the Servetus episode exploded in Geneva. Michael Servetus, a flamboyant skeptic with exasperating mannerisms, had written a tract denying the Trinity, the efficacy of infant baptism, and the acceptance of the orthodox viewpoint on the two natures of Jesus Christ. Servetus persistently stirred up Geneva's opposition against Calvin, who, badgered into a showdown trial between Servetus and himself, won. Calvin, although perhaps technically not responsible for this severe sentence, nonetheless has the blot on his record of being party to the death of Servetus.

Servetus' death, however, made Calvin the unchallenged power at Geneva. Calvin corresponded widely with the leading thinkers of Europe. In 1559, he founded what became the University of Geneva. Great numbers of Protestant refugees swelled in Geneva to absorb the Genevan Reformation. These later carried Calvinism home to Scotland, the Netherlands, Hungary, France, England, and Poland. Under Calvin, Geneva became what John Knox of Scotland called "the purest school of Christ on Earth."

—William P. Barker

The Anabaptists were the largest and most aggressive segment of the dissident Protestants. Since they rejected the concept of a Christian state and refused to participate in its activities, they were seen as revolutionaries. If their views of nonresistance were allowed to become the norm, Protestants would not be able to defend themselves against the Catholics or the Turks, who were invading Central Europe. As a result, the Anabaptists suffered martyrdom by the thousands. They stood for strict moral and ethical standards and, in general, excluded from their fellowship any who departed from these ideals.

Under the pressure of persecution, the Anabaptists, who often attracted the lower classes, divided into several groups, which made them appear all

the more dangerous to the established order, especially since they had no geographical center or a single formulation of the faith.

The Mennonites, taking their name from the influential Menno Simons (1496–1561) of Holland, were the largest of these groups. From homelands in Germany and the Low Countries, many eventually found asylum in Pennsylvania. A number of Anabaptists founded religious communities in Poland, Prussia, and Moravia, and in the late eighteenth century, many migrated to southern Russia. Other radicals chose the path of individualistic Christian mysticism and clustered into small, inconspicuous groups.

Keeping aloof from middle-class culture, commercial life, and political involvement, large numbers of Anabaptists moved to the frontiers of European society, where social and religious conformity were less prevalent, and the community of saints could live unmolested. Numerous Anabaptists succeeded in maintaining a community lifestyle peculiar to themselves, one that warded off the corruptions of the world. The most famous group was the Amish, resulting from a schism within the Swiss Mennonites. This faction, led by Jacob Ammann, migrated to Pennsylvania in the early 1700s and maintained a traditionalist lifestyle that rejected modern dress and conveniences. Another Mennonite group, the Hutterites, founded in Moravia in 1528, practiced communitarian living. Heavily persecuted in Europe, they moved to the Ukraine, and finally went to North America in the 1870s.

The tendencies and principles planted by both the magisterial and radical reformers found fertile soil in Britain. Unique combinations from both wings emerged there and spread throughout the world. American Protestant Christianity would be conditioned in the struggles surrounding the Reformation in England.

Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531)

Ulrich Zwingli

The guiding genius of the Reformation in the German-speaking cantons of Switzerland, Zwingli sparked the Reformation in Switzerland at the same time Luther ignited the Protestant movement in Germany. Zwingli, unlike Luther, never experienced a radical spiritual crisis or prolonged crisis of the soul but went through a gradual intellectual conversion.

Ordained in 1506, Zwingli became parish priest at Glarus, Switzerland, where he taught himself Greek and immersed himself in Scripture study. By the time Zwingli transferred to Einsiedeln ten years later, he was [preaching] boldly against the sale of indulgences and the veneration of the Virgin. Although some historians date this as the start of the Swiss Reformation, Zwingli at this point still had no idea of separation from the Roman Church.

Zwingli moved to Zurich in 1519 at the age of thirty-six, becoming a popular preacher and pastor. Unlike Luther, who broke with Rome painfully, slowly, reluctantly, and in gradual stages, Zwingli separated from Rome rapidly and easily. The rupture in Zurich came during Lent, 1522, when Zwingli preached that forbidding meat during Lent was unscriptural. Zwingli, in spite of pressures from the hierarchy and threats from the bishop of Constance, stood fast. In July of the same year, Zwingli and ten other priests publicly protested clerical celibacy and petitioned for permission to marry. When their request was denied, most of the ten, including Zwingli, married anyway.

With Zurich in a state of commotion over Zwingli's preaching and reports of Luther's activities in Germany, Zwingli prepared *Sixty-seven Articles or Conclusions* to be discussed publicly in Zurich. The *Articles*, emphasizing Christ as Savior and Mediator, stressing the supremacy of the Word of God and rejecting the papal system, was the first public statement of the Reformed faith.

After prolonged, intensive public debates during 1523 and 1524, Zwingli convinced the Zurich magistrates to officially adopt the reformed practices in the canton. The Zurich Reformation was decided by the will of the people, unlike the German, which was decided by the will of the princes.

—William P. Barker

The Character of the English Reformation

Serious trouble erupted between England and the Roman Church in the later 1520s as a result of the marital difficulties of Henry VIII. But distinct rumblings had been heard a century and a half earlier when the Oxford scholar John Wyclif openly challenged the authority of both the pope and the Church by appealing directly to the New Testament. He gave the English the Scriptures in their native tongue and organized lay preachers, Lollards, to proclaim reforming ideas across the land, a message especially appealing to the lower classes.

As was the custom among royalty, the youthful Henry entered into a politically advantageous marriage to Catherine of Aragon, who had been married to his late elder brother. In 1527, after eighteen years of wedlock, during which his desperate desire for a male heir had been frustrated (only one daughter had survived infancy), Henry appealed to Pope Clement VII for an annulment of his marriage, an act forbidden by church law on the basis of Leviticus 20:21. Clement refused, as he was under pressure from Catherine's nephew, Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor and king of Spain. But Henry would have his way. In 1533, he secretly married Anne Boleyn and had the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, annul his marriage to Catherine. The pope responded by excommunicating the king, who in turn had Parliament declare him to be "the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England." This action in 1534 made the break with Rome official.

The fact that Henry perceived his "reform" as political and ecclesiastical rather than theological was demonstrated by his official reaffirmation of Roman dogma in 1539. He did, however, make two concessions to the Protestant spirit: He issued the Great Bible in 1539, built on the translations of William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale; and he closed all the monasteries and confiscated their properties. This replenished the crown's depleted treasury, and by sharing his acquisitions with the gentry, Henry secured their loyalty and gave them an economic interest in the changes. His successors would establish Protestantism in England, but not without a hard struggle.

At his death in 1547, Henry was succeeded by his ten-year-old son, Edward VI, born of his third queen, Jane Seymour. Although he was dead by age sixteen, the deeply religious and anti-Roman Edward, who had Cranmer as his mentor, rapidly moved England in the direction of Protestantism. Images were removed from churches, chantries were

abolished, English replaced Latin in worship services, priestly marriage was legalized, and the laity were allowed to receive the Communion cup. To replace the Catholic order of worship, Cranmer authorized a new Book of Common Prayer, and a moderately Calvinistic creed was drawn up. Parliament officially imposed these changes on the nation, although many were still committed to the old ways.

When Edward died in 1553, his half sister, Mary Tudor, the daughter of Catherine of Aragon and an ardent Catholic, took the throne. Changes were inevitable. Mary set out to restore Catholicism by forcing Parliament to repeal the religious legislation enacted during Edward's reign. She and her cousin, Reginald Cardinal Pole (the Archbishop of Canterbury) reestablished old statutes against heresy and ordered the execution of three hundred Protestants, among them five bishops, including Cranmer, Nicholas Ridley, and Hugh Latimer. Many other Protestants left England to find safety among their brethren on the Continent.

Mary's efforts were doomed to failure. Although married to Philip II of Spain, she could not produce an heir, and her half sister Elizabeth, the daughter of Henry and Anne Boleyn, waited in the wings to rule. After only five years, the sickly Mary died in 1558, having earned for herself the inglorious title *Bloody Mary*.

Determined to end the religious strife, Elizabeth I (1558–1603), moved to establish a national state religion—the Anglican Church—that all people were obligated to follow. Through the Elizabethan Settlement, the Church of England was given its Protestant form, which continues to this day. The 1559 Act of Supremacy passed by Parliament severed all ties with Rome and declared the monarch the "supreme governor" both politically and ecclesiastically. An Act of Uniformity reestablished the Book of Common Prayer, and the Thirty-nine Articles, an outgrowth of Cranmer's creed, became the formal doctrinal statement. Its moderation satisfied everyone except hard-line Catholics. The church retained the pre-Reformation hierarchical structure of bishops and parish priests.

To the north, an alliance of Scottish nobles and middle-class townsmen moved Scotland toward a Calvinistic church, in spite of the existence of a Catholic monarch, Mary Stuart (Queen of Scots). Led by the fearless John Knox (1505–1572), a former priest who had studied in Geneva with John Calvin, the Scottish Parliament, in 1560, severed ties with the Roman Church. A Presbyterian form of church government was instituted with

ruling elders in the congregations, elected presbyteries of laypeople and clergy who would oversee several congregations, synods encompassing a larger geographical area, and a national assembly. Mary's tempestuous personal life as well as the struggle with Knox led to her abdication, exile in England, and eventual execution by Elizabeth. When Mary's son, James VI of Scotland, succeeded to the English throne as James I, he unified the two Protestant nations under one ruler, although each nation possessed its own style of established religion: episcopacy in England and presbyterianism in Scotland. Presbyterianism in America descended from the Scottish Reformation, as many Scots migrated to Northern Ireland in the early 1600s, and a century later their descendants crossed the Atlantic to find new homes in the colonies.

Meanwhile, a division occurred within Calvinism on the Continent that would influence the development of Christianity in England and America. The Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609) called into question some basic tenets of Calvinism, and his followers quickly spread the new ideas in the Dutch church. In short, Arminius rejected Calvinist predestination and the limitation of Christ's atonement to those who are "elect." Because people have free will, it was possible to reject the promptings of the Holy Spirit and spurn the offer of salvation. Believers who turn away from Christ can fall from grace. The Arminians were condemned at the Synod of Dort (1618–19), thus ensuring that the Dutch and German Calvinists, as well as their American descendants, would adhere to Calvinist orthodoxy. In England, however, the anti-Calvinist movement identified with Archbishop William Laud (1573–1645), and the later Methodist movement of John Wesley, were influenced by Arminianism.

Thomas A. Askew and Richard V. Pierard

Puritanism

A loosely organized reform movement known as Puritanism originated during the English Reformation of the sixteenth century. The name came from efforts to "purify" the Church of England by those who felt that the Reformation had not yet been completed. Eventually, the Puritans went on to attempt purification of the self and of society as well.

The theological roots of Puritanism may be found in continental Reformed theology, in a native dissenting tradition stretching back to John Wyclif and the Lollards, but especially in the theological labors of first-generation English reformers. From William Tyndale (d. 1536), the Puritans took an intense commitment to Scripture and a theology that emphasized the concept of covenant; from John Knox (d. 1572), they absorbed a dedication to thorough reform in church and state; and from John Hooper (d. 1555), they received a determined conviction that Scripture should regulate ecclesiastical structure and personal behavior alike.

Puritans achieved a measure of public acceptance in the early years of Queen Elizabeth's reign. They then suffered a series of reverses that lasted through the reigns of her successors James I and Charles I. In the days of James I, some Puritans grew discouraged about their reforming efforts and separated entirely from the Church of England. These "Separatists" included the Pilgrims, who after a sojourn in Holland, established, in 1620, the Plymouth Colony in what is now southeastern Massachusetts.

When Charles I attempted to rule England without Parliament and its many Puritan members, and when he tried systematically to root Puritans out of the English Church, a larger, less separatistic body emigrated to Massachusetts Bay (1630), where for the first time Puritans had the opportunity to construct churches and a society reflecting their grasp of the Word of God. In England, other Puritans continued the struggle for reform. When war with Scotland forced Charles I to recall Parliament in 1640, civil war was the ultimate result. That conflict ended with the execution of the king (1649), the rise of Oliver Cromwell to the protectorate of England, the production of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, and the erection of a Puritan Commonwealth. Yet Cromwell, for all his abilities, found it impossible to establish a Puritan state. After his death (1658), the people of England asked the son of Charles I to return, a restoration marking the collapse of organized Puritanism in England. Across the Atlantic, a vital Puritanism survived only a little longer. By the time of Cotton Mather (d. 1728), Indian warfare, the loss of the original Massachusetts charter, and a growing secularization had brought an end to Puritanism as a way of life in America.

Puritanism generally extended the thought of the English Reformation, with distinctive emphases on four convictions:

1. Personal salvation was entirely from God.

2. The Bible provided the indispensable guide to life.

3. The church should reflect the express teaching of Scripture.

4. Society was one unified whole.

The Puritans believed that humankind was utterly dependent upon God for salvation. With their predecessors in England, and with Luther and Calvin, they believed that reconciliation with God came as a gift of his grace received by faith. They were Augustinians who regarded humans as sinners, unwilling and unable to meet the demands, or to enjoy the fellowship, of a righteous God apart from God's gracious initiative. But Puritans also made distinctive contributions to the general Reformed idea of salvation. They advocated a "plain style" of preaching, as exemplified in the masterful sermons of John Dod (1555–1645) and William Perkins (1558–1602), which was consciously designed to point out simply the broad way of destruction and the strait gate to heaven. They also placed a new emphasis on the process of conversion. In the journals and diaries of leaders like Thomas Shepard (1605–1649) they charted the slow and often painful process by which God brought them from rebellion to obedience.

They also spoke of salvation in terms of "covenant." In the notes to the Geneva Bible, the translation of proto-Puritans completed during the reign of Mary Tudor, emphasis was on a personal covenant of grace, whereby God both promised life to those who exercised faith in Christ and graciously provided that faith, on the basis of Christ's sacrificial death, to the elect. Later, Puritans expanded the idea of covenant to take in the organization of churches, seen most clearly in the rise of Congregationalism (or Independency) and the structuring of all society under God, of which the "Holy Commonwealths" of Massachusetts and Connecticut were the major examples.

With the early English reformers the Puritans believed, second, in the supreme authority of the Bible. The use of Scripture, however, soon came to be a great cause of offense between Puritans and their Anglican opponents and among Puritans themselves. Puritans, Anglicans, and the many in between all believed in the Bible's final authority. But Puritans came to argue that Christians should do only what the Bible commanded; Anglicans contended rather that Christians should not do what the Bible prohibited. The difference was subtle but profound. Among Puritans considerable

differences eventually appeared over what Scripture demanded, especially in questions relating to the church. Some (mostly in England) contended for a presbyterian state-church organization, others (in Massachusetts and Connecticut) supported a congregational organization in league with the state, while still others (English Independents and Baptists as well as Roger Williams in New England) believed that the Bible mandated congregational churches separate from the state.

In short, Puritans disagreed with Anglicans about the way to interpret the Bible, but they differed among themselves about which biblical interpretations were best. The former disagreement dominated English religious life so long as the king and his episcopalian allies were in control. The latter came to the fore after the success of the Puritan Revolution, and it led to the disintegration of Puritanism in England.

These disagreements should not hide the Puritans' overriding commitment to the authority of Scripture. They made as serious an attempt as has ever been made in the English-speaking world to establish their lives on the basis of biblical instruction. When Puritan efforts to reform the kingdom of England faltered in the last years of Elizabeth's reign, they turned to the one sphere they could still control, their individual families. It was during this period, around 1600, that Puritans began to place new emphasis on the Sabbath, to revive family worship, and to encourage personal acts of mercy to the sick and dying. When Puritan prospects brightened in the 1640s, this "spiritualization of the household" emerged into the open.

Puritans believed, third, that the church should be organized from Scripture. Anglicans contended that episcopacy, since it was tried and tested by time and did not violate any command of Scripture, was a godly and appropriate way of organizing the church. Puritans responded that the defenders of episcopacy missed the point in neglecting what Puritans held up as the Bible's positive teachings: They argued that Scripture lays down specific rules for constructing and governing churches and a system of church order not based on bishops. Puritans maintained this conviction even when they failed among themselves to agree on what that biblical system was. But even these disagreements were fruitful, for they grounded the modern polity of Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists as well.

The reason Puritan beliefs concerning salvation, Scripture, and the church created such upheaval was their fourth basic conviction, that God

had sanctioned the solidarity of society. Most Puritans believed that a single, coordinated set of authorities should govern life in society. The result was that Puritans sought nothing less than to make all of England Puritan. Only late during the Puritan Commonwealth did ideas of toleration and of what is known today as pluralism arise, but these ideas were combated by most Puritans themselves and firmly set to rest for another generation by the restoration of Charles II.

From a modern vantage point the intolerance entailed by a unified view of society has harmed the Puritans' reputation. From a more disinterested perspective it is possible also to see great advantages. The Puritans succeeded in bursting the bonds of mere religiosity in their efforts to serve God. Puritanism was one of the moving forces in the rise of the English Parliament in the early seventeenth century. For good and for ill, it provided a foundation for the first great political revolution in modern times. It gave immigrants to New England a social vision whose comprehensively Christian character has never been matched in America. And, for such a putatively uncreative movement, it liberated vast energies in literature as well.

The Puritans enjoyed a great number of forceful preachers and teachers. The learned Dr. William Ames explained "the doctrine of living to God" in *Marrow of Theology,* a book used as a text during the first fifty years of Harvard College. The sermons and tracts of William Perkins outlined with sympathy the steps that a repentant sinner should take to find God. John Preston preached the severity of God's law and the wideness of his mercy fearlessly in the courts of James I and Charles I. John Owen, adviser to Cromwell and vice-chancellor of the University of Oxford, wrote theological treatises on the atonement and on the Holy Spirit that still influence Calvinistic thought in the English-speaking world. His contemporary, Richard Baxter, published nearly two hundred works expounding the virtues of theological moderation and the truths of what C. S. Lewis in the twentieth century would call "mere Christianity." In America, in Boston, John Cotton labored to present God's glory in conversion, and Hartford's Thomas Hooker glorified God in the labors of the converted. The Westminster Confession and Catechisms that Puritan divines wrote at the request of Parliament (1643–1647) remain a guide to Reformed theology, especially in Presbyterian circles, to this day. Together,

the works of the Puritans comprise Protestantism's most extensive library of sacred and practical theology.

Important as the contribution of ministers were, the greatest contribution of Puritans to Christian history probably resided with its laymen. The English-speaking world has never seen such a cluster of thoroughly Christian political leaders as the Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell, the governor of Massachusetts John Winthrop, or the governor of Plymouth William Bradford. These leaders erred, perhaps often, but they devoted their lives to public service, self-consciously and wholeheartedly, out of deepest gratitude to the God of their salvation.

We also glimpse the genius of Puritanism when we look beyond its politicians to its writers. It is all too easy to forget that John Milton, who in *Paradise Lost* dared "assert Eternal Providence/And justify the ways of God to men," had earlier defended the execution of Charles I and served as Cromwell's Latin (or corresponding) secretary. John Bunyan marched with Cromwell's army and preached as a layman during the Commonwealth before he was jailed in Bedford for his Puritan beliefs, where he redeemed the time by writing *Pilgrim's Progress*. In America, Puritanism produced a poet of note in Anne Bradstreet (1616–1672). It also gave us the poems of Edward Taylor (1645–1729), a retiring country minister. Taylor's meditations, composed to prepare his own heart for quarterly celebrations of the Lord's Supper, are among the finest poems ever written by an American.

The Puritans resemble other groups in Christian history who, in forsaking all for God, have won back not only God but much of the world as well. They stand with the early Franciscans, the Protestant reformers, the Jesuits, the Anabaptists, the early Methodists, and the Reformed Dutch of the late nineteenth century who, in their own separate ways, were transfixed by the glories of redemption and who went far in redeeming the world around them. With these groups the Puritans also verified the truth of the gospel words: They sought first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and much more was added to them besides.

<div align="right">Mark A. Noll</div>

Great Awakenings

The First Great Awakening in America occurred in the first part of the eighteenth century, primarily between 1720 and 1750. While names like Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and William Tennant were prominent, the Awakening was much more than the activity of a few public leaders. The Awakening could be termed *Great* because it was general and wide-reaching. People from a broad spectrum of American life were impacted. There is no doubt that the Awakening played a large role in developing a national consciousness among the various colonies, binding people together in a common belief that God had a special destiny for America.

The Great Awakening added new churches across all denominations. This growth resulted in a movement to provide educational opportunities for the growing number of ministerial recruits. The forerunners of many present-day eastern universities were born during this period of time, with William Tennant's "Log College" representative of the educational initiative. Basic schools also emerged for Native Americans, African-Americans, and the children of indentured servants.

Until the Great Awakening, with few exceptions, American religious life reflected the assumptions of Geneva and Calvinism. What emerged in the Great Awakening was not so much a substitute theological system but a new mood. If anything, it was a revolt that replaced a view of Christian life focused on an outward observable formulation of religious life with a deference toward personal religious experience. This shift of priority came with accompanying controversy. The Great Awakening was not only a renewal movement that called for conversion but also a renewal movement that challenged the standing religious assumptions about the nature of Christian life itself.

The growth of American churches and the political independence reflective of the American Revolution significantly impacted American Protestants. As 1800 approached, churches became aware that the peace after the Revolution had caused a general dereliction of national and personal spiritual disciplines. The perceived need for religious renewal now had the historical precedent of revivalist preaching and religious experience from which to draw. The Second Great Awakening, which stretched through the first half of the nineteenth century, featured the assumption that religious leaders could create a revival by utilizing means that were focused on influencing hearers to make a decision for Christ. Revivals ensued under

leaders such as Timothy Dwight (Jonathan Edwards' grandson), president of Yale College. The frontier version of such revivalist initiative is exemplified in the camp meetings led by ministers like James McGready. Charles Finney personifies this revivalist tradition born out of the First Great Awakening of the previous century. He no longer viewed revival as an end in itself but as a part of a renewal of vital religious life in perpetuity.

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758)
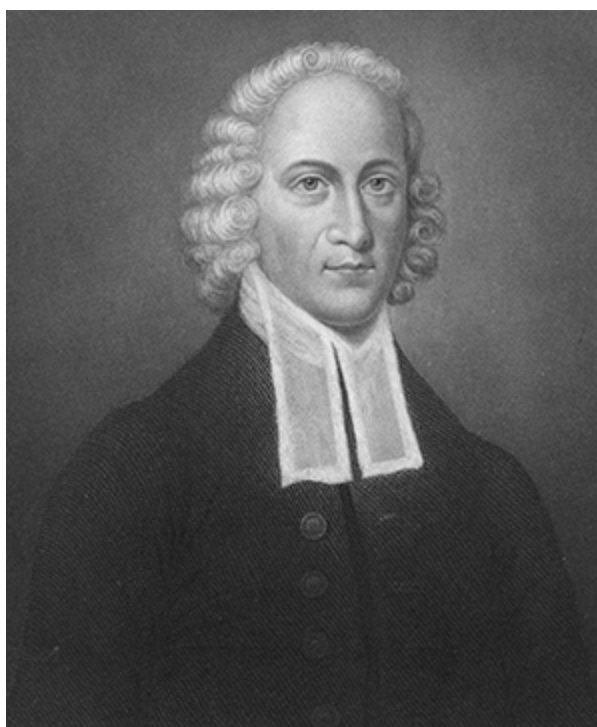
Jonathan Edwards

America's first (and, in the opinion of many, greatest) theologian, Jonathan Edwards was a Puritan pastor whose writings produced an evangelistic, missionary-minded Calvinism that came to be known as the New England Theology and would dominate American Protestant theological thinking for generations. Edwards was descended from illustrious New England families, graduated from Yale in 1720, taught briefly, served as pastor in New York for a time, then in 1729 became associate pastor with his famed grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, at Northfield, Massachusetts.

Edwards' ability as a preacher caused a great revival at Northfield in 1734–1735, when on one occasion three hundred professed their faith for the first time. In 1737, Edwards described his work in the publication *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God*, which became a bestseller in America and England (and established Edwards' fame) and contributed to the resurgence of widespread Christian faith known as the Great Awakening. During the beginnings of the Great Awakening in 1740–45, Edwards' powerful sermons and books stirred the colonies.

Edwards, for all his insistence on personal conversion, abhorred a shallow revivalism and resisted the emotional excesses that marred the Awakening in many places. Insisting that a real conversion meant living a responsible, moral life, Edwards tightened the requirements for church membership—which caused opposition in his Northfield congregation. When in 1749 Edwards announced that he would refuse to administer Communion to those not living a Christian life, an unpleasant controversy broke out that in 1750 caused him to resign.

A person whose life exemplifies the Second Great Awakening's impact on Christian education is Horace Bushnell, known as the father of the religious education movement. As a pastor in Connecticut, Bushnell used revivalist tactics to impact his community, with diminishing returns. After several years, he confessed that the most disheartening expectation of the Christian minister was the thought that vibrant Christianity depended primarily on revivals. Bushnell's subsequent response to the revivalist mode of the era is his idea of Christian nurture. He focused his attention on the home as the primary place of nurture based on the thesis that children should grow up as Christians and never know themselves as being otherwise. Bushnell was far ahead of his time in advocating a religious experience that was psychologically positive for the child. Bushnell saw proper education and responsible Christian families as the greatest opportunity for perpetuating Christian life.

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The Second Great Awakening's proactive entrepreneurial character exemplified American Christianity throughout the nineteenth century. Whether liberal or conservative, new structures and programs grew quickly. The Sunday school movement became an aggressive evangelistic tool on the American frontier and a stabilizing force in the American church throughout the century. The Chautauqua movement emerged as a training program for lay teachers of the Bible, using extension education principles popularized in England. The Chautauqua movement is the forerunner of a variety of adult education initiatives that take learning to the grassroots of America.

The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), with its aggressive evangelism and solid Bible study approach, was the training ground for Christian leaders like D. L. Moody. Moody, in turn, championed the Bible school movement, which made basic theological training accessible to the laity, empowering thousands to serve God faithfully.

Charles Grandison Finney (1792–1875)
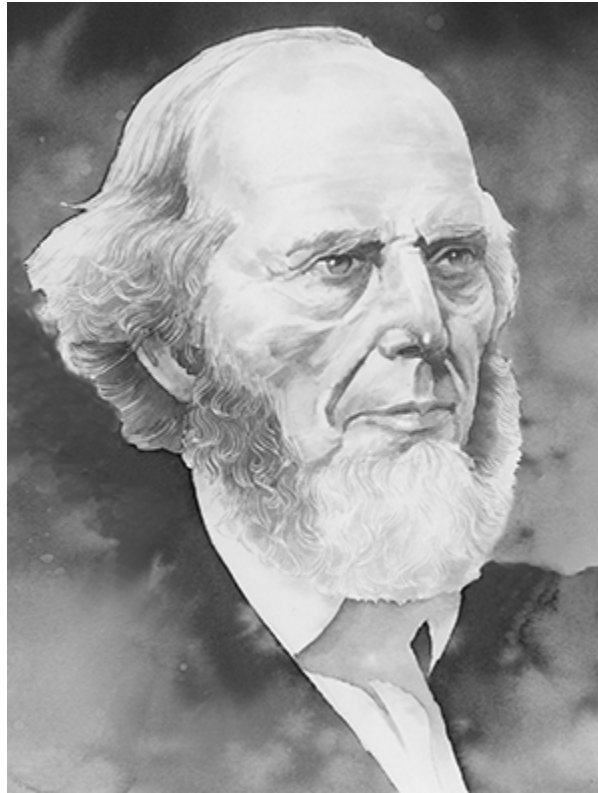
Charles G. Finney

One of America's greatest evangelists, Charles G. Finney originally was an attorney who converted after reading the Bible, which he had purchased to read after hearing the Bible referred to so frequently in lawsuits. He was ordained a Presbyterian minister in 1824 and began his famous revival meetings two years later in New York City, causing Broadway Tabernacle to be erected to handle the throngs.

Unlike many subsequent revivalists invoking his name, Finney was no religious huckster or mentally shallow haranguer. In 1857, his scholarly abilities were recognized when he was invited to open the department of theology at newly founded Oberlin University in Ohio and later to serve as president of Oberlin from 1851 to 1866.

Finney, who preached and taught that Christians must demonstrate their commitment by participating in current community affairs, took an active part in the abolition movement.

—William P. Barker

The aggressiveness of Christianity born out of the Second Great Awakening yielded incipient women's movements as women found ways to participate in ministries and Christian training outside the home. Female seminaries emerged, offering women entrance into formal education.

Women became involved extensively in the great century of missionary effort.

The contiguous Great Awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries clearly reflected the political order of America and the ecclesiastical priorities of Protestants. The religious paradigm shift that occurred, for better or worse, during this period has had ongoing and significant impact on American church life and the character of educational endeavors (secular and Christian) that have subsequently emerged.

Byron D. Klaus

The Azusa Street Revival

An abandoned Methodist church at 312 Azusa Street in the industrial section of Los Angeles became in 1906 the originating center of modern Pentecostalism. William J. Seymour, a mild-mannered Holiness preacher, founded the Apostolic Faith Gospel Mission, where a new emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit rapidly became a local sensation and eventually a worldwide phenomenon. Before coming to Los Angeles, Seymour had been influenced by the ministry of Charles Fox Parham, who had grown up in Methodist and Holiness circles. In his schools in Kansas and Texas, Parham taught that a baptism of "the Holy Ghost and fire" should be expected among those who had been converted and who had gone forward to the perfect sanctification that John Wesley and American Holiness bodies had proclaimed. Parham also pioneered the teaching that a special sign of the Spirit's baptism would be "speaking with other tongues." With many others in the Methodist and Holiness traditions at the end of the nineteenth century, he placed a strong emphasis on the gifts of the Spirit, including that of healing.

Dwight Lyman Moody (1837–1899)

Dwight L. Moody

Successful shoe-salesman-turned-preacher, Dwight L. Moody became one of the effective evangelists in the nineteenth-century English-speaking world. In 1860, he resigned from his well-paying position to devote all his energies to Sunday school work, speaking engagements, and social service. During the next thirty-nine years, this remarkable man built a church in Chicago (1863), served as a chaplain to Union troops during the Civil War, built the first YMCA building in the U.S. (1866), founded a girls' school (Northfield Seminary, 1879) and Moody Bible Institute (1889), and conducted thousands of services.

In 1873, Moody took a singer-composer named Ira D. Sankey to Britain, where they held a series of astoundingly successful evangelistic meetings. Now renowned figures, Moody and Sankey conducted similar revivals in the States and returned to the British Isles for a second round of meetings.

Moody preached a forthright appeal for Christian commitment but refused to indulge in high-pitched emotionalism, preferring to emphasize the love of God instead of divine wrath and avoiding histrionics in the pulpit. Unlike some others, Moody refused to capitalize personally on his success and turned over receipts from his meetings to an endowment fund for the schools he had founded. Many of the catchy gospel songs long used in Protestantism were introduced by Moody and Sankey.

—William P. Barker

The revival that began on Azusa Street rapidly attracted attention from secular media like the *Los Angeles Times*. More important, it soon became the center of attraction for thousands of visitors from around the world, who often went back to their homelands proclaiming the need for a special post-conversion baptism of the Spirit. These included Florence Crawford (founder of the Apostolic Faith movement in the northwestern United States), missionary T. B. Barratt (credited with the establishment of Pentecostalism in Scandinavia and northwestern Europe), William H. Durham of Chicago (early spokesman for Pentecostalism in the Midwest),

and Eudorus N. Bell of Fort Worth (first chairman of the Assemblies of God).

    Meetings at Azusa Street, which went on daily for three years, were marked by spontaneous prayer and preaching, a nearly unprecedented cooperation between blacks and whites, and the active participation of women. Observers at the time linked Azusa Street with the great Welsh Revival of 1904–1905 and the "Latter Rain" movement, which had pockets of influence throughout the United States. Azusa Street remains a potent symbol for the activity of the Holy Spirit to more than fifty million Pentecostals worldwide.

<div align="right">Mark A. Noll</div>

For Further Reading and Study

Christianity As a Worldwide Phenomenon, 1750–1950

✦

. . . to the ends of the earth.

—Acts 1:8

The two centuries from 1750 to 1950 witnessed the rise and maturation of the industrial capitalist economies of Western Europe and North America. As those economies expanded, they sought markets for their goods and dependable sources of raw materials in countries outside the North Atlantic orbit. So the Third World was created; that is, nations and peoples outside Europe and North America (and later Japan) became part of a single world market system dominated by the industrialized nations.

Typically, a Western power would establish military or political hegemony over a region, directly through military conquest or political usurpation or indirectly through gradual economic domination. When fully developed, colonial or quasi-colonial economic arrangements meant that Third World countries switched from subsistence farming to production of minerals or agricultural products for export. This amounted to an extractive economic relationship with Asian, African, and Latin American countries, supplying raw materials at low prices and buying manufactured goods at high prices, effectively draining their wealth into the coffers of the colonizing countries.

Within many colonized countries, land and political power became concentrated in the hands of an oligarchy connected to European or North American colonizers. Societal status was divorced from traditional patterns of hereditary hierarchy; even where the same families held authority, they

did so for new reasons. And often this new elite was composed of previously despised or outcast groups that had no status to lose by collaborating with colonial authorities. Along with that relationship went a certain cultural dependency, as European manners and customs frequently came to characterize the colonial elite. Christianity was often among those aspects of Western culture adopted by Third World elites. But cultural domination of the colonial elite was sown with the seeds of its own destruction. For it was among members of these elites, frequently those educated in Christian schools and infused with Western democratic ideals, that nationalism flowered in the twentieth century. Ultimately, this resulted in at least formal independence for nearly all colonized peoples.

The encounter between Christians and non-Western peoples between 1500 and 1750 exhibited several common themes:

1. the specter of aggressive Westerners seeking trade and total political and economic dominance
2. a propensity for European Christians to misunderstand non-European peoples
3. a reciprocal tendency to misjudge Westerners' intentions, motivations, and capabilities
4. a persistent habit of European missionaries, sent out to minister to Third World peoples, to concentrate on the overseas European population instead

In the era of capitalist colonialism that followed 1750, the first three of these tendencies continued, while missionaries began to break out of confinement in international settlements and make contact with large numbers of local people. In these centuries, three new themes were added:

5. Missionaries often were implicated in Western colonialism and therefore lost credibility.
6. Protestants came to the Third World in force for the first time.
7. Large and enduring Third World churches came into existence.

Church and Revolution in Latin America

Latin America was the one region outside Europe and North America that was predominantly Christian in 1750. The Roman Catholic Church was the established religion of both Spanish and Portuguese domains. It was not entirely an indigenous church. Although there were vast Catholic masses and a significant number of American-born priests, bishops were nearly all from Europe. That, together with the church's immense wealth (chiefly from land holdings), meant that the church was one of the pillars of the colonial regimes.

   Political independence came in the nineteenth century, largely at the expense of church interests. In many newly formed countries, nationalism took the shape of anticlericalism. The nineteenth century was a period of prolonged political instability throughout much of Latin America. The two major contenders were conservatives and liberals. Conservatives were dedicated to hierarchy, land-owning, a strong central government, the established church, and close ties with Iberia [Iberian peninsula—Spain, Portugal]. Liberals pursued a more democratic and nationalistic agenda, favoring decentralized government. The liberals' strategy for the future was keyed to business rather than land-owning and the interests of American-born, aspiring whites. When liberal, anticlerical regimes came to power, the church lost lands and political influence and fell into decay. By the end of this period, the Catholic Church had begun to recover, as it became accustomed to functioning in a more pluralistic system without much support from politicians.

   The changes in the Latin American Church can best be explained by example. The most radical case of anticlericalism occurred in Mexico, where, as elsewhere in Latin America, bishops and parish clergy split over independence. Although the church hierarchy supported Spain, many priests, such as Father Miguel Hidalgo, were prime movers of the revolution. When independence was achieved, the constitution of 1814 enshrined Roman Catholicism as Mexico's official religion. But soon an assault on church prerogatives began. The *patronato* [patronage system] had tied the church to Spain. The new government appropriated the *patronato* and began to exercise its own authority over church business. Liberals who replaced conservatives and wrote the constitution of 1857 separated church from state and confiscated most church lands.

The conservative-liberal split was complicated by Freemasonry. This secret society claimed the allegiance of most of Mexico's elite, including quite a number of priests, even though Masonry had many qualities of a competing religion—oaths of allegiance and quasi-religious rituals among them. In much of Latin America, most Masons were liberals and therefore opposed to the church. But in Mexico, nearly all the elite, whether conservative or liberal, were Masons. There the split was between different branches of Masonry; conservatives tended to be members of the Scottish Rite, while liberals mainly joined the York Rite. With the Masons so entrenched in both branches of the elite, perhaps the anti-Catholic tendencies of Freemasonry in general had something to do with the extremes to which Mexicans took anticlericalism.

In time positivism and then socialism became Mexican national doctrines, and Roman Catholic leaders were persecuted. The number of foreign priests dropped sharply, so in the process of disestablishment the church also became decolonized, though in a most disorderly fashion. A dichotomy between bishop and priest evolved. In time the church hierarchy made its peace with the powers of the new order, while some parish clergy began to identify with the struggles of the lower classes. For example, priests joined with lay leaders to form the Catholic Workers' Union in 1903. By the twentieth century, the bishops had become a bulwark of the liberal party. They were middle-class and European in ancestry, but Mexican-born. Meanwhile, some parish priests were becoming advocates of the Indian and Mestizo (mixed European and Indian) masses.

Something similar happened in nearby Guatemala. Starting in 1871, the liberal regime of Justo Rufino Barrios tried to secularize Guatemalan society. Barrios disestablished the Roman Catholic Church, seized most of its property, and sent the archbishop and other leaders back to Spain. Education was made secular, priests were forbidden to teach school, civil marriage was prescribed, and religious processions were banned.

Barrios, like liberals elsewhere, became entangled in the growing British and U.S. economic intrusion in Latin America. To support plantation agriculture for export, his government rounded up Indians and forced them to work for wages. The devout Indian population and their priests resisted, setting the stage for conflicts that persisted to the end of the twentieth century. In Guatemala, as elsewhere in Latin America, the tendency was for the church hierarchy to become identified with dictatorial national

governments tied to foreign neocolonial domination, while some parish priests and the urban and rural Catholic masses began to move into opposition.

To be sure, Mexican and Guatemalan nationalist anticlericalism was extreme. Each nation had its own national church history, in marked contrast to the colonial era, which was characterized by a common Latin American church. At the other end of the spectrum, the church in Ecuador seems to have avoided most of these class and ethnic conflicts.

Another noteworthy nineteenth-century development was the introduction of Protestantism into a formerly Roman Catholic milieu. Protestant missionaries from Britain and the U.S. came to Argentina in 1820, to Brazil in 1855, to Peru in 1891, and to other Latin American nations at various times in between. Representatives of all sorts of Protestant denominations took part, although in many countries the Methodists or Presbyterians led the way, followed by Baptists and members of smaller churches (including the Church of the Nazarene). Although Protestants paid increasing attention to Latin America as the twentieth century progressed, not until the 1950s and the rise of indigenous Pentecostal movements did Protestantism become a major part of Latin American Christianity.

For the most part, the religion practiced by Latin American Catholics did not differ much from that of European Catholics. The official theology, liturgy, and teaching of the church were common throughout Catholicism. Exceptions to this rule were groups that blended European Christianity with African or Native American religions. Some Peruvian Indians, for example, blended their worship of "Holy Mother Earth" with Catholic veneration of the Virgin Mary. Cuba, Brazil, Haiti, and other places with large African populations blended elements of European and African folk religions. Christian saints became identified with West African *orisha* or spirits. In Trinidad, pictures of John the Baptist were revered alongside those of Shango, god of thunder and lightning. Likewise, Oshossi, god of the hunt, was identified with the archangel Michael. This did not amount to complete syncretism, because the main structures of Christian worship and church life were kept separate from African-derived religious practices. But many people felt that recourse to two kinds of "magic" was more powerful than one. Similar accommodations have been made throughout Christian history.

Asia

Nowhere was the power of European and North American industrial expansion felt more deeply than in Asia. Between 1750 and 1950, nearly all of the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia became part of one or another Western empire. China and Japan also were forced to submit to Western influence. Imperialism was not only political and economic: More missionaries, Protestant and Catholic, went to Asia in this period than to any other part of the globe in any era.

Despite this massive effort, only tiny percentages of Asia's huge population became Christian. Toward the end of the era, small, independent Asian churches did begin to expand in numbers that remade Christianity into an Asian religion.

India

The predominant fact framing the Christian experience in India in these two centuries was the British Empire. Starting about 1750, the British East India Company began piecemeal to extend its power over Indian states and principalities. By 1857, it controlled nearly the entire subcontinent, either directly or through subservient Indian princes. The British brought trains and telegraphs, bureaucracy, and an educational system to organize their domain and extract its wealth. All these superimposed a veneer of European culture but did little to change the underlying Indian culture and social system. An elaborate system of caste continued to stratify society into discrete groups. The amorphous mass that is Hinduism continued to absorb people's religious energies.

The East India Company discouraged Christian missionaries because it did not want anything to disturb its economic position. Early Protestant missionaries, such as William Carey, had to either battle the East India Company or surreptitiously avoid it if they wanted to do their jobs. Beginning in 1793, Carey, together with a string of assistants, built a mission station at Serampore, a Danish territory near Calcutta that was out of the reach of the Company. There they popularized a new model for missions, based on work in Bible translation and education. They tried to interfere with Indian customs as little as possible, with the exception of *sati*, the practice of burning a wife on her husband's funeral pyre. Carey and

later missionaries tried to eradicate *sati* without success. [The British government banned *sati* in the early nineteenth century, but the practice did not cease until the social reforms of Mahatma Gandhi and others. The reporting of a *sati* in 2002 caused much controversy; another is known to have occurred during the 1980s.]

William Carey (1761–1834)

Indefatigable pioneer of the modern missionary movement, William Carey began his career as an illiterate cobbler at Northamptonshire, England. Carey became a fervent Christian, joining the Baptist Church when he was twenty-one; he tacked a map of the world over his cobbler's bench and began to educate himself. He meanwhile began to preach.

In 1787, he became pastor of a Baptist church at Leicester and created the ferment that eventually resulted in the Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen. In 1792, he wrote the weighty *Enquiry Into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* and preached a powerful sermon from Isaiah 54:2–3, which broke the resistance to the idea of going overseas to evangelize.

Carey was among the first to offer his services to the newly established Baptist Mission Society. In spite of powerful opposition among certain merchants, churchmen, and government officials, Carey finally reached Bengal in 1793, but immediately lost all of his equipment in the Hugli River. He resourcefully took charge of an indigo factory at Malda, learned Bengali, and began the first of numerous translations of the Bible into Indian dialects.

In 1799, Carey moved his operations to Serampore and soon set up a church, school, and printing shop to publish Bible translations and religious literature. Carey, an exceptionally gifted, hardworking linguist, mastered Sanskrit, Mahratta, Bengali, Punjabi, Telinga, and Bhotanta, acquired a working knowledge of numerous local dialects, and served as professor of Oriental languages at the Fort William College in Calcutta.

Somehow, Carey also found time to make contributions to science as a competent botanist. His personal life, however, was full of tragedy, with his children and wife all succumbing to the diseases and climate of India. On one occasion, years of painstaking work at producing a Sanskrit dictionary were wiped out one night when a fire destroyed his printing shop. Nonetheless, Carey during his lifetime produced more than two hundred thousand Bibles and Scripture tracts in forty different languages and dialects.

Carey's reports from India had a great effect in promoting interest in the church's overseas mission. His remarkable career stimulated the formation of missionary societies and boards in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in nearly every denomination in Britain and America.

—William P. Barker

In the 1850s, the British government took over direct control of India from the East India Company, and among its first acts was to proclaim religious freedom. In the preceding decades, in anticipation of crown rule, missionaries had come to India in bunches. They found the Roman Catholic Church in decline, although it had perhaps one million members; the Syrian church limited to two hundred fifty thousand people in a few castes in the south; and the Protestants, with fewer than one hundred thousand believers, just beginning to make headway. A century later, the Catholic Church had multiplied itself three times, the Protestants had grown tenfold, but the Syrians had increased only slightly; for one thing, a schism had split the Syrian Christians into two churches. Protestants progressed by applying large numbers of missionaries and building schools, hospitals, and other

social service outposts. The Catholics reversed their decline by belatedly supporting the growth of an Indian clergy.

One particularly noteworthy development of the half-century after 1850 was a tremendous rise in the number of women in ministry in India. Women missionaries came as doctors and church planters, although they were largely shut out of such occupations in Europe and North America. Thus missions provided a legitimate arena of achievement for women whose career aspirations were frustrated by Victorian-era gender role limitations. In India, as in China and elsewhere, the majority of missionaries were women, and many missionary women turned extraordinary energy toward reaching and supporting local women.

Pandita Ramabai (1858–1922)

Perhaps the greatest example of a woman ministering to women was Pandita Ramabai. (*Pandita* means "learned," a title of respect accorded Ramabai by the scholarly community in India.) Ramabai was the daughter of an unusual Brahman who believed both his sons and daughters must be educated. Left a widow in 1882, Ramabai went to England, where she became a Christian. On her return, she began to serve Indian widows and orphans, then branched out into education and the development of craft and agriculture industries to support the impoverished.

Conversion to Christianity was no easy thing for Indians, especially those of high caste. Most regarded conversion as capitulation to a foreign encroacher and treated converts as anathema. New Christians were driven out of Hindu villages and took refuge near new mission stations. There, as in John Eliot's praying villages in seventeenth-century New England and Vietnam's strategic hamlets in the 1960s, those who consorted with the imperial power were cut off from families, friends, sources of livelihood, and cultural moorings.

Added to the difficulty was the stigma of caste. Evangelists met their greatest success among low-caste and outcaste Indians—people who had little to lose by adopting the foreign faith. The same had been true of Islam in India centuries earlier. And missionary hearts, animated by compassion, particularly reached out to the poor and downtrodden. A few entire castes became Christian. But this meant Christianity was branded as a religion of the lowest order. In a society so sharply stratified as India, this ensured that almost no members of higher castes would dare to convert.

Some attempts to mitigate this difficulty appeared in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Parallel to the rise of an Indian national political consciousness in society at large, Christians sought more recognizable Indian ways to interpret their faith. These often cut across caste, as did the nationalist movement, in trying to express Christianity in Indian terms. Thus, Sundar Singh became a wandering holy man in the Indian fashion, rejecting Western ways but preaching Christ. H. W. Krishna Pillai composed *Rakshanya Yathrikam* ("The Pilgrimage of Salvation"), a stirring epic poem, and N. V. Tilak wrote hundreds of hymns that expressed Christian messages in Hindu idioms.

Others began to work out Indian theologies and formed Christian ashrams, communities of people devoted to lives of simplicity, worship, and service. These were modeled on Hindu ashrams, but with Christian content, to show non-Christians that Christianity did not have to take Western shapes. These were mainly places of meditation, where anyone, Christian or not, could come to meet God in prayer and pursue the Christian faith in a wholly Indian context.

China

"Christian missionary activities are the opening wedge for Western imperialism," wrote Tang Liang-li. "The Opium War was merely one aspect of the foreign invasion of China: the Missionary War was its logical complement."[1] This was not an isolated sentiment. Most Chinese throughout modern history have regarded Christianity with suspicion as the cultural arm of Western imperialism.

The Christian religion was not extinct in China when the Protestant missionary Robert Morrison (1782–1834) reached Guangzhou (Canton) in 1807. Chinese and foreign Roman Catholics continued to worship and spread their faith, despite intense persecution for propagating an illegal religion. Anti-Catholic activities continued through the nineteenth century. For example, in Fujian in 1836, Father Perboyre, a Lazarist priest, was hanged. Such martyrdom devastated a church that for two hundred years had depended on foreign leadership. With only a tiny fraction of the mainly foreign priesthood still functioning, China's Catholic Church fell into a decline from which it had not yet fully recovered toward the end of the twentieth century.

Unlike their Catholic predecessors, Protestant missionaries did not march boldly into the heart of China making converts. For several decades, they merely hovered on the fringes. Morrison never went farther than Guangzhou, and he and his contemporaries spent most of their careers in Singapore, Penang, and other centers of overseas Chinese population. There they hoped to reach expatriates who would take their faith into China proper. Only with the rise of European military intervention in the mid-1800s did Protestant missionaries begin to penetrate the interior.

China was a self-sufficient empire, the center of the world as the Chinese knew it. As it turned out, the Chinese misjudged Britain's newly acquired military power. But they were right in asserting that the British had nothing to trade that interested them (they preferred cotton and silk to British woolens, for example). Yet silver was draining rapidly out of the British economy to pay for tea and other Chinese goods. In desperation, the British East India Company hit on opium—a powerful, addictive drug that is the basis for heroin—and recruited a network of south Chinese pushers. When the Chinese government tried to stop this illegal narcotics trade, the British sent gunboats and soldiers. At the end of the First Opium War in 1842, Britain claimed access to five Chinese ports for trade, a permanent colonial outpost at Hong Kong, and affronts to the Chinese such as extraterritoriality, which meant a British citizen was not subject to Chinese laws when on Chinese soil. Subsequent gunboat diplomacy by the British, French, Americans, and others resulted in the opening of many more treaty ports and the economic prostration of China before a horde of Westerners.

Among those Westerners were Protestant missionaries. In the vanguard was Karl Gutzlaff (1803–1851), a Prussian-American who made several illegal trading and evangelism trips along the south Chinese coast in the 1830s. Etched in the minds of many Chinese is the picture of Gutzlaff standing in the shallows distributing Bible portions while opium was also being unloaded, all under the guns of a British warship. Gutzlaff and other missionaries frequently acted as interpreters for European and American military and trading ventures.

Not all Protestant missionaries were directly implicated in colonialist exploitation. Many, such as Peter Parker (1804–1888), toiled for years as doctors and educators, as well as seekers after converts. But they too enjoyed the special rights of foreigners under the unequal treaties, and they communicated their conviction of the inherent superiority of all things

Western. Many Chinese resented them for it. Only a few, such as James Hudson Taylor, were willing to step across cultural boundaries to meet the Chinese on something like equal terms. Although Taylor may have remained convinced of Western superiority, at least he did leave the comfort of the treaty ports, don Chinese clothing, and attempt to adapt his style of presentation (though not his message) to Chinese culture.

At the end of the century, Chinese people, led by martial arts instructors, rose up to try to throw off the foreign yoke in what Westerners called the Boxer Rebellion. Among the Boxers' special targets were Christians; scores of missionaries and thousands of Chinese believers were killed. Yet when foreign troops counterattacked, it was to save Europeans, not Chinese Christians.

The number of Western missionaries jumped sharply in the first few decades of the twentieth century. China was in political and economic chaos. Some missionaries (and some other foreigners) turned to economic construction—helping to build roads, and financing irrigation and similar development projects, as well as more usual missionary pursuits.

In this chaotic period, some of the foremost leaders of China were associated with missionary Christianity. Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925), first president of the Chinese Republic, was a Christian who had obtained his medical education in Hawaii. His successor, Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975), was apparently not a Christian, but his wife, Soong Mei-ling, and her powerful family were devout Methodists. Feng Yu-xiang was a Christian warlord reputed to have baptized his troops with a fire hose. Missionaries and other Western Christians took heart in the existence of such people in powerful positions in China in the 1920s and '30s, hoping that the world's largest country would soon become a Christian nation. However, committed Christians were few in number despite the prominence of Soong and Sun. As China was trying to bring itself together as a modern nation and ward off European and American domination, many young intellectuals studied the idea systems of the West in search of possible models. Mao Zedong (1893–1976), for example, studied Christianity in the 1910s before deciding that Marxism had more to offer his country.

Alongside the expansion of missionary numbers and activities there grew an independent Chinese Church. The first manifestation of independent development on the part of Chinese Christians was the somewhat heretical

Taiping movement, which brought immense suffering to China (upwards of twenty million lives were lost) and, consequently, did little to enhance the reputation of Christianity in Chinese eyes.

One of the remarkable facts about twentieth-century Chinese Christianity is the rise of a profusion of independent churches. Many of these were offshoots of Western missionary efforts, but many, like the Taipings, had only the most tenuous connections with outsiders.

By Western labels, these movements ranged from quasi-Roman Catholic to fundamentalist, from Presbyterian to Pentecostal. Some emphasized healing, some evangelism, some the social gospel. The proper dichotomy for understanding indigenous Chinese Christianity is not liberal versus fundamentalist, for China had experienced neither the Enlightenment nor the Industrial Revolution, which were the fountainheads of that split. Rather, these movements divided according to Chinese categories. At one pole were people infused with a Confucian spirit, such as Zhao Zi-chen, who took an activist role in trying to perfect human society in the sight of God along the lines of biblical principles. Such people were active, for example, in the YMCA and in social reform movements. At the other extreme were mystics, such as Ni Duo-sheng, who, like Taoist sages, retreated from the world into pietistic contemplation.

By the time of the 1949 Communist Revolution, the church had grown to more than 750 thousand Chinese Christians, most of them in church groups independent of missionary activity. In the years after Mao Zedong assumed power, this church exploded in numbers and variety.

Korea

If China was typical of the impact of imperialism on Christian witness, Korea was the exception that proves the rule. In Korea, imperialism was Asian, not Western, and that made all the difference. Christianity came to be identified not with imperialism but rather with active opposition to it. Largely, as a result, Christian churches today claim more than a quarter of the Korean population. The spectacular growth of Korean churches after World War II lies outside the scope of this chapter, but the roots of Korean church growth happened in this period.

Christianity was first planted in Korea not by foreigners but by a Korean. In 1784, Yi Sung-hun, a Confucian scholar, returned from Beijing a

Christian convert and began to tell others about Christ. The first missionaries—Chinese—followed and were joined by French priests. The government persecuted Christians as had the Japanese government a century and a half earlier, and the church stayed underground. There it became a magnet for dissidents—dispossessed peasants and would-be revolutionists who found a support network among Christians.

Yi Sung-hun (1756–1801)

Born into an influential Korean family, Yi Sung-hun became a reformist scholar of Confucianism. He was part of a group that obtained Catholic texts through diplomats to China, and compared the two philosophies. Interested in Catholicism, Yi accompanied his father, a high-ranking Korean government official, to Beijing in 1783. There he visited local Catholic priests to discuss their ideas and was soon baptized. He returned to southern Korea as the first Korean Christian in Korea. (There were Korean converts living in Japan.)

Yi's faith spread quickly among his friends, and they soon began to meet together. Since Christianity was outlawed in Korea, no ordained priests were allowed to enter the country. So Yi and others set up a lay priesthood, and by 1800, Christians numbering in the thousands could trace their conversion to Yi Sung-hun. Yi was exiled, and in 1801 was martyred for his faith during a severe persecution.

Korea was not officially open to Christian missions until the 1880s. Horace Allen came to Seoul in 1884 as a doctor. He healed a prince, whereupon he won toleration for missionary activity. Soon other Protestant missionaries poured in, Presbyterians most prominent among them. The northwest part of the country, around Pyongyang, partly because of its class structure, was the most fruitful ground for the new religion. A marginal economic zone, it was not dominated by wealthy, conservative—and anti-Christian—landlords, as was the more prosperous south. Christian missionaries worked mainly in education and medicine, along with church planting.

In 1907, a religious revival swept over Korea much like the Second Great Awakening in the United States a century earlier. This came at a time of despondency for many Koreans, for their country had just been made a Japanese protectorate. In 1910, fifteen of thirty-three signers of the Korean Declaration of Independence were Christians, and Christians organized demonstrations across the country.

For their pains, Christian leaders were jailed and beaten. In one instance, the authorities locked the doors of a church and set it afire, burning the congregation alive. During World War II nearly all foreign missionaries except German Benedictines were jailed or forced to leave the country. The

Japanese occupiers tried to force all Koreans—Christians included—to revere the Japanese emperor and observe Shinto rituals. Some Christians regarded this as merely a civil requirement and went along; others, who saw it as bowing down to Baal, refused and were persecuted. As in Europe, out of such situations there arose divisions that would plague the church for generations.

The war forced churches to rely on Korean leadership; they had no missionary overseers. The church had strong native leadership when the war ended. Although missionaries returned after the war and many attempted to resume their positions of dominance, the Korean church was extraordinarily effective at incorporating Western helpers within its structure without letting them dominate.

After the war, Korea was divided into Soviet and American spheres of influence. The north, where Christianity had been strongest, now actively persecuted Christians, even though its leader, Kim Il Sung (1912–1994), had been raised in a Christian home. Christians fled south in huge numbers and have opposed the Communist regime in the north ever since.

Thus, Christians in Korea were identified with Korean nationalism to the extent that they opposed Japanese rule, then Western missionary domination, and finally Russian-backed Communism. In that identification lay their strength and vitality.

Japan

[For nearly a century following the arrival of Catholic missionary Francis Xavier, Christianity flourished in Japan. Some estimate that more than three hundred thousand Japanese became "Kirishitan" during this period. But fearing that this faith was a disruptive foreign ideology, successive governments attempted to suppress it, first expelling all missionaries and then outlawing Christianity. The eventual massacre of some forty thousand believers coincided with the beginning of Japan's national seclusion, a period that lasted from 1639 until 1854.]

Christians reappeared in Japan in the 1860s from two directions; across the ocean and up from the underground. The Tokugawa government's persecution had been very efficient, but it had not eradicated the *Kirishitan* movement completely. A few thousand covert Christians continued to

worship, particularly in southwestern Japan around Nagasaki, a region that was never tightly controlled by the central government.

In 1853 and 1854, U.S. warships forced the Japanese to open their country to trade with the West. For the next few decades, the government was in turmoil; it was completely restructured after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 in an attempt to strengthen the country and repel the Western barbarians.

Some foreigners came to Japan, including missionaries, although Christianity was still outlawed. In 1863, a group of French priests arrived in Nagasaki and tried to make contact with the remnants of the Japanese Church. They succeeded in 1865, when a small group of Christians from Urakami visited. Cautious contacts proceeded for two years but were cut off in 1867, when police arrested six hundred Urakami Christians and demanded that they renounce their faith. Three years later, the government sent thirty-four hundred Christians into exile, scattered across twenty-one provinces. Not until 1873 were they allowed to return home. An unofficial tolerance began, largely because of pressure from Western governments.

From that point, Roman Catholic missions from Europe resumed, with a full complement of priests, schools, hospitals, and other services. Most native believers in time came out of hiding and rejoined the international church. A few, however—*the Hanare Kirishitan*—steadfastly refused to recognize the Europeans' authority and maintained a separate identity.

As in other parts of Asia, large numbers of Protestants poured into Japan with the opening of trade. Medical and educational missions began as soon as treaties allowed in 1857. From then, through the 1930s, Protestant missionaries played important roles in Japan's development, particularly in the founding of such key educational institutions as Doshisha University. Initially, most converts were former samurai who had been stripped of their positions by the Meiji government and who had no part in remaking Japan. Throughout the modern era, the church was identified with marginal dissident and outward-looking elements, including the Christian Socialist movement at the turn of the century.

Very few Japanese ever became Christians. Perhaps this was because Christianity stood in a different light in Japan than elsewhere in the Third World. The Western imperial adventure was never as complete in Japan as in Africa, Latin America, or even China. Japan, never anyone's colony, managed to rid itself of unequal treaties and other quasi-colonial disabilities

sooner than did China, and it never suffered neocolonial economic domination as did much of Latin America.

The Japanese were always able to assert a degree of national strength of identity that eluded other Third World peoples. Although there were periods of attraction to things foreign, they were brief. Western culture—Christian or not—never held the allure for Japanese intellectuals that it did for their counterparts elsewhere. Japan's emerging economic and military strength from the 1880s through World War II were built on an explicit celebration of the value and uniqueness of Japanese culture. This included veneration of the emperor in the state Shinto cult that emerged in the 1890s. Christianity did not carry high prestige socially or intellectually. Although Christians were sometimes appreciated for their contributions to Japanese society, they were more often seen as marginal characters and political malcontents—sometimes even as agents of foreign powers.

Southeast Asia

The Malay Peninsula exhibited a pattern of religious succession that was shared to greater or lesser degrees by other parts of South and Southeast Asia. Located at a crossroads for seaborne trade, the peninsula received wave after wave of foreigners. The original inhabitants were animists. In ancient times, Hinduism and Buddhism from India claimed some adherents. From the fifteenth century, Arab traders brought Islam and converted the bulk of the Malay population. Portuguese Catholics came in the sixteenth century, followed quickly by the Dutch, who supplanted Catholicism with Reformed Protestantism on the peninsula and throughout the Indonesian island chain. Finally, in the nineteenth century, the British brought a variety of Protestant denominations and official religious toleration. Christianity found few converts among the Malay population, which remained resolutely Muslim, but it did considerably better among Indians and Chinese who came with the British to pursue expanding opportunities. But, as in most of Asia outside the Philippines, Christianity remained the religion of only a tiny minority: the colonial masters and a small group of local people affiliated with them.

The Philippines proved to be an exception. There were no Christians in the Philippines when the colonizer Miguel Lopez de Legaspi arrived in 1565. Thirty years later there were three hundred thousand—about one-half

the islands' population. By 1750, virtually every Filipino was a professing Catholic. That startling metamorphosis was achieved by the relentless labors of hundreds of Spanish friars, who not only preached to Filipinos but also relocated them out of dispersed villages and into settled towns where they could be supervised and taught (some would say coerced). Masses of people were baptized upon the conversions of their village leaders. The work substantially converted an entire nation in a generation.

Spain lost control of the Philippines in the 1890s, as much because of the rise of Filipino nationalism as because of the U.S. military intervention of 1898. Thereafter, the United States imposed itself on the Philippines as a colonial power (after a long and bloody war) for nearly half a century. Although American-style political institutions and the English language became parts of Filipino culture, American religions did not take root. For a time it appeared Roman Catholics might lose control. Protestant missionaries poured in with the American army of occupation, and they made some converts. Far more significant was the formation of the Independent Church in 1902, a secession from the Roman Catholic Church and a repudiation of Spanish domination. It won over large numbers of Filipinos and began to move away from Catholic theology toward Unitarianism. But the Catholic hierarchy fought back, suing successfully to keep control of church buildings, retiring many Spanish priests, and replacing them with Americans and Filipinos. The Filipino Independent Church remained larger than the combined Protestant denominations throughout the twentieth century, but never threatened Catholic dominance again.

Protestants made a dent in Southeast Asia only among certain tribes, such as the Karens and Kachins of Burma, which became almost entirely Protestant in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, while other peoples around them remained untouched by Christianity.

The Pacific Basin

Christianity—and Western people generally—came to the islands of the Pacific abruptly in the nineteenth century. Europeans and North Americans found out about the islands and quickly came to trade, to convert, and to

colonize. But the Christian story here was different from many other places affected by Western imperialism. Whether because there was less commercial interest, because local societies were too small to resist the power of Western culture, or because native cultures rapidly incorporated Christianity without losing their own distinctives, in much of the Pacific, conversion to Christianity was quick and complete.

Movement of the faith proceeded from east to west. Christianity was planted in Tahiti in 1797 and quickly became deeply intertwined in Tahitian culture. The last place to receive missionaries was New Guinea in 1871. Especially in the early part of the nineteenth century, when island kings became Christians their populations followed. In Tonga, for example, the first missionaries came in 1826. In 1830, Taufa'ahau Tupou, chief of an outlying island, became a Christian and took the name King George. He extended his power over the rest of Tonga until conquering all of it by 1852. By that time, Tongan missionaries had already gone out to several other island chains.

Christianity and Pacific Island cultures fit well together, and Christianity quickly became incorporated into Polynesian culture. Most Pacific people were used to the notion of sacred time because they were accustomed to taboo days, so they proved to be strict observers of the Sabbath. They spent all of Sunday at worship, prayer, and communal activities. In the eastern islands, a village's entire population would observe prayers morning and evening each day. Traditional village elders became leaders of the new religion. Christian festivals dominated the social life of many communities —not just Christmas, Easter, and saints' days, but traditional occasions, such as Melanesia's new-yam festival, became part of the Christian calendar. Many European Christian values, such as honesty and generosity, fit well with Pacific virtues. And traditional ideas about marriage were in accord with European marital norms.

But other aspects of Christianity did not fit quite so well. Most islanders were practical, concrete people who did not separate the sacred and secular, nor the natural and supernatural, the way post-Enlightenment Europeans did. What seemed to Europeans to be hopeless materialism—believing in God because he would bless them with good crops—seemed like simple practicality to Pacific peoples. So too, missionaries were frustrated with Polynesians' lack of concern for European obsessions about timeliness and unremitting hard work. They never succeeded in getting Pacific peoples to

stop dancing, and they were unable to make Pacific sexual mores—which had been loosening since contact with non-missionary Westerners— conform to mission society rules.

Unlike most other parts of the Third World, no nationalist movement grew up in the Pacific Islands, except in Tonga, Samoa, and Fiji, before World War II. But after that war, independence from European governments came to most of the Pacific. At the same time, churches were gaining their independence from foreign missions, generally without the kind of struggle that occurred elsewhere. As island cultures and economies connected with the outside world, island Christianity melted into international ecumenical movements and lost much of its island flavor.

<div align="right">Kevin M. Cragg and Paul R. Spickard</div>

Africa

Western Africa

In 1787, four hundred eleven freed blacks left London to found a community called Freetown in what is now Sierra Leone. It became a haven for freed slaves and an outpost for the spread of the gospel. Like the Puritans who settled New England, these early settlers burned with religious zeal. Freetown became a Christian commonwealth that inspired similar Christian communities farther down the coast in the Nigerian towns of Abeokuta and Badagry. "Recaptives" (slaves liberated by the British Navy) added to the population of Freetown. Many converted to the Christian faith and found an opportunity for training at Freetown's Fourah Bay College, established in 1827.

One of the most outstanding graduates was a young recaptive named Samuel Ajayi Crowther. Crowther was ordained in 1843, and in 1864 became Africa's first Anglican bishop. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) recognized in Crowther the leader they needed to further the spread of Christianity in Africa. Under Henry Venn, an aggressive program of Africanization was adopted that called for the immediate building of self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing local churches. Crowther was asked to implement this strategy in the Nigerian interior. Through the failure of some of the members of his team and through the hostility of

white missionaries opposed to Venn's policies, Crowther was forced to resign. Leadership of the CMS work in West Africa fell into white hands. This led to a number of African-initiated churches. In addition to Nigeria, work went on in Liberia, Ghana, Cameroon, Gabon, Senegal, and Zaire, which was the main arena for Catholic missions.

Southern Africa

While West Africa was evangelized by Africans returning to their motherland, South Africa from the very earliest days of Christianity was dominated by the white expatriate. Despite the common denominator of white domination, there was little unity in South African Christianity, which saw three distinct and mutually hostile expressions of Christianity emerge in the nineteenth century.

Samuel Ajayi Crowther (c. 1809–1891)

Samuel Crowther

At the age of twelve or thirteen, Samuel Crowther was taken by slave traders and put on a ship bound for North America. When a British warship intercepted the slaver, young Crowther was returned to freedom in Africa where he was given an education in mission schools. Among the first to graduate from Fourah Bay College, the first university in sub-Saharan Africa, he went on to further university training in England.

Ordained by the Church of England in 1843, Crowther was named the first African Anglican bishop in 1864. Known for his opposition to slavery, witchcraft, and Islam, Bishop Crowther also promoted the translation of the Bible into various African languages. His ministry helped enable an evangelical—and truly African—expression of Anglicanism.

The first expression was that of Afrikaner Christianity and the Dutch Reformed Church. After England gained control of South Africa in 1815, conflicts between Boer farmers and English administrators multiplied, which led to mass migrations of Afrikaner families to northeastern regions of South Africa. ["Afrikaner" and "Boer" are names applied to the descendants of Dutch immigrants to South Africa.] One small party of "voortrekkers" encountered an army of Zulu warriors. Their surprising victory at the battle of Blood River, in 1833, coupled with the tradition that trekkers had made a special covenant with God prior to the battle, fueled the belief that Afrikaner Christians were an elect nation endowed by God with both a right to rule the land and a right to resist the non-elect. This religious tradition became a political and cultural force that found expression in the formation of the Afrikaner Nationalist Party.

[The abolition of slavery by the British government in 1836 exacerbated deep resentments harbored by the Afrikaners. Outrage that indigenous people were "being placed on an equal footing with Christians, contrary to the laws of God and the natural distinction of race and religion,"[2] led many Afrikaners to migrate out of British-controlled territory in what they compared to the biblical exodus. This separatist mindset eventually resulted in the policies of racial segregation and white domination known as apartheid.]

A second expression of South African Church life in the nineteenth century was that of "missionary Christianity," which made major inroads into the Xhosa community and produced believers such as hymn writer Ntsikana and the African Presbyterian leader Tiyo Soga. Such leaders encouraged the missionary-dominated churches to engage in programs of training, including Lovedale College and Fort Hare University. David Livingstone's fame exceeded that of all other nineteenth-century missionaries despite his failure as an evangelist (he saw only one convert, who eventually fell away). His achievements as an explorer, anti-slavery crusader, and missions promoter establish his place in history.

Though missionary Christianity tended to emphasize inward piety and broadly evangelical theology that stood in contrast with the more reformed Afrikaners by the late nineteenth century, attempts were made to bridge the gap. Most successful was Andrew Murray Jr., moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church and champion of both evangelical piety and missions. His emphasis on "absolute surrender" and the formation of new agencies such as the South Africa General Mission (now African Evangelical Fellowship) acted as a corrective to the Afrikaner Christianity.

A third expression of South African Christianity was that of the social gospel championed by people like the Anglican bishop John Colenso and John Jabavu. The emphasis of this form of Christianity was upon economic and political justice. Colenso opposed the Afrikaner and English messianic nationalism, which he saw as the root of injustice in South Africa. His clash with Bishop Robert Gray of Cape Town ended with the formation of an independent Anglican communion in South Africa. Like Colenso, John Jabavu regarded politics as an appropriate arena for Christian involvement. A tireless campaigner for African rights, he founded his own independent newspaper. This third expression would become a major force in the years following South Africa's Sharpville Massacre of 1960.

Despite the fragmented witness to the kingdom of God provided by South African Christianity, this region entered the twentieth century as one of the most Christianized regions in all of Africa. Yet white domination of the churches would eventually spawn a vigorous movement of "Ethiopianism"—separatist churches that demanded respect from the Westerner and a greater share of church leadership.

Eastern Africa

The nineteenth century witnessed the reintroduction of Christianity into the former Nubia (Sudan) and Mombasa (Kenya). Ethiopian Christianity was also revitalized. Additionally, the lands of Tanzania and Uganda saw the initial introduction of this ancient African faith among their own people.

ETHIOPIA AND SUDAN. In 1830, the CMS arrived in Ethiopia. Originally working with the Coptic Church, Protestant missionaries such as J. Ludwig Krapf clashed with Coptic authorities, leading to their expulsion in 1843. Under Emperor Menelik II, Ethiopian Christianity experienced a new surge

of life and entered the twentieth century carefully guarding its dearly won political and religious independence. In Sudan, Catholic work under the leadership of the Verona Fathers was swept away by the Islamic Mahdist movement.

KENYA. Krapf began work in Kenya in 1844 after his expulsion from Ethiopia. He and his colleague Johann Rebmann envisioned a chain of mission stations across the continent, linking up with Freetown in West Africa. Krapf's vision was to guide numerous mission agencies for the next century. Though he attempted to establish the eastern link of his chain at Rabai Mpyia, it was the later formation of Freetown [Kenya] in 1874 as a refuge for runaway slaves that gave Christianity its firmest foothold in British East Africa. Outstanding Christian leaders came from the community at Freetown, including David Koi, Kenya's first Protestant martyr.

   These missionary efforts on the coast were soon augmented by a new thrust inland. James Stewart, a Presbyterian missionary at Lovedale College, was recruited by Livingstone to establish an industrial mission in the Kenya interior in 1891. The CMS began work among Kikuyu of Kenya's central highlands in 1901. Peter Cameron Scott and his newly founded Africa Inland Mission (AIM) began churches among the Kamba people in 1895. The Holy Ghost Fathers began work in Nairobi in 1899.

TANZANIA. Catholic missionary efforts centered around the formation of a "Christian Village" at Bagamoyo (1868), where three hundred freed slaves found a place of refuge. Protestant work was conducted by the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA), who were vigorous in their opposition to the Arab slave trade that was decimating the inland peoples of Africa's Great Lake region, where the London Missionary Society (LMS) and CMS had established a presence. Through the intervention of Germany, the Arab slave trade was broken and a number of German mission agencies introduced Lutheranism.

UGANDA. More dramatically than in any other part of East Africa was the response to the gospel in Uganda. Christianity was introduced by the CMS in 1877 and flourished under the zealous leadership of Alexander Mackay. [European priests] introduced Catholicism in 1879. Despite the indifference

of King Mutesa I and the violent hostility of his son Mwanga, Protestant and Catholic Christianity eventually produced a religious revolution in Uganda that spilled beyond the borders of the kingdom of Buganda into the smaller kingdoms that make up the modern-day nation of Uganda.

Independent Religious Movements

One reaction to the missionary factor was the birth of the African Initiated Church Movement. The independent churches that were founded tended to fall into distinct groupings. Some were primarily concerned with African leadership and only secondarily concerned with changing missionary theology and worship. A second grouping emphasized healing and the supernatural. Armed with Scripture in their own languages, they struck out on their own; the preaching of Liberia's William Wade Harris in West Africa claimed over one hundred thousand adherents. Others, like Simon Kimbangu of Zaire, catalyzed separation from missionary churches into new denominations. In some cases, these "prophet churches" moved clearly outside the bounds of orthodoxy. Such was the case with Isaiah Shembe and his Church of the Nazarites in South Africa. After his death in 1935, his followers claimed that he had risen from the dead and was in fact the true Christ for Africa. A third category covers movements of revival within established denominations; the passion of these was the discovery of a vital Christianity to replace a numbing nominalism in the church. The outstanding example is the East Africa Revival that swept much of East Africa from 1930 onward.

Mark Shaw

For Further Reading and Study

See end of chapter 22.

The Church After 1950

<div align="center">✦</div>

Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

—Philippians 3:16

Evangelicalism

In America, revivalism was the hallmark of evangelical religion. The urban efforts of Charles Finney and Dwight L. Moody, as well as the rural and frontier movements among the Baptists, Methodists, Disciples of Christ, Presbyterians, and the growth of Holiness perfectionism all helped to transform the nation's religious landscape. Evangelicalism reached to the grass roots of white America, while the black community, in both slavery and freedom, was sustained and held together by its churches, which expressed a deep, personal evangelical faith. Evangelicalism shaped the nation's values and civil religion and provided the vision of America as God's chosen people. Political leaders publicly expressed evangelical convictions and suppressed non-Protestant and "foreign" elements that did not share in the national consensus. Not only unbelief but also social evil would be purged, and revivalism provided the reforming vision to create a righteous republic. The anti-slavery and temperance campaigns, innumerable urban social service agencies, and even the nascent women's movement were facets of this.

The Protestant nations of the North Atlantic region shared a great foreign missionary advance that carried the gospel to every corner of the earth, and before long the evangelical revivals that had repeatedly swept the Western world began to occur in Africa, Asia, and Latin America as well. The Evangelical Alliance was formed in 1846 to unite Christians (but not churches or denominations as such) in promoting religious liberty, missions,

and other common interests. National alliances were formed in Germany, the United States, and many other countries. In 1951, the international organization was replaced by the new World Evangelical Fellowship [now the World Evangelical Alliance].

The Twentieth Century

In the early twentieth century, however, evangelicalism went into a temporary eclipse. A decorous worldliness characterized by a stress on material prosperity, loyalty to the nation-state, and a rugged individualism inspired by Social Darwinism virtually severed the taproot of social concern. Orthodox Christians seemed unable to cope with the flood of new ideas—German higher criticism, Darwinian evolution, Freudian psychology, Marxist socialism, Nietzschean nihilism, and the naturalism of the new science—all of which undermined confidence in the infallibility of the Bible and the existence of the supernatural. The bloodbath of World War I shattered the optimistic, postmillennial vision of ushering in the kingdom of God as soon as the hold of social evil was broken at home and the Great Commission of carrying the gospel to all parts of the globe was fulfilled. Emerging from the struggle of theological liberalism and the social gospel in Britain and North America was a narrow fundamentalism that internalized the Christian message and withdrew from involvement in the world. In addition, Communism in the Soviet Union, Nazism in Germany, and secularism throughout the world contributed to declining church attendance and interest in Christianity in general.

After World War II, things turned around dramatically. Foreign missionary endeavors, Bible institutes and colleges, works among university students, and radio and literature ministries blossomed, while the evangelistic campaigns of a youthful Billy Graham had a global impact. A party of "conservative evangelicals" emerged in Britain and *Evangelikaler* in Germany, and their strength was reflected in such developments as the National Evangelical Congress and the German-based Conference of Confessing Fellowship. In the United States, the foundation of the National Association of Evangelicals (1942), Fuller Theological Seminary (1947), and *Christianity Today* (1956) were significant expressions of the "new evangelicalism," a term coined by Harold J. Okenga in 1947.

The new or "neo" evangelicalism took issue with the older fundamentalism. Okenga argued that it had a wrong attitude (a suspicion of all who did not hold to every doctrine and practice that fundamentalists did), a wrong strategy (a separatism that aimed at a totally pure church on the local and denominational levels), and wrong results (it had not turned the tide of liberalism anywhere nor had it penetrated with its theology into the social problems of the day). Edward J. Carnell maintained further that fundamentalism was orthodoxy gone cultic because its convictions were not linked to the historic creeds of the church and it was more a mentality than a movement. Carl F. H. Henry insisted that fundamentalists did not present Christianity as an overarching worldview, but concentrated instead on only part of the message. They were too otherworldly, anti-intellectual, and unwilling to bring their faith to bear upon culture and social life.

Although the new evangelicalism was open to ecumenical contacts, rejected excessive legalism and moralism, and revealed serious interest in the social dimension of the gospel, many of its spokespersons remained tied to the political and economic status quo. Groups of more "radical" Christians within mainstream evangelicalism—for example, the Chicago Declaration of 1973, the Sojourners Community, and the British Shaftesbury Project—began calling attention to needs in this area. As more attention was given to defining an evangelical, it became clear that the numbers were far greater than previously believed. This was caused in large part by the charismatic period that began in the mid-1960s, a phenomenon that was worldwide in scope and continued on for decades. But variations among the groups—Mennonites, Holiness, charismatics, Christian Brethren, Southern Baptist, black churches, separatist-fundamentalists, "nondenominational" bodies, and evangelical blocs within the traditional denominations—were enormous and a cause for deep concern.

Nevertheless, evangelical ecumenism has proceeded apace. The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association has been a major catalyst, especially in calling the World Congress on Evangelism (Berlin, 1966) and the International Congress on World Evangelization (Lausanne, 1974). The subsequent consultations sponsored by the Lausanne committee together with the activities of the World Evangelical Fellowship and the regional organizations formed by evangelicals in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe have done much to foster closer relations and cooperative efforts in evangelism, relief work, and theological development. With the

indigenization of mission society operations, and the sending of missionaries by people in Third World countries themselves, evangelicalism has become a truly global phenomenon.

Following the charismatic revival of the 1960s, evangelicalism has experienced phenomenal growth both in North America and worldwide, with most of the growth taking place in the charismatic sector. In the United States, some estimate that 100 million people now profess to be evangelical, and there has been commensurate growth in related concerns such as seminary enrollments, publishing, and political involvement. This growth has taken place against the backdrop of a dramatic decline in mainline church membership and an increased secularization and postmodernization of U.S. society at large.

Internally, within evangelicalism, this growth has created some difficulties, and cracks are beginning to show. The very nature of evangelicalism was never a unified movement but a collection of emphases based on a common core of belief—a core that is itself now under discussion.

One notable development has been the appearance of a loosely connected group of mostly younger men and women intent on reforming evangelicalism, variously called "postconservative," "reformist," "progressive," "the evangelical left," or even "liberal evangelicalism"—a label harking back to the early part of the twentieth century. At the present moment, the vast evangelical majority is more traditionally inclined and alarmed at what is perceived to be a defection from the faith. In some instances they are justified in their concerns; in others they act as alarmists.

Presently a number of doctrinal issues are being hotly debated within evangelicalism, forming the crux of the issue.

First, the nature of God. Some reformists would like to abandon a traditional theism for a more process model of God or would redefine various of God's attributes, in particular, omniscience, arguing that for humans to be truly free, God cannot know the future.

Second, Christology. To preserve the true humanity of Jesus, some reformists are advocating an adoptionist or kenotic form of Christology. They argue that evangelicalism is in danger of becoming docetic by placing too much emphasis on the deity of Christ.

Third, the doctrine of salvation. The theory of atonement is now being revisited, and various forms of universalism are openly defended as

evangelical. This denies the doctrine of hell, as do annihilationist theories, which are also being broached within the evangelical community.

Fourth, the doctrine of Scripture. Reformists are dissatisfied with the traditional doctrine of inerrancy and would substitute "infallibility" (Scripture infallibly leads to Christ), "final authority in what it teaches" (but nowhere else), or "final authority in faith and doctrine" (but not necessarily in matters of science or history).

Fifth, the traditional doctrine of direct creation (not necessarily twenty-four-hour-day theories) is being replaced by theistic evolution.

Sixth, in the area of hermeneutics, postmodern literary theories are being used to deny that when reading the Scriptures we may know to any truly meaningful extent the original author's intent.

Needless to say, traditionalists are deeply concerned about these trends and are wondering aloud if the liberal evangelicalism of this generation is going to become the liberalism of the next generation, as has happened in the past.

It is perhaps inevitable that these differences surfaced when evangelicalism was no longer fighting for its life and had time to ask itself just what it really is. And this is the question that must be faced. Much, but not all, of what is taking place within the reformist camp is outside the limits of evangelicalism historically understood. It remains to be seen how these differences will be worked out and whether evangelicalism can become a united force against the real enemies of the faith in our own day.

Richard V. Pierard and Walter A. Elwell

The Pentecostal Movement

The evangelical charismatic reformation movement usually traces its roots to an outbreak of tongues-speaking in Topeka, Kansas, in 1901, under the leadership of Charles Fox Parham, a former Methodist preacher. Parham formulated the basic Pentecostal doctrine of "initial evidence" after a student in his Bethel Bible School, Agnes Ozman, experienced glossolalia.

Basically, Pentecostals believe that the experience of the 120 on the day of Pentecost, known as the "baptism in the Holy Spirit," should be normative for all Christians. Most Pentecostals believe, furthermore, that

the first sign or "initial evidence" of this second baptism is speaking in a language unknown to the speaker.

Although speaking in tongues had appeared in the nineteenth century in both England and America, it had never assumed the importance attributed to it by the later Pentecostals. For instance, glossolalia occurred in the 1830s under the ministry of Presbyterian Edward Irving in London, in the services of Mother Anne Lee's Shaker movement in England and America, and among Joseph Smith's Mormon followers in New York, Missouri, and Utah. The Pentecostals, however, were the first to give doctrinal primacy to the practice.

Though Pentecostals recognize such sporadic instances of tongues-speaking and other charismatic phenomena throughout the Christian era, they stress the special importance of the Azusa Street Revival, which occurred in an abandoned church in downtown Los Angeles and launched Pentecostalism as a worldwide movement. The Azusa Street services were led by William J. Seymour, a black Holiness preacher from Houston and a student of Parham.

The Topeka and Los Angeles events took place in a turn-of-the-century religious environment that encouraged the appearance of such a Pentecostal movement. The major milieu out of which Pentecostalism sprang was the worldwide Holiness movement, which had developed out of nineteenth-century American Methodism. Leaders in this movement were Phoebe Palmer and John Inskip, who emphasized a "second blessing" crisis of sanctification through "baptism in the Holy Spirit." English evangelicals also stressed a separate Holy Spirit experience in the Keswick Conventions, beginning in 1874.

From America to England, "higher life" Holiness movements spread to many nations of the world, usually under the auspices of Methodist missionaries and traveling evangelists. Although these revivals did not stress charismatic phenomena, they emphasized a conscious experience of baptism in the Spirit and an expectancy of a restoration of the New Testament Church as a sign of the end of the church age.

Other teachings that became prominent in this period were the possibility of miraculous divine healing in answer to prayer and the expectation of the imminent premillennial second coming of Christ. The outstanding leader in the early healing movement was R. Charles Cullis, a Boston physician who,

in 1864, built his first "healing home" for the sick, where patients would be treated with prayer rather than medicine. Others included A. B. Simpson and A. J. Gordon, who emphasized healing in the atonement. The most flamboyant was the Australian healer Alexander Dowie, who built "Zion City" near Chicago in 1900, to bring "leaves of healing" to the nations. The teaching of a "premillennial rapture" of the church was first promoted in Britain and the United States by John Nelson Darby, founder of the Plymouth Brethren. At the same time these doctrines were being emphasized, a greater emphasis on the person and work of the Holy Spirit elicited the publication of many books and periodicals devoted to teaching seekers how to receive an "enduement of power" through an experience in the Spirit subsequent to conversion.

In the quest to be filled with the Spirit, many testimonies were given concerning emotional experiences that accompanied the "second blessing," as it was called. In the tradition of the American frontier, some received the experience with eruptions of joy or shouting, while others wept or spoke of surpassing peace and quietness.

By 1895, a further movement was begun in Iowa that stressed a "third blessing" called "the fire," which followed the conversion and sanctification experiences already taught by the Holiness movement. The leader of this movement was Benjamin Hardin Irwin from Lincoln, Nebraska, who named his new group the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church. Other "fire" groups formed during this period included the Pillar of Fire Church of Denver, led by Alma White, and the Burning Bush of Minneapolis. In Canada, R. C. Horner led a "third blessing" movement that paralleled those in the U.S.

Not only did such Holiness teachers emphasize conscious religious experiences, they tended to encourage people to seek for them as "crisis" experiences that could be received in an instant of time through prayer and faith. By 1890, the Holiness movement had begun to think of religious experiences in terms of crises rather than in gradual categories. Thus, the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church taught instant conversion through the new birth, instant sanctification as a second blessing, instant baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire, instant divine healing through prayer, and the instant premillennial second coming of Christ.

These teachers of the British and American Keswick persuasion tended to speak of the four cardinal doctrines of the movement. In America, this

way of thinking was formalized in A. B. Simpson's four basic doctrines of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, which stressed salvation, baptism in the Holy Spirit, divine healing, and the second coming of Christ.

Thus, when tongues-speaking occurred in Topeka in 1901, the only significant addition to the foregoing was to insist that the tongues-speaking was the biblical evidence of receiving the Spirit baptism. All the other teachings and practices of Pentecostalism were adapted from the Holiness milieu in which it was born, including its style of worship, hymnody, and basic theology.

After 1906, Pentecostalism spread rapidly in the U.S. and around the world. Despite its origins in the Holiness movement, the majority of the Holiness leaders rejected Pentecostalism. Some, such as Alma White, made charges of demon possession and mental instability against the Pentecostals. Most of the leaders in the oldest Holiness denominations rejected Pentecostal teachings outright. These included the Church of Nazarene, the Wesleyan Methodist Church, the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana), and The Salvation Army.

Other younger and more radical Holiness groups, however, were rapidly Pentecostalized as leaders went to Azusa Street to investigate the phenomena in evidence there. Among these "pilgrims" were G. B. Cashwell (North Carolina), C. H. Mason (Tennessee), Glen Cook (California), A. G. Argue (Canada), and W. H. Durham (Chicago). Within a year from the opening of the Azusa Street meeting (April 1906) these and many others spread the Pentecostal message. Sharp controversies and divisions ensued in several Holiness denominations. The first Pentecostal denominations emerged from these struggles from 1906 to 1908.

The wave of Holiness-Pentecostal groups included the Pentecostal Holiness Church, the Church of God in Christ, the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), the Apostolic Faith (Portland), the United Holy Church, and the Pentecostal Free-Will Baptist Church. Most of these were located in the southern states and experienced rapid growth after their Pentecostal renewals began. Two of these, the Church of God in Christ and the United Holy Church, were predominately black.

Pentecostalism also spread rapidly around the world. The leading pioneer was Thomas Ball Barratt, a Norwegian Methodist pastor who founded flourishing Pentecostal movements in Norway, Sweden, and England. The

German pioneer was the Holiness leader Jonathan Paul. Lewis Pehtrus, a Barratt convert, began a significant Swedish Pentecostal movement that originated among Baptists. Strong Pentecostal movements also broke out among Italians in Italy, Argentina, Canada, and Brazil through American immigrants Luigi Francescon and Giacomo Lombardi. Pentecostalism was introduced to Russia and other Slavic nations through the efforts of Ivon Voronaev, a Russian-born American immigrant from New York City who established the first Russian-language Pentecostal church in Manhattan in 1919. In 1920, he began a ministry in Odessa, Russia [Ukraine]. Voronaev founded more than three hundred fifty congregations in Russia, Poland, and Bulgaria before being arrested by the Soviet police in 1929. He died in prison.

Pentecostalism reached Chile in 1909, under the leadership of an American Methodist missionary, Willis C. Hoover. When the Methodist Church rejected Pentecostal manifestations, a schism occurred that resulted in the organization of the Methodist Pentecostal Church. Extreme rapid growth after 1909 made Pentecostalism the predominant form of Protestantism in Chile. The movement in Brazil began in 1910 under the leadership of two American Swedish immigrants, Daniel Berg and Gunnar Vingren, who began Pentecostal services in a Baptist church in Belem, Para [state]. A schism soon followed, resulting in the first Brazilian Pentecostal congregation, which took the name Assemblies of God. Phenomenal growth also caused Pentecostalism to be the major Protestant force in Brazil.

South Africa received the Pentecostal message in 1908 under the ministry of John G. Lake, whose ministry began in Zion City under Alexander Dowie of Chicago. In four years, Lake established the Apostolic Faith Mission Church and the Zion Christian Church. By the 1990s, the Zion Church had grown to be the largest Christian denomination in South Africa.

The Korean Pentecostal movement had its roots in indigenous revivals among Presbyterians and Methodists in 1906–1907. The formal Korean Pentecostal movement was planted by the American Pentecostal Mary Rumsey, who arrived in Korea in 1928. Out of the churches pioneered by Rumsey was born the Korean Assemblies of God in 1985, a church that produced Paul Yonggi Cho. By the end of the century, Cho's Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul had become the largest Christian congregation in the world with seven hundred thousand members.

It was inevitable that such a vigorous movement would suffer controversy and division in its formative stages. Though the movement has been noted for its many sub-movements, only two divisions have been considered major. These involved teachings concerning sanctification and the Trinity.

The sanctification controversy grew out of the Holiness theology held by most of the first Pentecostals, including Parham and Seymour. Having taught that sanctification was a "second work of grace" prior to their Pentecostal experiences, they simply added the baptism of the Holy Spirit with glossolalia as a "third blessing." In 1910, William Durham began teaching his "finished work" theory, which emphasized sanctification as a progressive work following conversion, with baptism in the Spirit as the second blessing.

The Assemblies of God, formed in 1914, based its theology on Durham's teachings and soon became the world's largest Pentecostal denomination. Most of the Pentecostal groups begun after 1914 were based on the model of the Assemblies of God. They included the Pentecostal Church of God, the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel (founded in 1927 by Aimee Semple McPherson), and the Open Bible Standard Church.

A more serious schism grew out of the "oneness" or "Jesus only" controversy, which began in 1911 in Los Angeles. Led by Glen Cook and Frank Ewart, this movement rejected the Trinity and taught that Jesus Christ was at the same time Father, Son, and Spirit, and that the only biblical mode of water baptism was administered in Jesus' name, and then was only valid if accompanied by glossolalia. This movement spread rapidly in the infant Assemblies of God after 1914 and resulted in a schism that later produced the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World and United Pentecostal Church.

Through the years, other schisms occurred over lesser doctrinal disputes and personality clashes, producing such movements as the Church of God of Prophecy and the Congregational Holiness Church. The vast majority of Pentecostal sects in America and the world, however, did not result from controversy or schism; in most cases, denominations developed out of separate indigenous churches originating in different areas of the world with little or no contact with other organized bodies.

The greatest growth for Pentecostal churches came after World War II. With more mobility and greater prosperity, Pentecostals began to move into the middle class and to lose their image of being disinherited members of

the lower classes. The emergence of healing evangelists such as William Branham, Oral Roberts, and Jack Cole in the 1950s brought greater interest and acceptance to the movement. The TV ministry of Roberts also brought Pentecostalism into the homes of the average American. The founding of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International in 1952 by Los Angeles dairyman Demos Shakarian brought the Pentecostal message to a whole new class—middle-class professionals and businessmen—helping further change the image of the movement.

In the post–World War II period, the Pentecostals also began to emerge from their isolation, not only from each other but from their Christian groups as well. In 1943, the Assemblies of God, the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, and the Pentecostal Holiness Church became charter members of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), thus clearly disassociating themselves from the organized fundamentalist groups that had disfellowshiped the Pentecostals in 1928. They thus became part of the moderate evangelical camp that grew to prominence by the 1970s.

Intra-Pentecostal ecumenism began to flourish also during the late 1940s both in the United States and elsewhere. In 1947, the first World Pentecostal Conference (WPC) met in Zurich and has since met triennially. The next year, the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America (PFNA) was formed in Des Moines as a coalition of mainstream white Trinitarian bodies. In 1994, the group abandoned the segregated pattern adopted in Des Moines for a new racially inclusive body known as the Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA).

Pentecostalism entered a new phase in 1960 with the appearance of "neo-Pentecostalism" in traditional U.S. churches. The first well-known person to openly experience glossolalia and remain within his church was Dennis Bennett, an Episcopal priest in Van Nuys, California. Although forced to leave his parish because of controversy over his experience, Bennett was invited to pastor an inner-city parish in Seattle; that church experienced rapid growth after the introduction of Pentecostal worship, becoming a center of neo-Pentecostalism in the northwestern U.S.

This new wave of Pentecostalism soon spread to other denominations in the United States and also to many other nations. Other well-known neo-Pentecostal leaders were Brick Bradford and James Brown (Presbyterian), John Osteen and Howard Irvin (Baptist), Gerald Derstine and Bishop

Nelson Litwiler (Mennonite), Larry Christenson (Lutheran), and Ross Whetstone (United Methodist).

In 1966, Pentecostalism entered the Roman Catholic Church as a result of a weekend retreat at Duquesne University led by theology professors Ralph Keifer and Bill Story. As the experience of glossolalia and other charismatic gifts spread, other Catholic prayer groups were formed at the University of Notre Dame and the University of Michigan. By 1973, the movement had grown so rapidly that thirty thousand Catholic Pentecostals gathered at Notre Dame for a national conference. The movement had spread to Catholic churches in over one hundred nations by 1980. Other prominent Catholic Pentecostal leaders were Kevin Ranhagan, Steve Clark, and Ralph Martin. The most prominent among Catholics, however, was Joseph Leon Cardinal Suenens, who was named by Popes Paul VI and John Paul II as episcopal adviser to the renewal.

In order to distinguish these newer Pentecostals from the older ones, the charismatic renewal was generally allowed to remain within the mainline churches. Favorable study reports by the Episcopalians (1963), Roman Catholics (1969, 1974), and the Presbyterians (1970), while pointing out possible excesses, generally were tolerant and open to the existence of a Pentecostal spirituality as a renewal movement within the traditional churches.

By the 1980s, the classical Pentecostals had grown to be the largest family of Protestants in the world, according to *World Christian Encyclopedia*, edited by David Barrett. The 51-million figure attributed to the traditional Pentecostals did not include the 11 million charismatic Pentecostals in the traditional mainline churches. By 1995, the global number of Pentecostals and charismatics had reached 463 million, making them the second-largest family of Christians in the world after the Roman Catholic Church. Denominational Pentecostals, with 215 million members, continue to experience explosive worldwide growth. Thus, the Pentecostal and the charismatic movements have become the most vigorous and fastest-growing family of Christians, a movement that Harvey Cox of Harvard University predicted would "reshape Christianity in the twenty-first century."

<div align="right">Vinson Synan</div>

The Church the Day before Yesterday

It is always difficult to reflect critically about times we're actually living in. The predictions we make now about the future of the church may end up being wildly incorrect. Or the truth they contain may reveal itself in ways we never anticipated. Nevertheless, here are some reflections regarding the last few decades of church history.

In the early 1960s, a council called by the Roman Catholic Church—Vatican II (1962–1965)—ended up having far-reaching effects. Its decree on ecumenism led some more liberal Catholics and many mainline Protestants to believe that the reunion hoped for at the founding of the World Council of Churches (WCC), or at the very least, close cooperation, was just around the corner.

But to the surprise of many, conservative Catholics and conservative Protestants have often been the ones working most closely together in the past decades. The main reason why can be stated in three words: *Roe v. Wade.* The 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion created a generation of conservative Christians hoping to see that decision overturned. Pro-lifers in Catholic and Protestant camps worked and prayed together on that issue (for example, the Catholic-founded March for Life boasts increased evangelical participation every year). They soon found there were other moral issues they agreed about as well.

This cooperation of conservatives on the abortion issue was part of a larger move throughout the 1970s and 1980s, where conservatives and liberals in differing denominations discovered they often had more in common with fellow-thinkers in other faith traditions than with people in their own denomination. This was particularly true in the case of contentious social issues: abortion, gay rights, civil rights, women's rights, war, environmentalism, and economics. But it also had theological dimensions. Conservatives in various groups often found common ground because they focused on dogmatic purity and the centrality of Scripture in interpreting modern experience. More liberal believers cooperated around experiential responsiveness—the use of modern experience as a valid interpreter of scriptural precepts.

In most mainline denominations, leadership had largely been by the liberal camp since the early twentieth-century fundamentalist-modernist debates. Alternative organizations where conservatives cooperated with

likeminded conservatives were sometimes formed for those who felt official denominational channels were irredeemably apostate. The growth of these organizations turned out to be part of a bigger surprise: the fact that fundamentalism and evangelicalism, far from being dead, were alive, well, and taking in members, at least in the United States.

After the Scopes trial in 1925, the overall assumption by most mainstream historians, journalists, observers of culture, and religious officials was that the fundamentalism evidenced at the Scopes trial had died. In fact, it had only gone underground. The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), founded in 1942 by Harold John Ockenga (1905–1985), Carl Henry (1913–2003), and others, owed its origin to a group of American fundamentalist leaders who spent the 1930s out of the "mainstream" public eye, developing a thriving network of Bible colleges, parachurch organizations, radio stations, and other groups. They wished to cooperate more fully and productively and—eventually—to make a bigger place in conservative Protestantism for the life of the mind.

The NAE still exists today, representing over forty Christian denominations and maintaining the same statement of faith it adopted in 1943: belief in the infallible inspiration of the Bible, the Trinity, the virgin birth, the vicarious and atoning death of Christ, his resurrection and ascension, the second coming, regeneration and indwelling by the Holy Spirit, the final judgment, and the spiritual unity of all believers.

The elections of Jimmy Carter (a self-avowed evangelical) and Ronald Reagan (who, though Episcopalian, appealed to an evangelical constituency with his policies) and the political rise of what has been termed the "Christian Right" or "Religious Right" brought the movement back into media attention. (*Newsweek* christened 1976 the "Year of the Evangelical," in fact.) Moderate and liberal mainline bureaucrats in both Catholicism and Protestantism discovered, to their surprise in the 1970s and 1980s, that they had a "silent minority" of more conservative members on their hands.

Evangelicalism has only grown since. Its boundaries as a movement are imprecise, but many scholars and adherents would accept the famous definition put forth by historian David Bebbington in 1989: evangelicalism is characterized by biblicism (holding the Bible in high regard), crucicentrism (making the cross central), conversionism (trying to convert others), and activism (expressing the gospel in people's lives and actions). Historian George Marsden once quipped that an evangelical was "anyone

who likes Billy Graham;" while Marsden was being humorous, the influence of Graham (1918–2018) as a centering figure of the evangelical movement is substantial, mainly through his crusades (which ran from 1947–2005), as well as his hosting of *Hour of Decision* in the 1950s and his friendship with presidents and other leaders.

Representative evangelical publications and institutions today include magazines such as *Christianity Today*; colleges such as Wheaton, Liberty, Biola, Taylor, and Azusa Pacific; seminaries such as Fuller, Trinity, Gordon-Conwell, and Asbury; and parachurch organizations such as InterVarsity, World Vision, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Compassion International, and Focus on the Family.

The boundary between evangelicalism and fundamentalism today is also imprecise. In some ways, it is a difference in tone. Marsden once called fundamentalism "militantly anti-modernist Protestant evangelicalism"—the "militant" not connoting actual violence, but an aggressive tone or stance. Fundamentalists generally hold to the same basic doctrinal commitments as evangelicals, expressed in the NAE statement of faith. However, they are more likely to urge complete separation from more liberal believers; to maintain some of evangelicalism's historical lifestyle markers (such as abstinence from alcohol and strict dress codes); to hold to certain theologies like gender complementarianism, six-day creationism, and premillennial eschatology; and to engage the wider culture from a posture of argument and apologetics.

Meanwhile, as modernity's emphasis on the linear, intellectual, and well-ordered has begun to turn into postmodernity's emphasis on the narrative, chaotic, and experiential, the church has found that many of the practices it developed over the past three to five hundred years no longer resonate with those in the pews.

One major development in response to this has been the rise of the megachurch. Earlier examples of large churches exist, such as the Angelus Temple of Aimee Semple McPherson's (1890–1944), founded in 1932, but most U.S. megachurches have come into existence since the 1950s. These are generally defined as large churches (over 2,000 in Sunday attendance) with multiple Sunday services, broadly evangelical theology, extensive weekly cradle-to-grave programming, contemporary worship music, a revivalistic song-prayer-sermon shape to worship, a downplaying of traditional religious symbols, and a focus on practical expository preaching

(often by a celebrity preacher-founder). Many are either nondenominational, or for all practical purposes independent of their affiliated denomination.

The most famous U.S. megachurches today are probably Willow Creek Community Church, founded by Bill Hybels (b. 1951) in 1975; Saddleback Church, founded by Rick Warren (b. 1954) in 1980; and Lakewood Church, founded by John Osteen(1921–1999) in 1959 and pastored today by his son Joel (b. 1963). The megachurch approach to worship and programming has been highly influential over and adopted in whole or part by many smaller churches in both evangelical and mainline denominations.

Churches have also begun to look back at traditions deserted as a result of Reformation and counter-Reformation debates, Enlightenment rationalism, and nineteenth- and twentieth- century attempts to "update" and "demythologize" Christianity. Particularly, they have looked to the early church for models, with the reasoning that just as it was faced with maintaining a witness to the gospel in a largely pagan culture, so are we.

This reclamation of tradition has taken different forms. For some, there has been a renewed emphasis on creedal confessionalism and doctrinal standards—not only denominational distinctives, but the statements of faith developed by the first four Christian centuries, most important the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

For others, this has taken the form of recapturing earlier liturgical practices. Two different liturgical renewal movements are at work here. One is the general convergence of mainline Catholic and Protestant official liturgies around models from the first four Christian centuries, a development sparked by Vatican II and still ongoing nearly six decades later. The second is the resurgence, in evangelical and nondenominational worship, of practices designed to appeal to the senses and encourage contemplation, such as incense, candles, art, contemplative music, and silence. The name most closely associated with the second is Baptist-turned-Episcopal theologian Robert Webber (1933–2007), who is also largely responsible for popularizing the term and concept of "blended" worship, an approach that tries to mingle the best of both Christian tradition and contemporary discoveries.

These trends, along with a general postmodern outlook, have become characteristic of a still-changing model for being Christian known as the

"emergent church," associated with thinkers like Brian MacLaren (b. 1956) and Shane Claiborne (b. 1975).

For many younger Christians not shaped by the political debates between the Establishment and the rebels of the 1960s, nor formed by the religious traditions and organizational debates rooted in the early twentieth-century fundamentalist-modernist controversy, the supposed conflict between orthodoxy and social justice has seemed to be an illusory one. These younger Christians—many from what is called the "millennial" generation born between 1982 and 2004—frequently combine a commitment to traditional Christian doctrine and discipleship with a social passion, often for politically progressive causes.

Looking for ways to combine their theological witness to the gospel with a social one, some of these young Christians have sparked a renewed interest in evangelicalism in issues that conservatives had once largely abandoned to Social Gospel proponents—poverty, racism, environmentalism, and peace activism, to name a few. One example of this untried circuitry is the "new monastic" movement associated with names like Claiborne, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove (b. 1980), and Elaine Heath (b. 1954), where committed Christians—married and single alike—live in some kind of intentional Christian community with rules for common life. Young Christians have also been in the forefront of using the internet and social media as vehicles for community, advocacy, and even worship.

All of this takes place in an increasingly global context. Christianity in the twenty-first century is shifting from being a religion mainly characteristic of the European West (including the United States) to being a religion mainly characteristic of the global South and of Asian nations, who now send missionaries to evangelize Westerners. In this global context, Western Christians are also wrestling with how to best respond to terrorism, foster interreligious relations, and relate to the growing number of Muslims who have migrated to Western countries. The events of September 11, 2001, the wars that followed in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Syrian refugee crisis that began in 2011 all make these issues both incredibly relevant and incredibly difficult.

Europe's established state churches have become both political and religious entities over the centuries, leaving a tangled legacy; while the U.S. has never had a state church, to some degree an assumed national Protestantism has filled the same place in people's thinking. That consensus

is breaking down. While in the mid 2000s over 80 percent of the U.S. population still identified as Christian on surveys and about 75 percent of Europeans did, statistical trends point towards a post-Christian orientation for modern Western society and culture. Those who reject religion (sometimes called "Nones" because of their choice of "none" to describe their religion on surveys) cite reasons ranging from the political complicity exhibited by the church throughout history to its perceived social backwardness in the face of modern lifestyles. The church is wrestling with how to respond in a cultural context that increasingly does not assume religious belief or adherence as normative. Whatever the next decades bring for the church, it will be necessary to approach our context with humility and with trust in God's ultimate purposes for his kingdom.

<div style="text-align: right;">Jennifer Woodruff Tait</div>

The Nones

Surveys often help social scientists document the waxing and waning of various trends related to expressions of belief. Affiliation with particular religious groups, as well as adherence to specific beliefs, are among the data collected and scrutinized on a regular basis. In recent years, one of the most interesting trends to be so documented and studied in America is what has come to be known as "the rise of the Nones."[1]

The "Nones" are those who check the survey box indicating no religious affiliation. The fact that this group is growing, and with startling apparent rapidity, may be due to several factors. One factor seems to be a disenchantment with denominational labels. Denominational politics, and indeed the close association with national political movements of certain religious groups, appears to be a big turn-off to many. Another factor is a general indifference to religion; it just doesn't matter.[2] But there may well be many other factors.

Whatever the reasons, this group reportedly now represents nearly 20 percent of American adults. They are predominantly young, male, white, and not necessarily atheist, nor necessarily hostile to religious institutions.[3] They simply choose not to affiliate with any.

Christianity (and some other religions, too) is growing in many other parts of the world, so this appears to be an American phenomenon, and if not strictly American, then certainly Western. And it presents an interesting

challenge for the institutional church, as well as for individual Christians who remain committed to the church. How do we reach those who simply see no need for formalizing their religious experience or affiliation? How do we make clearer distinctions between institutions of religion and those of government and politics? How do we make church "make sense" for those who see no sense—and feel no apparent need to try?

The old saying "Christianity is not a religion, it is a relationship" rings true, especially to evangelicals, but the point seems to be missed by the culture around us. The phenomenon of the "Nones" will test the American church at the very least, in the decades ahead, if we are to relate the good news of Jesus Christ to everyone, everywhere.

For Further Reading and Study

Thomas A. Askew and Richard V. Pierard, *The American Church Experience*

Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*

Elesha J. Coffman, *The Christian Century and the Rise of the Protestant Mainline*

Gerald R. Cragg, *The Church and the Age of Reason 1648–1789*

Kevin M. Cragg and Paul R. Spickard, *A Global History of Christians*

Ivor J. Davidson, *The Birth of the Church*

Enrique Dussel, ed., *The Church in Latin America*

William R. Estep, *Renaissance and the Reformation*

Charles W. Forman, *The Island Churches of the South Pacific: Emergence in the Twentieth Century*

Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa: 1450–1950*

Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (Vols. I and II)

George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*

James Hastings Nichols, *History of Christianity 1650–1950: Secularization of the West*

Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*

Scott W. Sundquist, *A Dictionary of Asian Christianity*

Robert Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity*

James Emery White, *The Rise of the Nones*

Introduction to Missiology

✦

> I should like to enlighten souls. I should like to wander through this world and raise your glorious cross in pagan lands. But it would not be enough to have only one field of mission work. I should not be satisfied until I had preached the gospel in every quarter of the globe even in the remotest islands.[1]
>
> —Thérèse of Lisieux

One of Jesus' last commands to his disciples is commonly known as the Great Commission: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19–20). Obedience to this directive fueled the missionary journeys of the apostle Paul as well as those of Peter, Philip, and others (recorded in Acts). But the Bible has far more to say on the subject of mission, which should not be surprising, given God's stated love for all humanity (John 3:16), "not wanting anyone to perish" (2 Peter 3:9).

Missiology—the study of mission—arises from a firm biblical foundation. It encompasses a twenty-century-long story of global outreach and expansion. It entails a carefully studied approach to intercultural communication if the gospel's message is to be received and believed. And it requires effective strategies in the face of changing circumstances, cultural obstacles, and spiritual opposition.

A Biblical Theology of Mission

The only rule of faith and practice that God has given is the Bible. It has the force of law. Because mission embraces "the totality of the task he sent his

church to do in the world,"[2] we must select a theme that is prominent in both Testaments. That theme is the kingdom of God, which dominated the ministry of Jesus and provides linkage to all the "various ways" through which God had earlier spoken to his people by the prophets (Hebrews 1:1). "Missiology is more and more coming to see the kingdom of God as the hub around which all of mission work revolves; one can almost speak of a consensus developing on this point."[3]

In our day, evangelicals are finding that the biblical base for mission is far more complex than previous generations envisioned. Gone is the single focus of an overwhelming concern for the spiritual condition of "the heathen." Nor can credibility be gained by supplementing this concern with appeals to the Great Commission, or by proof texts supporting such related themes as the sending character of God, the compassionate compulsion of the Spirit, the example of the apostolic church, and the relation between missionary obedience and the second coming of Christ. These themes are important, but one cannot build a comprehensive biblical theology of mission on them. The kingdom or "rule" of God must be the dominant motif, since by it God touches every aspect of the human condition: past, present, and future.

When we explore the relationship of God's kingdom to world mission, we begin with the reminder that God's kingship is both universal and covenantal. When God created the heavens and the earth by his Word, and created the first human couple in his own image and likeness, it was inevitable that he would exercise a loving and preserving control over his creation and particularly over the human race. This can be described as his universal kingship. Both Testaments teach this, but in the Old Testament we also find God's kingly rule identified with Israel, a people with whom he established covenant relationship.

The Old Testament Contribution

In the opening chapters of the Old Testament, we find the first reference to mission as defined above. God said to the first man and woman: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it" (see Genesis 1:26–30; cf. 2:15, 18–25; Psalm 8:5–6). By this command, frequently termed "the cultural mandate," God called Adam and Eve to accept responsibility for this world as his vice-regents, to serve and control it under his direction and for

his glory. Its details pertained to their social existence and marked the beginning of a stream of obligation—a mandate for family and community, culture and civilization—that widens and deepens as it courses throughout Scripture. We are not surprised to find that in the messianic age that Christ will later inaugurate, these many obligations will be made even more explicit as part of his missionary mandate that the church proclaim and demonstrate "this gospel of the kingdom" to the nations (Matthew 24:14). And such has proved to be the case. We might regard the cultural mandate as the prelude to the Great Commission.

At the outset, the expectation was that because God is sovereign, he will be obeyed. But this was not to be. Early on God imposed a moral test on Adam and Eve (the "trees"—Genesis 2:16–17). In granting them freedom of choice, God was running a great risk. Would they freely choose to remain under his control, or would they seek an existence separate from him? Sadly, they chose the latter, and their fall (3:1–7) brought them under the dominance of "the tempter" and forged linkage with his hostile spirit-power and open opposition to the rule of God.

More was involved. Although they continued to carry out the cultural mandate, their obedience was now shaped by selfish impulses arising from their abdication of responsibility for the world and their surrender to the one who had now gained control of it ("the prince of this world"—John 12:31; "the god of this age"—2 Corinthians 4:4). Subsequent chapters (Genesis 4–11) record the effects of the fall, ranging from fratricidal murder to worldwide violence, from God's judgment of all antediluvians to the tragedy that came to the one family that was delivered (Noah's), and from human arrogance attempting to establish a universal kingdom with its defiant tower to further judgment, the linguistic confusion and scattering of the people.

Since the cultural mandate was no longer being carried out under God's direction, God then began via divine election and covenant to unfold a redemptive purpose that would deal with the problem of human rebellion and alienation from his fellowship. He called a man named Abram out of Ur (within the complex of Babel) and began to train him to live by faith that through his seed (Israel), "all peoples on earth" would "be blessed" (Genesis 12:1–3). His gracious desire was via Israel to bring fallen people by repentance and faith to break with Satan's control (1 John 5:19; Acts 26:18, etc.) as co-laborers with their Messiah, to regain control of the world and those within it who would respond to his love.

Old Testament history records repeated failure on Israel's part. Actually, over the years, only a remnant within Israel believed and obeyed God. At the same time, however, their prophets predicted that God would ultimately realize the covenant goal he had set for a believing remnant in the nation: "to restore the tribes of Jacob" and to become "a light for the Gentiles" so that his "salvation" might be taken "to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:5–6). The key to this total restoration will be "the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel"— strangely, the One "who was despised and abhorred by the nation" (v. 7). Despite this, Israel went ever deeper into spiritual infidelity, open rebellion, and prolonged captivity, with only infrequent periods when through national repentance God's blessing became partly evident in his people's life and worship. The tragedy is that in the end the various contending parties within Judaism, though often at loggerheads with one another, united to participate in the final tragedy of standing against the One who came as the self-confessed "Son of Man" of Daniel, the "Suffering Servant" of Isaiah, and the "Smitten Shepherd-King" of Zechariah.

OLD TESTAMENT AXIOMS OF MISSION. Five major Old Testament axioms are inherent in the New Testament unfolding of the kingdom of God in relation to the church's mission to the nations. They can be traced within this tragic history of Israel's experience with God.

1. God is sovereign in his kingship. His rule over individuals and nations is always righteous and just. He is the moral Governor of the universe (Psalm 22:27–28; Daniel 4:34–35).
2. God seeks the personal commitment of his people. God's holiness demands righteousness on the part of all Israelites who would be in covenantal relationship with him (Isaiah 55:6–7).
3. God's people are to constitute a serving community among the nations by example and through personal outreach. They are to oppose by word and deed all that demeans people (Micah 6:8).
4. God's purpose through his people is relentlessly opposed by the inveteracy of human evil and the implacable hostility of Satan and his hosts (Job 1–2; 2 Chronicles 36:15–16).
5. God's purpose for Israel and the nations always moves beyond present matters and is invariably directed toward his future and ultimate

triumph in history (Isaiah 2:2–4; Zechariah 14).

SPECIFIC OLD TESTAMENT CONTRIBUTIONS. Within the record of Israel's long history, the Old Testament touches on themes relevant to mission outreach today: the issue of slavery and political liberation (Exodus and Ezra); the relation of God's people to secular power and secular events (Genesis and the Prophets); the mystery of suffering and redemption (Genesis, Exodus, and the Servant Songs of Isaiah); the lifestyle of God's people (Leviticus); the perils of religious pluralism (Hosea); the issue of racism and the disease of anti-Semitism (Esther); the basic problems encountered in serving God (Haggai and Zechariah); religious encounter and the non-negotiability of truth (Jeremiah); the pursuit of personal and national spiritual renewal (Nehemiah and Malachi); the role of the believing remnant within Israel (Amos and Isaiah); the possibility of becoming useless to God through ethnocentrism (Jonah); the function of wisdom literature as a bridge to the nations that know not God (Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes); and the missiological implications of Israel as a diasporal [scattered] people.

Although the Old Testament is replete with insightful material related to issues inherent in mission, on the one crucial issue it is silent. There God had not revealed "the mystery hidden for ages and generations" whereby Gentiles through the gospel would become fellow heirs with his people. Biblically informed Jewish people know that their future Golden Age will not take place without a massive ingathering of the nations to the worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But how this would come about remained a mystery until Jesus Christ inaugurated the messianic age (Ephesians 3:3–9).

The New Testament Contribution

The unity of the Bible is nowhere more clearly seen than in the way the Old Testament kingdom axioms mentioned above were amplified and increased in the New Testament. With the advent of Jesus Christ, these axioms are directly related to world mission.

First, God's sovereignty focuses on Christ's lordship. We preach "Jesus Christ as Lord" (2 Corinthians 4:5). This is the heart of the good news of the kingdom (Romans 10:9–10). Through the cross, he conquered all his foes and obtained salvation for his people. His present rule over the redeemed

points forward to his coming rule when "every knee" bows to him and "every tongue acknowledges" his lordship (Philippians 2:6–11). The worship of other gods is utterly abhorrent to him.

Second, Christ's lordship demands personal commitment. The New Testament stresses the necessity of faith, the new birth, the inner witness of the Holy Spirit, and its outward expression in love and kingdom service. Only new creatures in Christ shall enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5). Those who possess his lordship, but whose lives do not reflect his values and perspectives are challenged to examine themselves to determine whether they are truly his (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Third, the community of the King is the body of Christ. Kingdom people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are custodians of the kingdom and share oneness in the church. Their common life is expressed through corporate worship, mutual sharing, united confession, and outgoing service. They live by prayer and the confession of sin. Although the church as Christ's body is of divine creation, its visible, structured presence is a flawed mixture of God's grace, human fallenness, and demonic penetration. Its only glory is the presence of Christ in its midst, realized by faith.

Fourth, the church is called to mission. Only after Christ had completed his redemptive work did he issue the call to world mission: to proclaim and demonstrate by word and deed the "good news of the kingdom of God." Its details strikingly endorse but significantly supplement the Old Testament injunction to "do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8 NASB). After he sent the Spirit upon his disciples, they consciously began to sense that they possessed a universal faith for all nations and began to go beyond the bounds of Israel to Gentile peoples to proclaim this gospel. Mission's central and irreplaceable task is persuading people to become Christ's disciples and gathering them into local congregations.

Fifth, obedience to mission involves suffering. The New Testament is replete with the record of conflict and suffering precipitated by the advent and proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom. Jesus himself experienced the world's rejection and the devil's fury, and he learned obedience through what he suffered (Hebrews 5:8). In much the same way the church, claiming his victory over the powers and authorities (Colossians 2:15), will experience Satan's sifting (Luke 22:31) and fiery trials (1 Peter 1:6–8) that it

too might be perfected, the better to perform its mission. This process will continue and even intensify as the age draws to a close.

Sixth, the future remains bright with hope. God's redemptive purpose will be fulfilled (Acts 1:8). What he initiated will be consummated. Through the missionary obedience of his disciples, God will call out a completed people from the nations. Then he will "judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead" (cf. 17:30–31 ʀꜱᴠ and Matthew 25:31–32). The climax of Christ's redemptive purpose will take place at his second coming: "When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to every one" (1 Corinthians 15:28 ʀꜱᴠ).

Iꜱʀᴀᴇʟ Cᴏɴꜰʀᴏɴᴛꜱ Hᴇʀ Mᴇꜱꜱɪᴀʜ. In the Old Testament, God frequently sent prophets to Israel to remind the people of their covenantal relationship with him and the service he expected of them (Jeremiah 7:25). And yet, God's sending of Jesus was unique. The fallen condition of humanity was so acute and the need for redemption so great that only the incarnation of God the Son and the atonement of the cross could avail to provide for the redemption of God's people. Previous "sending" set the stage for this final "sending" of Messiah to Israel. This event marks the great hinge of salvation history: the end of "the old" and the beginning of "the new."

When Jesus came to Israel, he almost immediately began to question the traditional piety of the Pharisees. He also turned to the outcasts of society and set before them a quality of life dominated by God's love. In this connection, David Bosch states:

> It is remarkable to note how these people to whom Jesus turned are referred to in the Gospels. They are called the poor, the blind, the lame, the lepers, the hungry, sinners, those who weep, the sick, the little ones, the widows, the captives, the persecuted, the downtrodden, the least, the last, those who are weary and heavily burdened, the lost sheep.[4]

In other words, Jesus embodied the kingdom of God as a countercultural presence in society and offended the Pharisees who could only sneer and scornfully comment: "This mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them" (John 7:49). They did not sense the significance of his redemptive purpose despite their study of the Scriptures (5:39). The

Sadducees also opposed him because they knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God (Mark 12:24).

This redemptive purpose began with John the Baptist, Messiah's herald ("Elijah has already come"—Matthew 17:12; Malachi 4:5), and Jesus' incarnation, baptism, and divine attestation by God as to his true identity (Matthew 1:23; 3:7). His confrontation and triumph over satanic temptation followed; then, with the execution of John, their joint ministry of renewal came to an end. From that point onward, Jesus began to confront the Jewish people as their Messiah (Luke 4:16–30), gathered a community of disciples around himself (9:23), and inaugurated God's kingdom in its initial hiddenness. He explained: "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing their way into it" (16:16).

Jesus' miracles should not simply be regarded as humanitarian acts of compassion. Actually, they were messianic "signs" that Isaiah (chapters 35, 61) had predicted would precede God's decisive act in redeeming his people. They pointed to the reality of God's kingdom as "already" in the midst of Israel by virtue of who he was and what he did. On one occasion, he said, "If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20). At first, the crowds were drawn by the expectations he kindled and by his messianic signs. When he fed the multitudes, they wanted to make him their king (John 6:15). But when it became apparent that his kingdom demanded moral transformation, the crowds melted and opposition grew.

After a brief ministry of three years devoted to preaching the kingdom by using parables loaded with mission insights, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, and liberating the demonized, Jesus was seized by the religious establishment, subjected to an unjust trial, condemned to death for blasphemy, and then turned over to the Roman authorities to be crucified. He died as a Redeemer taking away the sin of the world (1:29) and rose from the dead the third day as Victor over sin and death, as the Old Testament had predicted (Luke 24:44–49). In his post-resurrection ministry, Christ stressed four realities:

1. his bodily resurrection (Acts 1:3)
2. himself as the key to understanding the Old Testament (Luke 24:25–27, 32)

3. his missionary mandate (literally "when you go"—of *course*, you will go) to "make disciples of all nations," incorporating converts into local congregations via baptism, and training them in discipleship, as he had trained them (Matthew 28:18–20)
4. his order to remain in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, without whose power their missionary task would prove impossible to achieve (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8)

He then ascended into heaven, his final witness to his divine sonship (1:9–11).

MISSION BEGINS: PROCLAIMING THE KINGDOM. The Spirit on the day of Pentecost transformed mission from preoccupation with a particular people, the Jews (Matthew 10:5–6; 15:24), to all peoples (Acts 2:17, 21, 39). But it took time for the early disciples to sense the full implications of Jesus' messianic Jewish movement being transformed into a universal faith—the beginning of a new era under the new covenant. At first, believers in Jesus were largely regarded as a messianic sect within Judaism. Their evangelistic method was deeply rooted in the Old Testament (13:14–43). But when Gentiles began to come to faith, the apostles did not feel that they should be transformed into Jews by circumcision and Law observance, according to the older pattern of Jewish proselytism. This produced a crisis that was partially resolved at a special council of "apostles and elders" (Acts 15). This also influenced their evangelistic approach to non-Jewish people (17:16–34; 26:18). This provoked a growing consciousness, particularly among Jewish believers, that a "parting of the way" was taking place within Jewry between rabbinic Jews and those Jews who, upon believing in Jesus, were increasingly finding spiritual oneness with the growing number of Gentile believers.

This massive shift precipitated much theological debate. Fortunately, God's gift to the early church was his provision of a "task" theologian, through the conversion of the apostle Paul (Acts 9; 22; 26; esp. 9:15). From that time onward, Paul's missionary activities and problem-solving letters greatly enlarged the movement's awareness of the complexity of the worldwide mission task. Notable is his letter to the vigorous, largely Gentile church in Rome that he sought a missionary base of operations in Spain for the whole Mediterranean world. He began with an appalling portrayal of the abounding sinfulness of all people, whether Jews or Gentiles (Romans 1:18–

3:20). He followed this with a comprehensive presentation of abounding grace to all sinners through the righteousness of God, the Lord Jesus Christ (3:21–5:21). Justification is by grace through faith.

But Paul could not stop. He had to delineate the amazing grace of God to all who had believed. Victorious living for Christians is gloriously possible through the cross and the Holy Spirit. These resources are such that although sin is always possible, it is not necessary (6:1–8:39)! Then Paul reviewed the tragic record of Israel's national experience. The nation was never intended by God to be an end in itself. Israel was chosen for worldwide ministry, but through its failure had to be set aside—neither totally nor permanently, for Israel shall yet enter its Golden Age through repentance and faith in her Messiah at his second coming (9:1–11:36). The final sections of this letter focus on practical matters related to Paul's concern that the church at Rome be transformed into a missionary-sending community eager to participate in mission outreach, particularly in the evangelization of Spain (12–16).

The Kingdom of God: A Sign of God's Tomorrow. The New Testament deals with many important mission matters, such as insight into the validity of mobile mission teams as well as fixed church structures; the essentiality, diversity, and exercise of gifts of the Spirit; the issue of the powers in relation to spiritual conflict; the phenomena of ethnic religion and spiritual conversion; the eternal separation between the saved and the lost; and the end of the age, God's ultimate triumph.

But what should concern us particularly is to see the full significance of making God's kingdom the dominant hub about which all mission activities are related. Ours is an age in which people all over the world are losing all sense of hope touching the future. But the reality of the kingdom means that God has a glorious future for Israel and all the nations. There is going to be God's tomorrow. And every Christian is called to be a "sign" of God's tomorrow in the world of today.

It follows then that the Christian community is to be countercultural, not captured by the status quo, by the privileged, the exploiters, the powerful. Its members march to the beat of a different drum, for they seek to embody all of the elements of God's kingdom in their lives. Like Christ, their concern is the poor, the blind, the disadvantaged, the despised, the captives, the persecuted, the imprisoned, the downtrodden, the bearers of heavy burdens, indeed, all those unaware of God's love. They proclaim Jesus Christ as

Liberator, Savior, Friend, and the One who grants forgiveness, newness of life, unspeakable joy, and hope. Their God is the One who makes "all things new." Their yearning for his "new heavens and new earth" constrains them to love and serve others on Christ's behalf. Their concept of the gospel is not confined to proclamation, for it involves both word and deed. Their struggle is to make sure that the good news of Jesus is not denied to any human. This is what mission is all about!

<div align="right">Arthur F. Glasser</div>

A History of Missions

The story of how the followers of a first-century itinerant Jewish preacher spread his message of God's kingdom to the entire world is amazing. The initial conquest of the Roman Empire and the subsequent planting of the Christian church around the earth were the result of the witness of countless believers. A great number of these missionaries are known, but there is an even greater number whose names are unknown to subsequent generations. This lack of a complete history forces us to recognize that God empowered ordinary believers to carry out the missionary task. While Jesus limited his ministry to the areas of Judea and Galilee, with occasional forays into non-Jewish territory, he gave his disciples specific instructions to be his witnesses in "Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8 NASB). The Acts of the Apostles is organized along that plan, with the gospel emanating in an ever-increasing circle. With the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the gospel was preached in Jerusalem to Jews and proselytes "from every nation under heaven" (2:5).

The first persecution that dispersed the church after the stoning of Stephen (chap. 7) resulted in the scattering of the believers throughout Judea, Samaria (8:1), Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch (11:19–20). It is noteworthy that the movement commanded by Jesus to disciple the nations only commenced with persecution. This theme of God's using what seemed like tragic events to propagate the gospel is repeated throughout history. The bringing of the gospel to the Samaritans bridged two major hurdles: religion and culture. The first recorded preaching to Gentiles is Peter's interaction with Cornelius (10). Some of those who were scattered because of

persecution went to Antioch, where they shared the message with Gentiles (11:20). Since these converts were not proselytes, it is not strange that the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch to distinguish them from a sect of Judaism (v. 26). The missionary journeys of Paul originated from this church, the Spirit directing the sending of Paul and Barnabas (13:2ff.), indicating where Paul and his team were forbidden to preach the gospel (16:6–10). At the end of Acts, Paul is in Rome preaching Christ unhindered while awaiting the disposition of the charges against him.

The church's early expansion is a paradigm for understanding how the gospel traveled around the world in the succeeding two millennia. Under the *Pax Romana*, the gospel spread rapidly in the major centers of commerce and government. Even during Jesus' ministry, the gospel had penetrated government circles (cf. Luke 8:3, where Joanna, the wife of Cuza, Herod's steward, is numbered among the circle that traveled with Jesus). Paul can write from Rome that the reason for his imprisonment is well known in the palace (Philippians 1:13). This interest in Christianity by the ruling authorities is indicative of the interaction that the gospel would have throughout history. Up through the twentieth century, the conversion of a ruler often meant gaining at least the nominal adherence of that ruler's subjects to Christianity. The close connection between the ruler's religion and the subjects' adherence is particularly pronounced through to the sixteenth century in Europe, and it is always common in close-knit societies.

The interaction of the gospel with commerce is seen in Acts and repeated in various periods of missionary work. At times, the gospel was bad for business (16:19; 19:23ff.). The commercial motive drove the sponsors of both Catholic and Protestant missions. Another repeated theme is the gospel's interaction with other religions. The main rivals of the Christian faith in the first century were the mystery religions, elements of which addressed similar questions answered in the Christian gospel. There was a spiritual hunger that the gospel could meet. However, the pagan religions did not give in easily, necessitating power encounters such as those in Acts (e.g., 6:8; 8:9ff.; 13:6ff.; 16:16ff.).

The First 500 Years

As we do not know the identity of the disciples who first preached to the Gentiles in Antioch, so we do not know who first preached the gospel in Rome. But Paul found believers there to welcome him. The earliest converts

were most likely from the lower classes. However, during the persecution under Emperor Domitian (c. AD 96), a cousin of the emperor was put to death and his wife banished because of "sacrilege," the usual charge against Christians. Some take this as an indication of the penetration of the gospel to the highest reaches of society.

At the end of the first century and throughout the second, severe persecutions arose against Christians because of their refusal to pay homage to the Roman gods. Their loyalty to *Christ alone as God* earned them the name *atheists*, since they would not acknowledge the Roman pantheon of deities. Justin Martyr (c. 100–165) was one of the early apologists who sought to defend the faith against misrepresentation. By the year 251, there is an estimate of the Christian population in Rome numbering thirty thousand. The persecution did not eliminate the church, as the clear testimony of the martyrs often bore eloquent witness to the reality of the faith.

The gospel entered Egypt at an early date, though again the original missionaries are not known. Alexandria became a major Christian center with teachers like Clement (c. 150–215) and Origen (c. 185–254) holding firmly to the biblical revelation, but also recognizing Greek philosophy as a preparation for the gospel. This is the first example of discerning the seeds of a pre-gospel understanding in a people's culture as a forerunner to evangelization. The results of both the Alexandrian model and applications of the same principle throughout the history of the church have been debated. The danger of syncretism is ever present in such formulations.

Christianity spread quickly across Roman North Africa among the educated colonial classes. These were the first Latin-speaking churches in the world. There was some use of the Punic language, brought by the Phoenicians who had colonized Carthage, but it is not clear that the church ever penetrated to the Berber vernacular of the villages and nomads. By not using the heart language of the peasant population, it was [all but] assured that these groups would turn to Islam in the seventh century. The major lesson learned from the experience in North Africa: the church needs to penetrate the common language. While the church in this area produced outstanding theologians, including the key figure in Western theology, Augustine of Hippo, the theological formulations did not stop the rapid spread of Islam.

The Donatist controversy, which revolved around what was to be the church's stand toward those who deny the faith during times of persecution, further weakened the church of North Africa. Nevertheless, from a missiological perspective, it is sobering to note the absence of Christianity today in what had been an influential center.

The earliest Christian kingdom was Edessa, one of the sources for the spread of the gospel in Armenia, the second Christian kingdom. Tradition tells of the visit of the apostle Thomas to India, and such a voyage would have been possible; Roman coins found in India indicate a trading pattern. The Mar Thoma (St. Thomas) Christians regard their origin in Thomas's ministry. The church certainly was in India in the first centuries of the Christian era.

The conversion of Emperor Constantine dramatically changed the picture for the developing church. From a persecuted minority, the church became legal and then socially acceptable. The peace of the church from external persecution provided the opportunity to solve its theological disputes, a process in which the emperors from Constantine onward took part. The Trinitarian and Christological disputes gave rise to what are sometimes called the Oriental or Eastern churches, which adopted a doctrinal stance different from the Chalcedonian formulas. These churches were missionary centers, with the Nestorian mission movement reaching into China.

Even before Christianity became recognized as the official religion of the Roman Empire (AD 333), the gospel had penetrated its western and northern provinces. Irenaeus (c. 130–c. 200), bishop of Lyons, writes of using Celtic as well as Latin in the church, which signifies the church's presence among the less-educated population. When Christianity became the empire's religion, more direct assaults could be made against paganism. However, the gain in legitimacy was at the expense of an increasing nominalism. Monasticism was in part a reaction to the lower standard of Christianity.

Patrick (c. 389–461) was captured by Irish raiders from his home in England as a youth. After six years, he escaped and entered a monastery in France. Persistent visions led him to return to Ireland at the age of forty-three, where he labored until his death. When he began his work, Ireland was almost entirely pagan, but by the time he died, Ireland was largely Christian. Later Celtic monks would be responsible for evangelizing large parts of Europe.

One of Europe's turning points was the baptism of Clovis, king of the Franks. He had married (in 493) a Christian princess, Clotilda of Burgundy, who did her best to convert him. Clovis vowed if the Christian God would help him defeat his enemies, the Alemanni, he would convert. On Christmas 496, he was baptized along with three thousand of his soldiers. Other rulers had converted, but Clovis was the first to accept, to the extent he understood, the Catholic faith instead of Arianism.

The Dark Ages (500–1000)

The classical world was passing. The barbarians pouring out of the Central European plain overran Western Europe. The Vikings raided as far as Constantinople and terrorized Britain and Northern Europe. Centers of learning were special targets because they were wealthy, yet even the horrors of these encounters presented an opportunity for the gospel. These five hundred years were when the church attempted to tame the barbarians and make their conversion more than nominal. The three key factors in this period were royal patronage, martyrdom, and monasticism.

Another challenge to Christendom came from Arabia, where Muhammad gathered his followers and provided them with a sense of unity and mission. They swept over Christian lands, and within a hundred years of Muhammad's death, all of North Africa and most of Spain, as well as Palestine and Syria, were under Muslim control. Checked for the first time by Charles Martel at Tours in 732, Muslims still sacked Rome in 846. Sicily was a Muslim country by 902. Finally, in 1453, Constantinople itself fell to the Muslims, ending more than one thousand years of primacy in Christendom.

Despite perilous times, however, the church continued to be found in new places. Irish missionaries established monasteries on the rugged Scottish coast and evangelized Britain. At the same time, a mission was sent by Pope Gregory the Great to the Anglo-Saxons who had supplanted the native Britons. In 596, Augustine (not the bishop) and a party of monks made their way to Kent, where Ethelbert (c. 560–616) was king. He had married Bertha, a Christian princess from Gaul, and by the end of the year he and ten thousand Saxons were baptized.

The Celtic missionaries had slightly different customs, preserved in their more isolated settings. While these differences seem insignificant to modern

readers, it raised the question that reappears in other ages: Who has the right to resolve differences? In the end Rome prevailed, which set a pattern that endured until the Reformation.

The advance of the church was not without compromise, exemplified by Pope Gregory's advising his missionaries to reconsecrate the pagan temples, destroying only the idols in them. Likewise, pagan festivals were remade into Christian holy days and traditional religious customs baptized as Christian symbols. The origins of the Christmas tree, the Yule log, and even the traditional date of Christmas are examples of this accommodation.

There were power encounters between the missionaries and the indigenous people. Boniface, apostle to the Germans, felled the sacred oak of Thor in Hesse. The gospel made a slow, steady advance through Europe, though it is doubtful that the pagan influences were ever fully rooted out, surfacing again in folk stories of trolls and fairies, with syncretism affecting church life. Some people groups were more resistant to the gospel, and many missionaries were martyred.

The schism between the church in the Eastern and Western halves of the Roman Empire was not official until 1054, and even then it was only the hierarchies that were excommunicated. However, the drift can be detected earlier in the various theological focuses that were developing. The importance for missions is that the Eastern Church did not insist on the same linguistic unity that the Western Church did. It is significant that Ulfilas (c. 311–383), the missionary bishop who translated the Bible for the Goths, was consecrated at Constantinople, though his Arianism keeps him from being claimed by the Eastern Orthodox.

In the eighth century, when Cyril and Methodius undertook missionary work among the Slavic-speaking Moravians, they were opposed by missionaries connected with the pope because of their translation efforts. The three principles that these two brothers from Thessalonica put forward were the use of the vernacular in worship, the employment of indigenous clergy, and the eventual selfhood of the church. They traveled to Rome, where they were able to celebrate the Slavonic liturgy in the pope's presence. However, when Methodius returned to Moravia as a bishop, he faced opposition and eventual expulsion. Their disciples spread throughout the Slavic lands, giving rise to the circumstances that led to the conversion of Vladimir in 988. Prince Vladimir, descended from Vikings, used his authority to force his followers into the fold of the church, thereby setting

one of the patterns for successive rulers of Russia. In spite of its beginnings, the church in Russia has endured for more than a thousand years, at times under repressive rulers who tried to control it.

The Medieval World (1000–1500)

As the Christian church entered its second millennium, it was a mainly European phenomenon. Vestiges of the ancient churches existed in Muslim-controlled territory, the church had a foothold in India and Ethiopia, but the Nestorian work in China had been suppressed. The Scandinavian peoples were initially resistant to the gospel, but by the late twelfth century, the church had been planted in the Nordic lands. The paganism that had been their religion was hard to suppress and still carries on in Nordic folklore.

The Crusades are perhaps the least likely vehicle for missionary expansion in the church's history. Conceived as an attempt to wrest control of the Holy Land from the Muslims, the military adventures spanned two hundred years and resulted in thousands of lives lost. The attempt to use force to convert unbelievers, while it had a seven-hundred-year tradition in the church, was a failure, in part because the Crusaders found it easier to kill the infidels than reason with them. The attempts to witness to Muslims by the humble Francis of Assisi (1181–1226) and the scholarly Raymond Lull (c. 1235–1315) are bright spots on an otherwise bleak landscape. Lull was martyred in North Africa. Francis managed to preach before the sultan of Egypt, who is reported to have said, "If I meet any more Christians like you, I will become one myself." The lasting legacy of the Crusades is enmity between Muslims and Christians that exists to this day.

The rumored existence of a Christian kingdom to the east of the Muslim-dominated lands prompted speculation. Several expeditions were undertaken to the Mongols, with varying degrees of success. The Christian kingdom was not found. However, the Mongols who ruled Central Asia threatened the Muslim Empire, capturing and destroying Baghdad in 1258 and reaching Damascus two years later. The Nestorian Church enjoyed a favorable position under the Mongols it had not known before, but in the end, the Mongols came under the Muslim culture and the opportunity was lost to bring them into the realm of the church.

The traveler Marco Polo brought back tales of the Chinese Empire and a request from Kublai Khan for one hundred scholars to debate the virtues of the Christian faith. John of Montecorvino (c. 1247–1328), a Franciscan,

undertook the journey, reaching Beijing in 1294. By the time of his death, he had been joined by three other Franciscans and been appointed archbishop by the pope. John had baptized several thousand; however, after his death, the church in China declined because more missionaries were not sent.

The Age of Discovery (1500–1600)

The Crusades fueled a desire to reach the East by circumventing the lands under Muslim control. Voyages of exploration were undertaken to reach the East Indies to secure a trade route for the spices of the East and to attempt to find allies in the continuing crusade against Islam. Prince Henry the Navigator (1394–1460) had sent crews down the coast of Africa. Christopher Columbus, trying to reach the East by sailing west, desired to bring the benefits of Christianity as well as securing lands and riches for his patron, Isabella, queen of Spain. In 1493, to settle a dispute between two Catholic sovereigns, the pope divided the world between the nations of Spain and Portugal with the commission to bring the true faith to the lands that they conquered. All lands west of the line were to belong to Spain, those to the east to Portugal. When the line was moved to the west a year later, Brazil came under Portugal.

The conquest of the New World was accomplished with considerable violence by the conquistadors. Some missionaries to Spanish America became vocal champions of the Indians. The best known was Bartholomew de Las Casas (1474–1566), who petitioned the Spanish throne for fair treatment of the Indians. Pedro Coaxer (1581–1654), a Jesuit, devoted his life to ministering to the African slaves brought to work the plantations. It is said he baptized over three hundred thousand.

When in 1534 Ignatius of Loyola gathered with six friends to form the Jesuits, a potent missionary force was launched. This new order was subject to the pope and devoted to the reconversion of heretics and the conversion of pagans to the Catholic faith. By 1640, Jesuit missionaries had been in most of the then-known world. One of the original six, Francis Xavier was not only to become a famous Catholic missionary, but also arguably one of the greatest missionaries of all time. Xavier first worked among illiterate fisherfolk in India, but news of the potential for evangelism in Japan led him there.

One of Xavier's lasting contributions to missionary thinking arose out of his experience in Japan. His previous ministry among low-caste people did

not prepare him for the advanced culture and traditions of the Japanese. Rather than tear down everything in the culture, Xavier sought to refine and re-create elements of tradition. In some ways, this is an extension of the policy carried out during the evangelization of Europe when pagan customs were incorporated into the faith. It was to have great consequences and some controversy among the missionaries who followed Xavier.

Another innovative Catholic missionary was Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), who labored in China. An expert clockmaker, he presented clocks as gifts to the Chinese, and when the clocks needed to be wound, he used the opportunity to preach. He dressed as a Confucian scholar and allowed his converts to observe the rites that honored Confucius and the family. Ricci's principle was to make the gospel as acceptable as possible to the Chinese and, judging by the number of converts of high rank, he was successful. The question of accommodation, however easy to enunciate, is extremely difficult to practice without compromising the gospel.

Roman Catholic Missions (1600–1800)

The advantages of the Padroado, the papal decree that divided the world between Spain and Portugal, meant that the missionaries could count on support, if not overly generous, from the colonial authorities. But it broke down because Portugal, whose population at the time was around one million, could not fulfill the missionary mandate. Thus, in 1622, Pope Gregory XV established the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to assume the missionary task. Francesco Ingoli, its first head, was a remarkable missionary statesman. Ingoli pushed for the rapid development of indigenous clergy and the freeing of Christian work from colonial attachments. In 1659, the Propaganda issued instructions to the vicars apostolic (heads of missionary regions) not to attempt to change customs of indigenous peoples unless these practices were distinctly non-Christian. "What could be more absurd than to transport France, Spain, Italy, or some other European country to China?"

In India, Robert de Nobili (1577–1656) followed the methods of Ricci by adapting his method of presentation to Brahman customs. While he gained some success with the upper castes, he faced opposition from other European missionaries who accused him of theological compromise. It was only when the lower castes were the target of missionary work that what might be termed a mass movement occurred.

With the decline of Spain and Portugal, France became the great Roman Catholic missionary source. French expeditions had priests with them who journeyed with the explorers into the interior of North America, establishing missions among the indigenous populations. In France, a nun of the Ursuline order, Mary of the Incarnation, had a vision of missionary work in Canada. Arriving in Montreal in 1639, the first six members of her order were the forerunners of the considerable involvement of nuns in missionary work. In Paraguay, Jesuits established self-sufficient villages, or *reductions*, in which they gathered their Indian converts. These were places of safety to protect the converts from hostile tribes and colonial slave traders. While the church was the center of the community life, from the standpoint of church expansion, the work among the Guarani was a failure, because while the Jesuits conducted their mission for more than a century, they brought no candidate for the priesthood forward from the Indians.

The second half of the eighteenth century saw the eclipse of Roman Catholic missions. Among the reasons for this change was the evolving political situation with Protestant nations becoming world powers. In some countries, a reaction against Christianity set in and many missionaries were martyred. The final blow was the suppression of the Jesuits by Pope Clement XIV in 1773. The loss of their missionaries and influence at that time was irreplaceable.

Eastern Orthodox Missions

After the Great Schism (1054), the histories of the Western and Eastern branches of Christianity drifted even further apart. The Tartar invasion was the crucible that forged the Russian nation, but it also hindered evangelism. However, there were notable missionary heroes of the Orthodox Church, all of whom shared the same concern for the Bible and liturgy to be in the language of the people. Stephen of Perm (1340–96) evangelized the Zyrians, reducing their language to writing. Makarius Gloukarev (1792–1847) worked in the Altai Mountains, incorporating education, health care, and women's ministry into his missionary work.

The linguist Nicholas Illiminiski (1821–1891) became a brilliant missionary strategist. While he was never a missionary in the traditional sense, he discovered that the use of Arabic script was reinforcing the Tartars' allegiance to Islam rather than instructing them in Christianity. Illiminiski

reduced the Tartar language to writing, using Russian script, and promoted the use of vernacular languages to teach truth.

Innocent Veniaminov (1797–1878) answered the missionary call to Russian Alaska, planting the church among the Aleuts. He also adopted the use of the vernacular and was proficient in navigating his kayak around his island parish. After his wife died, he became a monk, taking the name Innocent, and was made a missionary bishop for the vast territory of Siberia. He ended his service to the church by occupying the highest office, metropolitan of Moscow. One of the missionaries he influenced was Nicolas Kasatkin (1836–1912), who pioneered the Orthodox Church in Japan. Kasatkin's method of making each believer responsible to teach another person mobilized the Japanese.

The common elements in these examples were the use of the vernacular and the creation of an indigenous clergy.

The Beginnings of Protestant Missions

At the time of the Protestant Reformation, the countries that embraced the Reformation were not the world's dominant powers. Furthermore, internal squabbles as well as pressure from the Catholic Church made missions impossible. The response of the Reformers was to teach that the obligation for missionary work had ceased with the apostles. There were notable exceptions, such as Justinian von Welz (1621–1668), who advocated missionary work. When Holland became a world power, chaplains were sent to its colonies. However, any missionary effort was to come after their primary task of meeting the needs of the colonists.

The discovery of America prompted an interest in reaching the Native American population. The charter of the Massachusetts colony included the statement that the plantation's principal purpose was to convert natives to Christianity. The first successful attempt was by John Eliot (1604–1690), who learned the language of the Pequots and organized his converts into "Praying Towns" so they could live Christian lives. He is remembered for his Bible translation into the Indian language. David Brainerd (1718–1748), a close friend of Jonathan Edwards, also labored among the Indians. When he died, exhausted by his labors, he left behind a diary that influenced both William Carey and Henry Martyn.

The European missionary enterprise had its start in the movement known as pietism. *Pia Desideria* [Pious Desires], written by Philipp Jakob Spener,

outlined the necessity for personal conversion, holiness, fellowship, and witness. As the movement grew in the churches, King Frederick IV of Denmark decided that he should send missionaries to his tiny colony of Tranquebar; he turned to the center of pietism in Halle, Germany, for recruits. August Hermann Francke (1663–1727) selected two men, Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg and Henry Pluschau, who arrived on the field in 1706, the first non-Roman Catholic missionaries in India. Ziegenbalg (1683–1719), with no precedent to guide him, unerringly made the right choices and the best of missionary work, followed the principles he laid down for Bible translation, an accurate understanding of local culture, definite and personal conversion, and development of indigenous clergy as quickly as possible. He saw the potential of using education to spread the gospel, because Christians must be able to read the Word of God.

Another missionary leader influenced by pietism, Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, had welcomed the Brethren of the Common Life, exiled from Moravia, to settle on his estate at Herrnhut. Hearing that the Danish mission to Greenland would likely be abandoned, he proposed that the Moravians undertake it. August 21, 1732, is celebrated by the Moravian churches as the beginning of their missionary work. In addition to the work in Greenland, the Moravians sent missionaries to the West Indies and Surinam.

The Great Century of Missions

The explosion in Protestant missions coincided with the European mastery of speed in the form of the steamship, and power in the form of the steam engine. As the European powers scrambled to carve out colonies in the rest of the world, so missionary interest in the spiritual welfare of these peoples increased. The voyages of Captain Cook stirred William Carey (1761–1834), whose *Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of Heathens* was a stirring call to missions.

Carey challenged the generally accepted theological notions that the missionary mandate had ceased. A self-taught shoemaker and schoolteacher, he is sometimes referred to as "the father of modern missions." This is not accurate, as Carey knew about the work of previous missionaries. However, his importance as a forerunner in the English-speaking world has since produced the overwhelming majority of Protestant missionaries. Landing in India in 1793, he worked as a plantation manager for five years. With the

arrival of more Baptist missionaries in 1799, the missionary work progressed.

Carey was persuaded to join Joshua Marshman (1768–1837), a schoolteacher, and William Ward (1769–1823), a printer, in establishing a station at the Danish enclave of Serampore, sixteen miles from Calcutta. They established a Baptist church and engaged in preaching tours. Their great work was in translation. In thirty years, six whole Bibles, twenty-three complete New Testaments, and Bible portions in ten additional languages were printed. They were students of Indian society, with Ward publishing a book on Hindu culture in 1811.

While the Serampore trio had education as one of their goals, it was Alexander Duff (1806–1878) who opened the first English-speaking institution of higher education in India. Duff's aims were both educational and evangelistic, and while he only saw thirty-three converts in eighteen years, these were solid conversions. Duff's methods were widely copied in other areas.

Adoniram Judson (1788–1850) was the pioneer in Burma (Myanmar). Ann Hazeltine Judson (1789–1826) was one of the first missionary heroines, literally keeping her husband alive during his captivity in the Anglo-Burmese war. Judson's work lived on in his translation of the Bible into Burmese, but a greater legacy was to be found in one of his converts, Ko Tha Byu, who brought the gospel to his own Karen people. The Karens had a tradition of a Creator God whom they had displeased because of their sin. The gospel told them of a Savior who paid the price of their sin, and a mass movement occurred among them.

By no means the first missionary to Africa, David Livingstone (1813–1873) is known for his explorations and his opposition to slavery. Son-in-law to Robert Moffat (1795–1883), who served for forty-eight years among the Tswana people of southern Africa, Livingstone was not content to stay in one place. Beckoned on by "the smoke of a thousand villages" that had never heard the gospel, he explored the interior. It was his conviction that only as Africa became Christian and developed economically could the horrors of the slave trade be stopped.

Christianity's entrance into China was with the accompaniment of commercial interests. The first Protestant missionary in China was Robert Morrison (1782–1834). He arrived when it was illegal for missionaries to preach the gospel and was compelled to live in hiding. However, his fluency

in Chinese was so great that he became a translator for the East India Company. The trade in tea was causing an imbalance of payments for the British as the Chinese demanded silver for their tea. The answer for the British, who controlled the areas that produced opium, was to force China to allow trade in the narcotic. Two opium wars opened China to trade and allowed the residence of foreigners in China and transferred Hong Kong to Britain. [Hong Kong remained under British rule until 1997, when China resumed control.]

Karl F. A. Gutzlaff (1803–1851) envisioned a grand strategy for evangelizing the interior of China by employing native agents as colporteurs [traveling booksellers] and evangelists. Unfortunately, his agents were not always trustworthy and did not carry out the missionary work for which they were paid. However, Gutzlaff's work was not in vain, as he made the outside world aware of the provinces.

Another result of the opium trade and the entrance of missionaries was the T'ai P'ing rebellion. Hung Hsiu-Ch'uan (1814–1864) had received Christian literature from Liang Fah (1789–1855), the first ordained Chinese Protestant pastor. Through a series of dreams he conceived of his destiny to reform China through Christian principles as he understood them. The extent of his sect's orthodoxy is debated, but he used the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments, with the fifth enhanced to include filial piety and the seventh to prohibit opium use.

This peaceful movement was transformed between 1848 and 1853 into a revolutionary army that had its goal of overthrowing the Manchu dynasty. Nanking was captured by the rebels in 1853, and for eleven years was the capital of Hung's dynasty. The imperial forces, assisted by the Western powers, crushed the revolt. Ironically, Charles Gordon, the British Army officer who commanded the imperial troops, was as much a Bible reader as Hung, whose printers had been distributing Morrison's translation at a great rate.

The great visionary for China was James Hudson Taylor, who founded the China Inland Mission to place missionaries in the interior. His workers wore Chinese dress and adapted as much as possible to the Chinese way of life. Taylor accepted missionaries who had little formal education, which was a change from the societies that were growing more professional. In most cases, his recruits were fine missionaries, and many became superior

linguists. He also had the mission headquarters in China so the work could be directed by those who knew the local situation.

The gospel had some success in China, so that by the end of the nineteenth century there were about half a million adherents, but it also spawned fear and resistance. China was still in turmoil, with foreign nations making more demands, and in some cases occupying territory. Opposition to foreigners and Christians exploded in 1900 with the formation of Righteous Harmonious Fists (Boxers), supported by the empress dowager. The Boxers killed Chinese Christians and missionaries and destroyed mission property. It was the greatest loss of missionaries' lives to that time. A military force from the Western powers finally suppressed that rebellion also.

Missionary work in the twentieth century expanded dramatically. The Bible was translated into more languages, and as it was made available in Africa, the phenomenon of separatist churches erupted. The result of a vision of their founder, such as the Church of Simon Kimbangu, these groups, variously called Zionist or Ethiopian, are conveniently referred to as African Independent churches to indicate their non-missionary origin. Their doctrines are typically a mixture of traditional African cultures and biblical revelation. These indigenized forms of Christianity engaged the concerns of the people and provided an answer to a population transitioning to the pressures of the modern world.

The twentieth century was also marked by a worldwide charismatic phenomenon that grew out of the Holiness movement. This renewal, which resulted in the formation of Pentecostal denominations, provided a fresh impetus for missionary work. The outbreak of charismatic activity in the older, traditional denominations prompted a new interest in spreading a gospel of power-encounters with the forces of evil.

In this survey of expansion of the church, several themes have reappeared. The Bible, in the vernacular of the people, is a powerful force for transformation of societies. Empowerment of converts, either by recognizing them as leaders through ordination or through separatist movements, is the way the church grows in a culture. The contagious sharing of what has been experienced in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, either by missionaries or converts, is the key to church growth.

James J. Stamoolis

Intercultural Communication

Since cultures have different symbols, different contexts, different social rules, and different expectations, development of shared understanding is often exceedingly difficult. Thorough study of communication patterns to identify these differences and adapt to them is the foundation of effective cross-cultural ministry.

Intercultural communication is distinct from *cross-cultural communication*, which compares a particular behavior or behaviors in differing cultures. *International communication* deals with comparative mass media communication in different nations and communication between nations. *Global communication* is a term usually limited to the technology and transfer of information without regard to national borders.

Two general communication-model categories, mechanistic and humanistic, are useful to more fully understand the dominant but differing approaches to intercultural communication.

MECHANISTIC MODELS. Mechanistic models are most clearly seen in the development of "information theory" used in telephones, computers, and related devices. The behaviorist perspective (from psychology) stresses stimulus and response. The transmissional perspective (Berlo and DeVito) suggests ten components of communication: source, encoding, message, channel, noise, receiver, decoding, receiver response, feedback, and context.

Use of mechanistic models has led to emphasis on sending out a message without great attention to who is actually receiving and comprehending the message. It has also stimulated development of electronic translation units that are said to make intercultural communication possible. Equivalent words from one language are given in a second language. Applied to intercultural communication, a mechanistic model frequently overlooks significant areas like cultural assumptions, context, and experience. Though frequently followed in intercultural ministry, mechanistic approaches have little (if any) biblical support as a pattern for either evangelism or discipling.

HUMANISTIC MODELS. Humanistic models emphasize the human element in communication. The transactional view recognizes that knowledge of the receiver or listener is part of shaping the message form. Communication is seen as sharing. Symbols are used to stimulate the formation of meaning in

another person and, consequently, the sharing of meaning through a context-sensitive process. The interactional approach recognizes the reciprocal nature of communication, in which a circle that includes feedback and alteration represents the communication process. Both the transactional and interactional views are consistent with biblically based incarnational mission. A Christian view of communication must also recognize the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the communicative process.

Most humanistic models developed in the Western world assume that sharing of information is the primary aim of communication. However, East Asian societies that are deeply influenced by Confucianism (China, Korea, and Japan, especially) view communication as primarily to establish and maintain harmony. Balance and harmony in human relationships are the basis of society. Interpersonal communication is guided by social rules specific for each situation, depending on age, status, and intimacy. Thus, communication is an "infinite interpretive process"[5] where everyone concerned seeks to develop and maintain a social relationship. Communication is a way to seek consensus, not essentially to transmit information. Difficulties in intercultural communication will arise from the fundamentally different purposes in communicating between East and West, as well as from the more obvious differences in style, context, and vocabulary.

Communication and Culture

Is communication synonymous with culture, or an aspect of culture? Culture is a code we learn and share, and learning and sharing require communication. Every act and every cultural pattern involves communication. It is not possible to know a culture without knowing its communication, and communication can only be understood by knowing the culture involved. If culture existed without communication, culture would be unknowable. Communication, on the other hand, functions only as an expression of culture. Culture and communication are inseparable; communication is a part of being alive, of being in any kind of community.

Communication arts focus on specific communication modes, such as graphic and fine arts, drama, music, journalism, and literature. Specific ways a particular mode (communication art) is developed depend on the purpose

and cultural context. This is explicit or utilitarian communication, a skill to be acquired and used for particular purposes.

Problems in intercultural communication occur at both implicit and explicit levels. It is difficult implicitly because of differing assumptions about God, humanity, the world, and the nature of reality, as well as different values and different experiences. When these differences are ignored, assuming similarity instead of difference, communication across cultural boundaries will be ineffective or even negative in its effects.

Eastern Perspectives. The Eastern perspective on communication is historically based on the goal of achieving harmony between humanity and nature. Through communication, the individual seeks to rise above personal interests to become one with the "universal essence" by use of ritual, meditation, and myth. Today's patterns of communication used in Eastern nations as different as Communist China, Japan, and Korea derive from this common background. Kincaid and Cushman point out three characteristics shared by Eastern social and political systems: (1) subordination of the individual to a strong hierarchical authority; (2) a subjugation maintained by a symbolic perception of harmony; and (3) a belief that events have meaning as evidences of universal principles.[6] An Eastern view of communication emphasizes the implicit aspect.

Western Perspectives. By contrast, the Western perspective on communication emphasizes its role in establishing and maintaining individual political, social, and economic freedom. Communication, used to manipulate circumstances and people so that personal goals can be achieved, is utilized via the explicit or utilitarian approach.

Intercultural communication is difficult at the explicit or utilitarian level because of language difference, nonverbal misinterpretations, and personal attitudes. These problems can be identified and overcome, but mature understanding may still not be achieved. Effective intercultural communication demands recognizing and overcoming difficulties at both the explicit and implicit levels.

Signal or Symbol System. Twelve systems of signals are used by every culture. In fact, almost all of human communication occurs by use of one or more of the twelve systems: verbal (or spoken language), written, numeric,

pictorial, artifactual (three-dimensional representations and objects), audio (including silence), kinesic (what has been called "body language"), optical (light and color), tactile (touch), spatial (the use of space), temporal (time), and olfactory (taste and smell).

Even though the same signal systems are used in every culture, the many significant differences in their usage make clarity of understanding between members of different cultures difficult to achieve. One culture may emphasize the importance of the verbal (spoken word), while another emphasizes the unspoken use of body language (kinesic). Another culture may have highly developed pictorial communication, while still another has an intricate system of communication involving numbers. The individual signals may have totally different signification in different cultures. For example, a gesture may mean approval in one culture and be considered obscene in another, or a word may indicate appreciation in one setting but rejection in another. Effective intercultural communication at the explicit-utilitarian level demands learning both the relative importance of various signal systems as well as learning the meaning intended by various signals.

In summary, intercultural communication is a process depending on increasing involvement of the parties seeking to communicate. Only through involvement can both implicit and explicit communication contribute to shared understanding. Such involvement is demonstrated in the life of Christ, who became flesh and lived among us (John 1:14). It is also the pattern for missionary service (17:18). Paul clearly modeled this kind of intercultural communication, as he explains in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23.

<div align="right">Donald K. Smith</div>

Missiology: An Integrative Discipline

Missiology is an integrative discipline to equip God's people for evangelism, disciple-making, and church planting. Paul wrote that leaders are to "equip [God's] people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" to become "mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" in order to "[build] itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Ephesians 4:11–16). Thus, every Christian is called to be God's missionary —to represent his Word and presence in the world. This inclusive definition

is important because missions is the lifeblood of the church, the means by which searchers come to know God and learn to participate in his mission. The church must not be understood merely as a human institution, but as the result of mission, or sending, that begins with God.

> Without mission there is no church.
> When mission goes into decline, so does the church.
> Mission is thus the lifeblood of the church.

The understanding that Jesus came into the world not only to die for our sins but also to show us how to live as God's missionary people is of great significance for the church. Jesus' apostles and disciples were laypeople who walked with him, learning on the journey how to imitate Christ's mission in their own lives. For example, Peter, Andrew, James, and John, fishermen by vocation, learned to be missionaries by experientially walking with Jesus. Missions, thus, is not merely studied as an academic discipline, but as a calling of God modeled through practical ministry.

Missiology as a discipline must not merely be an academic study done within the classroom, but must also include following teachers who are role models of the life and ministry.

Missiology is both domestic and international. Missionaries are trained to minister both within their own culture and other cultures, where they must not only discern their own culture but also learn that of the recipient culture. My wife and I, for example, served as cross-cultural, church-planting missionaries in East Africa for fourteen years. In this process we became learners of a new culture, including the verbal constructs of the culture as expressed in the Swahili trade language and the Kipsigis vernacular. I have since served God as a church-renewal and church-planting missionary in North America by teaching missions as a discipline in seminary for eighteen years (frequently with the assistance of my wife), and then we founded and ministered within Mission Alive (www.missionalive.org) to equip leaders to plant disciple-making, reproducing churches in North America and renew existing ones. In these eras of life, we strived to live a Christ-formed lifestyle: UP in relationship to God, IN Christ-formed community, and OUT on mission with God. Living UP, IN, and OUT is the lifestyle of a missionary.
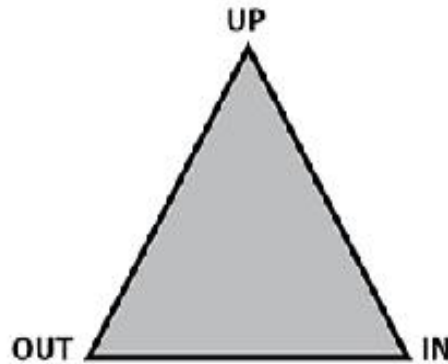
Missiology goes deeper than merely learning how to "teach" the Bible, the gospel, or the nature of ministry. It seeks to form disciples who walk with Jesus and who equip others to reflect the life and teaching of Jesus. As such, missiology entails five interactive disciplines as illustrated in "The Missional Helix."[7]

Too frequently missiology is considered a pragmatic discipline developed around strategy. Missiology began to reflect the pragmatics of culture: Church planting in the West, for example, often resembled starting a business with methodologies of attraction rather than making disciples who make disciples who then make even more disciples. Over time, some churches increasingly reflect the world—with a business structure of full-time people administrating an organization—rather than a community of people on mission with God.

Missiology as a discipline and practice of life, however, is much deeper and more transformative. The discipline reflects as least five elements: theological reflection, cultural analysis, historical perspective, strategies formation, and spiritual formation in what I describe as the Missional Helix. In this helix, ministry formation is like a spiral. The coils turn round and round, passing through the same landmarks, but always at a slightly higher level. This spiral, a helix, is descriptive of a process of effective missionary ministry. Effective missionaries are sensitive to all five elements in their teaching and imitative practice.

THE MISSIONAL HELIX
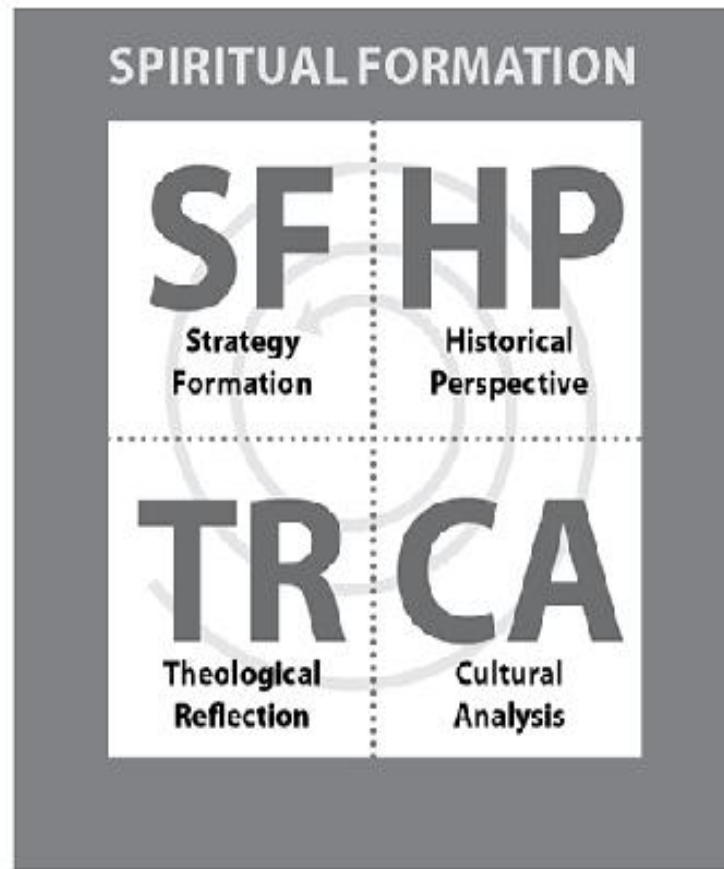
The spiral begins with theologies, such as the *missio Dei,* the kingdom of God, incarnation, and atonement, which focus and form our perspectives of culture and the practice of ministry. Cultural analysis enables missionaries and ministers to define types of peoples within cultural contexts—to understand the social construction of their reality, to perceive how they are socially related to one another, and to explain how the Christian message intersects with every aspect of culture (birth rites, coming-of-age rituals, weddings, funerals, and so on). The spiral proceeds to consider what has occurred historically in the missional context. Historical perspective narrates how things got to be as they are based upon the interrelated stories of the particular nation, tribe, lineage, neighborhood, the church, and God's mission. Strategy formation helps shape the practical methodology of ministry. These contextual strategies draw deeply from cultural and historical understandings to theologically discern what God is saying about the practice of ministry and develop actual practices to implement them.

Finally, this shaping of ministry takes place within the environment of spiritual formation as Christian servants, people of his kingdom, humbly submit their lives to a covenant relationship with God as Father and enthrone Christ as their King.

The Relationship between the Five Elements of Ministry Formation

The missional helix is a spiral because the missionary returns time and time again to reflect theologically, culturally, historically, and strategically under the guiding hand of God to develop ministry models appropriate to the local context. Theology, social understandings, history of missions, and strategy all work together and interpenetrate each other. Thus, praxis impacts theology, which in turn shapes the practice of ministry.

In this diagram, the broken line between the four internal elements of spiritual formation demonstrates how each interacts with the others. In this process, God is shaping who Christian leaders are and what they do within an environment of spiritual formation as they humbly and prayerfully submit to God as Father and to each other.

The diagram is a helix because theology, history, culture, and the practice of ministry build on one another as the community of faith collectively develops understandings and a vision of God's will within their cultural context. Like a spring, the spiral grows to new heights as ministry understandings and experiences develop. Ideally, the missionary is always learning, always spiraling, to a new level of understanding and competence.

THE MISSIONAL HELIX SPIRAL

SF Strategy Formation

HP Historical Perspective

TR Theological Reflection

CA Cultural Analysis

SF Strategy Formation

HP Historical Perspective

TR Theological Reflection

CA Cultural Analysis

Spiritual Formation

SF Strategy Formation

HP Historical Perspective

TR Theological Reflection

CA Cultural Analysis

Spiritual Formation

SF Strategy Formation

HP Historical Perspective

TR Theological Reflection

CA Cultural Analysis

The Components of the Missional Helix

Each of these four internal elements of the missional helix (theology, history, culture, and strategy) is essential in reflecting on and planning for Christian ministry.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION. Theological reflection is the beginning point for ministry formation and the most significant element within the internal structure of the spiral. All missiological decisions must be rooted both implicitly and explicitly in biblical theology in order to mirror the purposes and mind of God.

Too many missionaries, while acknowledging the Bible as the Word of God, allow culture rather than Scripture to shape their core understandings of the church. The Bible is used to prooftext practice rather than to define her essence. Without a biblically rooted ecclesiology, the teachings and practices of the church are likely to be shaped either implicitly by the dominant evangelical culture or explicitly by random surveys to ascertain what people want. A biblical understanding of the nature of the church, consequently, enables missionaries to plant and nurture churches that are rooted in the mission of God rather than presuppositions of popular culture. As expressed earlier, the entrepreneurial spirit of North America induces church planters to begin churches that are organized and managed like a business rather than a community formed under the lordship of Christ.

The missional helix proposes that missionaries use Scripture to form a biblical understanding of the church. Paul, in Ephesians 2:19–22, for instance, uses multiple metaphors to describe the nature of the church. The church is a new nation: Newly converted Christians are "no longer foreigners and strangers" but "fellow citizens" in a community of faith (2:19). The church is a family, or "God's household" (2:19). The church is a holy temple, well-constructed with each part joined together and built around Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone. This fellowship comes into existence through conversion: Those dead in sin (2:1–3) have been made alive with Christ (2:4–7) by God's grace (2:8–10). Paul stacks metaphors one on another to illustrate a redeemed fellowship "to bring unity to all things . . . under Christ" (1:3–11) and existing "for the praise of his glory" (v. 12). These perspectives form an inspired picture of God's divine community.

Theological reflection, however, extends beyond textual study. Missionaries must realize that all readers understand and apply Scripture within their historical traditions, based upon their rational systems of thought and formed by the perspectives from their experience. The missionary, therefore, must be cognizant of four different resources that shape theological reflection: Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.[8] For example, in rural, face-to-face cultures, Christians tend to perceive the church as a "family," in modern, industrial contexts as a "business," and in postmodern, informational cultures as a "network" or sometimes as a "community." Missionaries and ministers, as theological "meaning makers," must theologically reflect upon the connotation of these metaphors, using all four resources of theological reflection.

To be a missionary necessitates being a theologian.

CULTURAL ANALYSIS. In addition to theological reflection, missionaries must undertake an in-depth worldview analysis of the local culture. Much too often, this second element of the Missional Helix is excluded. Ministers and church planters naïvely project their worldview upon other contexts and interpret reality in terms of their heritage. This intellectual colonialism results in transplanted theologies, reflecting the missionaries' heritage rather than contextualized theologies, developed by reflecting on Scripture within the context of local languages, thought categories, and ritual patterns. Transplanted theologies are merely uprooted from one context and transferred to a new one with the expectation that the meanings will be the same in both cultures. The beginning point of theologizing in a new culture is always a thorough analysis of the culture on a worldview level. Based on these cultural understandings, trained missionaries are able to be theological brokers to those within the culture and minister alongside them in developing a local contextualized theology.

Christian ministry does not occur in cultural vacuums but in cultural contexts, where rival perspectives of reality vie for human allegiance. Missionaries must, therefore, become adept at differentiating worldview types and discern how these types influence the target culture. These understandings enable them to communicate God's message so that it interacts with the culture's perspective of reality.

At least four different worldview types are present in world cultures.[9] Stated succinctly, a *secular worldview* divides the world into natural and supernatural realms and focuses almost exclusively on the natural. God is considered to be either nonexistent or irrelevant to human affairs. Secularists tend to be resistant until they realize, usually during times of trauma, that humans are unable to "direct their steps" (Jeremiah 10:23), that the divine and the human are interrelated.

An *animistic perspective* of reality believes that personal spiritual beings and impersonal spiritual forces have power over human affairs. During times of disease, death, and drought, animists use divination to discover which beings and forces are impacting them in order to ward them off or to employ their power. They must learn that Creator God is approachable and concerned about human life, and unlike the gods, "majestic in holiness" (Exodus 15:11). Through the death and resurrection of his Son, God has defeated all the principalities and powers (Colossians 2:15).[10]

A *pantheistic worldview* perceives that an impersonal, all-pervading essence, sometimes defined as "god," fills the universe. As droplets of water merge to become a stream, then a river, and finally an ocean, so individuals can become one with the essence of the world through meditation, thus achieving a change of consciousness called "enlightenment." The pantheist, through living illustrations of Christian meditation, must experience God to be living and personal, full of compassion, and having a distinctive holiness.

A *theistic worldview* presupposes that God created the heavens and the earth and continues to care for that universe. Some theists follow God's distinctive way of salvation through Jesus Christ, while others focus on submission to and honoring Allah.

Based on these typologies, missionaries and ministers can diagram the intertwining influences of secularism, animism, pantheism, and theism within their host culture. While most cultures emphasize one or two of these types, influences from all four types may be syncretized in various configurations. Understanding the various influences in the culture enables missionaries and ministers to encode the gospel in theological metaphors appropriate to the culture.

Worldview analysis is only one of many tools of cultural inquiry. Other tools include study of the epistemological sources forming worldview, types of cognitive processes, a culture's grid/group orientation, levels of technology, and the resultant strategies for use of money and media,

differing definitions of sin and related conceptions of salvation, and the logico-structural integration of its worldview universals within cultures.

Frequently, missionaries and church planters analyze bits and pieces of a culture but are unable to make a systematic cultural analysis. Or they effectively analyze culture in broad, general terms, but are not equipped to make localized cultural analysis.

Effective missionaries, by their very nature, are practical cultural anthropologists.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE. Likewise, missionaries must develop ministry based upon historical perspective rather than being oblivious to what has previously occurred. Because of their short national history and focus on practical inclinations, many North Americans sense the future without understanding the past. Samuel Escobar believes that North American missiologists tend to negate theory and historical background. In other words, they look at missions as a management task necessitating "a task-oriented sequence of steps to be followed in order to achieve" specified goals. He challenges the North American missions community to expand the horizons of their "managerial missiology."[11]

Historical perspective provides many insights that guide missionaries to develop their practice of ministry. For example, the reading of history greatly aids contemporary evangelists to understand syncretism. Ancient Israel, like many people coming out of animism, was tempted to follow both God and the gods of the nations: "They bow[ed] down and [swore] by the LORD and . . . also . . . by Molek" (Zephaniah 1:5). Modern Christians have syncretized secularism and theism by negating the Holy Spirit and demythologizing spiritual powers. Postmodern Christians have brought new syncretisms, including pervasive relativism, fascination with spiritual powers, focusing on power and neglecting truth, and interpreting emotions and intuition as the work of the Holy Spirit.

Missionaries will find it difficult to understand the nature of syncretism without historical perspective.

STRATEGY FORMATION. Missions, by its very nature, necessitates strategic planning. Strategy formation, however, should never stand by itself as a self-contained, "how-to-do-it" prescription. Never should practitioners merely ask the question, "Does it work?" because many strategies that "create an

impact," enabling the church to grow for short periods of time, do not reflect the qualities and purposes of God. As inferred earlier, the "attractional," "consumer," or "health-wealth" types of churches produce numerical results, but when God takes away health or wealth, as in the case of Job, the faith of those who have come to Christ to receive his "benefits" will likely prove deficient. A question that better reflects the Missional Helix is, "Does this model of praxis guide people to become disciples of Jesus and people of his mission within this historical, cultural context?"

The foundational understandings of theology and the perspectives developed through cultural analysis and historical perspective should then lead missionaries to critical reflection upon praxis. The missionary or minister should return time and time again to reflect theologically, culturally, historically, and strategically within the context of spiritual formation in order to develop ministry models that are appropriate to the local context. The four elements work together and interpenetrate each other. Based on these understandings, strategy is the practice of model formation for ministry shaped by theological reflection, cultural analysis, and historical perspective, and by the continued practice of ministry while being spiritually formed as disciples of Christ.

Currently, mission strategies are undergoing radical transformation as missiologists reflect upon the various social contexts of missions and the need for the church to be God's distinct, called-out people. For example, the United States once considered itself to be a Christian nation. Many early immigrants fled Europe seeking religious freedom in the New World. As new towns emerged, churches occupied both a geographically and philosophically central location reflecting the church's role in shaping cultural customs and values. New denominations emerged reflecting the new modern paradigms and flavors of the North American frontier.

The Christian church in the twenty-first century, however, has generally lost this privileged position in the United States and is now only one of many influences shaping contemporary culture. Nevertheless, many Christians assume that the United States is still a Christian nation and attempt to promote Christian morals and ethics through public political activity. This has caused outsiders to view the church as sheltered, judgmental, and anti-homosexual.[12]

Returning to England after thirty years of missionary work in India, Lesslie Newbigin, father of the contemporary missional movement, witnessed an even greater decline of Christianity in his country. In *Foolishness to the Greeks*, he asked, "What would be involved in a missionary encounter between the gospel and this whole way of perceiving, thinking, and living that we call 'modern Western culture'?" or in its shortened more popular form, "Can the West be converted?"[13] This must also be a guiding question for us in North America during this generation. The church must learn to serve in pre-Constantinian ways as a minority—to survive from the margins rather than from the center of culture. According to Newbigin, "Missions, which have been accustomed to flowing down the current of world power, are now faced with the necessity of learning for the first time to swim against the current."[14]

The Environment of Ministry Formation

DEFINING SPIRITUAL FORMATION. The final and most important element of the Missional Helix is spiritual formation because it activates and shapes all the inward sectors of the helix.

Spiritual formation is defined by Paul as walking with God in such a way that we are being "transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18). This glory is embodied in Christ, who brought a new covenant, enlivened by the Holy Spirit. This glory is contrasted to the fading glory of the old covenant of Moses, written on "tablets of stone" (3:3, 7), not in human hearts. Paul says, "Will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness!" (3:8–9).

Paul compares his ministry to that of Moses. Because of the hope embodied in the new covenant, "we are very bold!" (3:12). When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, his countenance so reflected the radiance of God that the Israelites were not able to look at him. Moses, however, put a veil over his face to "prevent [them] from seeing the end of what was passing away" (3:13). Paul testifies that he and all others who have turned to the Lord minister with "unveiled faces . . . [and] are being transformed into his image" by the Holy Spirit (3:18). As light permeates darkness, Paul's

message gains credibility because of the presence of the Holy Spirit working powerfully within the church.

May we be people of unveiled faces, boldly reflecting God's glory as we are being transformed into his image by the Holy Spirit!

The twin themes of covenant and kingdom define the essence of spiritual formation. Covenant signifies the personal, intimate relationship of God with his people. Kingdom reflects God's rule with authority and power among his people. From this perspective, spiritual formation is the shaping of ministry as Christian servants humbly submit their lives to a covenant relationship with God as Father and, as people of his kingdom, enthrone Christ as their King.

THE COVENANT TRIANGLE. The ministry of Jesus demonstrates a covenant relationship between him and his followers as demonstrated by this triangle. Jesus reveals his relationship with God the Father and invites his disciples to participate with him in this relationship. In this community of shared life, Jesus does only what he sees his Father doing (John 5:19). Church planter and author Mike Breen writes, "In shared identity, common purpose is forged. As his disciples mature in their relationship with him, Jesus reveals that they will share in a common relationship with the one he calls Father and that together they will fashion the cords that will hold the covenant together."[15] This cord is love. Jesus said, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them" (John 14:23).
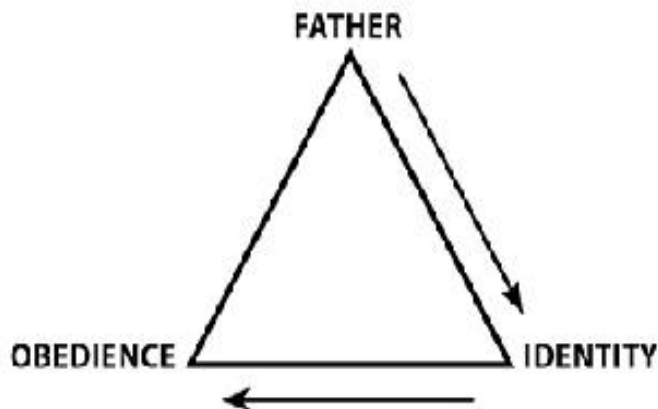
Disciples do not merely follow the Father because he commands it (the left side of the triangle) but obey him because of their identity as the Father's

children (the right side of the triangle).

This identity flows from God our Creator, who faithfully redeems us by the blood of his Son and indwells us by his Holy Spirit. Again, Breen writes, "We are children of God, born again into a new family, given a new name and a new identity by which we can gain access to all of the resources of our covenant partner."[16] Our participation in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ in baptism signifies a new life in union with God in Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3–7). The Lord's Supper is a covenant meal celebrated to help remind us whose we are (Luke 22:14–22).

Thus, we obey God because we are his children walking in covenant relationship with him. Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commands" (John 14:15). The way of God is spiritually formed within our hearts, minds, and souls so that we live with "security and confidence"[17] in covenant relationship with the God who formed us. We no longer seek to approach God through mere obedience but through recognition of our identity as children of God in Christ, covered by the blood of Jesus, and led forward by the Holy Spirit.

THE KINGDOM TRIANGLE. Like covenant, the theme of the kingdom or rule of God is interwoven through the fabric of the biblical narrative. Jesus began his public ministry by "proclaiming the good news of God," saying, "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:14–15). He taught his disciples to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). As servant-king, Jesus healed the sick, cast out demons, fed the poor, and forgave the sinful. His parables described the reception, value, and priority of his kingdom.
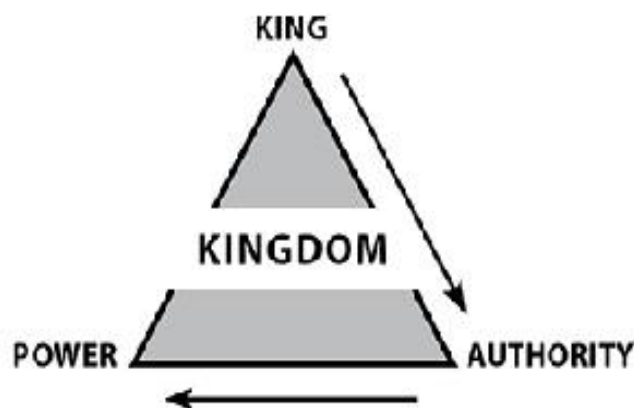
Jesus' kingdom glory was frequently camouflaged, but occasionally revealed in its entire splendor. At his baptism, heaven was opened and God gave his blessing, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). On the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus was elevated in a cloud over Moses, the great lawgiver, and Elijah, the great prophet, and God said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (Matthew 17:5). In his ascension, Jesus was taken into heaven before the apostles' eyes, who then heard the promise from two angels that he would likewise return (Acts 1:9–10).

As king, Jesus gives his disciples authority to act for him. They are to represent him as king. "In the gospels, we read of Jesus' amazing authority as he represented God's kingship. In turn, having followed him and learned to imitate his life, his disciples chose to receive the authorization to act on his behalf. Disciples choose to give as they have received—giving forgiveness, healing, deliverance, and blessing."[18]

When Jesus sent seventy-two disciples out on the Limited Commission, he commanded them to "heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'" (Luke 10:9). They returned with joy saying to Jesus, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name" (Luke 10:17). Jesus said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (v. 18). They did not do this by their own power or might, but by the delegated authority that God had given to them. This is not done by power flowing through human fingers, typifying some human ability, but via prayer to God who has all authority to forgive sin and defeat Satan. This defeat of Satan during Jesus' ministry was a foretaste of his disarming Satan's power on the cross (Colossians 2:15).

Breen describes the Kingdom Triangle in simple terms: "The Kingdom begins with the King, who exercises authority through us his representatives, and with that authority, he sends power for us to be able to do all that he wants us to do."[19]

The Missional Helix thus takes place within the environment of spiritual formation as Christian servants humbly submit their lives to a covenant relationship with God as Father and enthrone Christ as their king.

Functions of the Missional Helix

The Missional Helix is useful in at least two ways. First and foremost, it provides a model of decision-making for all Christians who consider themselves missionaries, so that ministry becomes intentional and, with much practice, instinctive. When formulating patterns of Christian ministry, the missionary-oriented Christian spirals around the helix, reflecting theologically, culturally, historically, and strategically, guiding both fellow Christians and searchers to be "transformed into his image" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Second, the Missional Helix provides a model for theological education. Equipping for ministry should not put high emphasis on some elements and give little consideration to others. Rather, it should provide an intentional, integrated model of ministry formation. The Missional Helix provides such a rubric. Imagine teaching a seminar or course using this integrative framework.

A Case Study: Use of the Missional Helix in Teaching and Mentoring

In teaching a seminar or class on Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts,[20] I briefly describe the interrelated sectors of the Missional Helix.

Because animistic assumptions are typically foreign to those who are from the West or inculcated with Western cultural values, I typically begin this seminar with "Cultural Analysis." I define *animism* along with significant terms like *divination* and *possession* and provide real-life stories from my journey of learning and ministry. I try to give just enough historical and theological background that participants, especially those who are unknowingly secular, will not reduce animism to "primitive superstition." This reflection on culture frequently engenders an appetite to feast on what the Bible says on the topic.

During "Theological Reflection," I give an overview of "God and gods" in the Old Testament, "Christ and demons" in the Gospels, and "the church and the principalities and powers" in Pauline literature. This reading of Scripture begins to raise numerous questions that need answers: What is the nature of spiritual power in the Bible? What is the relationship of Christ and Satan to these powers? How does the Bible describe the way of Jesus in relationship to these powers? What is the difference between animistic and Christian power? Biblical phrases like "the kingdom of God," "living in the

heavenly realms," and "waiting on the Lord" take on new, contextual meaning.

In "Historical Perspective," I tell a story of God providing rain during a time of drought while we ministered among the Kipsigis of Kenya and the competing worldviews within me as I considered what happened when God immediately provided rain. Based upon this story, we then discuss various perceptions for the cause of rain during premodernity, modernity, and postmodernity, contrasting secular, animistic, and theistic responses. Is God truly the giver of rain?

Covering "Strategy Formation," we seek Christ-formed ministry models by reflecting on various perceptions of truth encounter, power encounter, and cultural encounter to develop contextual, biblically rooted patterns of ministry. The word *encounter* is used intentionally because animism is a belief that personal spiritual beings and impersonal spiritual forces have power over human affairs, and that humans, consequently, must discover what beings and forces are impacting them in order to determine future action and, frequently, to manipulate their power. Cultural encounters occur during times of transition, necessitating cultural understanding to form new customs that reflect the kingdom of God, resulting in questions like, What type of blessing rituals occur when children are born? What type of rites of transition summon blessings from God rather than other spiritual beings and forces? What occurs when Christians marry? What are elements of a Christian funeral? and How do these rites of transition reflect the kingdom of God rather than dependence on other spiritual beings and forces?

For both leaders and the community of faith, "Spiritual Formation" occurs when Christians listen to God and spiritually discern his voice within the rhythm of theological reflection, cultural analysis, historical perspective, and strategy formation. This movement is continually happening in times of prayer, weekly meetings of communities of faith, and seminars for leader equipping, among other things. I remember a meeting of Kipsigis leaders when God spoke through us as a community, telling us that we needed to discern the difference between Christian and traditional marriage. This spiritual impulse led us to change the direction of our meeting to discern rituals and practices that distinctively reflect the love and holiness of God within a Christian wedding ceremony. We first searched Scripture as a community to discern the nature of Christian marriage and then discerned rituals for a wedding ceremony that reflected these principles. It was a

hilarious meeting as participants role-played various events that occur in a Christian wedding ceremony that would make it both distinctively "Christian" and contextually appropriate. A historical meeting in the life of a movement, and one to remember!

Spiritual formation thus occurs on the journey as God by his Holy Spirit speaks to us and leads us to discern practices for Christian living. When leaders are intentionally empowered to read Scripture with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, their communities grow in faith and practice. Today, Christian weddings have largely displaced "traditional" weddings among the Kipsigis.

Hopefully, this case study provides an example not only of a course using the Missional Helix but also its value to contemporary ministry training.

<div style="text-align: right">Gailyn Van Rheenen</div>

For Further Reading and Study

G. W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*

M. Pocock, et al., *The Changing Face of World Missions*

G. Van Rheenen, *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies*

D. K. Smith, *Creating Understanding: A Handbook for Christian Communication Across Cultural Landscapes*

R. A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*

Introduction to Homiletics

✦

> "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"
>
> —Romans 10:14

What Is Homiletics?

Homiletics is the art and science of preparing and delivering sermons. The word itself derives from the same Greek root from which we get the English term *homily*, which basically means "sermon." Another way to think of homiletics is the study and practice of preaching, though it may also include other forms of teaching. The following articles have been chosen not so much to teach the reader how to preach, though we do believe they may prove useful in that regard, but to help the reader begin to think about preaching as a means to transform lives. The first life that must be transformed, of course, is that of the preacher, for without that, a sermon is little more than any other kind of speech. Persuasive it may be, but not transformative. Read on for both information and inspiration as you consider the how, what, and why of preaching.

The Case for Preaching

No one who takes the Bible seriously should count preaching out. To the New Testament writers, preaching stood as the event through which God works. Peter, for example, reminded his readers that they had "been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and

abiding word of God" (1 Peter 1:23 RSV). How had this word come to affect their lives? "That word," Peter explained, "is the good news which was preached to you" (v. 25). Through preaching God had redeemed them.

Paul was a writer. From his pen we have most of the inspired letters of the New Testament, and heading the list of his letters is the one to the Romans. Measured by its impact on history, few documents compare with it. Yet when Paul wrote this letter to the congregation in Rome, he confessed, "I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine" (Romans 1:11–12 RSV). Paul realized that some ministries simply cannot take place apart from face-to-face contact. Even the reading of an inspired letter will not substitute. "I am eager to preach the gospel to you . . . who are in Rome" (1:15 RSV). A power comes through the preached word that even the written word cannot replace.

Moreover, Paul recounted the spiritual history of the Thessalonians who had "turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven" (1 Thessalonians 1:9–10 RSV). That about-face occurred, explained the apostle, because "when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers" (2:13 RSV). Preaching, in Paul's mind, did not consist of someone discussing religion. Instead, God himself spoke through the personality and message of a preacher to confront men and women and bring them to himself.

All of this explains why Paul encouraged his young associate Timothy to "preach the Word" (2 Timothy 4:2). *Preach* means "to cry out, herald, or exhort." Preachers should pour out the message with passion and fervor in order to stir souls. Not all passionate pleading from a pulpit, however, possesses divine authority. When preachers speak as heralds, they must cry out "the Word." Anything less cannot legitimately pass for Christian preaching.

<div align="right">Haddon W. Robinson</div>

Toward a Definition of Doctrinal Preaching

The late Jaroslav Pelikan, the celebrated historical theologian, stated, "What the church of Jesus Christ believes, teaches, and confesses on the basis of

the Word of God: this is Christian doctrine."[1] Peter Toon, in an insightful treatment of the development of doctrine across the history of the church, explained doctrine as "a historically conditioned response of the church to questions put to her at a particular time and place by the world or by her members."[2] However, we can define doctrine more easily than we can define doctrinal preaching. One of the ways of attempting a definition of doctrinal preaching is to show the relationship that doctrine has to preaching. William J. Carl III provides a clear portrait of the association of doctrine with preaching. He contends:

> Doctrine is not identical with the proclamation of the gospel. Doctrine serves proclamation, enriches and enlarges it, largely in a critical role, as a criterion for determining that what the church proclaims today is in harmony with Scripture and its tradition, that it is truly human language about God and not about the latest spiritual trend or social ethical passion.[3]

In conjunction with doctrine's critical relationship to preaching, like an arbiter or umpire of a baseball game who demands that the game be played according to the rules of the baseball manual, doctrine insists that preaching be carried out in harmony with the regulations of the biblical manual.

Furthermore, Carl discerns the affiliation that the rules of English grammar have with ordinary English conversation in light of the relationship that doctrine has with preaching. He quotes George Lindbeck, who said, "There is a parallel intimate relationship between the rules of English grammar and ordinary American discourse."[4] Carl further argues:

> Not all discourse that employs Christian vocabulary is proper Christian discourse any more than a sentence using nothing but English terms, such as "He don't do no wrong to nobody," qualifies as a proper English sentence. . . . We have come to recognize its impropriety as a result of our mastery of English grammar and our use of these rules to criticize and evaluate the sentence. In much the same way, Christian doctrines should function to criticize discourse that flows from the pulpit. . . . Preachers need to concern themselves with doctrine, then, in every sermon that they preach, just as authors need to attend to grammatical rules when writing. Just as the rules of subject/verb agreement inform the writing of this paragraph, so the Trinity doctrine must inform the way preachers speak when referring to God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, reminding them that their discourse does not imply that Christians believe in three gods.[5]

While preachers know what doctrinal preaching is, it is difficult to articulate succinctly what it is in one descriptive and pregnant sentence. A

definition is a limitation. Once something is defined, there is the inevitability of leaving something important out of the definition.

We live in a communication-crazed community. Words, words, and more words! Left-brained people especially emphasize the value of words. Warren W. Wiersbe asks, "How do you define life and taste? How do you give a definition for the essence of the feeling of being in love?" He cites the poet Walt Whitman, who once listened to a lecture of a learned astronomer who discussed the meticulous matters of the universe and the relationship of the bodily elements of space. After growing weary of this technical, scientific lecture, Whitman went out and looked at the stars![6]

People want preachers to define everything for them, and they are sometimes disappointed when the preachers tell them that they are unable to do so. Some things are enveloped within the realm of what Rudolf Otto called the *mysterium tremendum*, or the tremendous mystery. Some things have to be experienced. In a way, doctrinal preaching can only be approached in an effort to define itself, because the essence and reality of doctrinal preaching is bigger than any definition. Doctrinal preaching is not a mechanical process governed by a human agent; rather, it is an event that happens under the auspices of the Holy Spirit, who reveals the doctrinal truths and testifies of the person of Christ. Consequently, doctrinal preaching is shrouded in mystery. In an attempt to define doctrinal preaching, the mystery cannot be demystified, and the inscrutable cannot be scrutinized.

We can only move toward a definition of doctrinal preaching. We are on the way without any possibility of ever fully arriving! While it is true that we must experience the essence of doctrinal preaching, we must also know what we are experiencing. Among the many qualities of the effectiveness of Paul as a doctrinal preacher was his conviction about what he preached and whom he preached about. He reminded Timothy that all Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for doctrine (2 Timothy 3:16). Scripture is just as God-breathed as the body of Adam that received the breath of God; Scripture is just as God-breathed as the corpses in the valley of dry bones that became a resuscitated army when the *ruach*, or breath of God, was breathed into them (Ezekiel 37:1–14). Because Paul had this confidence, he could exclaim, "I know *whom* I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted unto him until that day" (2 Timothy 1:12).

We are challenged by 1 Peter 3:15 to "be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." Growing up in the church of my childhood, the Rose Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, the senior choir would sing the choral rendition of "It's Real" and do so with great passion and confidence. I can still see the tears running down the faces of those senior saints, and I can still hear both men and women shouting as they waved their hands in personal witness to the truth of the lyrics of the song: "Yes, yes, I know it's real!" I am convinced that these lyrics must undergird the sermonic statements of our doctrinal preaching.

> Oh, how well do I remember how I doubted day by day,
> For I did not know for certain that my sins were washed away.
> When the Spirit tried to tell me, I would not the truth receive;
> I endeavored to be happy, and to make myself believe.
>
> But at last I tired of living such a life of fear and doubt,
> For I wanted God to give me something I would know about;
> So the truth would make me happy and the light would clearly shine,
> And the Spirit give assurance that I'm His and He is mine.
>
> So I prayed to God in earnest, and not caring what folks said,
> I was hungry for the blessing; my poor soul, it must be fed.
> Then at last by faith I touched Him and, like sparks from smitten steel,
> Just so quick salvation reached me. Oh, bless God, I know it's real!
>
> *Chorus*
> It's real, it's real,
> Oh, I know it's real.
> Praise God, the doubts are settled,
> For I know, I know, it's real.[7]

Doctrine has a subservient role to preaching. While doctrine may exist to make preaching as disciplined as it needs to be, doctrine's mission is to be a servant to proclamation. Doctrine's purpose is not merely to be derived, constructed, and formalized, and to remain in the archives of academia for scholarly use only. Rather, doctrine is the possession of the church and must be preached. Preaching extracts its communicative strength from the reservoirs of doctrine and draws its riches from the wells of its truths. The doctrine behind and below the sermon gives it stability.

As Narcissus saw his reflection in a pool of water, so doctrine ought to see its image in the face of preaching. It gives the sermon its shape. After

the sermon is preached, the hearers may not initially recognize an identifiable doctrine within the sermon because the preacher may have expounded on the doctrine of sanctification without ever using the word *sanctification* during the preaching event. But the hearer ought to be able to detect the image behind the doctrine and arrive at the intended doctrinal experience. It is better to experience repentance, joy, and justification than merely to learn about them.

I do not have in mind the lessening of the importance of knowing doctrine; I just want to remind preachers constantly that doctrinal preaching not only informs our learning but also influences our living. We can never "fully know" during our terrestrial trek. Paul was right, "*Now* we see only a reflection as in a mirror; *then* we shall see face to face. *Now* I know in part; *then* I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12, emphasis added). But *then*! When the terrestrial trek is terminated and the celestial course is initiated, the "now-ness" of time will, in the words of the inimitable Dr. Gardner C. Taylor, fall exhausted at the feet of the "then-ness" of eternity. Not only will we have "no less days to sing God's praise," but we will also have no less days to learn more fully about the One to whom doctrine points.

We have heard about the love of God over the years, but after being in the presence of the Lord for a million years, we will only know just a little bit more of what the unconditional love of God really is. We have studied about the atonement for sin for a long period of time, but after staring at the nail prints in the Lord's hands for a billion years and gazing at the Lamb that was slain for our redemption, we will know only a smidgen of what the atonement really means. We have thought long and hard about the holiness of God, and reminded our congregants, "Be holy, because I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). But after a trillion years, we will know only a fraction about the holiness of God that causes angels to cover their feet and faces and to fly away as they sing a song that reverberates throughout the corridors of heaven, earth, and hell: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3).

Consider a scene where a sea gull is dispatched every year and flies to the Rock of Gibraltar, where it brushes its beak against that rock formation and flies away only to return a thousand years later. If that process is repeated every thousand years until the Rock of Gibraltar is reduced to sea level, in comparison, we would have only been in heaven for a day. There

will never be a moment in time or eternity in which we will fully comprehend the doctrines of the Bible that we preach. What Phillips Brooks told students at Yale still holds true! "Preach doctrine, preach all the doctrine you know, and learn forever more and more; but preach it always, not that men may believe it, but that men may be saved by believing it."[8] Exegesis must be combined with experience, deeds must be merged with doctrine, lips must be linked to lives, and beliefs must be integrated with behavior.

Charles Bugg referred to Phillips Brooks' assertion that compared the Bible to a telescope. The telescope is not designed to look *at* but to look *through*, to see that which is beyond us.[9] Additionally, Bugg cited the comment of Robert McCracken, who, while senior minister of the Riverside Church in New York City, was asked by someone why people kept coming to Riverside to hear his sermons. McCracken replied, "They keep coming hoping to hear a word from beyond themselves."[10]

Dr. Greg Thornbury, a professor at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee, interviewed Dr. Carl F. H. Henry, founding editor of *Christianity Today,* shortly before Henry died. Thornbury asked him what was the most profound question he had ever put to his students. Dr. Henry bypassed the conundrum of catechesis, the intricacies of systematic theology, and the profundity of doctrinal explanation and stated, "The most profound question I have ever asked my students is, 'Have you ever met the risen Lord?'"[11] This question goes beyond the mere recitation of a creed, the explanation of a doctrine, or the clarification of a biblical regulation. It points to a relationship with the person of Jesus Christ. Doctrinal preaching must move from merely learning *biblical regulations* or the indication that we cannot live holy as God requires. It must move toward *gospel revelation,* for Christ enables us to do what we cannot do—to live holy! Ultimately, it must move to forging a *relationship* with Christ. For Dr. Henry, it was not just a matter of testing a student on the historical claims of the resurrection of Jesus; his ultimate concern was whether the student had an experiential encounter with the Lord.

Job did not give a lecture on the person of the Redeemer; instead he declared, "I know that my redeemer lives" (Job 19:25). The blind man in John 9 did not need a seminar on blindness; he needed his sight. He declared, "I was blind but now I see!" (John 9:25). People who come to

hear us on Sunday morning do not merely need more *information* about Bible facts; they need *transformation.* This is why Harry Emerson Fosdick penned the classic line nearly eighty years ago: "Only the preacher proceeds still upon the idea that folk come to church desperately anxious to discover what happened to the Jebusites."[12] They come to have the tragedies and struggles in their lives addressed from the perspective of a God who is able to change their situations and/or to give them strength to endure them with joy. Doctrine, in its association with preaching, epitomizes the role that salt plays in protecting meat from decay. Doctrine is the protector of preaching. Without it, preaching would fall into heresy.

Additionally, doctrine is inseparably and inextricably integrated with true preaching and promotes the development and health of proclamation. Like yeast, which loses itself in dough and yet causes the dough to graduate from flatness to a fully rounded dinner roll, doctrine causes preaching to rise in fullness of authority and accent. Doctrine offers a moral conscience to preaching that prevents preaching from giving all of its attention to the heights of heaven while ignoring the social inequities on earth. Doctrine confronts preaching with this truth: "These things should have been done without neglecting the others" (Matthew 23:23 HCSB). Jesus confronted the Pharisees with their boast concerning tithing and stated that yes, they should have tithed, but they also should not have neglected the matters of social justice. The moral conscience of doctrine makes arrangements for preaching to meet at the intersection of the vertical relationship between God and humans and the horizontal relationship between humans and humans. This moral conscience of doctrine insists that preachers be acquainted not only with the streets of gold in heaven but also with the streets of gloom in the ghetto. It unites the pulpit and the pavement, the sanctuary and the street, Bethlehem and Birmingham, the New Jerusalem and New Jersey.

Doctrine relates to preaching in the same manner that John the Baptist related to Jesus. When John the Baptist received news that Jesus was baptizing more persons than he was baptizing, John did not assume the posture of a competitor, because his ministry was one of negation: he was neither the light nor the Christ. Rather, he was the best man alongside Jesus, the bridegroom. His job was to focus on the bridegroom, and in the process, John the Baptist, the best man, would decrease while Jesus, the bridegroom, would increase (John 3:30). Preaching that lacks doctrine is anemic and

weak. The preaching of Bible doctrine, however, is preaching that is powerful and effective.

Definitions of expository preaching provided by some of the great voices in preaching furnish assistance in the endeavor to define doctrinal preaching. They aid us in moving toward an operative definition that illustrates the positive intention and focus of this book. E. K. Bailey, late pastor of Concord Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, and founder of the E. K. Bailey International Expository Preaching Conference, defines expository preaching as "a message that focuses on a portion of Scripture so as to clearly establish the precise meaning of the text, and to poignantly motivate the hearers to actions or attitudes dictated by that text in the power of the Holy Spirit."[13] Like expository preaching, doctrinal preaching is consistent with the text out of which the doctrine emerges. Preachers who would preach doctrinally must put their ears to the pavement of the text and synchronize the heartbeat of the text with the heartbeat of the doctrine so that the author's intention is clearly seen and heard. Doctrinal preachers preach with passion and conviction, attempting to persuade the hearers to embrace the mindset and the behavior prescribed by the doctrine in the text. Preachers who would preach the doctrine in the text must stand with Martin Luther, John Calvin, and others in the Reformation heritage who believed that when they were accurately speaking in accordance with the Word of God, Christ was speaking.[14]

Haddon Robinson, staunch homiletician at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary near Boston, Massachusetts, penned his classic definition of expository preaching (used interchangeably with biblical preaching):

> Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through him to his hearers.[15]

These words ring true to preachers of Bible doctrine. The preacher must lift doctrine out of a passage instead of infusing a passage with foreign doctrine. Doctrinal preachers must also pay close attention to the grammatical elements of the original biblical languages in the passage. An examination of John 20:5–8 will reveal that there are three different Greek words for "sight" in the passage. In John 20:5, John "sees" the linen cloths as he stoops down and looks in from outside the sepulcher. In the Greek, the

word is *blepei* (he saw), which indicates a casual glance. John 20:6 indicates that Peter goes inside the sepulcher and also "sees" the linen cloths. The word for "see" in this instance is *theorei* (he saw), which expresses a more thoughtful and calculated look. Finally, in John 20:8, John goes inside the sepulcher the second time, and "sees" and believes. In the Greek the word for "sees" in this case is *eiden* (he saw), which conveys belief. Could these three distinct Greek words suggest the stages of faith through which some people process before experiencing mature faith?

Preachers of Christian doctrine must also attend to the historical details in the passage. For example, is the teaching from a passage applicable for a specific time, place, and people, or for all times, places, and peoples? The literary study of the genre of a particular passage should always be taken into account. The book of Proverbs is the inspired Word of God, but it is not a book of guarantees. Much harm has been done by preachers who have preached Proverbs 22:6 with a sense of guarantee: "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it." Many parents have incriminated themselves because their children departed from their Christian upbringing and teaching. Since the preacher proclaimed the text as a guarantee, the parents felt that they were evidently lacking in their parenting because their children did not lead exemplary Christian lives. However, this interpretation would seem to contradict the situation of Josiah, the godly king of Judah, who had an evil father (Amon), a wicked grandfather (Manasseh), and a righteous great-grandfather (Hezekiah). The book of Proverbs states principles that, when embraced, generally will give expected results.

This text really says that children will not turn from the "way" because the "way," or the "teaching," is in them. The prodigal son came back home to his father not because he attended a revival and was convicted of his waywardness, but because the "way," or the "teaching," of his father remained in him. Like a medicinal time-released capsule, the "way" began to speak to him in the pigpen, and he went home with a different attitude than the one he had when he left home. Christian parents whose children have departed from the teachings they were exposed to in their home need to cease punishing themselves and emulate the father of the prodigal son who kept the calf fattened in expectation of the return of the son.[16]

Preachers of Christian doctrine contemplate the context of the text, looking at it in light of the chapter of the particular book, the purpose of the

book, its relationship to the particular testament, and even its role within the entire canon of Scripture. Doctrinal preachers recognize that the Holy Spirit, the actual preacher, preaches to them before they preach to their congregations. The Spirit applies the doctrinal message to the preacher's life and personality and then to the hearers'.

The renowned Anglican preacher-theologian John R.W. Stott asserts that expository preaching is "the opening up of the inspired text with such faithfulness and sensitivity that God's voice is heard and His people obey Him."[17] Stott is convinced of this and contends that preachers of Bible doctrine possess at least these two convictions: first, they are firm in their conviction that the Bible is not *a* word of God, but *the* Word of God that is inspired and God-breathed. They are also firm in their conviction that the Bible is a closed book that must be opened by the Holy Spirit, and the truth correctly handled, or "carefully explained," by the preacher (see 2 Timothy 2:15).

There are also at least two obligations of doctrinal preachers. They must be faithful to the text of Scripture, and they must be sensitive to the hearers. In reality, they not only exegete the text but they also exegete the hearers.

Finally, doctrinal preachers have at least two expectations. If they are accurate in delivering the doctrinal message, then they can expect God's Word to be heard, although, like Isaiah, who cried out, "Who has believed our message?" they wonder if it is believed (Isaiah 53:1). They can also expect the people to obey God, because His Word will get a hearing whether it is heard immediately or futuristically, in compliance or disobedience; His Word will not return to him empty (Isaiah 55:11).

Although doctrinal preaching is difficult to define, William J. Carl III offers what appears to be the fullest possible definition:

> Doctrinal preaching, then, is Christian preaching grounded in the biblical witness to Jesus Christ; it starts with text, doctrine, or cultural question, but tends to focus on one or more Christian doctrines regardless of its starting point.[18]

In connection with Carl, doctrinal preachers locate the center of Bible doctrine not in a proposition but in the person of Jesus Christ. As Jesus admonished that the Scriptures be searched because they testify of him (John 5:39), preachers of Christian doctrine make Christ the heart of their preaching. If the Bible is read backward, one will see that Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, was slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

This means that in the mind of God, Calvary was a forethought and not an afterthought. God did not react to the fall of Adam and Eve, but rather he pre-acted *before* the fall of Adam and Eve. The Old Testament proclaimed that Christ is coming. The New Testament announced that Christ has come and will come again.

Doctrinal preaching might begin with a text, especially if the preacher is preaching a sermonic series through a book of the Bible. It could start with a doctrine, such as an article in the Apostles' Creed, which is a summary or compendium of truths that the church believes and espouses. Or it could commence with a relevant cultural question. Paul Tillich often charged the church with answering questions that no one was asking. Doctrinal preachers must pay attention to the questions voiced by culture. For example, in late December 2004, tsunamis (gigantic tidal waves) caused by an earthquake and the shifting of plates under the ocean cost more than 150,000 persons their lives in Southeast Asia. Many American citizens were there as tourists, and a number of them lost their lives. The tsunamis not only ravaged the land but left people injured, separated from their families, without food and clean water, and exposed to rampant and advancing disease. The overall question on the minds of those who come to church to hear us is "Why?" The doctrinal preacher must address this question of theodicy. Sometimes the only thing we can do after speaking to this matter is to lead inquiring people to Calvary and encourage them to hear anew and ponder again the words of Jesus: "My God, my God, why . . . ?" (Mark 15:34).

But we must not leave them with this question. They must be challenged to persevere through the mist of mystery and make the commitment of Jesus: "Father, into your hands . . ." (Luke 23:46). Doctrinal preaching does not answer all the questions and cannot solve all the problems, but it points the listeners to God, who is sovereign yet suffers with us in our stricken situations. The Lord is not removed from human plight; he is the Immanuel on our Emmaus road. We do not subscribe to the teaching of antipatripassianism, the doctrine that teaches that God is removed from pain and the sharing of human suffering. The Lord suffers with us. As our high priest, he can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Hebrews 4:15). Doctrinal preachers punctuate Carl's thought that regardless of the starting point, doctrinal preaching will tend to focus on one or more Christian doctrines. Doctrine is found in life, and life is found in doctrine.

How then is doctrinal preaching to be defined? As Haddon Robinson stated, "Defining becomes sticky business because what we define we sometimes destroy. . . . Preaching is a living process involving God, the preacher, and the congregation, and no definition can pretend to capture that dynamic. But we must attempt a working definition anyway."[19]

My definition of doctrinal preaching emphasizes its underlying aim: transformation through Christ. I state that doctrinal preaching is *the escorting of the hearers into the presence of God for the purpose of transformation.* I contend that the task of the doctrinal preacher is to serve as an escort who ushers the hearer into the presence of God through the proper and precise expounding of the Word of God. When this is done, the efforts of doctrinal preachers have reached their limits, because they cannot transform the hearer. The hearer is left in the presence of the only One who can transform a human soul—Christ. Preachers of Christian doctrine may inform the hearer's mind, which in turn serves to direct one to Christ, but only Christ can transform the hearer's heart.

The operational definition of doctrinal preaching is *the magnifying of Jesus Christ through the explanation and application of the basic truths of the Christian faith.* Doctrinal preaching must have an object. We cannot have faith in faith; we do not worship worship; and doctrine cannot exist for doctrine's sake. Doctrinal preaching carries out the mission of magnifying Jesus Christ. To magnify Jesus Christ is not literally to make him bigger. His influence is already felt in three worlds: heaven, earth, and hell. Heaven is his throne, and the earth is his footstool. He fills the universe with his power. Rather, to magnify Christ through doctrinal preaching is to present him in such a way that the hearers see him in a more glorious, majestic, holy, sovereign, just, faithful, and mighty manner than they have ever seen him before. This is made possible when the preacher of Christian doctrine, through the power of the Spirit, explains the basic and fundamental truths of the Christian faith and shows how they apply to the Christian life. Consequently, the function of doctrinal preaching is to ferry the truths of the "was-ness" of the Word from the shore of the ancient text to the shore of the "is-ness" of our contemporary world.

<div align="right">Robert Smith Jr.</div>

Contemporary Models of Preaching

Commitment to the centrality of biblical interpretation in preaching issues today in a variety of homiletic ideals and related forms. Definitions vary, and the following categories should not be taken as watertight, mutually exclusive, or even entirely comparable.

Exposition. Expository preaching may or may not involve verse-by-verse study of a text, be heavily doctrinal in thrust, or be as concerned with the impact of the text as with its meaning. But fundamentally, it aims to "make plain" what is in the text rather than "imposing" ideas upon it. In addition, exposition must be more than exegesis, and is so by including application of the text to hearers' lives. Yet preachers who regard themselves as "expositors" often take a detached rhetorical posture with respect to the text, speaking *about* it rather than involving themselves *in* it.

Such preaching has been revived since the mid-twentieth century, in reaction to liberalism and to "topical" preaching that seemed to let the world's concerns set preaching's agenda. Its laudable ideal is faithfulness to Scripture. Its danger is the illusion that the "meaning" of Scripture is a readily discoverable entity that can be disclosed to a congregation with minimal self-involvement by speaker or hearer.

Tools of the Trade

It's amazing how much of the Bible you can learn by simply reading it in English, but some knowledge of the original languages does give you an advantage. Reading a passage in Hebrew or Greek is like watching TV in high definition. It adds vividness and precision to the picture. You need not be an expert in the Hebrew or Greek languages to use them with benefit, and almost anyone can use some of the available linguistic tools. Accuracy, as well as integrity, demands that we develop every possible skill to keep us from declaring in the name of God what the Holy Spirit never intended to convey.

Up to this point we have been looking at the biblical text itself, both in English and possibly in the original languages, to try to determine the overall idea of the passage by asking questions to clarify what we do not understand. Now we can use tools to help us dig into the passage. At least seven different aids are available to help us as we examine our text.

Lexicons

A lexicon serves as a kind of dictionary for the original languages. By using a lexicon, we can find definitions of a word as it is used in Hebrew or Greek. But it is more than a dictionary: along with the definition of a word, it gives us root meanings, identification of some grammatical forms, a list of passages where the word occurs, classification of its uses in its various contexts, and some illustrations that help give color to the word.

Concordances

While lexicons, like dictionaries, define words, sometimes it is essential to study a word in the passages where it occurs. To determine the meaning of words through usage, we use a concordance.

Grammars

But meaning does not come from words alone. Words must be understood as they are used in phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs. A study of syntax examines how words combine to render meaning, and grammars assist us in

that study. Not only does a grammar offer general help in describing how words are formed and put together in sentences, but those with an index to Scripture often give insight into particular passages being studied.

Word-Study Books

Much of the work of evaluating how biblical writers use words has been done for us by scholars. Word-study books provide us with insights into words used throughout the Old and New Testaments, and because words are inane things until placed in a context, these books deal with their grammatical use when appropriate.

Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopedias

Unlike most English dictionaries, Bible dictionaries offer more than a definition of a word. They give brief discussions of people, events, and backgrounds of the biblical material. Many of your questions about when or where a book was written, its readers, and its author will be answered by a good Bible dictionary or encyclopedia. Because different reference works display different strengths, an examination of the same subject in several different encyclopedias and dictionaries enables you to achieve both balance and completeness. In addition, through the use of bibliographies found at the end of each article, you can pursue a topic in even greater depth.

Commentaries

As you teach the Scriptures, you need teachers to teach you. Through commentaries, scholars serve the church. They offer a wealth of information about the meaning of words, backgrounds of passages, and the argument of a writer. As a general rule, it is wiser (and cheaper!) to select the best volumes on individual Bible books from several different series. It is also helpful to consult an assortment of commentaries on a passage and weigh what they say against each other in determining the meaning of the biblical author. For your basic study, you will want to consult commentaries based on the original languages and not only on the English text. Several bibliographies exist to guide you in your selection of a library.

For your initial study, you will be helped by consulting commentaries based on the original languages. Volumes in the INTERNATIONAL CRITICAL COMMENTARY series or the WORD BIBLICAL COMMENTARY series are examples of this category. These are often quite technical and require some knowledge of the original languages, but they wrestle with the meaning of the text.

You will also want to consult expositional commentaries. They are much more English-friendly, but be sure to select those written by authors who work from the original languages. InterVarsity's TYNDALE OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARY series or Zondervan's EXPOSITOR'S BIBLE COMMENTARY series would be typical of this group.

You will find additional help in commentaries that focus on application, such as the NIV APPLICATION COMMENTARIES on both the Old and the New Testaments, or the IVP NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES. These volumes also deal with exegesis and exposition, but sometimes not at the same depth as the critical or expositional commentaries.

There are many books and online videos of sermons preached by well-known preachers. Although these may give you some ideas of how to approach or apply your sermon, they should not be used early in your preparation. You will be tempted to rely too heavily on them and therefore short-circuit your study of the text.

Bibliographies

An excellent resource for building your library is the *Commentary and Reference Survey* compiled by John Glynn (10th ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2007). Glynn offers helpful advice for building a "bare-bones" personal reference library. He suggests books and computer programs for three different groups: informed laypeople, Bible college and seminary students, and pastors. In addition to recommending reference books for your personal library, Glynn evaluates 750 commentary series and individual commentaries for single books of the Bible. He bases his judgments on published bibliographies and surveys, reviews in theological journals, and recommendations from recognized scholars. Glynn's survey answers the question "What volumes should I purchase to get the best books for my bucks?"

Two other useful library tools are published by Baker Academic: *Old Testament Commentary Survey* by Tremper Longman, and *New Testament Commentary Survey* by D. A. Carson.

Seminary bookstores can also help you to build a basic library or suggest the best commentaries on individual books of the Bible. Some seminaries have bibliographies compiled by their faculty of the best volumes to purchase. A library is indispensable for anyone doing serious Bible study. A collection of basic study books and some good commentaries will cost about as much as a year's tuition at many colleges or seminaries, but if selected with care, their value will last a lifetime.

—Haddon W. Robinson

Re-presentation. By contrast with "exposition," "re-presentation" implies that the preacher's task is not to talk *about* Scripture but in some sense to reenact it. Here, "to interpret Scripture" in the pulpit means not to discuss a text and apply it but allow its full power to be felt. Whereas exposition is often closely associated with the ideal of a "teaching ministry," re-presentation sits more comfortably with the proclamatory dimension of preaching. Many aspects of texts may go unexplained, but the attempt is made to let Scripture make its own impact on the minds and hearts of the hearers. Sermons are crafted to reflect the *form* of the text, not only to communicate its content.[20]

Such preaching often revolves around textual images or stories. The preacher may voice more than one standpoint, and thus set up a dialogue—perhaps between a biblical voice and a voice from the present. Contemporary interpretation is triggered as the former is allowed to address the latter, with minimal intrusion from the voice of a "detached" preacher. Re-presentational preaching is greatly assisted by the renewed emphasis on literary and rhetorical questions in biblical studies, though historical sensibility continues to play an important part in enabling texts to be heard with freshness.

Narrative. Narrative preaching may best be seen as a subset of re-presentational preaching, yet as a conception is important in its own right. It means not "preaching as a series of anecdotes," but preaching constructed with *narrative movement,* including such elements as suspense, disclosure, and resolution.

It finds its basis in the narrative shape of Scripture and the desire to catch hearers up into the story. Interpretation of the text may happen through a variety of means. A scriptural answer to a contemporary problem, or the solution to a difficulty perceived in Scripture itself, may be disclosed through a sermon with a "plot."[21] A biblical story may be told with allusions or direct references at various points to the contemporary world. Or contemporary stories may act as echoes or foils to a biblical one.

As with re-presentational preaching, generally, much interpretative work is left for the congregation to do. The preacher's task is to help the hearers see and feel the connection between Scripture and our world today, but it is for the hearers to go and work out the implications.

Liturgical. For some, the concept of preaching remains fundamentally shaped by its function within worship. Karl Barth argued that theologically

(if not always in practice) preaching takes place between the acts of baptism and the Eucharist.[22] In the sermon, the baptized are reminded of their identity in Christ that is enacted in Communion.

In this light, the preacher's task is to take one or more of the appointed readings and to discern and proclaim the gospel that lies at their heart.[23] Such preaching is thus distinguished from teaching and exhortation, and also from the expository ideal that can tend toward a focus on Scripture for its own sake.

A re-presentational form often lends itself to "liturgical" preaching, for the sermon can then be felt as one "act" in the "drama" of a service. The theological interpretation of Scripture happens as the preacher helps the congregation see and respond to the "fit" between the readings, the gospel message, and the whole act of worship.

Local theology. The model of preaching as "local theologizing" takes very seriously the fact that preaching happens in a particular context, and that its biblical interpretation must therefore be thoroughly contextualized.[24]

It assumes that the preacher is becoming familiar with the local congregational culture and yet is able to bring a broader and deeper perspective derived from the wider church and Christian tradition. It implies that it is meaningless to ask whether "text" or "context" should come first in constructing a sermon. Interpretation is a constant process of "negotiating the distance" between text and hearers.[25]

As compared with the "liturgical" preaching model, that of "local theology" allows greater latitude in subject matter. The gospel will certainly be informing the sermon, but textual interpretation will not have to focus so narrowly upon the paschal mystery. Scripture may be allowed to affirm, illumine, or challenge many aspects of communal and personal life. This may also turn out to be the most satisfactory umbrella concept for evangelistic preaching.

Stephen I. Wright

For Further Reading and Study

Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*

Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*

Robert Smith Jr., *Doctrine That Dances: Bringing Doctrinal Preaching and Teaching to Life*

chapter 25
Christian Leadership

Give me the courage to lead with wise compassion.[1]

—Richard Kriegbaum

The Task of Leadership

Enablement

What is the fundamental responsibility of a leader? What must spiritual leaders do to fulfill their mission?

At this point, we need a clear understanding of the meaning of leadership, particularly spiritual leadership. How is leadership, suitable for a [ministry] setting, defined? Leadership is characterized and described in a variety of ways by different authors, each writing from within a certain organizational framework. Of the literally hundreds of different definitions of leadership, a sampling may be helpful:

> Interpersonal influence exercised in a situation and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a special goal or goals.[2]
> A learned behavioral skill, which includes the ability to help others achieve their potential as individuals and team members.[3]
> The process of persuasion and example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to take action that is in accord with the leader's purposes or the shared purposes of all.[4]

Each definition contains some insight, yet each seems to fall short in some respect, especially when we consider spiritual leadership in the church.

This definition seems to fit spiritual leadership best:

> Spiritual leadership is the development of relationships with the people of a Christian institution or body in such a way that individuals and the group are enabled to formulate and achieve biblically compatible goals that meet real needs. By their ethical influence, spiritual leaders serve to motivate and enable others to achieve what otherwise would never be achieved.

One crucial ingredient is the emphasis upon others' (group and individual) goals, not the personal goals of the leader. In other words, spiritual leaders do not unilaterally decide what others should do and then try to get followers to do it. Or, to put the same thought in conventional Christian language, leaders do not determine the will of God for the group or church and then attempt to persuade others to follow it. Rather, leaders stimulate and aid the members to identify and achieve their own goals.

Of course, certain goals are biblically defined and, when those goals are clear, the spiritual leader's responsibility is to enable constituents to grasp and understand them, adopt them, and then achieve them. In other words, group process is not necessary to determine that loving one another should be a goal. Such a goal is biblically mandated. Leaders need only to point out the scriptural admonition to love and present it . . . with authority. However, leaders must recognize the fundamental difference between biblical goals and their personal opinions about [ministry] decisions.

Another important factor is the emphasis upon service to the group, not control over the group. Manipulation or coercion of people to achieve what the leader wants is not true leadership. John W. Gardner is correct:

> Elements of physical coercion are involved in some kinds of leadership, and of course there is psychological coercion, however mild and subtle, including peer pressure, in all social action. But in our culture popular understanding of the term [leadership] distinguishes it from coercion—and places higher on the scale of leadership those forms involving lesser degrees of coercion.[5]

In this regard, Ted Engstrom's statement is disconcerting: "Acting in our managerial capacity, all of us [leaders] . . . do basically the same thing. We are each and all engaged in part in getting things done with and through people."[6] This implies that the leader uses or manages people to get things done, and that the things done are what the leader decides should be done. Such a philosophy is consistent with many modern business and political concepts of leadership, but incompatible with the kind of spiritual

leadership that scrupulously avoids manipulation. People are not to be used to further the plans of leaders. People must be respected, involved in the setting of their own goals, and treated like colleagues in the ministry.

An enabling philosophy of [ministry] leadership always stresses profound respect for people. In the best forms of leadership, people are not treated as subjects or herded like cattle. Some of the most successful business enterprises claim this philosophy of respect:

> IBM's philosophy is largely contained in three simple beliefs. I want to begin with what I think is the most important: our respect for the individual. This is a simple concept, but in IBM it occupies a major portion of management time. . . . Treating people—not money, machines, or minds—as the natural resource may be the key to it all. . . . Treat people as adults, treat them as partners; treat them with dignity; treat them with respect.[7]

Leadership that is compatible with scriptural guidelines can only be other-centered; it can never be leader-centered. Transforming leadership is articulated and advocated by James Burns: "Such leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality."[8] By these criteria, those who exercise authoritarian control to achieve their own objectives are not really leaders. They are power wielders who "constantly exploit their external resources (economic, social, psychological, and institutional) and their 'effectance' (their training, skill, and competence) to make persons and things do what they want done. The key factor here is indeed 'what they want done.'"[9]

The classical power philosophies of Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Nietzsche may guide the behavior of the world's dictators, but they are grossly inconsistent with true ethical leadership and the Word of God. If we judge according to a high standard of leadership, Hitler, Idi Amin, and Jim Jones (and not a few contemporary church figures) were never leaders despite enormous but temporary power and materialistic success. Louis B. Lundborg succinctly states this truth: "A leader is one whom others will follow willingly and voluntarily. That rules out tyrants, bullies, autocrats, and all others who use coercive power to impose their wills on others."[10] Or as Kenneth O. Gangel correctly observes, "Leadership is not political power-play . . . leadership is not authoritarian attitude . . . leadership is not cultic control."[11]

Yet we must never think that a leader is powerless. Indeed, to suggest that a leader is without authority is to pose the anomaly of a leader with no followers. Leadership is a special kind of authority: legitimized power—the power of ethical, inspiring influence and enablement. This kind of authority can be awesome in its effect upon individuals and groups. It is the kind of power an excellent teacher or guide brings to bear upon the people he or she serves. It scrupulously avoids manipulative tactics to enhance the leader's status or to accomplish the leader's agenda.

The real and ultimate test of genuine leadership is the realization of enduring change that meets people's most basic physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. The world's and the church's appraisal of leadership frequently is false. There is the almost irresistible tendency to judge leadership by production statistics and materialistic standards, and to grant esteem and promotion to such "successful" people. But if actual needs in the lives of others are not met, and if people are not evangelized and edified, no meaningful spiritual leadership has taken place despite whatever achievement might be considered successful or significant.

Leadership and Management

We should distinguish between leadership and management, although sometimes the differences are pushed too far and become contrived. There is overlap between leadership and management, and the dissimilarities are not always sharply defined. A good leader must have some good management skills, and good managers usually have some leadership qualities. It is difficult to imagine a good manager who is not also a leader and vice versa.

(1) Vision. A leader has greater vision than a manager. Leaders think long term, beyond the day-to-day operations, beyond the immediate horizons that often limit the vision of managers and followers. Leaders see the whole, including relationships between the parts and relationships between the immediate organization and other organizations.

Leaders envision the achievement of objectives never dreamed of by others. George Bernard Shaw said, "You see things; and you say, 'Why?' But I dream of things that never were; and I say, 'Why not?'" Leaders not only have such dreams but also inspire others to share those dreams.

(2) Renewal. Leaders are always interested in revisions of process and structure, with an eye toward changing outmoded methods, defining new goals, tapping new resources, motivating or enlisting personnel, and invigorating the group and its individuals. Managers emphasize the achievement of goals already defined and the efficient use of present structures and readily available resources.

Managers give directions and evaluate performance, while leaders stimulate achievement and energize the entire organization—the group and its individuals. Leaders are more creative, innovative, and transforming.
Leaders like Gandhi can generate and inflame a worldwide movement. England desperately needed a leader capable of rallying the nation to fight against Hitler's forces, and Winston Churchill rose to become one of her greatest statesmen. From the Christian's standpoint, Jesus Christ was the greatest leader the world has seen. With a handful of rough-hewn disciples he founded a kingdom that shall never end, one against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. By the power of his person, his example, his teaching, and his Spirit, he changed the world forever.

(3) Orientation. Leaders are people-oriented; they constantly think in terms of their constituents and their needs. Managers tend to be more product- and program-oriented. Managers think about getting jobs done, doing things to produce satisfactory results according to set criteria. Leaders think about doing right things to help people maximize their potential.

Managers are conscious of efficiency; leaders are conscious of values. Managers are quick to direct people; leaders are quick to listen to people. A manager might say, "It can't be done," or "Maybe we can do it if . . ."; a leader would say, "We must find a way to do it, and we will." Managers supervise people, leaders energize people.

Leadership Strategies

What do leaders do in the exercise of spiritual enablement? By what ethical and biblically compatible methodologies do they operate so that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of spiritual achievement and realization? What special responsibilities do leaders

accept in carrying out their unique influence in the church? There are five fundamental activities in the leader's task of spiritual enablement.

(1) Leaders Listen. Leaders must have a passionate desire to understand the hurts, longings, desires, temptations, sins, joys, and real needs of those who form their constituency. Leadership involves effective communication, and effective communication begins with listening.

> True listening builds strength in other people. . . . The best test of whether we are communicating at this depth is to ask ourselves first: Are we really listening? Are we listening to the one we want to communicate to? Is our basic attitude, as we approach the confrontation, one of wanting to understand? Remember that great line from the prayer of St. Francis, "Lord, grant that I may not seek so much to be understood as to understand."[12]

Every real spiritual leader echoes this prayer.

Church leaders must develop this aptitude for listening. The counsel of James should never be forgotten: "My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak" (James 1:19). This wisdom is older than Solomon: "Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance. . . . Listen to advice and accept discipline, and in the end you will be counted among the wise" (Proverbs 1:5; 19:20).

In the context of leadership, the word *listen* is used in its widest possible connotation. Leaders give close attention to their constituents; they have their fingers on the pulse of the group. Leaders know the heartbeat of individual people; they know what grips them and what fulfills their dreams. They know the real, but often unspoken, needs and hopes.

No one can be a wise leader who fails to listen, learn, and accept the counsel of mature people. Untold suffering has been inflicted upon the church and its members by those in official positions who have been so passionate about carrying out a private agenda that they fail to listen to the heartbeats of the community—the congregation and its individuals.

True leadership begins with the act of hearing. Leadership action not based on careful listening is apt to be the wrong action. Listening with the ears and the heart must become so fundamental a part of every leader's life that the first and most natural thing the leader does is listen attentively. Obviously, the leader must listen not only to God, but also to God's people.

(2) Leaders Build a Team. Effective leaders never bring others to submission, but bring them to active participation in the life, maturing, decision-making, and outreach of the church. Saints are made by gaining their partnership, not their obeisance. Therefore, there is no alternative to the promotion of a sense of collegiality, a team spirit in ministry. The leader uses his influence to build a team. Moses thought he could do everything alone, but Jethro told him, in essence, "You can't; you need a team to share the responsibilities!" A wise leader heeds Jethro's advice.

Effective [ministries] are led by those who build a strong sense of synergy, community, and solidarity between leaders and constituents (the word *follower* seems too passive). With this approach to leadership, the distinction between leaders and those led often blurs in the emphasis upon collegiality and fraternity. Just who is leading and who is following may not be readily apparent, but this is not important.

Paul obviously made team-building a major emphasis in his ministry. He commonly spoke of people as his brothers or sisters, his fellow workers, and his fellow soldiers. Paul took pains to correct a wrong attitude in the church at Corinth: "When one says, 'I follow Paul,' and another, 'I follow Apollos,' are you not mere human beings? What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. . . . For we are co-workers in God's service" (1 Corinthians 3:4–5, 9).

Paul's goal was never to get people to do what he personally wanted them to do, but to do what was clearly God's desire. Paul dissuaded people from following him except insofar as he followed Christ. Paul expressed great joy "because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1:5). The best churches have members who feel not like spectators or subjects but like participants and fellow workers with their leaders.

Robert Greenleaf puts this concept simply, bluntly, and beautifully: "If one is to preside over a successful business, one's major talent will need to evolve from being the *chief* into the *builder of the team*."[13] The Japanese have excelled in this concept of leadership in corporate enterprise, and it has rewarded them richly. If Greenleaf's concept is valid and effective in the business world, it is vastly more important in the church. This is New Testament leadership at its best.

(3) LEADERS INSPIRE. As Burns suggests, "The first task of leadership is to bring to consciousness the followers' sense of their own needs, values, and purposes."[14] Spiritual leaders inspire people to recognize their own spiritual needs, values, and objectives, and then facilitate growth in these vital areas. Good, effective spiritual leaders infuse others with an animating, quickening, and exalting spirit of enthusiasm for the person of Christ, growth in Christ, and the mission of the church.

> To inspire is a task of a good teacher, and a leader is always a teacher of sorts: Teachers . . . treat students neither coercively nor instrumentally but as joint seekers of truth and of mutual actualization. They help students define moral values not by imposing their own moralities on them but by positing situations that pose hard moral choices and then encouraging conflict and debate. They seek to help students rise to higher stages of moral reasoning and hence to higher levels of principled judgment. Throughout, teachers provide a social and intellectual environment in which students can learn.[15]

If a spiritual leader truly wants others to learn, and if he is to inspire them, he needs to demonstrate worthwhile truths in his own life. "The fact is . . . nothing leads as well as example. . . . Values and behavioral norms are simply not transmitted easily by talk or memo, but are conveyed very effectively by doing and doing *visibly*."[16] In Paul's words, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

(4) LEADERS FOCUS ON VALUES. Good spiritual leaders do not focus on machinery, programs, or statistics. They are passionate about the fundamentals of value systems, reasons, philosophies, intrinsic truths, structures, objectives, designs, moods, emotions, and environments. All of this may be thought of as an essential part of a philosophy of ministry, and every excellent leader has an uncommonly clear understanding of these things.

For example, poor leaders might give great attention to the details of running a vacation Bible school, down to the cookies and punch, but they may have little idea of why all of this is being done and what is to be achieved by doing all these conventional things. Such people might be good workers and detail persons, but they are not leaders, because they do not focus on causes, values, or objectives. They see the cookies, punch, crayons, and chalkboards, but they do not see exactly how this program can meet fundamental needs and integrate into other activities of the church.

The trouble with many [organizations] is that their leaders are doing unnecessary things (and doing them well, perhaps), and they don't know why they are doing them, except that they are expected and customary. In the meantime, things that desperately need to be done are overlooked because of this maintenance mentality and devotion to tradition.

The real leader is always aware of a set of underlying values, perhaps not verbalized publicly, that is capable of impelling the institution or group forward. As Philip Selznick stated, "The institutional leader . . . is primarily an expert in the promotion and protection of values."[17] Or as Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman observed, "We are struck by the explicit attention [successful businesses] pay to values, and by the way in which their leaders have created exciting environments through personal attention, persistence, and direct intervention."[18]

It is because of this meticulous attention to value systems that good church leaders strive to maintain a climate where creative ideas, healthy conflict, and participation in decision-making are welcomed. The task, in part, of the true leader is to make sure that innovative ideas are solicited and that the people with these ideas are encouraged to participate in the work of the ministry. All of this is influence, but of a kind that is ethically acceptable and necessary in the church.

(5) LEADERS BALANCE PRIORITIES. There are three dimensions to effective leadership: personal (the individual), social (the group), and production (the job). The good spiritual leader is able to keep all three focused at the same time, carefully balancing and assigning proper weight and attention to each, never sacrificing one in order to achieve the other.

They are poor leaders whose zeal to get the job done causes them to run roughshod over people, or whose passion for group welfare makes them oblivious to the individual, or whose fervor to promote harmony leads them to achieve nothing but that. The best leaders excel in all three dimensions.

Jesus was zealous to accomplish his mission—the work the Father had given him to do—but he always had time to devote to individuals in need. He was eager to build the kingdom, but he never neglected the prostitute, the tax collector, or the blind man. He had time for the Samaritan woman and for Simon the Pharisee. He took time to feed the five thousand and to teach the disciples. Even in his agony on the cross, he was aware of and

attentive to the needs of others ("Father, forgive them . . ." "Woman, behold your son . . ." "Today you shall be with me . . ."). On this three-cornered foundation, he was equally concerned for the individual, the larger group, and the task before him. Indeed, these three seem to so blend in his ministry that they are inseparable and at times indistinguishable. He established his kingdom and accomplished the Father's will through giving attention to individuals and the group of disciples.

Hence, the task of the true spiritual leader is to promote growth in competence, responsibility, character, and leadership in individuals, to produce a healthy, functioning, ministering body, and to promote the achievement of the church's goals and plans in its community. These three dimensions of ministry are always sharply focused and balanced in the minds and actions of good spiritual leaders.

By identifying the five major responsibilities of leaders we are not suggesting that these things form the leader's comprehensive action list. Far from it. In fulfilling the duties of leadership, good leaders must, at various times, diagnose problems, gather and study facts, develop suggested solutions, evaluate alternatives, and make recommendations and decisions within specified guidelines. They may also plan, coordinate, publicize, introduce, clarify, restate, regulate, delegate, and summarize, much as a good manager might do. Yet none of these things are done in a high-handed, dictatorial, or unilateral way, but in the spirit of humble service to God and to the church, and in collaboration and cooperation with other leaders and the whole group.

The good spiritual leader conceives every task in terms of service to Christ and his church. The leader doesn't work with a lofty, isolated spirit of superiority but in the spirit of collegiality and unity with other servants in his church. Everything the leader does is done with the supreme consciousness that Christ is the head of the church and that we are his servants here to accomplish his work. Real action comes through the inspiring influence and enablement of one who demonstrates the reality of living under the authority of the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

Summary

Spiritual leadership is the development of relationships with the people of a Christian organization, institution, or body in such a way that individuals and the group are enabled to formulate and achieve biblical goals that meet real needs. Leaders, by their ethical influence, serve to enable, motivate, and inspire others to achieve their goals.

There are some notable differences between leaders and managers. Leaders excel in vision, revitalizing and energizing structures, process, and constituents, and orientation to the real needs of people.

Real leaders must be distinguished from mere power wielders. Spiritual leaders never use people to accomplish their own agendas, but inspire others to achieve their own goals and, ultimately, biblical goals. The test of genuine leadership is change that meets group and individual needs and enables constituents to fulfill the will of God in their lives.

The primary tasks of good spiritual leaders in influencing the church are:

1. Leaders listen. Their decisions and actions are based on real understanding of their constituency.
2. Leaders build collegiality. They never set out to use people to accomplish their goals and purposes. They disavow personal partisanship in favor of developing a team spirit and loyalty to Christ.
3. Leaders inspire. Good spiritual leaders infuse others with an animating, quickening, and exalting spirit of enthusiasm for the task of the church and the person of Christ. They do this primarily through their personal optimism, authenticity, enthusiasm, and example.
4. Leaders emphasize values. They focus on the fundamentals of value systems, reasons, philosophies, intrinsic truths, structures, objectives, designs, moods, emotions, and environments.
5. Leaders balance priorities. There is always consciousness of the individual, the group, and the job to be done. No one of these three is sacrificed for the benefit of the others.

In fulfilling these primary tasks of leadership, the spiritual leader may do a variety of other things, yet all is done under the headship of Christ and in the spirit of collegiality and service within the body.

James E. Means

Self-Leadership

Effective Christian Ministry Begins with Godly Self-Leadership

Leadership exists in many forms. Christian leadership is to follow the example of Jesus who served, suffered, and sacrificed to lead others toward godly redemption. Jesus remained true to his calling, even when it required his physical death, by keeping a deep personal relationship with God at the center of everything. Jesus consistently relied on God's presence, values, and purposes while guarding his heart from evil. The world around Jesus was also chaotic and confusing. In the midst of that, Jesus cared well for his followers as he led them toward the collaborative moral vision that continues to transform people and our world today.

To honor Jesus, Christian leaders also need to keep these same principles of service, suffering, and sacrifice on behalf of transformation at the forefront of their leadership. The leader's relationship with God, self, and others is vital to this process.

Our Relationship with God

As Christian leaders, the key focal point of our leadership is seeing our need for God at every moment. God sees all things (Psalm 147:5; Isaiah 40:28; Hebrews 4:13). He is aware of everything inside of and surrounding the leader. God is also able to work out all things for the good of those who love him and respond to his leading (Romans 8:28). Therefore, when we engage God's insights and ability to work things out for good, our leadership results will be much better than if we attempted it all on our own.

We don't do what God asks because he is controlling, demanding, and autocratic. We do what he asks because we believe in his love and his ability to see and understand more than we do. Entrusting our lives to him puts us on a path toward ultimate fulfillment. By surrendering to him, we become more than we could ever be on our own.

God grants his power to a Christian leader who seeks him. God has power over all things, even if he chooses not to immediately reveal it to us (1 Chronicles 29:11; 2 Chronicles 20:6; Job 12:13–15; Job 26:14; 1 Corinthians 6:14). God has the power to bring life out of death and renew

anything he decides to resurrect to new life. If we tap into God's power to redeem, we will lead with more power than if we act alone.

When we seek God, we choose to do life and leadership *with* God, and in this way we can avoid the pitfalls of pride and ego. Seeking to be aware of God first and foremost is the most important part of this journey. It is not about being perfect, but seeking, looking out for, and paying attention to God. This God-awareness is the path of humility as we surrender our mind, will, emotions, and personality (heart) to God's leadership and attempt to lead like Jesus.[19]

In contrast, when we determine to do life and leadership on our own, we may be acting on behalf of our own pride and ego. God hates pride (Isaiah 2:12; Psalm 66:11; Proverbs 8:13; Proverbs 16:5; James 4:6) because it draws us out of relationship with him and causes us to act independently. It is pride that causes us to lead without God's insights and power. Pride acts on behalf of evil and contributes to Satan's work in the world. For this reason, our focus as leaders needs to be on seeking God in each moment.

God is ready to renew us when we lose sight of our need for him (Isaiah 40:30–31; Ephesians 4:22–24; Psalm 51:10–12; Psalm 103:1–5). When we seek him, humble our hearts before him, confess our forgetfulness, and ask him to help us remember him as we live and lead, he is ready to receive us, our apology, and our request (1 John 1:9). And most important, he is ready and able to help us.

Going at leadership and life alone, without God's intervention and without Jesus as a role model, is the work of the obstinate soul, pride, ego, and Satan. There is no inner security in this way of life and leading. An insecure leader's ego fights against God while a secure leader humbles himself before God. As we consistently (and increasingly) seek God in this way, we are setting the foundation for true inner security. Humbling ourselves in God's presence and following Christ's example as we determine how to live and lead builds us up.[20]

As we seek God, we also need to receive God's love and let go of the world's approval. Because of Christ, Christian leaders are more susceptible to sacrifice than other types of leaders, so we need an inner foundation to get us through this suffering.[21] Jesus said we would experience what he experienced (Romans 8:17; 1 Peter 4:12–13). Jesus' mission was and is all about the transformation of the human heart (Philippians 2:1–11). And the path to transformation involves serving, suffering, and sacrifice. As we seek

God and model Christ's leadership, we are on the same mission. God's loving presence is what sustains us along the way.

Life in and of itself has its share of joys as well as suffering. Christian leaders are not free from the realities of this world, and the leadership path is a lifelong journey. At the same time, God's loving presence can lift us above the realities of this world because he has the power to renew, redeem, and resurrect. We can experience being lifted up by God's loving presence whether we walk or skip or run or stumble along this path.

God's love and a loving relationship with him are the only things that can make us secure. God whispers to us that we are loved and valued by him. No accomplishment, role, compliment, remuneration, or person can give us this sense of inner security. Those who count on these things find themselves lost and empty inside, and they cover this up with pride and ego. God desires his leaders to look to him for their inner security through his love and the value he gives us.

God is the only one who can trade our insecurity for inner security (Philippians 4:6–9; 1 Corinthians 10:13–14; 1 Timothy 1:16). As humans, we quickly lose our inner security. This is normal and natural, and it engages our need for God. As we bring our insecurities to God, he trades them for love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:19–26). As we humble our hearts, full of anxiety, fear, shame, guilt, and anger, God has the power to trade those feelings for his fruit of the Spirit. You can see where the leader who decides to do life and leadership on her own, without God, and does not make this exchange is left with a heart full of negative emotions. Where do those leaders go with their negative feelings and insecurities? I propose they resort to pride and ego, and that is why we see so much negative leadership in our world. God promises that as we run in the path of his commands, we will be set free (Psalm 119:30–32). To live and lead from a heart that is being released from insecurity and negative emotions,we need God to free us.

So much is written about emotional health and emotional intelligence, yet for Christian leaders our key is in seeking God, consistently and increasingly receiving the love that God has for us through Christ (John 15:4–5), and modeling Jesus' leadership. This journey leads us to work through the emotional and spiritual battle of insecurity in appropriate ways.

If we try to work through this battle on our own, we find that the emotions continue to haunt us or draw us into addictive behaviors (Romans 8:5–7; Galatians 5:19–21). Addictions come with trying to comfort ourselves in inappropriate ways because we don't know how, or are not willing, to deal with our emotions in healthier ways. Again, we try to do this hard work on our own. But God is the only one who can truly comfort us in our pain and insecurity. And he is the only one who can exchange the painful emotions that cause our insecurity for his fruit that brings security through abiding in him (James 1:21).

The mind, emotions, will, and personality form the center of a person[22] (Proverbs 4:23), and all affect the way we lead. The mind is the rational aspect of a person and can be brought to truth through Scripture and meditating on godly wisdom. The will can choose to seek, remember, and move toward God. The personality can be developed and balanced through listening to God and broadening relationships with others. Yet emotions develop from lifelong experiences, and they can be tricky to maneuver. If emotions are not worked through properly, they can manifest in negative ways. When painful emotions are not properly dealt with, they can draw us into negative behavior, even addiction. Negative emotions over time do incredible damage to us and to our relationships. Most people don't like to deal with emotional pain, and so they look for quick fixes to feel better. But the journey of the Christian leader who aspires to emotional health is not a quick fix.

The path to emotional health is found in seeking the way, the truth, and the life, summed up in Jesus (John 14:6). Working through our emotions with Jesus will result in healing, even though it may feel like a roller-coaster ride along the way. This journey leads to a full and true life because God, through Jesus, constantly renews and fills our hearts. Each day invites us to move toward God with our negative emotions in order to be filled anew with his fruitful emotions. Engaging with God in this way and working through negative emotions allows leaders to find their true passion. In contrast, when emotions are stuffed down and not dealt with, good emotions are lost along with the passion to move forward. God in his infinite wisdom knows how to deal with our tangled web of emotions to keep us moving toward the way, the truth, and the life.

Our Relationship with Ourselves

The reward of moving toward this kind of relationship with God is that it sets us up for a healthier relationship with ourselves. Godly self-leadership is likely to be the most significant aspect of leading well.[23] It is crucial to accept God's love and the value he places on us in order to have a good relationship with ourselves. This enables us to fight every leader's battle of the heart against shame, guilt, anxiety, fear, self-hatred, anger, lack of forgiveness, and the like (Ephesians 4:22–27; Colossians 3:5–10; Romans 7:23; 1 Peter 5:8; James 4:7). The goal is to allow God's love and value for us to flow into us so that negative emotions don't leak out of us, adversely affecting others. It is a moment by moment, day by day fight, but we need to get on the solution side of it to keep our sanity in the midst of chaos. God is present each moment to help us through this battle, providing his redemptive power to overcome. We need this power to maintain a good relationship with ourselves.

The vision for enhancing our relationship with ourselves expands into guarding our hearts, assessing ourselves in terms of the fruit of the Spirit, and understanding our strengths and weaknesses.[24] Guarding the heart is keeping the mind engaged in Scripture and truth, engaging the will in choosing righteousness, moving toward balance in our personality, and being aware of and maneuvering through our emotions. We can use the fruit of the Spirit in our lives to assess how we are doing internally, pray for God's power to overcome, and make adjustments. Additionally, understanding our strengths and weaknesses enables us to lead out of our passion as well as to work better with others.[25]

Our Relationship with Others

Our relationship with others is sustained by our relationship with God and with ourselves. When we become God-aware and self-aware and then let God fill us, our relationships flow better with others. *Flow* does not mean the absence of stress and tension. In this world we will consistently have some strain in relationships. At the same time, an inner security with God and ourselves, even if it takes some time to get there, will contribute to healthy God-honoring relationships with others.

Maturing becomes the length of time it takes for us to reconnect with God and/or to get on track with ourselves. As we mature, this may take minutes or hours as compared to days, weeks, months, or years. When

leaders take too long to move toward God, center the self, and reconnect with others, the impact and drain on people and ministry can be negative.

> The vision for maturity in Christian leadership is that we move forward more quickly with God and within ourselves to take the steps necessary to reconcile and collaborate.[26]

Most people desire to feel safety, trust, and understanding from their leaders. Whether spoken or unspoken, most followers have these questions: Will you help me feel secure? Do you know where you are going, how to get there, and how to help others come alongside of you? Are you willing to learn about me and listen to me along the way? Will you follow through? Will you care about me and what is important to me? These questions or needs come from the emotional realm and are a key reason we need to connect with the hearts of those who serve alongside us.

As leaders, we are constantly maneuvering through these questions from others whether we realize it or not. Our inner security with God and ourselves enables us to settle these questions with those we relate to every day. If we feel secure with God and within ourselves, we are more capable of helping others feel safe with us. There are aspects of another person's inner security that we don't have any control over. For instance, how someone feels about God or themselves is out of our control. Yet we can do our best to help them feel secure with us.

Creating a healthy environment around us means that we, as leaders, are secure with God and within ourselves so that we are able to care for others through providing safety, trust, and understanding.[27] Compassion and empathy are just as important as vision and strategy to followers. Listening to those we lead and reflecting back to them what we hear them saying will help them to feel cared for and that they have influence with us. Focusing on safe and secure relationships is what engages people in the areas of vision and strategy.

The path of Christian leadership is one of serving, suffering, and sacrificing. When we focus on gaining an inner security in our relationship with God, we set ourselves up for a more solid relationship with ourselves. Inner security means humbling the self by needing God, receiving his love and value, tapping into his power, and allowing him to strengthen our relationship with ourselves in order to better engage with others on behalf

of his mission. Christian leaders who honor these steps are more likely to lead effectively on behalf of Christ.

<div align="right">Jeanine Parolini</div>

A Theology of Volunteerism

The muscled bodies that compete in the Olympics look perfect to us. They are not, of course. They suffer sore limbs, torn muscles, bleeding blisters, and even broken bones. But despite their human flaws, Olympic bodies are finely tuned.

The imperfect yet high-performing body is a picture of an effective church, made up of imperfect but redeemed people who work together to advance God's kingdom. In reality, however, achieving high performance with a volunteer corps is not easy. In many respects, paying everyone to do the work of the ministry would seem easier than using volunteers. The church would certainly run smoother, but is running smoothly a valid goal for the body of Christ?

Most ministry should be carried out by volunteers.

From the beginning of the early church, people gave their time and talents freely to spread the Good News. While Scripture does not speak against professional ministry, it does affirm that most ministry should be carried out by volunteers. Note the address of many New Testament epistles: "To all the saints."

The Bible also lays out a leadership structure of pastors, teachers, elders, and others who assume significant responsibility for the spiritual welfare of believers. But structure doesn't preclude the Bible's emphasis on total involvement of the entire Christian community.

Four Images of Ministry

Let's look at four sections of the New Testament in order to lay the theological base for church volunteers.

(1) THE SERVANT LEADER. The best place to begin is with our Lord, who, shortly before his death, arranged for one last time of fellowship with his beloved disciples. As the meal was served, he rose, removed his outer clothing, wrapped a towel around his waist, and commenced washing their feet, a task normally allotted to the lowliest of servants. He washed feet that had spent the day walking through dusty, unpaved roads splattered with animal excrement. John the Baptist described himself as unfit to untie Jesus' sandals; now this same Jesus washed his disciples' feet.

The task completed (over Peter's objections), Jesus rejoined his companions at the table and said,

> Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.
>
> <div align="right">John 13:14–16</div>

Thus, the first step in building our theology of volunteerism lies in recognizing that those who carry leadership positions in the church also carry—first and foremost—the responsibility of serving those volunteers, in whatever lowly manner may be necessary.

(2) THE HOLY PRIESTHOOD. The apostle Peter, so vocal during the foot-washing scene, wrote, "You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9). This verse brings into clear focus the inappropriateness of making a sacred/secular division of work and life. Today, all Christians bear the responsibility originally placed on the shoulders of a few.

There exists no hierarchy of vocation—all function as priests, although clearly not all are involved in "church" work. For Christians, there exists no secular vocation. As we build our theology of volunteers, we must respect the sacredness of volunteers' weekday work. Their calling to their jobs carries no less godliness or need for commitment than the pastoral vocation; within those callings the royal priesthood will minister.

(3) THE BODY CONCEPT. The third image recognizes that every member plays an essential part in contributing to the health of the whole church. "Just as each of us has one body with many members," Paul writes, "and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Romans 12:4–5).

The expansion of this imagery in 1 Corinthians 12 has particular relevance to our theology:

> The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.
>
> vv. 21–26

Our theology of volunteers must be built on a foundation of Scripture set within a cultural context. The highly individualistic emphasis of North American society almost guarantees a problem with the practice of this theology; many live unaware of how individual inaction impacts group health. However, God uses the physical body as an image of the church to drive home this point: No one within this holy priesthood may consider himself or herself unessential to the ministry of the whole.

Let's summarize for a moment: Jesus set an example of servanthood for those who function as leaders within his church, essentially a volunteer structure. Each member of the structure holds a position of honor, for each forms part of a holy priesthood. The structure suffers harm and/or inefficiency when parts of it remain inactive and do not contribute to the health and work of the whole. The question of how to avoid that harm and inefficiency leads us to a fourth portion of Scripture that further builds our foundation.

(4) THE EQUIPPING LEADER. The book of Ephesians, and particularly the section in chapter 4:11–16, serves as a standard of volunteerism. As a whole, Paul emphasizes unity throughout, and he does so in a rather unique and perhaps a bit oblique fashion. He only uses the word for "unity" twice

(4:3, 13), but the theme comes through more clearly in the Greek text than in translation because of an unusual use of compound verbs. Fourteen times, Paul attaches the prepositional prefix *sun-* (meaning "with" or "together") to his verbs, creating several compounds not found elsewhere in the New Testament. The result? An overwhelming sense of leaders working alongside followers, seeing themselves as co-laborers, joining hands and talents for the furtherance of the gospel.

The last part of Ephesians 4 adds further detail to the concept. God has appointed leaders charged with equipping believers to do the work of service. (Interestingly, commentators of an earlier day, particularly in England, where the church operated under a pronounced clerical-lay division, inserted another comma in verse 12. The passage would thus indicate that ordained leaders were to: (A) prepare God's people, (B) do the work of service, and (C) build up the body of Christ. Today, we may disagree in theory, but our practice often betrays us.)

Paul follows his charge that leaders spend their time equipping God's people with a goal statement in verse 13 and then a twofold purpose statement in verses 14–16. Goal: that all believers might reach a state of maturity characterized by unity in Christ and knowledge of Christ. The purpose statement: First, the knowledge of Christ will keep believers from being distracted and deceived by improper teaching. Second, the unity in Christ will keep us connected first to him, as our source, and then to each other, as each part supplies what the other part needs, all the while speaking the truth to one another in love.

Here we learn how servant leadership functions in this army of volunteers: not as a means to force them into service or to heap guilt on them so they reluctantly take their places—counting the days until the sentence of service runs out—but to equip them so that they serve with competence.

A true theology of volunteers believes the work of God's kingdom goes on even when the church's formal or informal programs may seem inadequately staffed. As equippers, we must ensure that God's people have an adequate knowledge of Scripture and an adequate unity in Christ so they can grow to maturity. These goals are best accomplished through the teaching and worship ministries of the local church, and the effectiveness of that teaching and worship demands intense volunteer involvement.

An Evaluation

Is it possible that we have talked ourselves into a circle? By freeing God's people to see their work as sacred, are we allowing them to abandon the needs of the church? Or could it be that freeing people to see all work as ministry will help them see their need for further instruction and preparation for that ministry?

All God's people carry vital roles for the advancement of the gospel, and all need help in finding those roles and learning to do their work gracefully, competently, and with maturity.

When building a theology of volunteerism, many tend to start with a need ("We have a great need for Sunday school teachers or ushers or host homes for visiting missionaries or worship leaders or gardeners or secretarial help") and then move to Scripture to justify that need. How easy to remind church members, "You were saved to serve"! But, when we start with the Scriptures, we learn that leaders first must see themselves as servants. These servant-leaders then help believers grow to maturity as they find their unique niche in the larger body of believers.

When we focus on individual maturity, not slot-filling for programs, a theology of volunteerism begins to emerge: All God's people carry vital roles for the advancement of the gospel, and all need help in finding those roles and learning to do their work gracefully, competently, and with maturity. Appointed church leaders hold the responsibility to develop God's people both individually and corporately. In the process of this development, as believers recognize their own necessity to the health of the church, church leaders—co-laborers—can encourage them to take their rightful places of ministry, both within the programs of the church and in the marketplace.

A theology such as this provides a base of great freedom from which to minister. With the emphasis on servant-leadership and the growth of the individual, all leading to corporate health, leaders may undertake the joyous and fearful responsibility of encouraging spiritual maturity through the proper use of recruitment, training, and motivational techniques.

A Quick Look at History

This theology seems straightforward and easily drawn from the pages of Scripture. Does church history bear out the implementation of such a strategy?

Not always. From the earliest days, we see the church dividing its ranks into spiritual/unspiritual, sacred/secular, clerical/lay, orthodox/heretic. People hastened to rank themselves in some way, as if to affirm the spirituality of some and to deny it in others. In time, all the work of the church became done by the clerics. A person seeking spirituality could find it only in a celibate, monastic life. That priesthood carried remarkable similarity to the Old Testament order.

With the Reformation, lay movements sprang up around Europe, movements that profoundly affected the early history of the United States. The Puritans carried a strong sense of the holiness of all life, disdaining the sacred/secular division.

The church is rarely divorced from the politics of its time. When functioning in a society with a rigid hierarchy, Christ's body will often find itself with a hierarchical bent, using Scripture to justify its structure. A church functioning in a slave-supported economy will point to the Bible to justify its abominable practice. In North America, which has a democratic form of government, we believe our contributing into the decision-making process is an inalienable right, available to all. But the pastor in a tribal area of Myanmar is expected to make all the decisions and perform all the ministry of the local church. The concept of active lay involvement would remain inconceivable to such a person, although he might hear it taught day after day in seminary. We cannot ask the pastor in Myanmar to separate himself from his culture, but we can ask him to examine the New Testament: Whom does God expect to do the work of ministry?

Growing the Church

It's plausible to conclude that paid staff—and paid staff only—should do the work of the church. Throughout its history, the church has often practiced that model, and to some extent it continues to do so. Yet such a decision would grieve the heart of God. Jesus died for all humanity, and those who become believers must grow to maturity.

The responsibility to encourage that growth has been placed on the shoulders of the church's appointed leaders—the pastors, the teachers, the prophets, the evangelists. But how do we help our volunteers grow? How do we encourage their involvement without just "using" them for the sake of corporate growth or greater numbers? How do we love their weaknesses, affirm each one as a necessary part of the body of Christ, put up with the inefficiencies of a volunteer organization, and still carry on God's work? It might just be that these questions actually define the work of ministry.

<div align="right">Kenneth O. Gangel</div>

For Further Reading and Study

Leith Anderson, *Leadership That Works*

Kenneth O. Gangel, *Feeding and Leading*

Sue Mallory, *The Equipping Church*

Tom Marshall, *Understanding Leadership*

chapter 26

Christian Ethics

✦

[It] is worse than useless for Christians to talk about the importance of Christian morality, unless they are prepared to take their stand upon the fundamentals of Christian theology.[1]

—Dorothy L. Sayers

Doctrine and Ethics

A story is told about Kenneth Kirk, sometime professor of moral theology at Oxford University. His wife was once asked what she felt about her husband's work. "Kenneth," she said, "spends a lot of time thinking up very complicated and sophisticated reasons for doing things we all know perfectly well to be wrong." This illustrates neatly the way in which moral theology is viewed by many people these days. I want to suggest that a recovery of Christian doctrine is fundamental to a recovery of Christian ethics. In other words, Christian doctrine is what sets Christian ethics apart from the ethics of the world around us. It defines what is distinctive—what is Christian—about Christian ethics. To lose sight of the importance of doctrine is to lose the backbone of faith and to open the way to a spineless ethic. I hope that the following observations will explain why I believe this to be the case.[2]

Commitment is fundamental to any but the most superficial forms of human existence. In his famous essay "The Will to Believe," psychologist William James makes it clear that there are some choices in life that cannot be avoided. To be human is to make decisions. We are all obliged to choose between options that are, in James' words, "living, forced, and momentous." In matters of morality, politics, and religion, we must make

conscious choices—and, as James stresses, our whole life hangs upon the choices made.

Christian doctrine is what sets Christian ethics apart from the ethics of the world around us.

Every movement that has ever competed for the loyalty of human beings has done so on the basis of a set of beliefs. Whether the movement is religious or political, philosophical or artistic, the same pattern emerges: A group of ideas, of beliefs, is affirmed to be in the first place true and in the second place important. It is impossible to live life to its fullest and avoid encountering claims for our loyalty of one kind or another. Marxism, socialism, atheism—all alike demand that we consider their claims. The same is true of liberalism, whether in its religious or political forms. As Alasdair MacIntyre demonstrates so persuasively, liberalism is committed to a definite set of beliefs and hence to certain values. It is one of the many virtues of MacIntyre's important work that it mounts a devastating critique of the idea that liberalism represents some kind of privileged and neutral vantage point from which other doctrinal traditions (such as evangelicalism) may be evaluated. Rather, liberalism entails precommitment to liberal beliefs and values. Liberal beliefs (and thus values) affect liberal decisions —in ethics, religion, and politics. The following quotation illustrates the general tenor of MacIntyre's work:

> To the readership of the *New York Times,* or at least to that part of it which shares the presuppositions of those who write that parish magazine of affluent and self-congratulatory liberal enlightenment, the congregations of evangelical fundamentalism appear unfashionably unenlightened. But to the members of those congregations that readership appears to be just as much a community of prerational faith as they themselves are but one whose members, unlike themselves, fail to recognize themselves for what they are, and hence are in no position to level charges of irrationality at them or anyone else.[3]

Time and time again, life-changing decisions are demanded of us. How shall I vote at the next election? What do I think about the riddle of human destiny? What form of educational system do I consider to be best? Is the use of deadly force justifiable to defend democracy? What rights do animals have? All these questions force us to think about our beliefs and to make choices. You cannot sit on the fence throughout life, as William James demonstrated with such remarkable clarity. To suspend judgment on every question that life raises is to be trapped in an insipid agnosticism, where all

the great questions arising out of human experience receive the same shallow response: "I don't know—and I don't care."

Thinking people need to construct and inhabit mental worlds. They need to be able to discern some degree of ordering within their experience, to make sense of its riddles and enigmas. They need to be able to structure human existence in the world, to allow it to possess meaning and purpose, to allow decisions to be made concerning the future of that existence. In order for anyone—Christian, atheist, Marxist, Muslim—to make informed moral decisions, it is necessary to have a set of values concerning human life. Those values are determined by beliefs, and those beliefs are stated as doctrines. Christian doctrine thus provides a fundamental framework for Christian living.

A common complaint about doctrine runs along the following lines: "Doctrine is outdated and irrelevant. What really matters is our attitudes toward other people, and our morality. Doctrine does not matter." Dorothy L. Sayers reacted as follows to this suggestion:

> The one thing I am here to say to you is this: that it is worse than useless for Christians to talk about the importance of Christian morality, unless they are prepared to take their stand upon the fundamentals of Christian theology. It is a lie to say that dogma does not matter; it matters enormously. It is fatal to let people suppose that Christianity is only a mode of feeling; it is virtually necessary to insist that it is first and foremost a rational explanation of the universe. It is hopeless to offer Christianity as a vaguely idealistic aspiration of a simple and consoling kind; it is, on the contrary, a hard, tough, exacting, and complex doctrine, steeped in a drastic and uncompromising realism.[4]

Not so long ago, there was a movement within liberal theology arguing that there existed a universal morality that Christianity reflected. It was not necessary to know anything about Christian theology to make ethical judgments. This universal morality, it was argued, was adequate in itself. The Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, humanist, and atheist were all, it was argued, committed to much the same set of moral principles (with unimportant local variations). In *The Abolition of Man*, C. S. Lewis described these as "the ultimate platitudes of Practical Reason." That view is now regarded as so seriously vulnerable as to be virtually defunct. Works such as Jeffrey Stout's *Ethics After Babel* destroyed the credibility of the idea of a universal morality. Like every other form of morality, Christian morality is something special and distinct, not just a subspecies of some nonexistent universal morality. With the passing of the myth of a universal

morality, Christian writers have begun to write with much greater confidence on the theme of "Christian morality" in the knowledge that there is a distinctly Christian outlook on many matters. And this outlook, it is increasingly being stressed, is based upon Christian doctrine.

It is doctrine that explains why and how Jesus' words and deeds have divine rather than purely human authority.

To make this point we may consider two highly acclaimed works on the theme of Christian ethics: Oliver O'Donovan's *Resurrection and Moral Order* and John Mahoney's *The Making of Moral Theology*. Despite differences between the two authors, one theme emerges as of major importance: Ethics rests upon doctrine. To give but one example: For O'Donovan, Christian ethics rests upon a proper understanding of the objective order imposed upon creation by God. To act in a Christian manner rests upon thinking in a Christian manner.[5]

Let us explore this briefly by considering the ethical authority of Jesus Christ. To allow that Jesus is a religious teacher is to raise the question of his authority. Why should we take him seriously? Although we have been fortunate enough to have had the advice of countless moral and religious teachers in human history, what makes Jesus different? What singles him out as commanding attention? It is untenable to suggest that Jesus' authority rests upon the excellence of his moral or religious teaching. To make this suggestion is to imply that Jesus has authority only when he happens to agree with us. We thus would have authority over Jesus.[6]

In fact, however, the teaching of Jesus has authority on account of who Jesus is—and the identity and significance of Jesus can only be spelled out in doctrinal terms. "We cannot go on treating and believing in Jesus Christ in a way in which it would be wrong to treat and believe in another man, without a theory of his person that explains that he is something more than man."[7] It is doctrine that explains why and how Jesus' words and deeds have divine rather than purely human authority. It is doctrine that singles out Jesus Christ, and none other, as being God incarnate. To pay attention to Christ reflects our fundamental conviction that God speaks through this man as through no other. Here is no prophet, speaking on God's behalf at second hand; here is God himself, speaking to us. "We have to do with God

himself as we have to do with this man. God himself speaks when this man speaks in human speech" (Karl Barth). Quite contrary to the Broad Church liberals of the nineteenth century (who believed it was possible to uphold the religious and ethical aspects of Christianity while discarding its doctrines), the authority of Jesus' moral and religious teaching thus rests firmly upon a doctrinal foundation.

This point is made with care and persuasion by philosopher of religion Basil Mitchell, who stresses that ethics depend upon worldviews and that worldviews in turn depend upon doctrine:

> Any worldview that carries with it important implications for our understanding of man and his place in the universe would yield its own distinctive insights into the scope, character, and content of morality. To answer the further question, "What *is* the distinctive Christian ethic" is inevitably to be involved to some extent in controversial questions of Christian doctrine.[8]

The liberal Christianity-without-doctrine school thus finds itself in something of a quandary. If Christianity is primarily about certain religious or moral attitudes, it seems that those attitudes rest upon doctrinal presuppositions. Doctrine determines attitudes. It is utterly pointless to argue that we all ought to imitate the religious and moral attitudes of Jesus. That is a demand for blind and unthinking obedience. The question of why we should regard these attitudes as being authoritative demands to be considered. And that means explaining what it is about Jesus Christ that demands singling him out as authoritative—in short, developing doctrines about Jesus.

This point was made clearly and prophetically by William Temple. Writing against the "religion without dogma" movement in 1942, he declared:

> You would hardly find any theologian now who supposes that Christian ethics can survive for half a century in detachment from Christian doctrine, and this is the very last moment when the church itself can come forward with outlines of Christian ethics in the absence of the theological foundation, which alone makes them really tenable. Our people have grown up in a generally Christian atmosphere, and take it for granted that all people who are not actually perverted hold what are essentially Christian notions about human conduct. But this is not true.[9]

He then goes on to illustrate this point tellingly with reference to the rise of Hitler and Stalin in the 1930s. Although many liberal and radical writers of the 1960s suggested that Christian ethics could be divorced from doctrine

and maintain an independent existence, the wisdom of Temple's words is once more apparent. Distinctive ethics (whether Marxist, Christian, or Buddhist) are dependent upon worldviews, which are in turn shaped by doctrines, by understandings of human nature and destiny.

Doctrines are . . . the foundation of our understanding of the world and our place within it.

Beliefs are important because they claim to describe the way things are. They assert that they declare the truth about reality. But beliefs are not just ideas that are absorbed by our minds and that have no further effect upon us. They affect what we do and what we feel. They influence our hopes and fears. They determine the way we believe. A Japanese fighter pilot of the Second World War might believe that destroying the enemies of his emperor ensured his immediate entry into paradise—and, as many American Navy personnel discovered to their cost, this belief expressed itself in quite definite actions. Such pilots had no hesitation in launching suicide attacks on American warships. Doctrines are ideas—but they are more than mere ideas. They are the foundation of our understanding of the world and our place within it.

What we might call the "commonsense Christianity" school will probably continue to insist that faith is a "practical and down-to-earth matter," having nothing to do with "airy-fairy theories" (if I might use phrases I was fond of myself at one time). Economist John Maynard Keynes came across similar attitudes among industrialists and politicians. "We are practical people," they declared, "who have no need for abstract theories about economics." Yet these people, Keynes scathingly remarked, were little more than the unwitting slaves of some defunct economist. Their allegedly practical outlook actually rested upon unacknowledged economic theories. They lacked the insight to see that what they regarded as obvious was actually based upon the theories of some long-dead economist. Without knowing it, "commonsense Christianity" rests upon quite definite doctrinal foundations. The man who declares in the name of common sense that Jesus was simply a good man may genuinely believe that he has avoided matters of doctrine, whereas he has actually echoed the doctrines of the Enlightenment. The study of Christian doctrine is thus profoundly liberating, since it exposes these hidden doctrinal assumptions. Every version of Christianity that has ever existed rests upon doctrinal

foundations, but not every version of Christianity has grasped this fact. The genuine question of importance is quite simple: Which of those doctrinal foundations are the most authentic and reliable?

This is to raise the question of truth in Christian doctrine and ethics. To some modern religious writers, it may seem slightly quaint and old-fashioned to talk about "truth." *Relevance* and *meaningfulness* were words that captured the imagination of a recent generation. Unless something was relevant or meaningful there was no point in bothering with it. Christian doctrine, many suggested, was outdated and irrelevant. The brave new world that was dawning could manage very well without such relics of the past.

The danger of all this is clear. Beneath all the rhetoric about relevance lies a profoundly disturbing possibility: that people may base their lives upon an illusion, upon a blatant lie. The attractiveness of a belief is all too often inversely proportional to its truth. In the sixteenth century, the radical writer and preacher Thomas Müntzer led a revolt of German peasants against their political masters. On the morning of the decisive encounter between the peasants and the armies of the German princes, Müntzer promised that those who followed him would be unscathed by the weapons of their enemies. Encouraged by this attractive and meaningful belief, the peasants stiffened their resolve.

The outcome was a catastrophe. Six thousand peasants were slaughtered in the ensuing battle, and six hundred were captured. Barely a handful escaped. Their belief in invulnerability was relevant. It was attractive. It was meaningful. It was also a crude and cruel lie, without any foundation in truth. The last hours of that pathetic group of trusting men rested on an utter illusion. It was only when the first salvos cut some of their number to ribbons that they realized they had been deceived.

To allow relevance to be given greater weight than truth is a mark of intellectual shallowness and moral irresponsibility. The first and most fundamental of all questions must be this: Is it true? Is it worthy of belief and trust? Truth is certainly no guarantee of relevance, but no one can build his personal life around a lie. Christian doctrine is concerned to declare that Christian morality rests upon a secure foundation. An obedient response to truth is a mark of intellectual integrity. It marks a willingness to hear what purports to be the truth, to judge it, and—if it is found to be true—to accept it willingly. Truth demands to be accepted because it inherently deserves to

be accepted and acted upon. Christianity recognizes a close link between faith and obedience—witness Paul's profound phrase "the obedience of faith" (Romans 1:5 NASB)—making it imperative that the ideas underlying and giving rise to attitudes and actions should be judged and found to be right.

To care about doctrine is to care about the reliability of the foundations of the Christian life.

Christian doctrine aims to describe the way things are. It is concerned with telling the truth in order that we may enter into and act upon that truth. It is an expression of a responsible and caring faith, a faith prepared to give an account of itself and to give careful consideration to its implications for the way we live. To care about doctrine is to care about the reliability of the foundations of the Christian life. It is to be passionately concerned that our actions and attitudes, our hopes and our fears, are a response to God and not to something or someone making claims to deity, which collapse upon closer inspection. . . .

A church that takes doctrine seriously is a church that is obedient to and responsible for what God has entrusted to it. Doctrine gives substance and weight to what the Christian church has to offer to the world. A church that despises or neglects doctrine comes perilously close to losing its reason for existence and may simply lapse into a comfortable conformity with the world—or whatever part of the world it happens to feel most at home with. Its agenda is set by the world; its presuppositions are influenced by the world; its outlook mirrors that of the world. There are few more pathetic sights than a church wandering aimlessly from one "meaningful" issue to another in a desperate search for relevance in the eyes of the world.

Why, then, are such considerations important? I would like to reflect on their importance to the modern American situation, using Robert Bellah's *Habits of the Heart* and Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* as dialogue partners. Bellah and his coauthors, surveying individualism and commitment in modern American life, concluded that morality was in a state of chaos. There is no longer any consensus. There is no common language of morality. There is no moral Esperanto that can be abstracted from the moral traditions of humanity. Bellah quotes Livy's reflection on ancient Rome: "We have reached the point where we cannot tolerate either

our vices or their cure." And MacIntyre, pursuing the analogy with ancient Rome a little further, declares that "the New Dark Ages are already upon us." I would like to add to this that the so-called New Age movement is simply a new dark age, a new age of distortion and darkness in which the light of faith came dangerously close to extinction.

The foundations of secular ethics are in serious disarray. The notion of some universal morality, valid at all places in space and time, has lost credibility. Secular ethics have been fascinated by the notion of moral obligations, based on the Kantian notion of a sense of moral obligation. But, as MacIntyre pointed out with great force, there are alarming parallels between the Western appeal to a sense of moral obligation and the eighteenth-century Polynesian idea of taboo. Captain Cook and his sailors were puzzled by the Polynesian concept, which seemed quite incomprehensible to them. MacIntyre points out that the liberal notion of moral obligation is just as arbitrary as taboo. The difference is that liberals fail to realize it.

So there is a need to be able to develop foundations for ethics. No longer need we pay excessive attention to the functional idea of a universal framework of morality. Instead, we may concentrate upon what ways of thinking and what ways of acting are appropriate to the Christian community of faith. MacIntyre calls for "the construction of local forms of community through which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the New Dark Ages, which are already upon us." I would like to suggest that this vision is helpful to us.

It encourages us to see ourselves as a "city upon a hill" (to use a biblical image) or a "local form of community in the New Dark Ages" (to use MacIntyre's). Within that community, a distinctive way of thinking and acting exists, nourished by the gospel, sustained by the grace of God, oriented toward the glory of God. It is a vision that Americans may share with their Puritan forebears who settled Massachusetts Bay in the seventeenth century with such hope and faith. Their vision can be ours. As MacIntyre stresses, it does not matter if those outside this community fail to understand or share this vision; the important thing is that the vision is presented to them, is kept alive. By joining this community of faith, they may come to understand its hopes, beliefs, and values.

But let me end with a Pauline image, lent new importance by trends in secular moral philosophy. It is the image of Christians as citizens of heaven, developed with such force in Philippians 3:20–21. The model is that of a colony, an image familiar to the Philippians, Philippi then being a Roman colony. It was an outpost of Rome on foreign territory. Its people kept the laws of the homeland, they spoke its language, they longed for the day when they could return home to the *patria*, the fatherland.

We must never be afraid to be different from the world around us.

Let us think of ourselves, our seminaries, our churches, and our families as colonies of heaven, as outposts of the real eternal city, who seek to keep its laws in the midst of alien territory. C. S. Lewis gave us many helpful ways of thinking about the Christian life, and one of the most helpful is that of the world as enemy territory, territory occupied by invading forces. In the midst of this territory, as resistance groups, are the communities of faith. We must never be afraid to be different from the world around us. It is very easy for Christians to be depressed by the fact that the world scorns our values and standards. But the image of the colony sets this in its proper context. At Philippi, the civilizing laws of Rome contrasted with the anarchy of its hinterland. And so our moral vision—grounded in Scripture, sustained by faith, given intellectual spine by Christian doctrine—stands as a civilizing influence in the midst of a world that seems to have lost its moral way. If a new dark age does indeed lie ahead of us—indeed, if it is already upon us—then it is vital that the Christian moral vision, like the torch of liberty, is kept alight. Doctrine, I firmly and passionately believe, gives us the framework for doing precisely that. It can be done—and it must be done.

Alister E. McGrath

A Biblical Foundation

Neither in Judaic nor in Christian thought can ethics be separated, except for the purpose of concentration, from its theological context. All biblical theology has moral implications that comprise the biblical ethic.

Ethics in the Old Testament

In recognizing the Old Testament as Christian Scripture, the church adopted some embarrassing moral precedents: burning witches, the poisoned trial cup, family punishment, polygamy, concubinage, and much violence and war. But it also fell heir to a great deal of moral instruction, warning, example, high inspiration, and moral faith that immeasurably increased Christianity's ethical resources.

Chief among gains was undoubtedly the theocratic foundation of ethics as the will of God, holy, faithful, and good, and based on what God had already done as creator and redeemer of his people. Thus, the Decalogue [the Ten Commandments] opens with "I am the Lᴏʀᴅ your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Exodus 20:2). The unique covenant that bound Israel to its God—not in a natural bond (as though God were the remotest ancestor), but in a moral relationship, originating in God's choice, promise, and deliverance and answered by Israel's grateful obedience and trust—lent an unparalleled quality of humility and confidence to Jewish ethical thought. Properly understood, obedience did not aim at divine favor but was inspired by it.

The Decalogue itself (perpetuating even older ideals) is a remarkable ethical document, its received form embracing a dual code of religious (Exodus 20:3–12) and social (vv. 13–17) duties, through bringing both areas (worship, prohibition of idols, the oath, the sacred day, and filial piety on the one hand, and the sanctity of life, marriage, property, truth, and desire on the other) under direct divine authority. Inevitably, this form of commandment gave its tone to Judaic morality, although the final commandment against coveting enters a realm where legalism is helpless.

The development of this ethical basis in the "Book of the Covenant" (20:22–23:19; see 24:7) reflects a simple nomadic and agricultural background, bringing a sense of justice and measured responsibility into primitive conditions; capital offenses are numerous, slavery accepted, but equity and piety begin to affect social life.

Deuteronomy emphasizes a humanitarian spirit, a liberality, sympathy, and inward holiness ("Love the Lᴏʀᴅ your God," 6:5) entirely in accord with the teaching of the prophets. Amos made ethics essential to Israel's relation to God, and his morality was pure, self-disciplined, passionately defensive of the poor and oppressed, passionately opposed to cruelty, deceit, luxury,

and selfishness. Isaiah and Micah demanded a religion consonant with the character of the Holy One of Israel. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah 40–66 apply the bitter lessons of the Babylonian exile in relentlessly ethical ways, though always within the context of God's unswerving purpose for his people. Israel's God is emphatically the author and guardian of the moral law, requiring above all that people do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God (Micah 6:8).

Major Ethical Systems

According to Norman Geisler, there are only six major ethical systems or ways of determining what is right and wrong.[10]

1. *Antinomianism* asserts that there are no moral or general laws. Therefore, stealing is not wrong or right. Since there are no objective moral laws in this system, deciding right and wrong is subjective and personal.

2. *Situationism* maintains that there is one absolute law: love. Therefore, stealing may be right if a person does it as an act of love to keep someone from starving to death. Everything except love is relative.

3. *Generalism* teaches that there are no absolute laws, only some general ones. Therefore, stealing is generally wrong, but there may be times when it is permissible. In this system, the end justifies the means. If the end is good, stealing is not wrong.

4. *Unqualified absolutism* declares that there are many absolute laws, but they don't conflict. Therefore, stealing is always wrong. In fact, no absolute law, such as truth or love or the sanctity of life, may be broken without consequences. The end never justifies the means. This is the biblical view.

5. *Conflicting absolutism* says there are many absolute laws that do conflict, and we should choose the lesser evil. Therefore, stealing is forgivable. When we face moral dilemmas, we must decide which absolute laws to keep and then ask for forgiveness for the one we break.

6. *Graded absolutism* states that there are many absolute laws that do conflict, and we should obey the higher one. Therefore, stealing is sometimes right. When we face moral dilemmas, we must decide which absolute law is more important than the others and follow it, making it permissible to break the others.

—Lin Johnson

Later Jewish moral teaching (in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, Sirach [an Apocryphal book]) included valuable ethical "wisdom" whose aim was to simplify duty into practical reverence for God, the merest common sense in

those who know themselves creatures of the Eternal: "The fear of the L<small>ORD</small> is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10). Wisdom's ideal is eloquently expressed in Job 31.

The Babylonian exile and the foreign domination that followed so threatened Jewish self-identity that immense emphasis was laid upon the written and oral Law, which enshrined everything distinctively Jewish. Piety, nationalism, and pride combined to produce an exaggerated legalism, burdensome to most and a source of moral blindness, hypocritical casuistry, and self-righteousness to many. Hence, there arose "religious" opposition to Jesus, for whom legalism held no divine authority, and Christianity's emphasis on freedom.

Ethics in the New Testament

A long ethical tradition was summarized, therefore, when John the Baptist appeared, demanding purity, righteousness, honesty, and social concern (Luke 3:10–14). But especially illuminating is the discrimination of Jesus as he took up from Judaism its ethical monotheism, its social conscience, and the relation of religion to morality, while rejecting the tendency to self-righteousness, the hard, external legalism, the nationalism, the cultivation of merit, and the failure to differentiate ritual from morality. On the other hand, Jesus pressed the demand for righteousness still further than the law, into the mind and motive behind behavior (Matthew 5:17–48), back to God's original purposes (19:3–9; Mark 2:27), or to the sufficient and overriding commandment of love to God and neighbor (Matthew 22:35–40). In this summary of all duty religious and social, *love* is Jesus' most characteristic contribution to ethical thought, as his example of love's meaning and his death in love for humanity comprise his most powerful contribution to ethical achievement.

Religion and ethics meet again in Christ's gospel of the kingdom of God, his version of the messianic hope and of the prophets' vision of God as Lord of history. Christ's description of life in the kingdom, its opportunities and obligations, applies his radical and realistic idea of righteousness and love to family life, stewardship of wealth, responsibility toward the state, social evils, and the fact of sin's sickness and cruelty. In all realms, obedience to the will of God constitutes the kingdom and ensures its

blessings; though it may involve loss of the self-life, it will gain eternal profit.

But the King is also Father and the citizens of the kingdom are his sons and daughters, sharing a status and life that reflect God's character in a fellowship and forgiveness, a freedom and trust, that make obedience glad. Beneath all else is the personal attachment of people to Jesus himself as Savior and Lord; in that love (John 14:15; 21:15–17) the desire to be like Christ becomes a moral incentive of immense emotional power. Such love delights to keep Christ's commandments.

There is good reason to believe the apostolic church offered considerable moral training to converts, covering abstinence from old sins and pagan ways, steadfastness under persecution, the fostering of fellowship, and submission to leaders. This probably included lists of duties as husband, wife, parent, child, servant, slave, and neighbor (see Colossians and 1 Peter). The earliest development of Christian ethical teaching is perhaps best illustrated in 1 Peter, where the emphasis falls upon holiness and submission—to civil powers (2:13–17), to slave-masters (2:18–25), to husbands (3:1–7), and within the fellowship (3:8–9; 4:8–11; 5:5–6). This unexpected theme not only spells out the meaning of life under divine rule, it follows from the biblical view of the essence of sin as self-will.

Illustration of the earliest Christian moral life is best seen in Luke's impressive gallery (in Acts) of essentially good, happy, socially useful, courageous, and transformed people, closely corresponding to his picture of Jesus in his gospel. James, too, probably presents an early picture of the church's moral stance, in a series of meditations on great words of Jesus in the manner of Jewish wisdom literature.

Paul's ethical concern was to counter the legalism that had failed in his own life, and that threatened to confine the church to a Jewish sect, by insisting on the sufficiency of faith to save Jew and Gentile alike, and on the freedom of the Christian to follow the leading of the Spirit (so Galatians). While handing on to converts the common tradition of ethical teaching (Romans 6:17; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6), Paul especially explicated the ethical significance of faith and the nature of life in the Spirit.

Faced with the challenge that if justification is by faith alone the believer may continue to sin with impunity, Paul replies that the faith that saves involves such a personal identification with Christ in death to sin, self, and

the world, and in resurrection to a new life of freedom, surrender, and triumph, that to continue in sin while exercising such faith is inconsistent, unnecessary, and impossible (Romans 6; Galatians 2:20). For Paul, the faith that saves sanctifies. If any believer finds this not so, it is because he or she is failing to be what in Christ he or she has become—dead to sin and alive to God.

If there is no love for the needy, there is no love for Christ who identifies with the needy; if there is no love for Christ, there is no faith in Christ, since faith without love is spurious; and if there is no faith in Christ, there is no salvation.[11]

—John R. W. Stott

Paul's other ethical theme contends that what the law can never do, through the weakness of human nature, "the law of the Spirit of life" in Christ Jesus does accomplish, so that the law is fulfilled in us (Romans 8:1–4). Already Jeremiah and Ezekiel had linked the invisible power of God in creation and history (Spirit) with the new heart and will needed in Israel. Luke, by showing Jesus as the bearer and bestower of the Spirit, and John, by describing the Spirit as Jesus' other self, reveal how in early Christian thought the whole idea of the divine Spirit had become stamped with the image of Jesus (Acts 16:7). Paul spells out the effect of this identification as producing the Christlike character—the fruit of the Spirit—in every willing believer (Romans 5:5; 8:9–14; Galatians 5:22–23). This transformation of people by the inner dynamic of the Christ-Spirit is one of the central ethical motifs of Christianity.

The other is the theme common to all New Testament ethical teaching, the imitation of Christ. The Synoptic Gospels present this as simply following Jesus. John expounds the ideal of *Christus Exemplar* as loving (13:34; 15:12), obeying (9:4; 15:10), standing firm (15:20), and humbly serving (13:14–15) as Jesus did for us. First John links it with the Christian hope (3:2). First Peter connects imitation especially with the cross (2:21–25; 3:17–18; 4:1, 13). Paul makes it the goal of worship (2 Corinthians 3:18), of ministry (Ephesians 4:11–13), of exhortation (1 Corinthians 11:1), and of God's providence (Romans 8:28–29), defining its inmost meaning as

having "the mind of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 2:16; Philippians 2:5), "the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 7:40).

Summary

In contrast with philosophical systems, the enduring marks of biblical ethics are its foundation in relationship with God, its objective imposed obligation to obedience, its appeal to the deepest needs in people, its down-to-earth social relevance, and its capacity for continual adaptation and development.

The final biblical formulation of the ideal as Christlikeness is related directly to love and gratitude kindled by the experience of redemption; it is rooted in objective history (as the obvious ethical implicate of the incarnation); it appeals strongly to one's finest moral intuitions; it calls to Christlike ministry among the needy of the world and to the fulfillment of God's kingdom on earth; and through the Christian centuries its many forms and interpretations have proved its flexible adaptability to changing conditions. The early biblical command "Be ye holy for I am holy" finds clear echo in the latest biblical promise, "We shall be like him."

Reginald E. O. White

Christian Social Ethics

Introduction and Definition

Public policy, politics, economics, war, poverty, education, racism, ecology, and crime: these are examples of the subject matter of social ethics. The task of social ethics can best be understood in contrast to other related fields. In contrast to social history studies, what *was* the situation in the past, and social science, what *is* the situation, social ethics is concerned with what *ought to be*—with the values and norms against which the past and present are to be judged. While social ethics has a task distinctive from those of social history and social science, it cannot be successful in this endeavor without an ongoing interaction with these related fields.

As in the case of other subfields of ethics, social ethics may be approached *descriptively* (What is the character of this morality? This

ethical language?) or *prescriptively* (I propose this set of values, these norms and principles, this way of resolving an ethical dilemma). A further distinction must be made between ethical discernment and ethical implementation. Social ethics includes reflection both on the problem of analysis and discernment of the social good and on the problem of strategy and implementation of the social good. Just as dogmatic theology exists to serve the church in its proclamation and worship, social ethics exists to serve the world by means of social reforms that will bring it into closer conformity to what is just, good, and right.

It is impossible to maintain a clear and precise distinction between social ethics and personal (individual) ethics. No individual behavior is without social implications. No social situation or problem is without individual repercussions. Nevertheless, for analytical purposes it is helpful to treat social ethics as a field in its own right and to direct primary attention to the ethical aspects of social groups, institutions, and corporate problems (racial, economic, political, etc.). By contrast, then, personal ethics focuses on the individual moral agent.

As in the case of personal ethics, social ethics addresses two general sets of questions (each of which has a discernment and an implementation aspect as noted above). The first has to do with *being* (character) and the second with *doing* (specific decision and action). While the latter (reflection on specific, immediate ethical dilemmas) is an often urgent task for social ethics, the former is at least equally important. That is, behind specific acts and dilemmas exist ongoing attitudes, arrangements, and processes that may be just or unjust, good or evil. This is the problem of corporate and structured evil. For social ethics, good and evil are not located merely in individual moral agents or in specific decisions and actions; they are also attributes of institutions, traditions, social arrangements, and processes.

Only in the last century has social ethics come into its own as an academic specialization in philosophy, theology, and religious studies departments. For Christian social ethics, however, it is essential to recognize that the subject matter of social ethics has received great attention throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. So too, most leaders and teachers of the Christian church over the past two millennia have given attention to social ethics, even if the label itself has not been employed. A contemporary Christian social ethics should be rooted in and governed by Holy Scripture as the Word of God. It should be informed by the witness

and experience of the church throughout history. And it should be in fruitful dialogue with social history and social science, as suggested earlier.

Analysis and Discernment

The first task of Christian social ethics is the analysis of structures and situations and the discernment of good and evil in relation to these.

REVELATION AND OBSERVATION. Christian social ethical analysis proceeds in a dialectic between revelation, the word of God "from above," and observation and experience "from below." A sociological realism must probe beneath surface problems to a correct discernment of the fundamental forces and problems of our society. What is the framework and what are the main currents just under the surface of current events and dilemmas? At the same time, analysis and discernment are informed by biblical revelation, by the Word of God. From the Genesis account of God's questioning of Adam, Eve, and Cain, through Jesus Christ's questioning of Peter and the disciples, social ethics is rooted in the Word of God. God not only illuminates, corrects, and deepens our observations of social reality, he also raises new issues and problems often undetected by even the most realistic sociological analysis. Thus Christian social ethics has a distinctive role to play in the broader society by giving expression to God's revealed perspectives on human affairs.

CREATION. Much of traditional theological social ethics has been shaped by appeals to orders of creation (or "spheres" or "mandates"). The orders of the family and marriage, politics and the state, work and economics, and sometimes others have been understood not only by reference to biblical revelation but also by common sense, reason, and natural law. Each order or sphere has its own distinctive purpose and corresponding ethical framework. All orders are under the final sovereignty of God. Critics of this position have argued that (1) we live in a fallen world in which appeals to a lost creation are misguided, and (2) the Bible itself rarely, if ever, develops an ethic of creation.

Whether or not social ethics is founded primarily on orders of creation, certain elements of the biblical revelation on creation have ongoing importance for Christian social ethics (cf. Genesis 1–2). The ethical "good"

is defined by the will, word, and work of God. Humanity is intended to be co-humanity: a social, joyful partnership of human beings before God ("It is not good for the man to be alone"). A positive view of politics and the state sees them as rooted in, and implied by, the social nature of created humanity. Marriage is implicitly monogamous and characterized by partnership before God. Work is fundamentally a matter of creativity (in the image of the Creator) and stewardship ("fill the earth and subdue it").

FALL. As important as the doctrine of creation for Christian social ethics is the revelation concerning the fall. The fall (Genesis 3) indicates that evil originates in rebellion against God and disobedience to his command. Evil is manifested in accusation, division, and the domination of one human being over another (Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel). Cain's departure from the presence of God in favor of building his own city and society (Genesis 4) and the subsequent revelation concerning the city (Babel/Babylon, Nineveh, etc.) complete this initial description of social evil. Its essential characteristics are pride, disobedience to God, accusation, division, domination, exploitation, violence, and the will to power.

Later perspectives in Hebrew-Christian thought developed this view of the fall in terms of the enmity of cosmic "principalities and powers" against God's purposes. Social structures and forces can have a demonic, corporate aspect. Evil is not merely an individual phenomenon, but a corporate, structural matter. In this light, the state (or work, or money) is ethically ambiguous: it can be the promoter of co-humanity, the restrainer of social evil, or the habitat of the rebellious powers. Both social history and social science, using different terminology and research methods, corroborate the biblical revelation on the ambiguous, transpersonal, and structural potential of the state (and other social institutions).

LAW AND JUSTICE. Christian social ethics, indeed all social ethics, often centers on the problem of justice and its institutionalization in law. The relationship between divine, revealed moral law and positive, civil law has been the subject of extensive reflection by Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, and many other classical Christian thinkers. Christian social ethics must be informed not only by the example of ancient Israel's theocracy (in which the connections between the Ten Commandments and the Book of the

Covenant and Holiness Code are fairly direct) but also by the example of Israel in exile and captivity (where the people of the Word lived in an alien situation).

In any case, justice (righteousness, judgment) is one of the most important ethical norms for Christian social ethics. "I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight" (Jeremiah 9:24). God "works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed" (Psalm 103:6). Biblical justice is more than fairness and equality. It is revealed to be a redress of grievances for the benefit of the oppressed. It is not so much in tension with love as inclusive of love and mercy. In an era in which justice and law have been reduced, in many respects, to quantitative, technical terms, Christian social ethics must give voice to the biblical concept of justice: qualitative, of divine origin and human concern.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD. Even the most intransigent orders-of-creation, social ethicists acknowledge that a new order of redemption takes its place in society with the coming of Jesus Christ and the founding of the church. This church is (or is supposed to be) the primary exemplar of the kingdom of God, which is in tension with the kingdom of this world. In Augustine's terms, the most important constitutive factors in social history are the city of God and the earthly city. The former is powered by *caritas,* love for God, and the latter by *cupiditas,* love for self. For Martin Luther, the two kingdoms are distinctive in that God's kingdom is a matter of interior faith, while the civil kingdom concerns external affairs. For Augustine, Luther, and others, of course, the picture is considerably more complex than these summaries. Nevertheless, there remains a distinction to be made in Christian social ethics between the corporate reality that takes Jesus Christ as its point of departure, and everything else.

It is in Jesus Christ that the Word of God is most clearly and fully revealed—for social ethics as for everything else. The social teaching of Jesus is given in his "platform" statement (Luke 4:18–21), in the temptation (Matthew 4), in his parables and discourses, in the Sermon on the Mount (5–7), in his Farewell Discourse (John 13–17), and in the events of the crucifixion and resurrection. The great commands to love God and love

one's neighbor, the call to unqualified servanthood and sacrifice, the Golden Rule, the call to simplicity and away from worship of material things, and so on, give the essential dimensions of Jesus' social ethics. Christian social ethics must reflect not only on the traditional, mainline interpretations of the meaning of Jesus Christ, the kingdom of God, and the love command but also on the interpretation and application of this social teaching by Franciscans, Anabaptists, Quakers, and others who have developed a social ethic based on Jesus Christ.

Eschatology. Christian social ethics is fundamentally eschatological in nature. That is, it leans toward the future and complete arrival of the judgment and grace of God. More than the original creation, it is the new creation that is invoked for ethical guidance in the New Testament. The kingdom of God, which is truly here (in part), will be (fully) revealed at the end. Jesus Christ is the new Adam. The Holy Spirit is the down payment on the future—not merely the echo of the original creation. History moves toward the New Jerusalem, not back to a golden age in Eden. For these reasons, the Apocalypse has particular social ethical significance in revealing God's final ethical judgment on human society in terms of Babylon (Revelation 18) and the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21).

It is in this final judgment that the principalities and powers are finally and totally dethroned, completing the work of Jesus Christ, who, "having disarmed the powers and authorities . . . made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Colossians 2:15). Babylon is the habitation of Satan and the principalities and powers. It is condemned for allowing the merchants of the earth to grow rich from her excessive luxuries, for her pride and power, for her mistreatment of saints, prophets, and apostles, for trafficking in the bodies and souls of human beings, for violence and bloodshed. The New Jerusalem, by contrast, is the place where God dwells, where death, mourning, and pain are eliminated, where the thirsty and hungry are satisfied, where nothing shameful or deceitful occurs, where the city gates are open to all the nations. Given the prominent eschatological thrust of biblical social ethics, Christian ethics takes seriously this final apocalyptic scenario in discerning what is good and evil socially.

Strategy and Implementation

The first task of Christian social ethics, then, is the analysis and discernment of social good and evil, drawing on social history, social science, and, above all, biblical social ethics. The second task is to reflect on the relation between Christ and culture—that is, between the ethical command of God and the social situation. It is the problem of strategy and implementation.

TRADITIONAL PERSPECTIVES. Contemporary reflection on how Christian (or religious) conviction relates to society has been influenced a great deal by social historians and social scientists. While Karl Marx, [Emile] Durkheim, and others have also had considerable influence, this reflection is most often indebted to pioneering studies done by Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch, and H. Richard Niebuhr. Weber's studies of the role of prophetism and charisma, his fourfold typology of the relation of religious groups to the world (innerworldly and otherworldly asceticism, innerworldly and otherworldly mysticism), and his classic study *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* continue to be an important point of departure for reflection of problems of strategy and implementation of Christian social ethical concern.

Ernst Troeltsch's *Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* proposed and gave voluminous historical illustration to a threefold typology of church, sect, and mystical association. Niebuhr elaborated and modified Troeltsch's typology into five categories, which remain influential in many current discussions. "Christ against culture" is represented by the sectarian, Anabaptist approach. "The Christ of culture" is represented by Ritschl and the accommodationist approach. "Christ above culture" is represented by Thomas Aquinas and a synthetic approach. "Christ and culture in paradox" is represented by Luther and the dualist approach. "Christ the transformer of culture" is represented by Augustine and the conversionist approach.

Social scientific and historical typologies such as the above are not able to do full justice to individual traditions. Nor do they take adequate account of the "denominational" and "laicized" character of contemporary society. Sixteenth- (or even nineteenth-) century categories and divisions are not directly transferable and applicable to the present. Nevertheless, reflection

of contemporary strategy and implementation is greatly impoverished without taking into account these traditional perspectives.

PRAYER AND EVANGELISM. From the point of view of biblical social ethics, the two activities of prayer and evangelism must not be underestimated as strategies for social change. Basic to the Judeo-Christian worldview is the conviction that God participates and intervenes in human history, partly, at least, in response to the prayer of his people. Entreaties, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings are to be made on behalf of all people, including those with political authority (1 Timothy 2:1–2). Prayer is thus, among other things, a political and social activity of great importance.

It is also basic to the Christian outlook to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in the hope that men and women will come to know him as Savior, Lord, and God. While social ethics is concerned primarily with corporate and structural good and evil, it is partly by means of individual moral agents that corporate, institutional reality is affected. Evangelism, among other things, brings about social change by means of the transformation of social actors, individual moral agents.

ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY. Far from being an uncaring, irresponsible withdrawal from social responsibility, the formation of alternative Christian community plays an important role in implementing social ethical change. The primary alternative community is the church (in both its local and broader senses). Intentionally Christian businesses, schools, political groups, and other associations are other means by which this strategy may be employed.

Alternative Christian communities have a fivefold significance for the implementation of social concern.

First, the community is an essential context for moral deliberation and discernment. The individual gifts and abilities of members of the community combine to discern the best possible responses to the complex issues and dilemmas of contemporary society.

Second, the very existence of the community (with its ultimate commitment to Jesus Christ) contributes to the health of society by "opening up" the social order. Totalitarian, monistic tendencies are held in check by the existence of alternative communities in society.

Third, the Christian community furnishes society with an example of "another way" of dealing with various social problems (leadership patterns, welfare activities, and so on).

Fourth, the community can function as a laboratory in which various reforms can be tested, refined, and demonstrated.

Fifth, the community prepares and assists individuals who go out from the community into the various structures and situations in the broader society. It is a resource not only for discernment but also for social action.

INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPATION. As Moses, Daniel, Paul, and other biblical figures demonstrate, direct participation in the political (and other) structures and institutions of society is another strategy available for the implementation of social ethical concern. Especially in circumstances where Christians (along with others) are invited to exercise political and social responsibility, it is appropriate to regard institutional participation as a valid means of implementing ethical conviction. Electoral politics, legislative reforms, business and professional activities, and public education are examples of institutional spheres where participation might be called for. The boundaries of such participation are established by two criteria.

First, no Christian is ever authorized to violate the command of God: we ought always, in cases of conflict, to "obey God rather than human beings!" (Acts 5:29).

Second, no Christian individual or group is ever authorized to unilaterally impose (coercively) the moral standards of God's kingdom on the world. Christians are to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, and sheep among wolves: they have presence and impact, but not by way of coercion and domination.

MEANS AND ENDS. Biblical Christian social ethics, in both discernment and implementation, defies easy categorization as deontological (doing what is right without regard to consequences) or teleological (the end justifies the means) ethics. In particular, however, a teleological approach violates the biblical message. Under no circumstances are evil means justified or permissible (Romans 6). The Christian is called to "overcome evil with good" (12:21). Since the means chosen affect the character of the end, a good end can be achieved only by the use of good means. Justice will be

achieved only with just means; peace with peaceful means; freedom or equality with means that are characterized by freedom and equality. Christian reflection on strategy and implementation of the good that is discerned will always stress this indissoluble relationship between means and ends.

<div align="right">David W. Gill</div>

Christian Ethics and Poverty

The poor are mentioned in various forms more than three hundred times throughout the Bible. While the references can include someone who is spiritually poor (Matthew 5:3), the vast majority deal with material poverty. Poverty seems an inescapable part of the human condition; though there should not have been any poor among the people of Israel (Deuteronomy 15:4), there would always be poor in the land (15:11). Jesus indicated that there would always be poor people for us to help (Matthew 26:11; Mark 14:7; John 12:8).

In biblical terms, there are several causes of poverty. The first is God himself, who gives both poverty and wealth (1 Samuel 2:6–8). He may do so out of judgment, seen in his warning to Israel that he would impoverish them if they turned from his ways in the promised land (Deuteronomy 28:48). While God is ultimately sovereign, we also see the human side of poverty. Proverbs focuses on poverty stemming from the poor person's lifestyle choices, including laziness (10:4–5), haste (21:5), love of pleasure (21:17), and stinginess (28:22). However, in the rest of the Old Testament it is more often the oppression of ungodly people (the rich and privileged) that causes or perpetuates poverty (e.g., Job 20:19; Psalm 14:6; 37:14; Proverbs 29:7; Ezekiel 18:12; Amos 4:1).

In contrast to the oppressors, God is the refuge of the poor (Psalm 14:6; Isaiah 25:4). He hears them (Exodus 22:27; Psalm 34:6), provides for them (68:10; 82:3; 102:17; 113:7; Isaiah 41:17), and secures justice for them (Psalm 140:12). Ultimately, they will be judged righteously by the Messiah (Isaiah 11:4). Until then, however, they need special protection and justice. As a symbol of God's concern, he made specific provisions for the poor in the law: gleaning rights were established (Leviticus 19:10; 23:22), a cloak

given in security by a poor person was to be returned at night so that he could sleep with it (Exodus 22:26–27; Deuteronomy 24:12–13), daily payment of wages for poor workers was required (24:14–15), a triennial tithe was collected (14:28–29), the poor among Israel were not to be charged interest (Exodus 22:25) and generosity in lending to them was to be blessed by God (Deuteronomy 15:7–11), and the poor were allowed to make less expensive offerings (e.g., Leviticus 5:7, 11; 27:8). As God's people we are to follow his example. Those who know God defend the poor (Jeremiah 22:16) and in so doing are righteous (Proverbs 29:7). God blesses those who help the poor (Deuteronomy 24:13, 19), since being kind to them is being kind to God (Proverbs 19:17; cf. Matthew 25:31–46). Therefore, when we defend their cause (Jeremiah 22:16) or help them (Proverbs 14:31) we walk in his ways.

The poor deserve impartial judgment; they are neither to be favored nor oppressed simply because of their poverty (Exodus 23:3–11; 30:15; Leviticus 19:15). We are to ensure that they are not denied justice (Exodus 23:6) and are not exploited (Proverbs 22:22). The one who helps them will be watched over by God, but those who oppress the poor are evil; they deserve to die (Ezekiel 18:10–13) and will be judged by God (Isaiah 3:13–15) since they show contempt not only for their victims but also for their Maker (Proverbs 14:31). Sodom, for example, was condemned because her people did not help the poor (Ezekiel 16:49).

Like Isaiah, Jesus taught that a lack of concern for the poor is not a minor lapse, but reveals that something is seriously wrong with one's spiritual compass, the heart.[12]
—Timothy Keller

As portrayed in the biblical discussion, the poor are people and part of his creation. While poverty is sometimes their own fruit, more generally it is the rich (together with the structures of society) who oppress them and deny them justice and opportunities to alleviate their condition. It is true that the poor are sinners, but it is also true that they have been deeply sinned against. God does "opt" for them in demanding impartiality and justice and in caring for their spiritual and material needs. The same attitude should be found in the church (e.g., James 2:2–6).

While their circumstances may enable the poor to see God more realistically than the rich, and they have much to teach the wealthy about dependence on God for daily life, that they are saved simply by virtue of their socioeconomic status cannot be sustained in light of the overall biblical evidence. The poor *do* need to hear the good news; thus, Jesus' declaration that he had come to proclaim this and to set them free from those things that bind them (Luke 4:18–20). As the church, we also have an obligation not only to evangelize the poor but also to seek impartial justice for them, as well as to side with them in the face of oppression.

Where we have been the oppressors, we must repent and change our actions and attitudes. Where we have stood by silently observing their oppression, we must take their side in combating the oppression they face. In so doing, however, we must not view them simply as objects of our attention, but recognize their humanity and extend to them the dignity found in partnering with them rather than dictating to them according to our own agendas. Above all, wherever we encounter the poor, we must declare to them the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection and invite them to enter into a living relationship with the One who is ultimately most concerned with their plight.

<div align="right">A. Scott Moreau</div>

For Further Reading and Study

Charles Colson, *How Now Shall We Live?*

David W. Gill, *Doing Right*

Dennis P. Hollinger, *Choosing the Good*

Arthur R. Holmes, *Ethics*

Francis Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?*

chapter 27
Christian Education

✦

> . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.
>
> —Matthew 28:20

Many churches have a staff or volunteer position with the title Christian Education Director or Minister of Christian Education. And because this person is often focused (or seemingly so) on the Sunday school, particularly the teaching of children, it may be customary to think of Christian education as primarily concerned with Bible stories and children's programs. However, although instructing the very young is an essential dimension, there is much more to Christian education. So, what is it, and how can Christian leaders pursue it effectively? Is there one "right" way to inculcate Christian values? What is the role of educational theory in a Christian environment? How do learners become "doers of the word, and not hearers only" [James 1:22 KJV]?

To help answer these and other questions, the following articles offer some thoughts on the scope, purpose, and context of Christian education, consider the strengths and limitations of key theories as to how learners receive and retain knowledge, and shed some light on how Christian educators may assist learners, regardless of age, gender, race, or ethnicity, to "live differently as a result of knowing God and internalizing his truth."

Defining Christian Education

Is there a difference between religious education and Christian education? Is Christian education only for Christians? How is Christian education different from "secular" education? What makes Christian education Christian? What

is the purpose of Christian education? How are goals and values determined? What is the setting for Christian education? What specifically is Christian education? As a definition for Christian education is developed, these questions must be addressed.

Religious Education or Christian Education?

For years the term *religious* education was used because it was broad and covered various perspectives. It was not limited to Protestants or evangelicals but included Roman Catholics and Jews, as well as adherents to other faiths. This grouping is best seen through the Religious Education Association, which counts in its membership people of many different theological persuasions. Evangelical educators, however, were not comfortable with this inclusiveness and wanted to make a definite statement that they were not open to just anything religious but only to what is taught in the Word of God.

This became a theological and biblical distinction. Seminaries had for years offered the Master of Religious Education (MRE) degree, but many evangelical schools changed this to the Master of Arts in Christian Education (MACE). Though some in evangelical churches may refer to *religious education* as a term when describing the educational ministry, the understanding is that they are referring to a Bible-based ministry of education, not something so inclusive that every kind of religious group is accepted.

At one time there was a distinction between religious education and Christian education that was not tied to the inclusivity issue. Christian education was defined as anything that dealt with schools, such as Christian day schools and schools on the mission field. Religious education was anything that involved the local church ministry, such as Sunday school, leadership development, and family life education. Though some may still use this distinction, it is no longer universally accepted.

The Scope of Christian Education

For whom is Christian education designed? Taken literally, it means education for Christians, but in reality it is far more than this in scope. It includes preconversion, conversion, and postconversion learning experiences. People come to faith in Christ through the faithful teaching of

God's Word and the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. After conversion, the learner moves into the discipleship stage and is to develop and grow as a believer. This is Christian education in action: not a onetime learning experience but a lifetime dedicated to learning more about God and his Word. It includes the application of this truth in the life of the learner so that it can be passed on to others in service and ministry. Christian education is designed to bring people to faith, to develop people in their faith, and to lead people to minister to others through the ministry of the church.

There has been much discussion on the difference between secular education and Christian education. Some state that there is no difference because the same theories, methodologies, and approaches to learning prevail. It is true that content is shared in both. It is true that both want to see change, which many will call "learning." It is also true that Christian education is more than just teaching about the Bible and that secular subjects can be taught from a Christian perspective. There is a difference, however, because of the unique role of the Holy Spirit in Christian education. Through the Spirit's illumination, believers are shown the truth of God's Word, and this is not present in secular education. Secular and Christian educators may use similar methodologies, but this does not make them the same.

Christian education is Christian when teachers and learners are dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit in the learning environment. It is Christian when the purpose and goals are honoring to the Lord and to his kingdom. It is Christian when the curriculum is developed from the teachings of the Word and from an understanding of biblical theology. It is Christian when there is an overall understanding and perspective that God is in control and that teachers and learners are sincerely seeking to fulfill his will and purpose in all things.

The Purpose of Christian Education

The purpose of Christian education is to bring people to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, to train them in a life of discipleship, and to equip them for Christian service in the world today. It is to develop in believers a biblical worldview that will assist them in making significant decisions from a Christian perspective. It is helping believers to "think Christianly" about all areas of life so that they can impact society with the message of the gospel. In essence, it is the development of a Christian worldview.

The purpose, goals, and values of Christian education are derived from a biblically based theological foundation—quite different from the more inclusive "religious" education approach. Worship, evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, and service are all drawn from the Scriptures and are included in any purpose and value statement for Christian education. Goals are developed from these key functions of the church, and effective Christian education can be measured based upon the accomplishment of these important functions.

The Context of Christian Education

The primary setting for Christian education is the church. Actually, the church's educational ministry is probably the largest educational endeavor in the world. Considering the youngest child through the oldest adult, the numbers involved in some form of Christian education ministry through the church are significant. Christian education also takes place outside the walls of the church through Christian schools, Bible studies, camps, parachurch organizations, and other kinds of varied ministries. It is important to note that Christian education is not limited to just one kind of organization or ministry and is found outside the church in many different venues.

Christian education, then, is more than merely teaching Christians. It is all of the above and much more.

Dennis E. Williams

Learning Styles

Learning style can be defined as the way a student sees or perceives things best and then *processes or uses what has been seen*. When a student's preferred learning style is honored in the Christian classroom, that person will often be willing to attempt more for Christ, to become a stronger disciple. Learning styles move the focus away from "How can we maintain discipline long enough to get through this Sunday school class? How can we help these at-risk children?" to "We're so glad to be participating in this life-changing experience, called by God to teach so many at-promise children!"

The traditional view of learning was that all students learn the same way. Educators assumed that all students' minds process information in the same

linear pattern. This pattern became the model or teaching template for countless decades of instruction. It had the same basic steps: (1) teachers presented the information while the students listened carefully; (2) students took notes and memorized them; (3) teachers interacted with the students through teacher-directed questions and answers; (4) students then returned the information to the teacher to prove they had learned the content of instruction. But learning is not an easily diagrammed 1-2-3-4 process. God was much more creative when he crafted our minds. Each of us learns best in a pattern that is uniquely ours. When we take into consideration differences in learning preferences, students are able to learn faster, enjoy what they are learning more, and are more likely to put what they have learned into practice.[1]

When we as teachers fail to take these differences into consideration, we waste valuable learning opportunities. As students we may convince ourselves that we are not smart, and once convinced we may live down to those convictions. This detrimental mindset can be learned early in life. As one public elementary school teacher quipped, "It takes no time at all for a child to understand the difference between being assigned to the Robin Reading Group or the Buzzard Reading Group."

Everyone has a learning style—both very smart people and people who struggle with any kind of learning. When students are taught in styles that match their individual learning styles, they will be much more likely to reach their full potentials.

Picture a dandelion in seed. Carefully pick it and blow hard so that the seeds fly off in the wind every which way. On even a moderately windy day, it would be impossible to follow each of those seeds. The same is true of information about learning styles. Many researchers are following different aspects of how people learn. Each confirmed new body of information makes Christian educators' jobs more difficult and at the same time more effective. We have a mass of new information. Volunteers may feel like the little girl who came home from Sunday school and stamped her foot, announcing to her mother, "I'm never going back there again!"

Her mother, not the least bit amused, asked, "Why not?"

"Well," said the child, "I already know better than I behave."

Yes, as teachers, we already know better than we behave, yet the more we learn, the more responsibility we have to put what we have learned into

practice.

Here we will explore two aspects of learning styles.[2] First, we will look at the Natural Learning Cycle, which gives us a pattern to follow as we teach. Second, we will look at the modalities or senses we use most in learning. Knowledge of modalities can help us pick methods that appeal to everyone in a class, using them appropriately and effectively throughout the Natural Learning Cycle.[3]

The Natural Learning Cycle: A Natural Learning Process

It makes sense to most teachers that people learn in very different ways. "But how," the volunteer teacher asks, "can I possibly teach all these different students in the same classroom?" The answer is not as difficult as one might think. Learning follows a natural progression or cycle. When the teacher follows that cycle, he or she will find that every learner will have an opportunity to shine. The learner's preferred learning style will allow that student to participate and even take a leadership role in that part of the lesson. When the student knows that the way he or she learns will be honored at some point, he or she is freed to listen and learn in areas that are not a preference.

Learning-style expert Bernice McCarthy has given names to students who enjoy one of these steps more than others and learn best when that step is included in every lesson.[4] She asserts that every student's learning style is defined by his or her favorite place on the cycle. In that place the student can say, "Here I am smartest. Here I can contribute best."

STEP **1:** *Collaborative Learners* begin with what they already know or feel or need, easily sharing from past experiences. They make connections with their lives outside the classroom and bring those connections into class for everyone to discuss and examine. Quite simply, students who contribute most to this first step of the learning process are adept at providing the context in which new learning takes place. They help the whole class understand why what is about to be studied is important. They answer the question "Why study this?"

STEP 2: Step 1 has prepared the whole class for learning something new. Now a second group of students, *Analytic Learners*, takes leadership. This is the group that enjoys answering questions such as "What new things do we need to know?" or "What does the Bible say about this issue?" Analytic learners need to learn something new in every lesson or see a new perspective on what they already know. Every student participates in every part of the natural learning cycle, but each will enjoy one or two parts most. A word of caution: It is here, at the end of Step 2, that many volunteer teachers stop. They have captured the interest of the class, and they have led that class into Bible study. Their students, they feel, have learned. However, they are only halfway through the learning cycle. If they stop here, students will be unlikely to put what they have learned into practice. Also, almost half their students will not feel a part of the class because they have not had an opportunity to use their minds in the ways that work best for them. In Western culture, 30 percent of students prefer Step 2 of the learning cycle. The other 70 percent are pretty equally divided among the other three steps.

STEP 3: Step 3 is the safe laboratory where *Commonsense Learners* build on what has gone before. They know why the subject they are studying is important. They know what the Bible has to say about it. Now they want to know how what they learned makes sense today. Is it applicable? In the safety of the classroom setting, they want to practice finding answers to the hands-on, practical question "How does this work?"

STEP 4: A fourth group of students, the *Dynamic Learners*, will lead the whole class in finding creative ways of using what they have learned in the classroom. This final step moves students out of laboratory safety and into their Monday-through-Saturday lives.

   No student will fit perfectly into any one of the four quadrants (see diagram). Our God is much too creative to have limited his creation to just four kinds of learners. Each mind pattern will be slightly different, but for most students there will be one or two of the steps in the Natural Learning Cycle where they feel most at home and where they can contribute most. Eliminate a step, devalue a student!

   About this process McCarthy says, "It is natural to learn this way. In the process of my coming to understand the Natural Learning Cycle, I kept feeling I had always known it. I found myself recognizing how I had used it intuitively in much of my teaching. For the work of the researchers who

helped me bring this cycle to my consciousness, I am grateful because now I can name it, now I can own it."[5]

NATURAL LEARNING CYCLE

Dynamic Learner

Collaborative Learner

Commonsense Learner

Analytic Learner
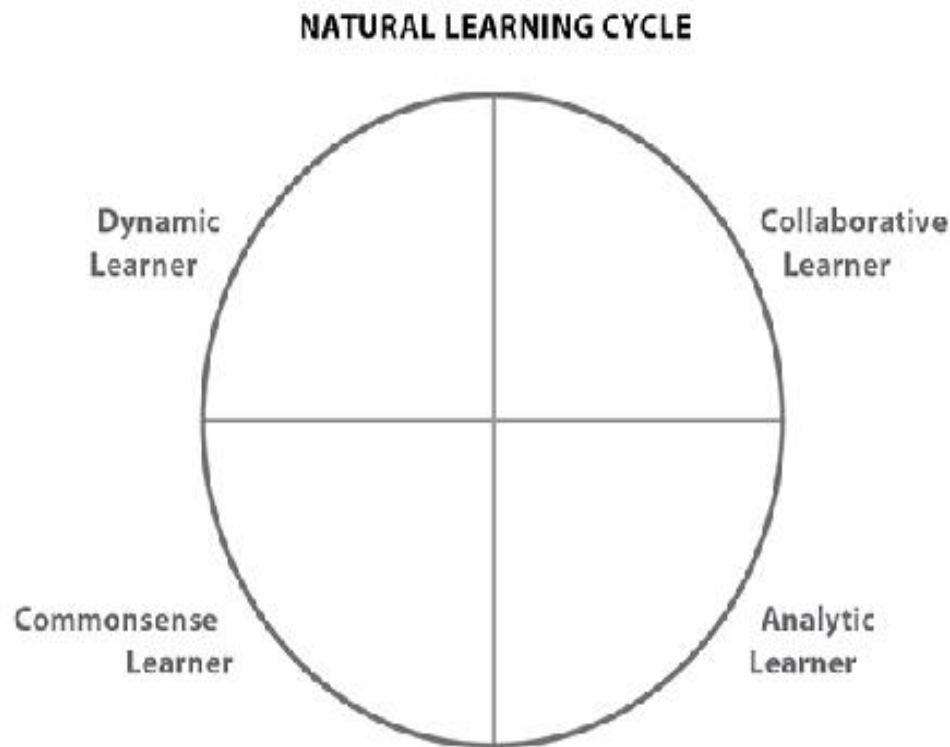
A Predictive Evaluation

It would be very helpful for the student interested in further details on a learning-style preference inventory to consider the following questions.[6] Understanding your own style of learning will be a tremendous help to you in your ability to appreciate the variety of students in your classroom.

Overview of the Natural Learning Cycle

Students who prefer different quadrants of the Natural Learning Cycle have very dissimilar learning characteristics. A study of each can help us meet the needs of all four groups.

THE COLLABORATIVE LEARNER: WHY DO I NEED TO KNOW THIS? The Collaborative Learner is at risk in many classrooms for two reasons. First, this learner is adept at considering the broad picture but is not usually as good with details.

For example, if the teacher asked for the names of the twelve disciples in the order Jesus chose them, this student would be totally lost. This is not the way his or her mind works, and he or she may not even value the answer. If, however, the teacher asks, "What is Christian discipleship, and how did you see Jesus' disciples growing in their understanding of discipleship?" he or she is right in there, talking about possible answers to what is regarded as an important question.

What's My Learning Style?

The following learning-style indicator will help you ascertain your own preferred style of learning.[7]
    Directions: After reading each sentence, indicate if that statement is:

4 = Always like me
3 = Sometimes like me
2 = Rarely like me
1 = Not at all like me

After completing the statements, decide which predicts most closely the way you learn by adding the numbers in each of the four sections. The quadrant that has the largest numeric value is the one where you are most at home in the Natural Learning Cycle. This prediction may confirm what you already know about how you learn best. Also pay attention to the parts of the cycle that are least like you. You'll want to pay extra attention to how you structure learning sessions to make certain that you are not overemphasizing the parts you prefer and underemphasizing those where you are not as comfortable.

Collaborative Learners

_____ I do my best work when I'm with other people.
_____ I like a colorful working environment.
_____ I like to give essay-like answers to questions rather than specific fill-in-the-blank answers.
_____ I see myself as a friend to my students.
_____ The worst thing that could happen in my class is that students wouldn't get along well together.
_____ People describe me as a really nice person.
_____ Part of my self-identity is wrapped up in the number of friends I have and the strength of those friendships.
_____ Three words that describe me are *friendly, sharer, hugger*.
_____ Total

Analytic Learners

_____ I do my best work alone, gathering information I need from books or other teachers.
_____ I like to work at a desk or table.
_____ I like to solve problems by finding the right answers.
_____ I see myself as an information giver to my students.
_____ The worst thing that could happen in my class is that students wouldn't learn the basics of their faith.
_____ People describe me as a really smart person.
_____ Part of my self-identity is wrapped up in how smart others think I am.
_____ Three words that describe me are *rational, analytic, smart*.
_____ Total

Commonsense Learners

_____ I do my best work alone, putting together information so it will work.
_____ I like to work with my hands as well as my mind.

_____ I like to solve problems by checking out my own ideas.
_____ I see myself as a trainer, helping my students do what needs to be done.
_____ The worst thing that could happen in my class is that students wouldn't learn to live their faith in practical ways.
_____ People describe me as a hard worker, a results-oriented person.
_____ Part of my self-identity is wrapped up in how well what I do works.
_____ Three words that describe me are *active, realistic, practical.*
_____ Total

Dynamic Learners

_____ I do my best work brainstorming new ideas and trying things not many people would dare to try.
_____ I like playing with new ideas, making intuitive guesses on what works.
_____ I like to solve problems by making guesses or following hunches.
_____ I see myself as a facilitator for my students.
_____ The worst thing that could happen in my class is that students wouldn't take what they have learned and make this world a better place.
_____ People describe me as a highly creative person.
_____ Part of my self-identity is wrapped up in how many new ideas I have.
_____ Three words that describe me are *curious, leader, imaginative.*
_____ Total

Based on these predictive lists, I suspect:
My strongest place on the Natural Learning Cycle is _____ . (This place may be your "home base," where you are most comfortable teaching.)[8]
The students I am most likely to miss (those in the opposite quadrant) are those who are strongest in this section on the Natural Learning Cycle:_____ .

<div align="right">—Marlene LeFever</div>

Collaborative Learners base their in-class contributions on what they have seen outside of class. If they admire the pastor as a person determined to follow Jesus even when it's difficult, they would be likely to answer the discipleship question by using the pastor as an example. They see things and generalize about them. They learn by listening and sharing ideas.

The second characteristic that puts Collaborative Learners at risk is that they have to talk in order to learn. The longer they discuss ideas, the smarter they often become. When a Sunday school teacher says, "Settle down and be quiet. We're going to study Christian discipleship now," these students may find staying focused on the lesson difficult. If instead the teacher said, "Get together with two other classmates and talk about people you know who are excellent disciples of Jesus today," these students are immediately engaged, often so much so that they bring the rest of the class along with them. They function through social interaction. It is in the act of verbalizing that they discover what they think.

Collaborative Learners are people-oriented. They focus on facts primarily in terms of people. They are keen observers of human behavior and are able to show real interest and empathy for others. Along with their people skills,

Collaborative Learners show great innovation and imagination, especially in areas that involve people contact.

Here is a partial list of characteristics that help define people with a strong Collaborative learning style.[9]

- Talk in broad overviews
- Learn by listening and sharing ideas
- Answer the questions "Why?" and "Why not?"
- Are sociable, friendly, sensitive
- Are empathetic
- Keenly observe human nature
- Enjoy listening and talking
- Work best in a noisy setting
- Dislike listening to long lectures, memorizing, working alone
- Are idea people
- Are in tune with their feelings
- See facts in relationship to people
- Learn by talking
- Like the feeling of "my gang"
- Get smarter the longer they talk
- Enjoy role play, simulation, mime
- Dislike win/lose situations (example: debate)
- Value people above product, friendship above grades
- Love a colorful classroom
- Define themselves in terms of friendship

THE ANALYTIC LEARNER: WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW? Analytic Learners enjoy the part of the lesson where they learn something new or put something they know into a different context. They are the thinkers and watchers of our society, the people most rational and sequential in their thinking. They like to sit back, listen, watch, and examine all sides of an issue before they venture an answer or conclusion. They start with an idea or an abstraction

and allow their minds to play with it until they are certain they have the right answer.

In Western society, these are the students who are labeled "smart." Teachers love them. They love teachers. These are the children who, when the teacher tells them to sit down and open their books, actually sit down and open their books. Traditional classrooms suit them. They are quiet in class as long as they believe the teacher has something to teach them. They follow directions. They work for the A's in life, even in a Sunday school class where grades are not given. In other words, they want to be known as the ones who memorized every verse this quarter. They thrive on teacher affirmation: "I never have any trouble with Daniel. He always wins the Bible quizzes."

Yes, this group is smart, but those students who are stronger at other places in the Natural Learning Cycle are just as smart. Teachers need to make certain that while they are affirming this group, they are also affirming their other students as they move around the Natural Learning Cycle.

Here is a partial list of characteristics that help define people with a strong Analytic learning style.[10]

- Like information presented logically and sequentially
- Value facts, figures, and the theoretical
- Debate to logically prove the correct stance or answer
- Value smart and often wise people
- Set long-range plans and see their consequences
- Are curious about ideas
- See themselves as intellectual
- Have a high tolerance for theory
- Think in terms of correct and incorrect answers
- Value being right
- Enjoy listening and taking notes
- Like teachers who are information givers
- Prefer a quiet learning situation
- Learn from traditional methodology

- Dislike situations and methods where no one wins
- Define themselves by how smart they are
- Enjoy reading the Bible for concepts and principles
- Are impersonal
- Need competition
- Prefer to work alone

THE COMMONSENSE LEARNER: HOW DOES THIS WORK? Commonsense Learners are most at home in the third quadrant of the Natural Learning Cycle because here ideas are tested to see if and how they work. These students like to think about problems logically, breaking them down into parts and putting them together again. They love to make the Analytic Learner's list of facts usable. They value strategic thinking. Action and doing are their strategies for learning. In this quadrant, students move away from knowledge for knowledge's sake to knowledge for Jesus' sake. Commonsense Learners would agree with Jewish educator Abraham J. Heschel, who said, "Thinking without roots will bear flowers but no fruits."[11]

Like their opposite—the Collaborative Learners—Commonsense Learners have two characteristics that put them at risk in the school system and also in our Sunday school and other church programs.

The first is their need to put what they have learned into some sort of usable form. If they can't use it today or tomorrow, they will ignore the information because it won't make sense to them to learn it. Their strength is their practical application of ideas. If what is being presented seems to have no immediate use, they may disregard it completely. Everything must be practical. Many of these students do not do well in school because they completely avoid classes that are preparation for the future. The attitude is, "I don't need it now, so I won't learn it now."

The second characteristic that puts the Commonsense Learner at risk is that he or she needs to move as part of the learning process. God seems to have put into these students' heads a direct connection so that when their bodies aren't moving, their minds are not working at full capacity either.

Many Commonsense Learners are more active than their counterparts with other learning styles. Their hands and bodies move constantly because they use all of themselves in the learning process. These learners strive to

make things work, to make them right. They will be the first volunteers to clean up the churchyard or get involved in a car wash to make money to buy a missionary a computer. While their bodies are moving and they are doing something that makes sense now, they are learning.

Here is a partial list of characteristics that help define people with a strong Commonsense learning style.[12]

- Move during the learning process
- Value action, product development, "how-to"
- Are realistic and practical
- Deal with logical consequences
- Are goal-oriented
- See skills as knowledge
- Value teachers as instruction managers
- Prefer to work alone
- Are impersonal
- Do not enjoy lectures
- Value strategic thinking
- Restrict judgment to concrete things
- Grade success by how well projects work
- Resent being given answers
- Excel in problem solving
- Enjoy "how-to" reading
- See Christianity in terms of action
- Read the Bible to get hands-on information
- Dislike sitting quietly in a learning setting
- Teach and learn through demonstration
- Can be mechanically and computer literate

THE DYNAMIC LEARNER: WHAT CAN THIS BECOME? How sad it is when a teacher runs out of time before allowing this highly creative group of students to grapple with the question, What can this become? Dynamic Learners look at

everything in terms of the future. "If we learned all this today and we know it works because we've practiced it in class, what good is it if we don't do something with it? Hey, I've got a great idea. . . ." This group loves new ideas but has no difficulty moving from one idea to three new ones if the first doesn't work. The fun in learning for them is in flexibility, in trying new things that other people would never dare to try.

Unlike their opposites—the Analytic Learners—this group just plunges right into things without thinking them through. They have experimental attitudes and accompanying experimental behavior. They would understand and agree with humorist Jonathan Winters' quip, "I couldn't wait for success . . . so I went ahead without it." They have project after project started, but they often have difficulty finishing something. After all, there are so many other ideas to be tried.

In class, Dynamic Learners may run ahead of the teacher or want to do something totally different from what the teacher has planned. They don't want to do less; they want to do different. They would agree with Mike Yaconelli: "Christianity is not about learning how to live within the lines; Christianity is about the joy of coloring."[13] Dynamic Learners have a curiosity about new ideas and a tolerance for ambiguity. In addition to their highly creative learning style, they are often leaders with strong personalities and personal enthusiasm. Both characteristics make them easy people to follow. A caution to teachers: If you identify a strong Dynamic Learner, spend extra time being Timothy to his or her Paul. This person will be a leader. Teachers need to do everything possible to channel that leadership toward discipleship under Jesus Christ.

Here is a partial list of characteristics that help define people with a strong Dynamic learning style.[14]

- Are leaders
- Have experimental attitudes and behaviors
- Cultivate a well-developed sense of humor
- Demand flexibility
- Take a long time to complete an assignment
- Need options
- Like student-directed classrooms

- Are curious and insightful
- Enjoy teachers who facilitate and stimulate creativity
- Are future-directed
- Want to do anything that is different or breaks the mold
- Make decisions based on hunches
- Enjoy people
- Communicate with great skill
- Enjoy dramatics or any art form that allows them to assert individuality
- Are unpredictable and willing to take chances
- Value creativity
- Have strong intuition
- Can see numerous ways of approaching a situation or problem
- Work to make these things different or better

Modalities: Using Modalities in the Natural Learning Cycle

We can use the Natural Learning Cycle as our pattern for structuring a lesson that will allow each student an opportunity to do his or her best.[15] At this point we need to ask, "What methods should I use to help my students answer the four cycle questions: Why study this? What do I need to know? How does it work? What can it become?"

Our senses or modalities are our main avenues of sensation. Those who learn best by seeing are called visual learners. (Visual learners may learn best through reading, but many of our students today are as picture literate as they are word literate.) Those who learn best by hearing are called auditory learners. Those who need to move as part of the learning process are called tactile/kinesthetic (T/K) learners. "Tactile" refers to a sense of touch; "kinesthetic" refers to body movement like what would be used in miming or playing kickball.

Seventy percent of all our students have a modality preference. The other 30 percent will stay focused no matter what modality is being used as long as they are interested in the topic. Students with modality preferences are smarter when they are taught with methods and materials that match how

they prefer to learn, and they get even smarter when that teaching is backed up by their secondary preference.[16]

AUDITORY LEARNERS. Twenty percent of students who have a modality preference are auditory. An auditory learner can remember 75 percent of what he or she hears in a forty- to fifty-minute teaching session. Many more girls than boys are auditory learners. This single piece of information contains a clue as to why boys often don't enjoy Bible study groups or Sunday school classes as much as girls. If the teaching is primarily auditory, many boys don't learn from or enjoy what's happening in class, even when the auditory activity is intended to reach their preferred spot on the Natural Learning Cycle.

Researchers who wired a playground for sound found that all the sounds coming from girls were recognizable words. Only 69 percent of the sounds made by boys were understandable words. The remaining were either one-syllable sounds like *uh* or *mmm* or sound effects like *Varooom! Yaaah! Zooom!*[17]

VISUAL LEARNERS. A visual learner can remember 75 percent of what he or she sees during a forty- to fifty-minute class period. Forty percent of our students with a modality preference are visual learners. Some visual children, especially those who are picture literate, are thought less of because their visual aptitude is not valued as much as a verbal aptitude. Our society places a greater premium on verbal meaning, both spoken and written. We need to affirm the picture-makers in our classes.

Many of our students are coming to class with unique picturing skills developed over years as they played video games and watched television. We need to use pictures in more creative ways to hold their attention and to capture and use the skills they have developed. Pictures and art are occasions for intelligence. For very young children, we use pictures, videos, and even flannelgraphs to help them see the story. But how do we continue to use pictures as children grow? For many teachers this will require an extra application of creativity.[18]

TACTILE/KINESTHETIC LEARNERS. Many tactile/kinesthetic learners will have low visual and auditory skills. They have to move in order to learn. They will not

be fully successful if taught in any other way. Forty percent of our students with a modality preference are T/K. Many more boys than girls have a strong T/K preference.[19]

Put yourself in the story found in Mark 9:35–37: "Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, 'Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.' He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.'"

Jesus was dealing with men who learned as they walked around. Most were more comfortable working with their hands than with their minds, so here Jesus taught them using T/K processes. First they all sat, probably on the ground (great for stretching out). Then Jesus picked up a child. Imagine the disciples each holding the child and passing him around, tousling his hair. Jesus' lesson was heard.

Volunteers sometimes feel they have lost control when students are moving, but when movement is actually part of the process of learning, discipline will not be a problem. Students need to know the purpose of the activities and the rules (usually also including noise rules) involved.

Conclusion

Using the Natural Learning Cycle and an educationally sound mix of methods throughout a lesson will not guarantee that every student will come to love Jesus and serve him. Only the individual students, led by the Holy Spirit, can make that decision.

"Teachers are called to view teaching as ministry to and with God as well as to and with others," says Christian educator Robert Pazmino. "The gift of teaching requires speaking for God and serving the faith community with gifts and the strength that God provides. The ultimate end must always be in view, namely, the glory of God through Jesus Christ."[20] Dallas Willard writes, "We want to 'make the tree good.' We do not aim *just* to control behavior, but to change the inner castle of the soul, that God may be worshiped in spirit and in truth and right behavior ceases to be a *performance*."[21]

Learning styles should be viewed as one tool, one gift of understanding that teachers twenty years ago were not given. Learning styles can help volunteers teach students the way God made them, not the way we wish he had made them and not the way we used to think he made them.

A little girl was coloring a picture of Jesus healing a sick man. She colored Jesus' face all green, then his hands and his feet. The teacher said, "Tell me about your picture." The little girl had no trouble. "Well," she said, "green is healthy. Jesus is green because he's healthy, and pretty soon he's going to make that sick man green, too." Romans 15:13 echoes a teacher's prayer for a healthy, green ministry: "Oh! May the God of green hope fill you up with joy, fill you up with peace, so that your believing lives, filled with the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit, will brim over with hope!" (THE MESSAGE).

<div align="right">Marlene D. LeFever</div>

Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Christian Education

(Note: While the following material is addressed in the specific context of American society, almost every nation comprises a multiplicity of cultures. We encourage you to think broadly about the cross-cultural issues identified below and make appropriate application to the situation in your local context.)

The tapestry of American culture has transformed exponentially due to increasing ethnic diversity. North America has changed from being described as an industrial society concerned with nationalism and uniformity to an information society concerned with diversity. Due to immigration and higher birth rates, minorities now account for nearly half of the population and are expected to become the majority in the coming decades.[22]

With this varying demographic picture, American culture has gained an added richness. At the same time, Christian leaders face the challenge of providing inclusive ministry opportunities. These cross-cultural concerns include both individual and group contact and arise because interaction occurs between people who are dissimilar. The dissimilarity most often

applies to skin color, communication via a different language, and/or different ethnic backgrounds.[23]

This diverse cultural scenario raises serious questions regarding the church's responsibility. What possible barriers or obstacles may be present that discourage members of an ethnic minority group from attending church? Is it acceptable for church congregations to represent only one culture when society represents diversity? Do members of culturally different groups become disillusioned with elements of the educational programs or worship service? If so, what strategies or action plans are needed to correct this?

Although diversity awareness is a responsibility of all agencies of the church, educational ministries will be one of the most efficient avenues for informing and changing attitudes. For this reason, educators and educational programs within the church may need to assume more responsibility for this task than other administrative positions or program units.

The Church and Cultural Diversity

Churches in the twenty-first century should assume that cultural differences of individual members will be a normal part of congregational life. Along with other institutions, the church will include a variety of ages, ethnicities, social classes, physical abilities, and religious backgrounds. The impact of ethnic differences on organizations and the people in them should not be underestimated.

Culture refers to the ongoing social context of our lives. It includes ethnicity, race, class, gender, sexual identity or orientation, generational status, religion, and migration experience.[24] People representing different cultural backgrounds bring different assumptions, values, and behaviors with them into the congregation. Furthermore, those assumptions, values, and behaviors shape how others perceive and respond to them, how they respond to specific situations in the life of the church, and how they interact with other people.

During general church meetings or committee meetings, members of different groups or cultures may talk past each other, never truly hearing the other's voice or acknowledging the truthfulness of the other's position. In such cases, there may appear to be a surface consensus on an issue, when in actuality some members of the group leave, believing they were not heard,

or with feelings of defeat and frustration. Ineffective communication occurs, and division and controversy may arise in the church.

Christians lack agreement on how the church should express its openness to diversity and how that openness will look in contemporary society. Aubrey Malphurs insists that realistically our church culture will exclude some people, even though it is the desire of most congregations to reach everyone. "Attempts to reach everyone in general will reach no one in particular. Once your church's culture is set, you'll exclude some people. This can't be helped." However, he reminds us that an important concept to remember is that no culture is superior to another.[25]

Churches consciously or unconsciously use various approaches to relate to members of subordinate groups. Placed on a continuum, these approaches range from a complete lack of acceptance to complete acceptance. Richard Schaefer uses seven approaches to describe varying degrees of acceptance for subordinate groups. Although not all of the approaches would have a direct application to the church, six of them do seem to appropriately identify possible reactions by church communities or organizations.[26]

The first approach, and the most extreme consequence for a subordinate group, is expulsion. Expulsion, an unacceptable consequence of minority-group status, occurs when dominant groups directly or indirectly force a specific subordinate group to leave.

A second approach is secession, in which a subordinate group formally withdraws from a church or denomination. The subordinate group may form a new group in which it ceases to be a subordinate group, or it may move to an already established church or denomination.

Segregation is a third possible approach for subordinates. It refers to the physical separation of two groups in physical location and social functions. This often occurs at the initiation of the dominant group. Segregation in America is still pervasive. The majority of blacks and Hispanics attend predominantly black or Hispanic schools and live in sections of metropolitan areas that are highly segregated.

The fourth approach is illustrated by the melting pot concept first used in 1782 by the French observer Crèvecoeur to describe America.[27] The analogy was based on the attempt during the Middle Ages to melt less costly metals together in order to create gold and silver. The goal was to homogenize ethnic differences into one mainstream American identity that represented a new culture. In 1963, Daniel Moynihan and Nathan Glazer attacked the

homogenization ideal. They maintained that it is a misconception that unity depends on uniformity rather than the strengths that come from diversity.[28] Although this [fourth] approach is moving in the direction of being more tolerant and accepting, it has its weaknesses. A church may choose to ignore individual differences in order to stress the similarity of oneness in Christ. It has the same weaknesses that are true of a marriage relationship that represents fusion. On the surface, this may appear to be a desirable union, but it often represents the losing of individual identities in order to take on the couple identity. Another illustration is the declaration that one is color-blind relative to skin color. It may sound advantageous to transcend skin color but not if it involves the denial of differences that are important distinctives in personal identity.

The fifth approach a church might take in relating to individuals of a subordinate group is assimilation, the attempt to absorb ethnic minority group members into the dominant group. This approach requires members of the subordinate group to take on the characteristics of the dominant group in order to eventually be accepted as part of that group. With this approach, minority groups usually lose some or most of their distinctives and values. Individuals who refuse to take on the characteristics of the dominant group may be considered disloyal.

The sixth and final approach that could be used by a church is multiculturalism or mutual acceptance. Its goal is to maintain and appreciate the cultural differences of all groups. It involves mutual respect for one another's culture. Rather than the melting-pot approach of one identity, ethnic differences are woven into a tapestry or mosaic of American identities. Some would view this as more idealistic than realistic, and it has been the source of many controversial issues.

A Focus on Ethnic Groups

The church congregation that reflects contemporary society will have opportunity to interact with various subcultures, each of which represents different life experiences and socialization processes. A general understanding of the basic cultural groups is necessary in order to recognize and appreciate the distinct styles of communication and types of behavior unique to groups. Some of the more prominent ethnic subcultures by population are the Hispanic-American subculture, the African-American

subculture, and the Asian-American subculture. The cultural assumptions of these select groups will be considered below. General descriptors are used to provide the conceptual base needed to understand particular groups. They are not intended as a list of identifiable characteristics assigned to group members, for culture is not monolithic but is representative of broad differences across the ethnic group.

A description of the characteristics of cultural groups provides what sociologists refer to as the ideal type. The concept, introduced by Max Weber as a hypothetical model, consists of the most significant characteristics, almost in extreme form, of a social phenomenon. It does not mean the best possible version but rather a pure, distilled form, so pure that it probably does not exist in reality. If descriptions of cultural groups are viewed as hypothetical models, it lessens the possibility of stereotyping.

"Culture" is inclusive of ethnicity, race, class, gender, generational status, and religion. Within each of the ethnic groups considered, a great deal of diversity exists. A wide range of languages, religions, value patterns, and physical characteristics is found in each cultural group. This demonstrates the importance of a shared symbolic community to establish cultural identity; it is not automatic due to ethnicity or skin color.

HISPANIC-LATINO CULTURE. The Hispanic culture includes groups that represent a diverse range of religions, ethnicities, languages, and skin colors. To identify all groups as Hispanic or Latino may be convenient in research but is often unfair in that it tends to overlook the uniqueness of the many groups identified within the more inclusive label.

The ten largest Hispanic origin groups—Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Salvadorans, Dominicans, Guatemalans, Colombians, Hondurans, Ecuadorians, and Peruvians—make up 92 percent of the U.S. Hispanic population. Six Hispanic origin groups have populations greater than one million.[29]

Although inadequate knowledge of the English language may cause difficulties in employment opportunities, the Spanish language is a marker of Hispanic pride for most. The majority of Hispanic-Americans are bilingual in Spanish and English. Skin tones in the Hispanic cultures vary from white through shades of brown.

The Hispanic culture is collectivist, with the individual's dignity depending more upon internal spiritual qualities than external material

accomplishments. Truth is grounded in interpersonal reality rather than in objective reality. Interpersonal relationships and spiritual values are very important.

Puerto Ricans are unique in comparison with other ethnic groups in that they can travel freely between their homeland and mainland America since they are citizens of the United States. Racial identity in the Puerto Rican culture is not determined primarily by physical characteristics (as is so often the case in the U.S.), but by nonracial factors such as socioeconomic status. Puerto Ricans often express surprise at the prejudice based on skin color that they experience when first coming to the mainland.

Bʟᴀᴄᴋ Aᴍᴇʀɪᴄᴀɴs. The terms *black* and *African-American* seem to be used interchangeably in contemporary literature. Black Americans have been a part of the American culture since the first Europeans reached this country. As a result, the African-American culture has had a strong role in shaping the language, art, music, and literature of America.

The 2007 census noted that blacks have a larger percentage of young people (31 percent) and a smaller percentage of older people (8 percent) compared to the non-Hispanic white population. The 2009 census noted that 25.8 percent of black households were at or below the poverty level compared to 8.2 percent of non-Hispanic white families.[30]

In the African-American culture, there is a strong sense of community and identification of the self within the group. Three social groups are especially important: the family, the community, and the church. Community is central to the identity of the individual, and high priority is placed on collective responsibility. In the African-American culture, individuals are encouraged to find self-identify within the group. The emphasis on community entails a strong encouragement to resolve conflicts as they arise rather than allowing them to continue.

The church is the central social group for African-Americans. Organizations or individuals who want to reach the African-American culture today often begin by contacting black churches. Church leaders are commonly the spokespersons for black issues and concerns. While churches have been active in addressing physical needs, greater attention needs to be given to providing adequate social programs.

Educators have noted distinctive modes of learning, such as imagination and humor, hands-on experiences, and oral and kinesthetic information.

Teachers can utilize these modes most effectively by using the Socratic method, being personable and tolerant, and using positive reinforcement in verbal and physical forms.

Asian-American Culture. Asian immigrants to the United States represent a large number of nationalities and cultures. The Census Bureau also identifies several subgroups. Between 2000 and 2010, the Asian population grew at the same pace—43 percent—as Hispanics.[31] As of 2010, six groups make up 83 percent of the total Asian-American population. Largest are the Chinese, numbering more than 4 million, followed by Filipino and Indian, each numbering more than 3 million, followed by Vietnamese, Korean, and Japanese, with more than one million each.[32]

A significant part of Asian family life is a good education. Twenty percent of all Asians age twenty-five and over have an advanced degree (Masters, PhD, MD, or JD) compared to 10 percent of the total population. Approximately 49 percent of Asian Americans hold managerial, professional, or related occupations.[33]

A Pew Research survey (2011) found Asian-Americans were more satisfied than the general public with their lives, finances, and the direction of the country, and place a greater value on marriage, parenthood, hard work, and career success. The U.S. offers a better life for most Asian-Americans, but approximately 12 percent live below the American poverty level.

Principles and Goals for Cross-Cultural Christian Education

The interactive study of culture and education is a phenomenon of the twentieth century. The topics of cultural diversity and diversity training in their specific relationship to education have received increased attention in research literature during the past decades.

Christian education has more recently been examined in terms of cross-cultural issues. Religious teachers face the same challenges as public schoolteachers when their classes include students whose cultural backgrounds differ from their own. Such students have had different experiences, may not share the same values and attitudes, and may give different interpretations to the teacher's explanations than do other students

in the class. Cross-cultural perspectives of Christian education include a consideration of the principles and practices that provide effective teaching for all members of a group when diverse cultures are included.

Multiculturalism is the term often used when cross-cultural perspectives are applied to education. However, there has been little agreement about how the concept should be defined. The following operational definition of multicultural Christian education that examines the subject in terms of its purpose should suffice as a beginning point for discussion:

> Multicultural Christian education has as its goal the embodiment of a system of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that recognizes and respects the presence of individuals from diverse groups, acknowledges and values their differences, and provides an inclusive context that empowers all members of the church family so that they are encouraged and enabled to make a personal contribution to Christ's ministry.

When a program of Christian education is truly cross-cultural in its approach, it will be viewed as a process that affects the structural organization of the church, directs instructional strategies, and changes personal values of members of the congregation.[34] The purpose of such a program goes beyond the boundaries of the local church. Martin Marty writes that the purpose of multicultural Christian education is "to provide the widest scope and fairest representation of the surrounding world."[35]

Cross-cultural sensitivity is sufficiently important to warrant its own mission, vision, and goal statements. These will need to be consistent with the general statements for overall Christian ministry as well as with the specific statements for Christian education. The objectives listed below are suggested to assist in developing a more inclusive approach for educational ministries:[36]

1. To develop an increased awareness of cultural diversity
2. To encourage positive interethnic relationships within the church and community
3. To develop cross-cultural skills for the teaching-learning setting and for intercultural communication
4. To assist parents in encouraging children to appreciate and value diversity in others

5. To assess practices and attitudes in the church that are ethnocentric in nature
6. To develop a sense of social responsibility to reduce inequalities and promote justice for members of minority groups.

Implications for Diversity and the Instructional Process

More recently, greater attention has been given to developing the competence of religious educators to work with diverse cultures. The term *cultural competence* means having the ability to respond respectfully and effectively to cultural differences and similarities.[37] Some helpful guidelines are as follows:

1. Classroom preparation should include consideration for those who represent cultures different from that of the teacher. This means preparing and planning both curriculum and classroom presentation that will be most conducive for all students present.
2. The teacher of diverse students needs to utilize a variety of pedagogical procedures that acknowledge diverse learning styles. This may include procedures that are not considered the most effective for students of the dominant culture.
3. Both visual and verbal cues are especially important for students who speak English as a second language. Charts, graphs, line-art drawings, and transparencies provide additional information and can be used as direction indicators for lectures. Printed outlines giving the general direction of the lecture are also helpful. The teacher can call attention to concepts that are significant by using the terms *first*, *second*, and so on.
4. The analytical or relational mode of conceptual organization is another facet of reasoning that may be associated with cultural groups. Analytical learners are believed to be task-oriented and favor individuality and independent thinking. Individuals with a relational mode are more aware of the whole picture and appreciate learning situations that are more personal and are experientially relevant. They will appreciate learning that provides a social encounter rather than one that is purely cognitive.

5. Church teachers must be especially careful when dealing with abstract concepts. Those who use a style of thinking that differs from the teacher and others in the classroom may have difficulty understanding theoretical ideas. This is a special concern in religious education since most of the primary theological concepts are abstract in nature. Providing examples and being sure to make clear and thorough explanations for the concept are important. Sufficient time for questions that truly deal with understanding the concept will help those who are struggling to move with the flow of the class. A Korean student in my "Women in Ministry" course shared that other students were involved in such a rapid exchange of complex ideas throughout each class that she invariably suffered from a physical headache due to the constant strain to stay with the class discussion.

6. Pedagogical methodology should be evaluated in terms of the ethnic heritage that students represent. In *Soul Stories: African-American Christian Education,* Anne Wimberly advocates the story-linking process to apply Christian education to the life experiences, history, and liberation of African-American Christians.[38]

What It Means to Have a Church that Embraces Diversity

The global society predicted for the twenty-first century has arrived. Some churches will not achieve diversity transformation because leaders fail to conceptualize and articulate the need to their constituency. Others may underestimate the complexity of the task. Still others will not move beyond conceptualization. Unless action follows conceptualizing and strategizing, churches will fail to reflect Christ's model of diversity in which all are accepted regardless of race, gender, or class. The magnitude of this task dictates that a local church must prioritize the development of a Christian education program that is inclusive in perspective. The process begins with assessment and proceeds to articulation and action plans. The desired outcome will be interrelationships of equality and respect among the collections of people groups that reflect an awareness, acceptance, and appreciation of differences.

A key issue will be the development of culturally alert ministers and teachers. This involves developing specific competencies regarding cultural

alertness. First, educators should develop intentional awareness of their own cultural background. Second, this awareness should be complemented by knowledge competencies that provide information concerning the specific groups with which they are working. The third area of multicultural competence is the acquisition of practical skills that will enhance cross-cultural communication.[39]

The truly multicultural Christian education program is not found in methods, materials, or programs. It is found in developing cultural competence to be aware of and effectively respond to cultural differences and similarities. It is found in the desire to represent the unified family of God. As Christian educators articulate the relationship between cross-cultural perspectives and the significance of Calvary, the stage is set for others to connect that meaning with their personal lives and to commit themselves to become one in Christ. Before the cross, all of us are part of that same family.

Lillian Breckenridge

Christian Formation

Christian formation is the process and product of motivating, nurturing, and internalizing values, priorities, perspectives, and responses that are from God. It asks the question "How are Christians formed?"

Components of Christian formation include teaching and preaching the Word of God, stimulating and guiding to understanding and integration of truth into life. Formation involves motivation—becoming actively involved in desiring growth, wanting to become what God has designed us to be. It includes information—knowing who God is and what God wants, knowing who I am and how I grow. It involves will—deliberate commitment to respond to truth in life once known. Under the guidance of the Spirit, learning that integrates all three of the above leads to a transformation of the person into increased likeness to Christ.

Scripture gives evidence that Jesus and the biblical writers expected that persons would live differently as a result of knowing God and internalizing his truth. Both being and doing were to be transformed. While potentially this transformation is already a reality to the one who is "in Christ," the Scriptures also indicate that there is a process of putting off and putting on,

of increasing in intensity of likeness toward fulfilling a predetermined design. The Spirit is the Instrument of this change. "We all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Jesus and the biblical writers expected that persons would live differently as a result of knowing God and internalizing his truth.

There is also indication that the person, upon encountering God, has responsibility in this wondrous formational journey. "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). And important especially for Christian educators is the fact that the human instrument plays a formational role in this creating of another in Christ. "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you" (Galatians 4:19). The apostle Paul was a co-laborer with the Spirit of God in helping to bring about formation in the lives of the Galatians.

As Christian educators, we support this process that moves a person beyond information and beyond desire into the realm of life-changing transformation.

Research makes us aware that such formation occurs in a spontaneous way in life. God utilizes our experiences to move us in the direction of fulfilling his design. Often these formational "classrooms" are disruptive crises, moments we cannot control. Out of them come new perspectives, new priorities, new persons. At other times, the unavoidable processes of life (getting older) become formation-linked experiences. A third formational instrument is moments of grace in our lives, the goodness we cannot explain. The Spirit often utilizes these occasions to create our Christian formation.

Is there also a deliberate fostering of formation? Can Christian educators learn to provide a setting, to work with the Spirit to cultivate a learning situation that may be conducive to the Spirit's moving persons toward fulfillment of God's plan for their participation in the likeness of his Son? Christian formation answers *yes*. Just as the practice of the spiritual disciplines places us in a position for God to work in us, so Christian formation focuses on God and in doing whatever will foster his positioning learners' movement into formative moments of life change. Such servant-

posturing in teaching requires continual attentiveness to what God wants, allows learners to become actively involved in processing with God, and leads toward inevitable response to God on the part of the learner. The teacher becomes a forerunner, a preparer of the way, a spiritual connector assisting learners to recognize God in their lives and experiences, an explainer of truth while helping students experience it, and a shadow that fosters increasing awareness of God's major role in any learning encounter.

Christian formation is characterized by these factors:

First, there is constant awareness of moving toward the goal of maturing and maturity. Information is evaluated by "How does this enable the learner to move toward maturity in Christ?" Learner situations are assessed by "What is needed to experience God's truth in this situation?" Methodology is chosen on the basis of "What process will best enable this person to move toward maturity?" Experiences are part of the maturity process through such queries as "What does this experience contribute toward maturing in godliness? How can this learning experience be best structured to lead to a step of maturation?" "Christ being formed in them" is the filter by which all teaching, nurturing, and information processing is examined.

Second, the whole person is included. Since persons are integrated wholes and since formation requires a holistic response, Christian formation takes into consideration the total person and seeks to tap into all parts of the whole. It is never enough just to stimulate the mind. The heart and will must be challenged also. A conceptual response is never sufficient—tests, projects, and evaluations must call for life responses that integrate them all.

Third, formation always involves openness to God and his Word. That Word is never seen as just knowledge to be acquired but as reality to be lived. It is always framed in "believing this, how then shall we live?" Knowing God is personal, relational, and priority. He is the Source and End of all learning for formation. Everything is evaluated or enhanced by him. There is no source of learning where he is not found.

Fourth, formation is developmental, building on previous concepts and moving toward a goal—that of maturity in Christ. The formational stages of human development may affect the process of spiritual formation and should be factored in by the Christian educator. However, the Creator is greater than those delineated stages and is not limited by them.

Fifth, formational learning requires the learner to be actively involved in interacting with the truth on a personal basis. The teacher's role is

conditioned by this factor, giving away responsibility for learning and opportunity for personal processing whenever possible. This will mean diminishing of the teacher role as the learner grasps and begins to apply truth. It will affect the choice of methodology to gain maximum learner involvement. Formation empowers the learner to learn.

"Christ being formed in them" is the filter by which all teaching, nurturing, and information processing is examined.

Sixth, Christian formation is always related to life. This means it will begin and end in life perceptions and experiences as shaped by God for knowing him and for a person's growth in him. This factor ensures that truth and life will always be teamed together in a formational learning experience.

Seventh, Christian community plays a powerful role in formation. It is in community that the learner discovers needed arenas of growth, and in community that the learner receives insight, support, and opportunity to express his or her uniqueness as a facet of the person of Christ to the group.

Eighth, the Spirit of God is the primary force in moving persons toward maturity and in forming Christ in them. Christian formation follows his lead. The human teacher serves as "teaching assistant," always acknowledging the supremacy of the Master Teacher in bringing about God's plan.

Julie Gorman

For Further Reading and Study

Michael J. Anthony, ed., *Introducing Christian Education: Foundations for the Twenty-first Century*

Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image*

James and Lillian Breckenridge, *What Color Is Your God?*

Julie Gorman, *Community That Is Christian: A Handbook on Small Groups*

Daniel Lambert, *Teaching That Makes a Difference*

Lois LeBar, *Education That Is Christian*

Marlene LeFever, *Learning Styles*

Glossary

A POSTERIORI Theological or philosophical reasoning rooted in facts or experience; an argument that begins with an effect (or fact) and proceeds to a cause (or principle); opposite of *a priori*.

A PRIORI Knowledge or conclusion independent of (prior to) experience; an argument beginning with cause (or principle) and proceeding to effect (or fact); opposite of *a posteriori*.

AD HOMINEM Latin, lit. "to the man"; appealing to personal feelings or prejudices rather than to one's intellect; in debate, attacking an opponent's character rather than critiquing his or her argument.

ADOPTIONISM A heresy in the second and third centuries AD (and again in the eighth century) holding that Jesus had no divine nature until his baptism, at which point God adopted him.

ADVENT The first advent refers to the birth of Jesus Christ, the second advent to his eventual return (the second coming). When capitalized, the word refers to the liturgical season just prior to Christmas.

AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY Sometimes referred to as "age of reason"; the point at which a child is believed (by some Christians) to be responsible for knowing right from wrong, or capable of understanding and appropriating God's gift of salvation. Some hold this age to be seven, some thirteen (after Jewish custom), while others believe it differs for each child.

ALEXANDRIAN SCHOOL The school of early Christian theological thought centered in Alexandria, Egypt, and featuring the writings and teachings of such early church leaders as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Athanasius. While staunchly defending the concept of Christ as the God-man, this school was also influenced by Greek philosophy (Plato) and tended toward an allegorical interpretation of many biblical texts.

ALLEGORIZE To interpret (particularly Scripture) allegorically. A widely used interpretive method (often in conjunction with other methods) until its

rejection by the sixteenth-century Protestant reformers.

ALLEGORY A literary device in which ideas or moral principles are presented symbolically or metaphorically, often using fictional events and characters. Similar to a parable, but usually much longer and more complex.

AMEN Hebrew "truly," or "verily." Used as an affirmation or expression of assent—"so may it be" or "so be it"—as at the end of a prayer.

ANALOGICAL Rooted in or pertaining to an analogy.

ANALOGY A way of communicating similarity or relationship between dissimilar things or persons. For example, since God created us in his image, some of what we can understand about God comes via analogy with human beings: "Since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone" (Acts 17:29). "God is my fortress" is a common scriptural example of a metaphorical analogy.

ANATHEMA "Accursed," in New Testament use. Also meant excommunication in the Middle Ages.

ANGELOLOGY The study or doctrine of angels.

ANGLICANISM The doctrine and practice of the Anglican Church (Church of England) as expressed in the Bible, the *Book of Common Prayer,* and the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds.

ANIMISM The belief that everything in the universe (including natural phenomena) possesses its own spirit.

ANNIHILATIONISM The belief that not every soul is immortal, and that the unrepentant are ultimately annihilated, or cease to exist.

ANNO DOMINI Latin for "the year of our Lord," usually abbreviated AD, a designation linking the modern calendar with the birth of Jesus Christ (now thought to have occurred in 4 BC or slightly before).

ANNUNCIATION The angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary (recorded in Luke 1:26–38) that she would become the mother of Jesus.

ANOINT To consecrate; to bestow favor; a rite of consecration (many Old Testament references) particularly for prophets, priests, and kings; a rite of healing (James 5:14). The use of oil (for anointing) is associated with the Holy Spirit.

ANTHROPOMORPHISM A figure of speech in which human characteristics are ascribed to God (or to any other thing or being that is not human). "The face of God," "God's right hand," and "the heart of God" are examples of anthropomorphism.

ANTHROPOPATHISM A figure of speech in which human emotions or passions are ascribed to God (or to any other nonhuman entity).

ANTICHRIST/Antichrist In a general sense, antichrist is one who opposes Christ. The person of Antichrist is thought by many to be a political and/or religious figure who consolidates opposition to Christ in the last days.

ANTINOMIANISM From Greek words meaning "against law." Theologically, antinomianism is the belief that those who are justified by grace are under no obligation to obey the Old Testament moral laws. Philosophically, antinomianism can refer to those who are against all laws (anti-law, lawless) in general.

ANTIPOPE One usurping the place of the pope; a pope not duly elected or whose election has been invalidated; a false claimant not recognized by the Roman Catholic Church as a pope. There were roughly thirty of these between the third and fifteenth centuries.

APOCALYPSE From Greek, meaning "unveiling." The book of Revelation (the Apocalypse); or any one of several other (apocryphal/pseudepigraphical) writings that claim to reveal secrets regarding the end of the world.

Apocrypha Means "hidden"; a collection of writings not included in the Hebrew Scriptures, considered noncanonical by Protestants but accepted by Roman Catholics. Also sometimes includes unauthenticated additions to the New Testament. See also Pseudepigraphic.

Apocryphal Specifically, pertaining to the writings known as the Apocrypha; generally, often used to imply a lack of authenticity (e.g., an apocryphal story).

APOLOGETICS A defense or explanation; traditionally, of biblical Christian faith.

APOSTASY, APOSTATE The desertion of one's faith; one who deserts or abandons the faith.

Apostles' Creed A brief statement or affirmation of the Christian faith. While no direct link to apostolic authorship has ever been established, the creed effectively summarizes apostolic teaching:

> I believe in God the Father Almighty;
> Maker of heaven and earth.
> And in Jesus Christ his only begotten Son, our Lord;
> Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
> born of the Virgin Mary;
> suffered under Pontius Pilate,
> was crucified, dead, and buried.
> He descended into hell.
> The third day he rose from the dead.
> He ascended into heaven;
> and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
> from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
> I believe in the Holy Ghost;
> the holy catholic Church;
> the communion of saints;
> the forgiveness of sins;
> the resurrection of the body;
> and the life everlasting.

apostolic age The first century AD; the New Testament era.

Arianism A theological position articulated by Arius, a third-century Greek theologian from Alexandria who claimed that Jesus Christ was created (or begotten) by God the Father and is therefore not eternal and not equal to, or of the same substance as, the Father. Arius's view was condemned as heresy at the council of Nicea in AD 325. Arianism has resurfaced periodically over the centuries, including as a doctrine of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Arminianism The theological perspective of Jacobus Arminius (sixteenth-century Dutch theologian), in which he emphasized humankind's free will in salvation (that is, one may reject God's offer) and discounted the Calvinistic tenets of unconditional election and irresistible grace. Arminius also rejected "eternal security," believing that losing one's salvation is possible. John Wesley was a strong proponent of Arminian theology; denominations holding these views include the Methodists, Nazarenes, Wesleyans, and the Salvation Army. See also Calvinism.

asceticism The practice of self-discipline or self-denial, particularly of pleasures—food, drink, sex, etc.—and comforts, with the aim toward

spiritual perfection. Since adherents view the material world as essentially evil, purging oneself of all material attachments is the focus of life. In the New Testament, self-denial, self-discipline, purity, and simplicity are clearly taught as components of Christian discipleship, not as a means of self-perfection.

Asia/Asians In the ancient world of the Roman Empire, "Asia" was the peninsula east of the Straits of Bosphorus and Dardanelles, comprising most of modern-day Turkey. Also referred to as Asia Minor; "Asians" were inhabitants of Asia Minor.

atheism The belief that there is no God or supreme being of any kind; a conduct of life that does not take God into consideration.

atman In Hindu thought, the soul, the divine life principle, the true Self; the universal or supreme soul.

atonement Broadly, amends made for an offense committed; pointedly (the atonement), reconciliation between God and humankind brought about by Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

autopistic Self-validating.

axiopistic Validated by external or empirical evidence.

baptism The Christian rite of initiation, which symbolizes commitment to Christ, spiritual rebirth, purification; in some Christian churches baptism is reserved for those having professed faith in Christ. In others it is offered to children of believing parents as well as adult converts; considered a sacrament by some, an ordinance by others. Modes of baptism include immersion, effusion (pouring), and aspersion (sprinkling).

baptism of the Holy Spirit The personal empowering presence of the Spirit conferred upon the individual believer. While many Christians believe this baptism to be concurrent with regeneration, others, particularly among Pentecostals and charismatics, hold it to be a subsequent and separate work of grace, accompanied by miraculous gifts and signs, such as speaking in tongues (glossolalia).

behaviorism A model of psychology that focuses exclusively on observable behavior; behaviorism holds that rather than involving conscious mental activity, learning is simply response to stimuli, resulting in new behavior.

Key to the theory's development are the studies of Ivan Pavlov and B. F. Skinner.

BELIEVERS' BAPTISM The practice of baptism in which the rite is reserved for those who profess faith in Jesus Christ. Implied is that the recipient is either an adult or has reached the "age of accountability."

BHAGAVAD-GITA "Song of the Blessed One (Krishna)"; a sacred Hindu devotional text that expounds doctrine and philosophy.

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY The study of God based on the teaching of Scripture; seeks to integrate the teachings of the biblical writers into a comprehensive view of the teaching of the entire Bible.

BLASPHEMY The act of maligning, insulting, offending, profaning, or devaluing God or sacred things; irreverence toward God.

BRAHMA, BRAHMAN In Hinduism, the supreme creator, the universal soul, the source and the goal of all things.

CALVINISM A theological system based on the teachings of John Calvin (Jean Cauvin), a sixteenth-century French reformer; Calvin stressed the supremacy of Scripture (*Sola Scriptura*) in theology and practice. Five key doctrines of Calvinism outlined by the Synod of Dort (1610) form the acronym TULIP:

> **T**otal depravity of mankind (sin renders us incapable of righteousness)
>
> **U**nconditional election (God's election is not conditioned on our belief)
>
> **L**imited atonement (Christ's redemptive work applies only to the elect)
>
> **I**rresistible grace (God's grace cannot be rejected or thwarted)
>
> **P**erseverance of the saints (the elect are eternally secure)

CANON (OF SCRIPTURE) The sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, considered by Christians (and Jews, in the case of the Old Testament) to be divinely inspired and therefore authoritative for faith and practice. Roman Catholics also accept the authority of additional writings known commonly as the Apocrypha.

CASUISTRY Applying moral standards or principles to specific questions of right and wrong conduct.

CATECHISM A manual of instruction in a particular creed or set of doctrines, often presented in question-and-answer format.

CATEGORY MISTAKE A term coined by English philosopher Gilbert Ryle; a confused or improper classification or attribution of properties. For example, it would be a category mistake to speak of an automobile as loving or of school as nothing more than the classroom furniture. Ryle's particular concern was the application of material or physical concepts to ideas about mental processes.

CATHOLIC When capitalized, *Catholic* pertains to the Roman Catholic Church; when lowercased, *catholic* means "universal." For example, in the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in . . . the holy catholic church" refers not to the Roman Catholic Church but to the universal church.

CHALCEDON, COUNCIL OF A gathering of more than five hundred bishops in AD 451; they affirmed that Christ was simultaneously fully human and fully divine, and they rejected both Nestorianism and Eutychianism. The council also gave jurisdiction over the Eastern Church to the bishop of Constantinople; Roman Catholics, loyal to the bishop of Rome (the pope), rejected this decision.

CHALCEDONIAN CREED To combat Nestorianism and Eutychianism, the following creed was drawn up by the Council of Chalcedon:

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

spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.

CHARISMA, CHARISMATA Greek for "gift(s)"; in the New Testament, a divine enablement for service or ministry in the church, given to each believer by the Holy Spirit.

CHARISMATIC Refers to a movement that began within organized churches of various denominations. Among its key beliefs is that the spiritual gifts (*charismata*) described in the New Testament (particularly the "sign" gifts—e.g., tongues, prophecy, healing, miracles) are still used by the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians today, and that these gifts are usually granted to believers in an experience subsequent to salvation. The charismatic movement bears similarities to Pentecostalism but is not linked exclusively to specific denominations, and it does not hold speaking in tongues as a necessary sign of authentic Christianity.

CHRISTOLOGY The study or doctrine of Jesus Christ, his nature, his person, his work.

CODEX An ancient manuscript in book form (as opposed to scroll form); that is, having pages.

COMMON GRACE The grace God extends to everyone everywhere, without distinction ("He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" Matthew 5:45). God's providence for his creation, his restraint of general chaos, and the human consciousness of right and wrong are aspects of common grace. Not to be confused with special (redemptive) grace.

COMMUNION Also called the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Table, the Eucharist; an act of worship in which the Lord's last meal with his disciples before he was crucified is reenacted. Bread and wine (or juice) are taken to represent Christ's body and blood. Held by some to be a sacrament, by others an ordinance.

CONCORDANCE An alphabetical index of important words listed in the order and context in which each is found in the Bible.

CONFESSION An acknowledgment of one's sin. Also, a statement of belief or doctrine.

CONGREGATIONALISM A form of church government having as its chief feature the autonomy of the local church.

CONSUBSTANTIATION The Lutheran view of Communion, that the body and blood of Christ are *substantially present with* the consecrated bread and wine, even though these latter do not physically change (as opposed to transubstantiation).

CONVICTION A convincing awareness, brought about by the Holy Spirit, of one's sin and need of salvation.

COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT An apologetic that links the universe (cosmos) to its cause—the "uncaused Cause."

COUNTERREFORMATION A movement within sixteenth-century Roman Catholicism intended to stem the advance of Protestantism. Among its emphases were internal reforms, the Inquisition, and renewed mission efforts.

COVENANT A solemn promise, agreement, or contract between parties; God's pledge of blessing for those who obey him.

COVENANTALISM Also called covenant theology; a theological system emphasizing God's covenants as the chief lens through which we may understand the Bible. According to this view, three covenants are key: the covenant of redemption (before creation, between the Father and the Son); the covenant of works (from creation to the fall, between God and humankind); and the covenant of grace (from the fall to the second advent, between God and humankind). Reformed Protestants, Presbyterians, Anglicans/Episcopalians, and some Lutherans hold this view. See also dispensationalism.

CREED A formal statement of beliefs or doctrines. See Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed.

CULT A system of religious beliefs and rites; a religious sect.

DE FACTO "Actual"; that which really exists, without regard to legal sanction. For instance, one who overthrows a legally established government may be said to be the *de facto* head of state.

DE JURE "By right"; legally sanctioned; rightfully. As an example, one may be the *de jure* leader of an organization or state without being the *de facto* leader.

DEISM Belief in God as Creator, but as distant from and disinterested in his creation; characterized by reliance upon reason and skepticism of the supernatural; sometimes referred to as "natural religion" or "the religion of nature."

DEMONOLOGY The study or doctrine of demons.

DETERMINISM The belief that all events (including human choices) are the inevitable result of previous events (or previously determined factors) and that, hence, true freedom is illusory.

DEUTEROCANONICAL Of a "second canon"; pertaining to literature considered apocryphal by Protestants but some of which is accepted by Roman Catholics.

DIASPORA "Dispersion"; refers to Jews dispersed among Gentile nations after the Babylonian exile; also used to refer to early Christians scattered (particularly by persecution) beyond the borders of Palestine.

DIDACTIC With instruction (especially moral or spiritual) as its aim.

DIET A legislative or deliberative assembly.

DISPENSATIONALISM A theological system featuring the belief that time—past, present, future—is divided into "dispensations," eras during which God deals with humanity in specific ways (e.g., much of the Old Testament era was the "dispensation of law," while the current era is the "dispensation of grace," etc.).

DISPERSION See Diaspora.

DOCETISM The beliefs of an early Christian sect that Jesus' physical humanity (including his crucifixion and resurrection) was illusory. (From Greek *dokein*, "to seem.") See also Gnosticism.

DUALISM The religious belief that there are ultimately two competing and equal principles in the universe: good and evil. Zoroastrianism (from ancient Iran/Persia) is a prime example of dualism.

ECCLESIOLOGY The study or doctrine of the church.

ECUMENICAL "Worldwide" or "universal"; pertaining to contact or rapprochement between or among various Christian denominations.

EFFABLE That which is possible to express or utter. See also ineffable.

EISEGESIS "To read into" a text some meaning that may not actually be present. Interpreting a text according to supposition, preference, or bias rather than original meaning. See also exegesis.

ELECTION Divine choice; predestination, particularly for salvation.

EPISCOPALISM A form of church government wherein supreme authority is vested in a board of bishops (the episcopacy).

EPISTEMOLOGY The study or theory of the nature of knowledge, its validity, its limits, our methods of obtaining it.

EQUIVOCAL Having ambiguous meaning; subject to two or more interpretations.

ESCHATOLOGY The study or doctrine of "last things."

ESCHATON The climax of the divine plan; the end of the world as we know it.

ESSENES An ancient order of Jewish ascetics.

ETHOS The distinguishing spirit or character of a group, culture, religion, organization, etc.

EUCHARIST The sacrament of Holy Communion.

EUROPE In the first-century Roman world, what is currently Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Greece, parts of Serbia, Croatia, Austria, and Germany, as well as western Turkey and the islands of the Mediterranean Sea. By the end of the century, much of Britain had been added.

EUTYCHIANISM The theological view (named for Eutyches, a fifth-century proponent) that Christ's nature was solely divine and merely clothed in humanity. This single-nature doctrine, also called Monophysitism, was declared heretical at the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451.

EVANGELICALISM from Greek *euangelion*, or "gospel"; a Protestant theological paradigm that affirms central historic Christian beliefs while emphasizing the sovereignty of God, the authority of the Bible, the reality of sin in the world and in every person, the necessity of salvation by grace through personal faith in Jesus Christ, the proclamation of the gospel, and the return of Christ.

EX NIHILO Latin term meaning "out of nothing."

EXCOMMUNICATION Exclusion of a member from the fellowship and rites of a church, usually for heretical teaching, gross immorality, or another offense for which the member is unrepentant. Rather than punishment, the goals are repentance of the offender and the spiritual health of the church community.

EXEGESIS from Greek for "explanation"; interpreting the intended meaning of a text, usually through understanding word meanings, grammar, and context. See also eisegesis.

EXISTENTIALISM A theological or philosophical model that stresses subjective experience over abstract reason. Some existentialists, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, are (or were) atheists. Søren Kierkegaard was among the most famous Christian existentialists.

EXORCISM The act of casting out (of someone) an evil spirit or demon, usually by prayer.

EXPIATION Making amends; atonement; the means of atonement.

FINITE GODISM A worldview that envisions God in many respects as orthodox Christians do, yet with limitations to his power and his nature. For instance, finite godism maintains that miracles, while possible, do not actually occur, and that evil exists in this age not because God allows it but because he isn't perfect and isn't able to prevent it.

FREE WILL The belief that every person has the ability to choose among alternatives (including whether or not to accept God's offer of grace), that all outcomes are not externally predetermined. Emphasized in Arminianism.

GLOSSOLALIA Ecstatic utterance or speech in an unknown language. Also known as "speaking in tongues."

GNOSIS Special, exclusive, or superior spiritual knowledge, a claim to which is the basis for Gnosticism.

GNOSTIC Pertaining to Gnosticism; one who adheres to the beliefs of Gnosticism.

GNOSTICISM A belief system of the early Christian era that mingled various Greek and Eastern philosophies with some aspects of Christianity. Among its characteristic beliefs are forms of dualism and adoptionism. To the Gnostic, "salvation" is achieved through "awakening" to a higher

knowledge, or gnosis; Jesus came not to impart salvation from sin, but to give us spiritual knowledge. While many Gnostics were ascetics, not all practiced a restrained lifestyle. Some even held that spiritual awareness could be transferred via extramarital sexual acts. Some of the early Christian councils and creeds came about in an effort to combat Gnostic teaching.

GRACE God's unmerited favor and love toward humankind.

HAMARTIOLOGY The study or doctrine of sin; from Greek *hamartia*, "to miss the mark, to fall short" (compare/contrast with *paraptoma*, "to slip or deviate from the path").

HENOTHEISM Belief in one deity without denying the existence of other deities.

HERMENEUTICS From Greek for "interpretation"; the study of the principles for sound, systematic interpretation of Scripture.

HETERODOX Not orthodox; contrary to established doctrine; heretical.

HOLINESS MOVEMENT Traces its roots to eighteenth-century Methodist John Wesley, who believed true holiness to be an attitude. Holiness churches stress purity and believe in entire sanctification (i.e., sinlessness in this life is attainable) following a second blessing, which is a work of grace separate from, and subsequent to, salvation.

HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE From Charlemagne in the ninth century until Francis I of Austria, nearly one thousand years later, the Central European "empire" existed under dual authority. Whether in figure or in fact, the emperor was accorded political power while the pope retained spiritual power.

HOMOIOUSIA From Greek, the belief that God the Father and God the Son are of similar but not identical substance. See also Arianism.

HOMOOUSIA From Greek, the belief that God the Father and God the Son are identical in substance. See also Arianism, Nicene Creed.

HYPOSTATIC UNION The union of divine and human natures in one person, Jesus Christ.

HYPOSTATIZATION An act or expression that ascribes distinct existence or reality to something or someone.

IMAGO DEI Latin for "in the image of God."

IMMANENCE God's pervasive presence in all creation.

IMMANENTISTIC Emphasizing or focused on God's immanence rather than his transcendence.

IMMUTABLE, IMMUTABILITY Unalterable, not subject to change; the state of ongoing existence without change.

IMPUTE To ascribe vicariously to someone a particular quality or condition (good or evil). For example, Christ's righteousness is imputed to us through faith in his atoning work.

INDETERMINISM The belief that humans have some measure of freedom to choose or to act; while some indeterminists hold that no choices or actions are self-caused, most believe that external conditions or events— past, present, or future—exert *influence* but not absolute *control* over human choices. See also determinism, self-determinism.

INEFFABLE Unutterable; inexpressible.

INTERDICT Exclusion from rites and benefits of the church, including the sacraments.

INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD Approximately four hundred years of Jewish history immediately prior to the birth of Christ, so-called because no canonical book of the Old or New Testament was written during the period.

JUSTIFICATION The manner in which God considers righteous those sinners who, by faith in Jesus Christ, receive divine forgiveness and reconciliation.

KERYGMA Greek for "preaching" or "proclamation"; the content of the gospel message.

KORAN See Qur'an.

LEGALISM Stressing the letter rather than the spirit of the law; the belief that salvation is attained by adherence to the law rather than received by grace through faith.

LIBERATION THEOLOGY A school of thought, historically linked to Catholicism, that sees Jesus as liberator, particularly of the poor, from social, economic, and political oppression. Political activism is a hallmark; some have interpreted this theology as a literal call to arms against oppressors, and others have added Marxist principles. While its popularity has

waned, particularly among Catholics, liberation theology's most noted expressions have been widespread in parts of Latin America.

LITURGY The prescribed rites or forms for public worship.

MANICHAEANISM (MANICHEAISM) Founded by Manichaeus (c. 216–276); a dualistic mélange of pagan and Christian beliefs. Among its tenets are the inherent evil of matter (the material) and the ongoing battle between the opposing kingdoms of light and darkness.

MEMORIAL/COMMEMORATIVE (VIEW OF COMMUNION) In this approach to the Lord's Supper, the partaking of the bread and wine is "in remembrance" of Christ's atoning sacrifice. The elements are understood to be representative symbols of his body and blood; his presence is not believed to be contained in them. See also consubstantiation, transubstantiation.

MENDICANT ORDER A religious order or society whose members are bound by vows of poverty, relying for financial support on begging. Examples include the Franciscans and the Dominicans.

METAPHYSICAL Above (beyond) the physical; having to do with ultimate reality, basic knowledge, and the meaning of life.

METAPOLOGETICS A branch of apologetics that focuses on the nature, foundations, and methods and systems of apologetics. A metapologetic (singular) is a particular theory of metapologetics.

MILLENNIUM Literally 1,000 years; the thousand-year reign of Christ referred to in Revelation 20. According to premillennialists, 1,000 years of peace and harmony follow Christ's return to earth; amillennialists view the millennium as a symbol of the church age rather than a literal era; postmillennialists anticipate Christ's return following a "golden age" of Christianized society.

MISSIOLOGY The study or theology of missions.

MODALISM A denial of orthodox Trinitarianism in which the distinctive persons of Father, Son, and Spirit are seen as three mere manifestations or "modes" of God's person; also known as Sabellianism, after Sabellius, a third-century North African priest who was excommunicated for his views.

MODERNISM Also known as theological liberalism; a movement with origins in late-nineteenth-century Germany that elevates "the essence of Christianity" over the authority of Scripture and church doctrine; stresses adaptation of the Christian message to keep in step with cultural and scientific developments. Modernism takes a decidedly humanistic view of such things as sin, salvation, prayer, and the kingdom of God.

MONISM A system of belief that attempts to interpret reality in terms of one central principle.

MONOPHYSITISM The belief that Christ's nature was solely divine and merely clothed in humanity. This single-nature doctrine, also called Eutychianism, was declared heretical at the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451.

MONOTHEISM Belief in a single deity. Christianity, Islam, and Judaism are monotheistic religions.

MONTANISM A second-century Christian sect (named for its founder, Montanus) that emphasized an ascetic lifestyle, the imminence of Christ's return, and the prophetic gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially speaking in tongues (glossolalia). The Montanist movement faded in the fourth century.

MORAL ARGUMENT This apologetic for God's existence holds that the human sense of morality or moral conviction (imperfect though it may be) presupposes a moral Creator.

MYSTERY RELIGIONS Ancient religious sects that engaged initiates in secret rites, traditions, and symbols. In some cases these may have included baptism in blood or "sacred" prostitution.

NATURALISM A system of belief that denies validity to all but material (natural) explanations of reality. The possibility of the supernatural (including revelation) is categorically excluded.

NEO-ORTHODOXY A twentieth-century theological movement that criticized modernist theological positions regarding sin, revelation, science vs. religion, etc., but relied heavily on esoteric reasoning, paradox, and the abstract in coming to its own conclusions. Largely considered a product of its time (World Wars I and II), the movement seems to have faded. Karl Barth and Reinhold Niebuhr were two leading proponents.

NESTORIANISM The doctrine that Jesus' human and divine natures existed independently, rather than unified in one personality; named for Nestorius, fifth-century patriarch of Constantinople, who was denounced as a heretic in AD 431.

NICENE CREED The Council of Nicea (325) convened to combat Arianism, the denial of Christ's equality with God the Father. Out of that council came the following theological confession:

> We believe in one God,
> the Father, the Almighty,
> maker of heaven and earth,
> of all that is, seen and unseen.
>
> We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
> the only Son of God,
> eternally begotten of the Father,
> God from God, Light from Light,
> true God from true God,
> begotten, not made,
> of one Being with the Father.
> Through him all things were made.
> For us and for our salvation
> he came down from heaven:
> by the power of the Holy Spirit
> > he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
> > and was made man.
> For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
> > he suffered death and was buried.
> > On the third day he rose again
> > in accordance with the Scriptures;
> > he ascended into heaven
> > and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
> He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
> > and his kingdom will have no end.
>
> We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
> who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
> With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
> He has spoken through the Prophets.
> We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
> We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
> We look for the resurrection of the dead,
> > and the life of the world to come. Amen.

NOETIC Relating to rational or intellectual activity (from Greek *nous,* "mind").

NOMINALISM Philosophically, the belief that abstract ideas or universal concepts are names only and have no basis in reality; the opposite of realism. Theologically, stated belief in a doctrine or worldview that is not upheld or lived out in practice.

OMNIBENEVOLENCE All-lovingness (all + goodness); total or unlimited goodness.

OMNIPOTENCE Having all power (all + power); total or unlimited power.

OMNISCIENCE All-knowingness (all + knowledge); total or unlimited knowledge.

ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT The philosophical premise that the very idea of the perfect Being necessitates the objective existence of such a Being (God), for without existence perfection would be impossible.

ONTOLOGY The study or science of being/existence.

ORDINANCE A religious ceremony or rite, such as baptism or Communion.

ORTHODOXY Adherence to proper or accepted belief, approved doctrine; when capitalized, refers to Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

ORTHOPRAXY Adherence to proper or accepted religious conduct.

PAGAN Irreligious or nonbelieving; an irreligious or non-monotheistic person.

PANENTHEISM A theological system (a kind of combination of theism and pantheism) in which all things exist within God; "*pan*" (all) "*en*" (in) "*theos*" (God).

PANTHEISM A theological system in which God is everything in the universe and everything in the universe is God.

PATRISTIC Related to the fathers of the early Christian church and/or their writings.

PAX ROMANA "The Roman peace"; the period of internal stability and relative tranquility enjoyed by the Roman Empire from 27 BC until near the end of the second century AD.

PENTATEUCH From Greek words for "five" and "book"; denotes the first five books of the Old Testament; sometimes called a "fivefold book" since its components (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) are closely interrelated.

PERSPICUITY Clearness; lucidity.

PERSPICUOUS Clear; lucid, easily understood.

PNEUMATOLOGY The study or doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

POLEMIC A theological controversy or argument. Polemics (plural) is the study of such controversies.

POLYTHEISM A belief in and/or worship of many gods.

POSITIVISM A philosophy that limits explanations of reality to observable physical phenomena and excludes any consideration of the metaphysical or spiritual; all authentic knowledge is supposed to be scientific.

POSTMODERNISM A worldview that is skeptical of absolute truths or universal principles in favor of relativity and individual experience. In this view, no single answer or paradigm suffices for all cultures or individuals; reality is subject to individual interpretation.

PRAXIS Practical, rather than theoretical, application of rules, principles, or beliefs. Accepted or customary practice.

PRESBYTERIANISM A form of church government in which elders (presbyters) are elected by the congregation and collectively (as the presbytery) govern the church.

PRESUPPOSITIONAL Based upon a presupposition. A presuppositional truth, for example, is something one believes based upon a condition already accepted as true.

PRIMA FACIE Latin for "at first view" or "at first sight"; implies sufficient basis to consider as fact.

PROCESS THEOLOGY A school of thought, developed in the nineteenth century, that emphasizes experience, universal free will, and self-determination while de-emphasizing or denying God's sovereignty, immutability, and omnipotence. In this thinking, God cannot regulate events directly but rather influences change by offering possibilities to the agents of free will. Process theology has influenced some streams of Jewish theology and some variants of Christianity.

PROPITIATION In theology, the appeasement of God's wrath toward sin through Christ's atoning sacrifice.

PSEUDEPIGRAPHIC Means "false headings/inscriptions"; pertains to those writings incorrectly attributed to various apostles and other noted biblical figures such as Solomon, Enoch, et al.

Qur'an The sacred text for Muslims, written in Arabic, in which the prophet Muhammad records revelations of Allah.

rapture A future event in which it is believed that all Christians (including deceased believers, who will resurrect) will be supernaturally gathered to "meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

reconciliation Restoring a broken relationship to fellowship or friendship.

redemption The act of rescuing from sin and its consequences.

Reformation, Protestant A sixteenth-century movement for renewal within the Catholic Church that resulted in the formation of various Protestant churches. Prominent reformers included Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, and Ulrich Zwingli.

religio licita "Legal religion"; religion recognized or approved by the governing authorities.

repentance Reversing one's direction in regard to sinful behaviors or attitudes; turning with appropriate sorrow from past acts displeasing to God.

righteousness All that is right, good, upright, morally pure, just, reverent; unswerving obedience to God and his commands.

Sabellianism See modalism.

sacrament A rite or ceremony of the church: an "outward, visible sign of an inward, spiritual grace"; viewed by some as a means of grace, that is, grace is conveyed to the participant. Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox, and some other churches recognize seven: baptism, Communion (the Eucharist), confirmation, marriage, holy orders, penance, and extreme unction. Most Protestants recognize only baptism and Communion, holding that these two alone were instituted by Christ; some churches refer to these as ordinances rather than sacraments.

sanctification The act of consecrating or setting apart for a holy purpose; the process of conforming to the character of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

self-determinism Free will; the view that a person causes his or her own actions; that, faced with a choice, humans may choose other than they actually do.

Septuagint Greek for "seventy"; a third- or second-century BC Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures; the name (often abbreviated *LXX*) derives from tradition, which holds that seventy scholars made the translation in seventy-two days.

SOCIAL GOSPEL The application of biblical principles to every area of human social endeavor and relationship; a Protestant movement in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America, responding compassionately to social problems arising from increasing industrialization and urbanization; frequently criticized by conservative Christians for emphasizing social concern over repentance and salvation.

SOCRATIC METHOD A method of instruction, famously employed by Socrates, that uses probing questions, often in a group setting, in an effort to develop a student's critical thinking skills, especially related to values, beliefs, and morals.

SOTERIOLOGY The study or doctrine of salvation.

SPECIAL GRACE The grace by which God bestows redemption and sanctification; unlike common grace, special grace is available only through faith in Jesus Christ.

SPECIAL PLEADING Emphasizing only what is favorable—and/or ignoring all evidence unfavorable—to one's own side of a legal or logical argument.

SUBORDINATIONISM The unorthodox doctrine that Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are subordinate to, not coequal with, God the Father. See also Arianism, Nicene Creed.

SUI GENERIS Latin for "of its particular kind"; unique.

SYNCRETISM Absorbing the practices, beliefs, or symbols of one religion into those of another.

SYNOPTIC GOSPELS Gospels with a similar point of view: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. (*Synoptic* is from the Greek for "seeing together.")

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY A method, or system, for studying God and his relationship to his creation; chapter 1 and chapters 4–10 of this book represent a brief systematic theology.

TELEOLOGY A way of explaining nature in terms of divine purpose and design; the teleological argument for God's existence posits that nature's evident purpose and design require a Designer.

THEISM The belief in the existence of God or some supreme being. Polytheism is the belief in/worship of many gods; monotheism, only one.

THEODICY A formal effort to reconcile evil in the world with God's goodness and sovereignty.

THEOPHANY A manifestation or appearance of God to human beings.

THEOPNEUSTY "God-breathed"; divine inspiration, particularly pertaining to the role of the Holy Spirit in the creation of the Scriptures.

TRANSCENDENCE God's distinctness from and superiority over creation.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION The Catholic doctrine of Communion, in which the "substance" of the bread and wine is said to actually change into the body and blood of Christ, even though the appearance remains unchanged.

TRIBULATION, GREAT TRIBULATION In eschatology, a seven-year period of divine judgment upon the earth, including global food shortages, plagues, natural disasters, and widespread death and destruction.

TRINITARIAN Relating to the doctrine of the Trinity; one who holds to this doctrine.

UNIVERSALISM The belief that through good's eventual triumph over evil all human beings will ultimately be saved.

UNIVOCAL Unambiguous; having only one proper meaning.

VOLUNTARISM The theory that the universe (all that exists) emanates from the will; that the will (as opposed to the intellect) is the ultimate principle of reality and of human experience.

VULGATE Jerome's fourth-century Latin translation of the Bible.

WORLDVIEW One's way of interpreting life and its various phenomena: may be influenced by religion, race, culture, socioeconomic status, gender, experience, and so on.

YAHWEH Proper name for God, derived from the Hebrew letters transliterated as YHWH, used extensively in the Old Testament.

YAHWISTIC Pertaining to the worship of Yahweh.

ZEALOT A member of the first-century-AD Jewish political party that advocated violent overthrow of the regional Roman government.

Endnotes

Introduction

Endnotes

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Chapter 1

Revelation:

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[1]. R. C. Sproul, *The Soul's Quest for God: Satisfying the Hunger for Spiritual Communion with God* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1992), 64–65.

[2]. Marcion, a second-century teacher in Rome, broke with the church over his belief that the New Testament contradicted the Old Testament entirely. He formed his own canon, excluding the Old Testament.

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[1]. Each classification has its strengths and weaknesses. We may distinguish those attributes that are absolute and immanent (A. H. Strong); incommunicable or communicable (Louis Berkhof); metaphysical or moral (John Gill); absolute, relative, and moral (H. Orton Wiley); or personal and

constitutional (Lewis Sperry Chafer). Advantages and disadvantages of these groupings can be seen in those respective theologies.

[2]. In contrast to the Hindu concept of *maya*.

[3]. This contradicts those in the Thomistic tradition who have taught the impassibility of God.

[4]. G. C. Berkouwer, *The Providence of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952), 98.

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[1]. D. L. Sayers, *Creed or Chaos?* (London: Meuthen, 1947), 28.

[2]. Some of the ideas developed very briefly in this section are explored at greater length in A. M. McGrath, *Understanding Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991).

[3]. A. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 5.

[4]. Sayers, *Creed or Chaos?* 28.

[5]. O. O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986).

[6]. The manner in which Jesus Christ can be a moral example for us is explored in the essay "In What Way Can Jesus Be a Moral Example for Christians?" Alister McGrath, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 34, no. 3 (Sept. 1991): 289–298.

[7]. C. Gore, *The Incarnation of the Son of God* (London: Murray, 1922), 23.

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10. N. Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989), 25–27.

11. J. R. W. Stott, *Life in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 92.

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Chapter 27

Defining Christian Education:

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1. See M. Spenger's *Learning and Memory: The Brain in Action* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1999), an excellent resource for information on how the brain controls learning. "During the first year of life, the brain makes neuronal connections at an enormous rate. Some scientists say that after the first two years, the brain never again learns as much or as quickly. . . . It takes another 8 to 10 years to complete the wiring" (4–5).

2. For a concise overview of several bodies of learning–style research, see M. LeFever's article on learning styles in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*, M. Anthony, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001).

3. Howard Gardner's *Multiple Intelligences: Theory and Practice* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), while not covered in this chapter, is also worth the reader's consideration. His research, falling under the heading of "intelligence" rather than strictly learning styles, demands that teachers rethink classroom processes that facilitate learning, especially among those students who learn in wildly different ways. His theory of multiple intelligences (MI theory) suggests there are at least seven: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences. According to Gardner's research, "A person's learning styles are the pragmatic manifestations of intelligence operating in natural learning contexts. All students will exhibit all seven intelligences, and many of them may be developed to a level of competency. However, learners will be highly developed in some, modestly developed in others, and underdeveloped in the rest" (T. Armstrong, *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom* [Alexandria, VA: Association of Curriculum and Supervision Development, 1994]).

4. B. McCarthy, *The 4MAT System—Teaching to Learning Style with Right/Left Mode Techniques* (Barrington, IL: Excel, 1987). This essential resource introduces the reader to the 4MAT system and contains fifteen units showing 4MAT's applications in K–12 classrooms.

5. B. McCarthy, *About Learning* (Barrington, IL: Excel, 1996), 289.

6. For a more conclusive test, see the Learning Type Measure, developed by Excel, Inc. This excellent measure confirms what students already suspect—their preferred style. However, of even more importance is that the measure allows students to see how much ability they have in steps that are not their preference. For teachers, this serves as a caution. Volunteers may weight their teaching toward the areas they personally enjoy, thus devaluing or ignoring opposite styles.

7. Adapted from M. LeFever, *Learning Styles—Reaching Everyone God Gave You to Teach* (Colorado Springs: Cook, 1995), 29.

8. "Teaching styles should never be treated as a mere corollary to learning style. Teaching/learning styles are distinct, though complementary, and should be studied separately. They bear completely different objectives, goals, and criteria. The nature of a learning style describes the learner's learning. The nature of a teaching style is not to describe the teacher's learning or even primarily the teacher's facilitation of the student's learning; rather, it is to describe the teacher and his or her behavior as a vehicle for teaching" (G. M. H. Gayle, "A New Paradigm for Heuristic Research in Teaching Styles," *Religious Education* 89 [Winter 1994]: 9).

9. LeFever, *Learning Styles*, 48.

10. Ibid., 56.

11. Quoted by R. W. Pazmino, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997), 15.

12. LeFever, *Learning Styles*, 132.

13. M. Yaconelli, *Dangerous Wonder* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998), 124.

14. LeFever, *Learning Styles*, 74.

15. R. Dunn and K. Dunn, *Teaching Elementary Students through Their Individual Learning Styles* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1992); Dunn and Dunn, *Teaching Secondary Students Through Their Individual Learning Styles* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1993).

16. While we often think of methodology and modality preferences in terms of children, our modality preferences make a difference regardless of age. Michael W. Galbraith and Wayne B. James point out that "since learning styles impact the amount of information processed and retained, knowledge and utilization of an older learner's most effective learning style will enhance learning" ("Assessment of Dominant Perceptual Learning Styles of Older Adults," *Educational Gerontology*, no. 6 [1984]: 455).

17. G. Smalley and J. Trent, "Why Can't My Spouse Understand What I Say?" *Focus on the Family Magazine* (Nov. 1988): 3.

18. Dynamic Learners/Teachers would enjoy taking on the challenge of brainstorming new ways to capture our students' picture literacy in class. Gather a group of people for this purpose and see what new ideas develop. Albert Einstein was diagnosed early and incorrectly as intellectually challenged. His exceptional gifts were initially missed, even though he had a genius ability for visual-spatial perception, visual reasoning, and visual memory. Teachers today need to pray, "Lord, if you should ever allow me to touch the life of a child who has the potential of an Einstein, help me to be ready. Help me recognize a visual gift and encourage it by the way I teach."

19. One out of every three women, black and white, attend church at least once a week. Only one of four white men and one of five black men do. Some men told researchers that they skip church because it is irrelevant and unmanly (National Opinion Research Center, associated with the University of Chicago, reported in *The Christian Ministry* [Nov./Dec. 1990]). One explanation is that the tactile/kinesthetic preferences of many men are often ignored in both adult church classes and in the actual worship service.

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21. D. Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998), 364.

22. F. Walsh, ed., *Normal Family Processes: Growing Diversity and Complexity*, 4th ed. (New York: Guilford, 2012), 16.

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24. M. McGoldrick and D. Ashton, "Culture: A Challenge to Concepts of Normality," in *Normal Family Processes*, 251.

25. A. Malphurs, *The Dynamics of Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), 138–139.

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27. P. Gleason, "American Identity and Americanization," in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. S. Therstromm (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1980), 31.

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31. See Table 1, "Population by Hispanic or Latino Origin and by Race for the United States: 2000 and 2010," in K. Humes, N. Jones, and R. Ramirez, "Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010," 2010 Census Briefs, March 2011, www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-02.pdf.

32. "The Rise of Asian Americans," Pew Research Report, June 19, 2012 (updated April 4, 2013), http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/06/19/the-rise-of-asian-americans/.

33. S. H. (Abraham) Hwang, "Family Life Education with Asian Immigrant Families," in *Family Life Education with Diverse Populations*, 190.

34. J. Breckenridge and L. Breckenridge, *What Color Is Your God? Multicultural Education in the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 76–83.

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