

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of man answers the question, ‘what is it to be human, and how do we account for both the amazing selflessness which we often see in people, and yet the horrifying degree of evil of which people are capable?’

MAN AS CREATURE

EXEGESIS OF KEY PASSAGES

Old Testament

GENESIS 1:26-28; 2:4-8,15-25

These are the only passages which deal with human nature in the absence of sin.

1. Genesis 1:26-28

- 1) Man is one with the rest of creation.
 - i. He was created on the same day as the land animals.
 - physiologically the human body and other mammalian bodies are built to the same pattern.
 - ii. Man was blessed (cf. v 22)
- 2) Man is distinct from the rest of creation.
 - i. The account of the creation of man is worded differently.
 - I. *Let us make* (v 26).
 - II. *So God created* (v 27).
 - III. *And God said* (v 28).
 - ii. There is the theme of the image / likeness.
 - What does this mean?
 - I. Man’s mental or spiritual faculties?
 - II. Physical resemblance?
 - III. Man as God’s representative on earth?
 - IV. Man as having the capacity for genuine relationship with God?
 - iii. Only when man was created could God say **VERY good** (v 31)

2. Genesis 2:4-8,15-25

- 1) **Man was created with a purpose (vv 5,15).**
- 2) **Man is an integral part of the created order (v 7).**
- 3) **Man is distinctive within the created order.**
 - i. Human formation (v 7f).
 - ii. Man’s life was directly given by God (v 7).
 - iii. There was no comparable helper amongst the animals (v 20; contrast. v 23).
- 4) **Man was made for a life of joyful aesthetic appreciation.**
 - i. He was put in a *garden* (v 8).
 - ii. The name of the garden was ‘*Eden*’ (v 8 cf. Ps 36:8).

- iii. The garden was in the *east* (v 8).
- iv. Man was *put* there (v 15).

5) Man lives under God's authority (v 16f).

- i. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was permanently forbidden.
- ii. The law under which man was made to live was a 'law of liberty' (Jas 1:25).
- iii. The Creator's authority is underlined by the death-threat.

6) Human life consists in relationship, not aloneness (v 18).

- i. True relationship requires comparability (cf. v 20).
- ii. True relationship involves partnership.
- iii. True relationship brings elation (cf. v 23).
- iv. Authentic human sexual lifestyle is possible only in monogamous marriage (v 24).
 - I. leaving.
 - II. joining.
 - III. union.

7) In the bare essentials of human being there is nothing to be ashamed of (v 25).

FORMULATION OF DOCTRINE

1. The Early Christian Creeds

The only relevant phrase comes in the **Definition of Chalcedon** on the two natures of Christ: it describes him as "*truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body*".

True humanity has a twofold aspect:

- 1) a soul.
 - mentioned first as most important.
 - Characterised by rationality.
- 2) a body.
 - the early church rejected the Greek idea that the 'real you' is the soul, and that the ideal is to live in detachment from the body.
 -

2. The Reformed Confessions and Catechisms

1) God created man in his own image.

2) What is the image of God in man?

- three Confessions answer this question explicitly:
 1. moral uprightness.
 2. rational wisdom.
- another four Confessions define the image implicitly:
 1. perfection of all natural capacities.
 2. moral perfection.
 3. a will freely directed to what is good.
 4. rationality.
 5. spiritual knowledge.
- NT background: Col 3:10; Eph 4:24.

3) Why was man created in God's image?

- 1. to know God rightly.
- 2. to love God heartily.
- 3. to live with God eternally.

- 4. for God's glory.

4) Man as creature consists of body and soul.

- some of the Confessions distinguish a *mortal* body and an *immortal* soul.
- I think that this is careless wording:
 1. if death is the result of sin, then surely man's *body* was immortal before the fall.
 2. if the soul is held to be *naturally* immortal, this would contradict 1 Tim 6:16.
 3. Scripture sees man as an integrated whole.

5) Man is the highest of God's creatures.

6) Man was created as a being subject to God's law.

- the following terms are used:
 - commandment of life.
 - covenant of law (written on the heart).
 - covenant of works.

7) The human race was created initially as one couple.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

G.C. Berkouwer, *Man: the Image of God* (1962), rejects two theories of the meaning of the image:

- 1) the image as man's dominion (Gen 1:28).
- 2) the image as human being as man and woman.

Karl Barth argued that relationship within the triune God has its counterpart in human life in the relationship between man and woman (Gen 1:27).

Berkouwer finds it unconvincing to move from this text to an emphasis on relationship *per se*.

Berkouwer also rejects any doctrine of the image which involves carving man up: the body is not to be ruled out as part of the image.

On the basis of Eph 4:24 and Col 3:10 Berkouwer sees conformity to God in holiness as the heart of the image. However, this is found in the community of the new man in Christ: the nature of Christian community is the imitation of God in his love and mercy.

PASTORAL APPLICATION

1. Live genuinely humanly: be merciful.
2. Have respect for every human being as a person created in the image of God.

MAN AS SINNER

The *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* lists eight terms under the semantic fields of sin, iniquity, transgression and wrong. They suggest the following aspects of sin:

- 1) sin is the misdirection of human potential.
- 2) sin is the failure to realise proper goals.
- 3) sin is the twisting and distortion of human personality.
- 4) sin is the wreckage of the entire human constitution.
- 5) sin is the failure to act uprightly and fairly.
- 6) sin is the wilful flouting of the Creator's authority.
- 7) sin has so gripped the human personality that it is no longer a matter of choice.
- 8) sin is straying from a right lifestyle.

The *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* lists four terms in its article entitled 'Sin'. They suggest the following aspects:

- 1) *adikia* – sin involves injury to another’s rights.
- 2) *hamartia* – sin involves failing to make a standard of achievement.
- 3) *parabasis* – sin involves turning off the proper pathway.
- 4) *paraptoma* – sin involves failing to make progress in the right direction.

To these a further two terms might be added:

- 1) *anomia* – sin is defined by reference to the broken law.
- 2) *poneria* – sin is a rottenness at the core of the human constitution.

EXEGESIS OF KEY PASSAGES

Old Testament

GENESIS 3

1) The Nature of Sin

1. Sin as orientation towards the creation.

- Adam and Eve paid attention to a creature (cf. Rom 1:25).
- the Bible has little to say about the fall of Satan, but his role in man’s fall is assumed (Rom 16:20; Rev 12:9).

2. Sin as misrepresentation of God.

- i. Impugning his character:
 - the serpent’s use of *indeed* (v 1) sows the seed of doubt (v 3 cf. Gen 2:16f).
 - the serpent accuses God of lying – but see Jn 8:44.
- ii. Denying his nearness:
 - the serpent avoids using the personal name of the LORD (v 1; cf. v 3).

3. Sin as craving for the unattainable.

- defining one’s own goals
- denying one’s own limitations (v 5f).

4. Sin as independence from God.

- divine prerogatives are usurped (v 6 cf. 2:15,21-23; v 7 cf. 1:7,11,26,31; 2:18).

5. Sin as explicit disobedience (cf. 1 Jn 3:4).

6. Sin as deception.

- Rom 1:25 speaks of *the lie* (v 3 cf. 1 Tim 2:14).

2) The Consequences of Sin.

1. In relation to oneself.

- bitter disappointment (v 5 cf. v 7; vv 16f, 19).

2. In relation to God.

- fellowship disrupted (vv 8,10).

3. In relation to other people.

- blaming others (v 12f).
- desiring domination (v 16).

4. In relation to the creation.
 - work becomes frustrating (v 19).
 - the function of creation is distorted (v 8 cf. 2:9).
5. In relation to everything.
 - death (v 19 cf. 2:17).
 - : mortality.
 - : spiritual death.

3) **The Permanence of Sin.**

- clothes become a permanent reminder (v 21).
- Gen 3 is both the story of 'Everyman', and the explanation of original sin.

GENESIS 6:5,11-13

- God's permanent assessment of human life.
- Outward expressions of sin (vv 11-13) are traced back to their root in the inner life of man (v 5).
- The flood changed nothing at this level (Gen 8:21; Isa 64:6).

GENESIS 11:4-6

- 1) Fallen man wants a name for himself (v 4).
- 2) Fallen man wants to be God for himself (v 4).
 - the attempt proves ridiculous (v 5).
- 3) The pooled resources of sin are devastating in their potential (v 6).

PSALMS 14:1-3; 53:1-3

- 1) **The spiritual basis of sin** (v 1).
 - the failure to reflect the mercy of God.
- 2) **The moral outworking of sin** (v 1).
 1. Corruption.
 2. Abomination.
- 3) **The universality of sin** (vv 1-3).

PSALM 51:5

- this text is vital to a full understanding of the Biblical doctrine of man as sinner.
- We sin because we are sinners by nature.

ISAIAH 53:6a

- 1) **Sin involves straying.**
 - sin is always defined by reference to God.
- 2) **Sin has infected everyone.**

New Testament

MATTHEW 15:11,18-20

- 1) The outward life is defiled by what comes out of a person, not what goes in.
- 2) What comes out of a person is the fruit of the seed of defilement which is present in the heart.

JOHN 8:43-44

- 1) Sinners are enslaved by their sin.
- 2) Slavery to sin involves descent from Satan.

ROMANS 3:22b-23**1) The universality of sin.**

- *there is no difference* (v 22).
- *all have sinned* (v 23).

2) The entire human race sinned in Adam.

- in v 23 the tense is *aorist* = a once-for-all event.

3) Fallenness is a permanent for the whole human race.

- what is the *glory of God*?
 - i. God's good opinion.
 - ii. God's image in man.
 - iii. Man's privilege of living in God's presence.

ROMANS 5:12-21**1) The entry of sin into human life came about as the result of one action by one man** (vv 12,15-19).

- the single event of Adam's disobedience is the root of every single sin which has afflicted the world ever since.

2) From that one event sin infected every human being throughout history (vv 12,19).

- Adam's fall was not just the pattern which we all follow, but the moment when human nature itself was thrown off course.

3) The result of the entry of sin through Adam was that the judgment of death came upon every human being (vv 12,14-18,21).

- the sentence of condemnation has brought death.
- not only sin, but also its effects, are universal.

4) Sin and death are realities even where God's Law is unknown (v 13f).

- the background to this is Rom 3:21: without law sin, though present, cannot be defined with clarity.
- God's law makes sin abundantly clear (v 20).

GALATIANS 5:16-21**1) What human nature desires is opposed to the Spirit of God** (v 16f).**2) What human nature gives rise to is *evident*** (v 19).

- the human conscience prevents people from sinning comfortably.

3) Man as sinner is barred from entry to God's kingdom (v 21).

- the lostness of man is the sad reality.

EPHESIANS 2:1-3

- 1) **Man as sinner is dead in trespasses and sins** (v 1).
 - this highlights man's total inability.
- 2) **Man as sinner lives as a matter of course in his sin** (v 2).
- 3) **Man as sinner lives according to the age of this world** (v 2).
 - we are not mere victims, but participants.
- 4) **Man as sinner lives according to the prince of the power of the air** (v 2).
 - man has deliberately aligned himself with the devil.
 - demonic powers are ever-present.
 - man has democratically elected Satan as his leader.
- 5) **Human beings as sinners are sons of disobedience** (v 2).
 - disobedience is the essence of sin.
 - disobedience is the primary feature of human life.
- 6) **The sinfulness of man is a universal condition** (v 3).
- 7) **Man as sinner is dictated to by fleshly lusts** (v 3).
 - bodily urges are out of control.
- 8) **Man as sinner does just what he pleases** (v 3).
 - the thoughts which control action are corrupt.
- 9) **Man as sinner is liable to God's anger** (v 3).
- 10) **Every individual human being is sinful from birth** (v 3).
 - the doctrine of *original sin* means that we all originate as sinners.

EPHESIANS 4:17-19

- 1) **Sin has damaged the human mind.**
 - this is brought out in three phrases:
 1. *futility* (v 17).
 2. *understanding darkened* (v 18)
 3. *the ignorance that is in them* (v 18)
- 2) **Sin has broken man's relationship with God** (v 18).
- 3) **Sin has hardened the human heart** (v 18f).
 - our hearts are steeled against the truth.
 - we become insensitive to evil.
- 4) **Sin leads to all sorts of evil practices** (v 19).
 - i. *licentiousness* = treating life as a joke.
 - ii. *uncleanness* = filthy behaviour.
 - iii. *greediness* = self-interest.

- notice the totality of the sin life:
- 1. we have given ourselves over to it
- 2. we have succumbed to all kinds of sin.

FORMULATION OF DOCTRINE

1. The Early Christian Creeds

- 1) To be human is to need salvation.
- 2) Man is a sinner in need of forgiveness.
 - human sinfulness was as foundational a doctrine as the Trinity to the early Church.
 - sin is an intolerable weight that crushes and destroys fallen man.
- 3) Man stands under the divine judgment.
- 4) Human life ends in death.
- 5) Sinfulness is a universal human phenomenon.

2. The Reformed Confessions and Catechisms

1) The sinfulness of the human race stems from Adam's rebellion.

1. The original sin was Adam's disobedience.
2. As a result of his disobedience Adam fell from his first condition of excellence.
3. Through Adam's sin, sin and death spread to all his descendants.
4. The guilt of the original sin is imputed to all people.
5. Human nature was corrupted and this corruption is passed on from generation to generation.

2) Human nature is now fundamentally corrupted.

- depravity is at the very heart of man.

3) A corrupt nature gives rise to corrupt practice.

- all human works are sinful.
- man is deprived of all righteousness.

4) This corruption of nature is all-embracing.

1. Man is afflicted by moral inability.
2. Man's will is not free to choose good or evil.
3. Man's mind is blinded.
4. Man's spiritual perception is destroyed.

5) Sin has turned man into the enemy of God.

- communion with God has been lost.

6) Sin has brought calamitous consequences upon the human race.

1. Temporal experiences of wrath.
 - i. the curse on life in this world.
 - ii. physical death.
2. Eternal experiences of wrath.

7) God is not the author of sin.

8) God's law exposes sin.

- the 'first use of the law'.

9) Sin has corrupted, but not totally annihilated, human nature.

- human talent is still seen in works of science and art.

10) The teaching of Pelagius is rejected.**11) Salvation from this state of misery...**

- ...is gloriously possible
- ...is marvellously provided in Jesus Christ.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Charles Finney was a 19th century American evangelist. His teaching on man as sinner set the direction for much of 19th and 20th century western Evangelicalism – and yet his doctrine was unsound.

He rejected the pessimistic attitude towards human nature. He rejected original sin: guilt and corruption are not inherent in human nature, but are the results of bad choices.

Finney rejected the plain meaning of Scripture – eg. Ps 58:3. He subjected Scripture to the judgment of man's fallen reason.

Finney therefore saw conversion as the free act of the sinner himself. He assumed that duty implies ability.

Finney's influence is seen in the widespread talk about people making 'decisions' for Christ.

Finney was really reviving the ancient heresy of **Pelagius**.

Pelagius' disciple, Celestius, summarised his teaching in *Against the Doctrine of the Propagation of Sin*:

- 1) Even if Adam had not sinned, he would still have died.
- 2) Adam's sin harmed only himself, not the whole human race.
- 3) Newborn children are in the same state as Adam before the fall.
- 4) It is not through Adam's sin that the whole human race dies.
- 5) The Mosaic law is as good a guide to heaven as the gospel.
- 6) Even before the advent of Christ there were men without sin.

In AD 418 the Council of Carthage declared Pelagianism a heresy, and upheld four truths against it:

- 1) Death is not a natural evil, but the penalty imposed on man because of Adam's sin.
- 2) Every person has inherited original sin from Adam.
- 3) Grace is not given just to help us to do what we can do anyway by our own free will: it is absolutely indispensable.
- 4) Even newly born children already bear the taint of sin.

In the early 17th century there was a partial re-run of this debate in the Netherlands.

Jacobus Arminius put forward five points of disagreement with an extreme version of Calvinism taught by Francis Gomarus:

- 1) It is God's eternal purpose to save those who believe and persevere: the grace of the Holy Spirit is the essential prerequisite for faith and perseverance.
- 2) Jesus Christ died to obtain eternal redemption for all people; faith is necessary for the enjoyment of this redemption.
- 3) The human race in sin is totally depraved; the sinner has no free will and is completely unable to think, will, or do any good, or to exercise saving faith without regeneration.
- 4) The human being is in absolute need of grace to begin, continue and accomplish any good: this applies even to the regenerate; grace, however, is not irresistible.
- 5) On the question whether the believer can, through negligence, become devoid of grace, further study of Scripture is necessary.

The **Synod of Dort** replied to this position in 1619.

Their reply had four sections, because on point (3) there was no disagreement.

They recognised inconsistency in Arminius' teaching, and denied that man has sufficient powers, even with the aid of grace, to frustrate the purposes of God.

The Synod taught that God's grace accomplishes his purpose irresistibly, not by tyrannical force, but by gentle wooing.

PASTORAL APPLICATION

- 1) We need compassion for sinners.
- 2) We must preach the joyful gospel, in complete dependence on the Holy Spirit.

CHRISTOLOGY

Who is Jesus Christ?
What is special about him?

The answer centres on the truth that he is both fully human and fully divine.

EXEGESIS OF KEY PASSAGES

Old Testament

Jesus was the fulfilment of prophecy (Lk. 7:19f; cf. Zech. 9:9; Mal. 3:1).

What sort of person will this coming one be?

The OT expectation was a Saviour who would be both human and divine.

PASSAGES WHICH PROPHECY A HUMAN SAVIOUR

1) *Genesis 3:15*

Jesus is the seed of the woman (cf. Gal. 4:4).

2) *Genesis 12:7*

Jesus is the true seed of Abraham (cf. Gal. 3:16).

3) *Deuteronomy 18:15*

Jesus is the prophet like Moses (cf. Ac. 3:22f; 7:37).

4) *2 Samuel 7:12-16; 1 Chronicles 17:11-14*

Jesus is the son of David (cf. Matt. 1:1; 12:23; 9:27; 20:30).

PASSAGES WHICH PROPHECY A DIVINE SAVIOUR

1) *References to the Angel of the LORD...*

...who is distinguished from God (eg. 2 Sam. 24:16; Ex. 32:34), and yet claims identity with God (eg. Gen. 31:11,13).

2) *Psalms 2:7*

The unique sonship of the LORD's king carries implications of deity.

3) *Psalms 45:6-7*

In v. 2 God has blessed the king, but now the king is addressed as God.

4) *Psalms 102:25-27*

The Psalmist is addressing the LORD (v.12), but in Heb. 1:10-12 these verses are applied to Christ.

5) *Psalms 110:1*

'Lord' is a title with divine implications, and the position at the LORD's right hand is "supra-angelic" (Robert Reymond) [cf. Matt. 22:43-45].

6) *Isaiah 7:14*

The one who comes to be with us is none other than God.

7) *Isaiah 9:6*

These four titles have divine implications.

8) *Daniel 7:14*

The Son of Man is a manlike figure, and yet there are four indications of his divinity:

1. he has free access to the Ancient of Days;
2. he comes on clouds (cf. Nah. 1:3);
3. he receives a universal and everlasting kingdom;
4. he is offered worship.

9) *Malachi 3:1*

The LORD is speaking, and says that his messenger prepares the way before 'me'.

THE OLD TESTAMENT EXPECTATION OF A DIVINE-HUMAN MESSIAH

As the LORD's Anointed (Isa. 61:2; Lk. 4:21) Jesus fulfils the three human offices of prophet, priest and king, but only one who is God can rise to the heights of devotion which he achieved.

New Testament

THE GOSPELS...

...clearly tell the story of a man, whose ordinariness was so clear to his contemporaries (Matt. 13:54-56; cf. Mk. 6:3; Jn. 6:42) that they regarded any hint of a claim to divinity as blasphemous (Matt. 9:3; Jn. 5:18; 8:58f; 10:33; 19:7). But the testimony of the gospels is that this claim was not blasphemous, but true.

The Synoptic Gospels take the manhood of Jesus as the starting-point, and within the story of a human life signals of divinity occur.

In John the emphasis is reversed: he writes about the divine Christ; his starting-point is the pre-existence of the one who became flesh in Jesus, but within the story of one who is clearly God, striking indications of humanity appear.

THE EVIDENCE FOR JESUS' HUMANITY (in the Gospels)

1) *The Genealogies*

Matthew 1:1-16 traces Jesus' ancestry back to Abraham.

Luke 3:23-38 traces Jesus' descent back to Adam, the prototype man, and to God as Creator of the human race.

2) *John 1:30*

Jesus was a male (cf. Ac. 2:22; 17:31). His was not 'impersonal humanity'; he was a real human person.

3) *Indications of human weakness in Jesus' experience*

Jesus was 'flesh' (Jn. 1:14) – human in every aspect of what humanness is, including weakness:

1. *Jesus knew hunger (Matt. 4:2; 21:18; Jn. 4:31).*
2. *Jesus got tired (Matt. 8:24; Mk. 4:38; Lk. 8:23; Jn. 4:6).*
3. *Jesus was temptable (Matt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-13; Mk. 1:13).*

His sinlessness (Heb. 4:15) did not negate the pain of trial.

4. *Jesus experienced sorrow (Matt. 26:37f; Mk. 4:33f; Lk. 22:44).*

Is it possible that in Matthew 26:41 Jesus is speaking about himself?

5. *Jesus knew the grief of bereavement (Jn. 11:35).*

THE EVIDENCE FOR JESUS' DIVINITY (in the Gospels)

1. *Jesus was born by a virgin (Matt. 1:20; Lk. 1:32f).*

The virgin birth did not make Jesus divine; it was a sign (Isa. 7:14) of his divinity.

2. *Jesus' existence did not begin with his birth (or even his conception) [Jn. 1:1-3].*

i) *He is eternal*

"In the beginning" echoes Genesis 1:1. Jesus' pre-existence is taught throughout John's Gospel:

- I. John the Baptist's words (Jn. 1:15,30).
 - II. Jesus came from heaven (Jn. 3:13,1; 6:33,38,51; cf. 6:62; 8:23; 16:27f,30; 18:37)
 - III. Jesus was sent by the Father (Jn. 4:34; 5:30,36,-38; 6:29,38,44,57; 7:16,18,28f; 10:36; 12:49;13:20; 17:18,21).
 - IV. Jesus stated that he possessed glory before creation (Jn. 17:5)
- ii) *The Word may be distinguished from God and yet is God.*

iii) *He was the father's agent in creation (v. 3; cf. v. 10).*

3. *Jesus is the Father's only-begotten (Jn. 1:14,18; 3:16).*

This is more than a statement of uniqueness: it speaks of relationship to the Father by generation rather than creation.

4. *Jesus is 'the Son of God'*

- so named by others (Mk. 1:1; Jn. 1:34; Matt. 4:3,6; 8:29; Lk. 4:41; Jn. 1:49; 6:69; Matt. 14:33; 27:54; Jn. 20:31).
- Jesus' own claim (Jn. 9:35-37; 10:36; Lk. 22:37).

5. *Jesus was offered – and accepted – worship (Matt. 2:2,11; 8:2; Mk. 5:6; Matt. 9:18; 14:33; Jn. 9:38; Matt. 15:25; 20:20; 28:9,17; Lk. 24:52).*

No protest is recorded (contrast Matt. 4:9f; Ac. 10:25; Rev. 19:10; 22:8f).

6. *Jesus' divinity was signalled at two key moments.*

- his *baptism* and *transfiguration*:

on both occasions there was a voice from heaven (Matt. 3:17; 17:5), which identified Jesus as God's Son, defining him as truly divine.

At the *baptism* Jesus is also identified with the LORD (Matt. 3:3).

The *transfiguration* was itself a glimpse of Jesus' divine glory (Matt. 17:2; Mk. 9:2). Matthew speaks of white light (light that is as pure as can be) – and God is light. Mark speaks of whiteness beyond the power of human laundry: this is divine clothing!

7. *Jesus himself claimed to be God.*

Note the following four passages:

1. *Matthew 11:27*
2. *Matthew 22:41-45*
3. *John 10:30*
4. *John 14:7-11*

8. *Those who met and heard Jesus recognised his divine claim.*

- i) *the demons* (Mk. 1:24)
- ii) *his sympathetic hearers*

Four different words express the crowds' amazement:

- I. *ekplesso* – to be almost knocked out with surprise (Matt. 7:28; 13:54; 22:33; Mk. 1:22; 7:37; 11:18).
- II. *existemi* – to be almost transported outside oneself with wonder (Matt. 12:23; Mk. 2:12; 5:42; 6:51; Lk. 2:47).
- III. *thambeo* – to be speechless with amazement (Mk. 1:27; Lk. 5:26).
- IV. *thaumazo* – to be full of admiration for something because it is so unusually good (Matt. 8:27; 9:8,33; 15:31; 21:20; Mk. 5:20; Lk. 4:22).

Luke 9:43 uses both *ekplesso* and *thaumazo*: what amazed the people was that in Jesus' works they saw the majesty of God.

- iii) *The soldiers who went to arrest him* (Jn. 18:5f).

In the I AM they were confronted with the power of divinity.

THE REST OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

ACTS

The humanity of Jesus is taken for granted in the earliest Christian preaching (Ac. 2:22) – and this man is the Christ (Ac. 2:36; 5:42; 9:22; 17:3; 18:5,28), a title which is beginning to have divine connotations.

Paul introduced the term ‘Son of God’ (Ac. 9:20). He had become convinced of Jesus’ divinity on the Damascus road (Ac. 9:5; 22:8; 26:15).

PAUL’S LETTERS

1) Romans 1:3-4

Jesus’ humanity: *a descendant of David; according to the flesh* (human nature in its totality); *born* (became).

Jesus’ divinity: clearly demonstrated in the resurrection.

2) 2 Corinthians 4:4

Jesus’ humanity: the image (what man was meant to be).

Jesus’ divinity: glory (“the absolute perfection of the deity”).

3) Philippians 2:6-8

Jesus’ divinity: *in the form of God* (his essential nature); *equality with God* (not snatching at something which he had no right to have).

Jesus’ humanity: *in the likeness of men; appearance as a man* – these two phrases could suggest mere similarity, or even disguise. However, three phrases leave no doubt that Jesus really became human: *he made himself of no reputation* (“he did not lay aside the divine attributes, but the insignia of majesty”); *he took the form of a servant* (human service was the very essence of his life); he willingly embraced death.

4) Colossians 1:15-19

Jesus’ humanity: the image.

Jesus’ divinity: *firstborn over all creation, before all things, the beginning, the pre-eminence*: he is prior in time and supreme in rank because he is on the Creator side of the Creator/creature divide. God in all his fullness is resident in him.

5) 1 Timothy 3:16

The humanity of Jesus was the site of divine manifestation.

6) Titus 2:13

The man who is our Saviour is identified as the great God.

THE OTHER NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS

HEBREWS

George Eldon Ladd writes: “No New Testament book emphasises the humanity of Jesus more emphatically than does Hebrews” (2:14,17f; 4:15; 5:7f).

At the same time, Ladd notes, “Hebrews has an explicit high Christology” (1:2f,5f,8,10; 2:3; 4:14; 5:5; 6:6; 7:3,14,21; 8:8,11; 10:16,30; etc.).

2 PETER

The man Jesus Christ is both God and Saviour (1:1).

JOHN'S LETTERS

1. JESUS' HUMANITY

1) *Jesus was flesh* (1 Jn. 4:2f; 2 Jn. 7).

Already before the close of the NT era there were deceivers who were questioning the idea that Jesus was truly flesh. John's letters assert Jesus' real humanity.

2) *The Christ is located in a man* (1 Jn. 2:22; 4:15; 5:1,5).

The use of the human name JESUS stresses that God has revealed himself in tangible form – in this man.

3) *Jesus lived a normal human life* (1 Jn. 5:6).

Water and blood may mean birth and death: from start to finish Jesus remained fully and truly human.

2. JESUS' DIVINITY

1) *He is the Son of God* (1 Jn. 3:8; 4:15; 5:5,10,12f,20).

“Jesus is...uniquely related to the Father” (cf. 1 Jn. 1:3,7,22-24; 3:23; 4:9f,14; 5:9,11; 2 Jn. 3,9).

2) *He was sent into the world by the Father* (1 Jn. 4:9f,14).

“The unique status of Jesus in relation to God.”

3) *He is the only-begotten* (1 Jn. 4:9).

He has his being as the Son of the Father by eternal generation.

FORMULATION OF DOCTRINE

The Early Creeds

THE APOSTLES' CREED

Here the story of Jesus is told by reference to 11 key moments in his life:

- 1) His conception by the Holy Spirit.
- 2) His birth of the virgin Mary.
- 3) His sufferings under Pontius Pilate.
- 4) His crucifixion.
- 5) His death.
- 6) His burial.
- 7) His descent into hell.
- 8) His resurrection on the third day.
- 9) His ascension into heaven.
- 10) His present position seated at the Father's right hand.
- 11) His future coming as Judge of the living and the dead.

Note the following four features of this creed:

1. This historical summary is prefaced by the description of Jesus Christ as the Father's only-begotten (*monogenes*) Son. Although this term is not elaborated it points to a super-historical element behind the 11 items in the above list.

2. The first of the 11 items emphasises that there was never a moment of his earthly existence when Jesus was anything other than God.
3. The point of the historical list is to stress the reality of Jesus' human experiences.
4. The mention of Pontius Pilate in the third item is deliberate: it demonstrates that these events can be verifiably dated.

THE NICENE CREED

Jesus' divinity

This contains a far more elaborate declaration of the divinity of Christ in response to the Arian controversy. Arius taught that the Word (*Logos*) was a creature, who became the Son of God by adoption.

The Creed piles up phrases which stress the Son's full divinity:

- 1) The Word *begotten* appears three times.

It affirms the Son's uniqueness, eternity, and divinity.

- 2) Three phrases link the Son's nature as begotten with true divinity.

God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God: the being of the Son is derived from the being of God in a way that no creature can be.

- 3) The meaning of *begotten* is more precisely interpreted.

Of one substance with the Father: Jesus' nature is identical to God's.

- 4) The uniquely divine function of Creator is ascribed to the Son.

This sets Jesus Christ plainly on the Godward side of the distinction between the Creator God and his creation.

- 5) The incarnation is described as his coming down from heaven.

The person of the Son did not begin with his conception in Mary's womb: his divine life predated his human existence.

Jesus' humanity

This creed lists 9 key moments in Jesus' human life:

- 1) His incarnation by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary.
- 2) His crucifixion under Pontius Pilate.
- 3) His sufferings.
- 4) His burial.
- 5) His resurrection on the third day.
- 6) His ascension into heaven.
- 7) His present position seated at the Father's right hand.
- 8) His future coming as Judge of the living and the dead.
- 9) His eternal kingdom.

The combination of the conception and birth with the words *became incarnate* affirms that the eternal divine Son became something which he had not been before – a true human being.

THE ATHANASIAN CREED

This creed mentions seven items in the history of Jesus:

- 1) His incarnation.
- 2) His sufferings.
- 3) His descent into hell.
- 4) His resurrection.
- 5) His ascension.
- 6) His present position at the father's right hand.
- 7) His future coming as Judge.

Jesus' two natures are explained in four parallel clauses:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. He is God of the substance of the Father. | He is man of the substance of his mother. |
| 2. As God, he was begotten before the worlds. | As man, he was born in the world. |
| 3. He is perfect God. | He is also perfect man |

The second clause is amplified in the words, *subsisting of a reasonable soul and human flesh*: the human soul was not replaced by the divine nature, in which case Christ would not have been perfectly human.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 4. He is equal to the Father as God. | He is inferior to the Father as man. |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|

The creed then emphasises that the two natures are united in one person.

Two possible forms of this unity are ruled out:

1. 'conversion' – the view that the divine nature was somehow altered through its contact with human flesh.
2. 'confusion' – the view that the two natures became a third thing, neither truly divine nor truly human.

Two phrases are used to explain how two natures in one Christ can be the reality:

1. 'Manhood was taken into God'.
2. 'unity of person' – as distinct from in nature.

THE CHALCEDONIAN DEFINITION

This became the classic statement of orthodox Christology for the whole church for the rest of time. It makes three main points:

1) *Jesus Christ existed in two natures.*

(i) The divine nature

This was complete and true. Jesus Christ was of one substance with the Father, begotten of the Father before the ages, his only-begotten.

The true deity of Christ is emphasised also in the description of Mary as 'the God-bearer' (*theotokos*). Although Roman Catholic theology has abused this term, all it meant originally was that Mary was the mother of God the Son in his becoming human. It affirms that the child she bore was unequivocally God.

(ii) The human nature

This was complete and true, and meant that Jesus had a reasonable soul and a body. He was one substance with us, like us in all respects except sin. Although Jesus' manhood was begotten of Mary in her virgin state, his was otherwise a normal human birth.

2) *Jesus Christ existed as one person.*

He was one subsistence, one and the same Son, at once and at the same time both God and man.

3) *In this one person each nature continues to be present in its own integrity.*

There is no confusion, no change, no division, and no separation. The distinction of natures was not annulled by the union, and the characteristics of each nature were preserved.

The Reformation Confessions

1. Jesus Christ is true God.
2. Jesus Christ is true man.
3. Jesus Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.
4. Jesus Christ is set in his place in salvation-history.
5. In Jesus Christ his two natures are distinct, and yet inseparably joined.
6. In the union of natures in Jesus Christ there is no mixture of natures and no absorption of one nature into the other.
7. Because of the union of natures in Jesus Christ, what is appropriate to one nature is sometimes ascribed to the other (eg. Ac. 20:28; Jn. 3:13; 1 Jn. 3:16).
8. In Jesus Christ God became man to fulfil the three offices of prophet, priest and king.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

EARLY CHRISTOLOGICAL HERESIES

A number of inadequate Christologies were ruled out by the early church.

Two concerns were paramount: (1) the two natures; (2) the unity of Christ's person. Christological heresies tended to exaggerate one of these at the expense of the other.

NESTORIANISM (a schizophrenic Christ)

- exaggerated the two natures to the point of dividing the person of Christ into two.

The other heresies exaggerated the unity of Christ's person to the point of failing to uphold the two natures. This could happen in either of two ways.

ADOPTIONISM (Jesus an exalted man)

- Jesus was just a man; from his baptism the presence of God indwelt him, but he did not have a divine nature.

The other danger was to uphold the divine nature at the cost of losing the human nature.

APOLLINARIANISM (God in a body)

- The divine nature inhabited a human body, but Christ was not fully human: he did not have a human spirit. At best this is a 1½ natures Christology.

DOCETISM (Christ a divine apparition)

- Christ was truly divine, but only seemed to be human; his human experiences were all unreal.

EUTYCHIANISM (Christ the odd bod)

- After the incarnation Christ had only one nature: the humanity was completely swallowed up by the divinity; consequently the humanity ceased to have a distinct reality and the divinity was altered.

MODERN CHRISTOLOGICAL ERRORS

Much modern theology wants to take Christ's human nature as its starting-point. As a result it can end up threatening the completeness and distinctness of the divinity.

1) Degree Christology

Jesus enjoyed to a far greater degree a consciousness of God which is potentially available to any human being. He was not actually divine.

2) Symbolic Christology

The historical life of Jesus is irrelevant, because 'Christ' is merely a symbol of newness of human life which is possible for all human beings. The 'Christ' may be symbolized in other religions too. Jesus was in no sense divine, and his humanity is merely incidental.

3) Presence Christology

Jesus was a man in whom God was present by his Spirit, but he only experienced without measure what his disciples also experience in a measure.

4) Substantial Presence Christology

The incarnation demonstrates the fundamental similarity of the divine and the human and enables man to rediscover the divine spark within. The two natures are so united that it becomes unclear what that essence is.

5) Kenotic Christology

The Son of God emptied himself of those divine attributes which are inconsistent with being a man. The divinity was partially transmuted into humanity

POSTMODERNISM AND CHRISTOLOGY

Postmodernism claims that there is no such thing as absolute truth.

This leads to a denial of the uniqueness of Christ. For postmodernism, he is not divine.

Some Christians have tried to restate Christology in terms which engage with postmodernism.

Gareth Brandt does not reject Chalcedonian orthodoxy, but argues that it is incomplete. He suggests that a Christology for a postmodern generation must be "radically ethical", and Jesus' ethic was nonviolence. The purpose of the incarnation was to show us what God is like and what the divine image in man really means, which is peace in human relationships.

The danger in this approach is that it becomes unimportant whether Jesus Christ was truly divine or not.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

1. The next two doctrines (the Atonement and Salvation) are the real practical application of Christology. As the early creeds said, "for us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven".
2. Because he is truly human, Jesus is the example for us to follow (1 Pet. 2:21-24).
3. Because he is God incarnate, Jesus becomes the model for us to imitate (Philip. 2:3-8).
4. Because he is truly divine, Jesus is worthy of our worship.
5. Because he is the God-man, Jesus Christ is Lord of all, and should be proclaimed to the world as the one to whom every knee should bow.

ATONEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Hebrew word usually translated ‘atonement’ in the English Bible is *kaphar*. In the LXX it is generally translated *exilaskomai*. The NT uses *hilaskomai* and a number of cognates.

It is sometimes suggested that the basic meaning of *kaphar* is ‘cover’ (cf. Gen. 6:14). This seems unlikely: some scholars think that there are two different Hebrew roots both written *kaphar*, and that the root meaning ‘atonement’ has no connection with covering; rather its basic idea has to do with the payment of a price.

To understand what atonement is we need to look at the contexts in which *kaphar* and its cognates are used.

EXEGESIS OF KEY PASSAGES

Old Testament

GENESIS 32:20

This is the first use of *kaphar* vocabulary.

Jacob offers Esau a present to make atonement in the hope that he will be accepted. Esau’s legitimate anger needs to be pacified.

LEVITICUS 1:1-6:7

This is the main OT passage on the principles of atonement. It gives the regulations for the five main types of offering.

The burnt offering is the main one:

- The sinner places his hand on the head of the animal, symbolising his identification with it. The animal experiences the death which the sinner deserves, and the LORD accepts the animal’s death instead of the sinner’s punishment (1:4f).
- The sacrifice is *a sweet aroma to the LORD* (1:9,13,17).
- ‘Sweet’ means soothing or tranquillizing (cf. Gen. 8:21). It is the LORD’s anger which is tranquillized so that punishment is withheld.
- The phrase *sweet aroma* occurs also in connection with the grain offering (2:2,9,12), the peace offering (3:5,16), and the sin offering (4:31).
- The chief recurring feature is that the sacrifices were designed to tranquillize the LORD’s anger.
- The result for the sinner is forgiveness (4:20,26,31,35; 5:10,13,16,18; 6:7).
- Forgiveness means (1) the LORD’s anger is tranquillized; (2) blessing comes; (3) the person’s name is welcomed (see Deut. 29:20).

LEVITICUS 16

The Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:27f).

- Five animals are used.
- A bull and a goat are killed as sin offerings. Two rams are killed as burnt offerings. A second goat is released into the desert as the scapegoat after the people’s sins have been confessed upon it.
- The background to the Day of Atonement: death because of sin (cf. Lev. 10:1f), and the deadliness of the divine presence (v. 1f).

- The purpose of the Day of Atonement: to avert the death threat. Four animals die instead of the people.
- The significance of the Day of Atonement procedures:
 - (1) the sin offering bears the people's guilt (Lev. 10:17) and dies as the people's substitute.
 - (2) the scapegoat – atonement is made on it (v. 10): its disappearance into the desert symbolises the total removal of guilt from God's sight. The two goats as a pair form the one sin offering (v. 5).
 - (3) The sprinkling of blood on the mercy seat (kapporet): this is where the LORD meets and speaks with his people (Ex. 25:22). Before he can do so, atonement is necessary.
 - (4) A secondary significance of atonement is cleansing (vv. 16,19,30). The primary significance is the diverting of God's wrath on to a substitute who pays the price for sin.

LEVITICUS 17:10-14

Released blood “symbolizes a life given up in death”: the life of the victim is sacrificed so that the life of the sinner is preserved.

It is the LORD who makes the gift of an atoning sacrifice.

NUMBERS 16:41-50

Atonement again averts the death-threat resulting from divine anger.

PSALM 78:38

The word translated ‘forgave’ is literally ‘made atonement for’. The LORD’s anger is turned away and the people are not destroyed.

The basis of atonement is the LORD’s compassion. Since this is the LORD’s defining attribute, his anger is turned away repeatedly.

SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES OF ATONEMENT
as taught in the OT:

- 1) Atonement is necessary because sin against the LORD of deadly holiness brings death.
- 2) Atonement is achieved by a substitute who bears the sinner’s guilt and is punished instead of the sinner.
- 3) Atonement involves the payment of a price to ransom one’s life – and the price is blood.
- 4) Atonement tranquillizes the LORD’s anger.
- 5) As a result of atonement deserved punishment is withheld, death is averted and the sinner lives on.
- 6) Because of atonement guilt is totally removed from the sinner as far as God is concerned – sins are forgiven.
- 7) A secondary result of atonement is the cleansing of the sinner’s defiled soul.
- 8) Atonement leads to God’s acceptance, meeting with God, hearing his life-giving word, and every conceivable blessing.
- 9) It is the LORD who provides and secures atonement because of his compassion.

New Testament

1. The *hilaskomai* vocabulary.

ROMANS 3:25

‘Propitiation’ translates *hilasterion*, the regular LXX word for the mercy seat: Jesus Christ is the place where God’s anger is tranquillized, the meeting place between God and man.

1. The blood of Jesus is the price paid in lieu of our death: his death was the substitutionary sacrifice for sin.
2. God himself was at work in the death of Christ.

The sacrificial nature of Christ's death is stressed also in Eph. 5:2. The sin-offering is most likely in view (cf. Isa. 53:10).

1 JOHN 2:2; 4:10

Here 'propitiation' translates *hilasmos* – the means of atonement, the atoning sacrifice.

1. Sins are what make atonement necessary.
2. Jesus did not just offer a sacrifice: he was the sacrifice in his own person (cf. 1:7).
3. The Father sent the Son for this purpose: there is no divide between the Persons of the Trinity.
4. The basis of the Father's initiation of the atoning purpose was love.
5. The outcome of atonement is that we live (cf. 4:9).

HEBREWS 2:17

'Make propitiation' translates *hilaskomai*.

1. Sin is what necessitates an atoning sacrifice: the cross underlines how evil we are.
2. Christology and the doctrine of atonement are linked: the purpose for which the incarnation took place was that atonement might be made.
3. Atonement is first of all directed to God: his anger must be tranquillized.

HEBREWS 8:12

'Merciful' translates *hileos* (literally: *I will be appeased [or propitiated] for their unrighteousness*: the activation of God's mercy is triggered by the atoning sacrifice.

The result of atonement: sins are cast out of God's mind forever.

LUKE 18:13

The tax-collector's prayer is literally '*God be appeased (hilaskomai) towards me*'.

This gives voice to the sinner's consciousness that there is nothing I can do to make up for my sins, and yet the Lord needs to receive satisfaction. If the sinner is to have any hope God must provide atonement.

2. References to the ransom price.

In an article entitled *The New Testament Terminology of Redemption* B.B. Warfield points to the frequency of *lutron* vocabulary in the NT

MATTHEW 20:28/MARK 10:45

Jesus' own life was the price paid to effect our release from sin and guilt: his shed blood was the payment (ransom – *lutron*) which compensates a holy and angered God. He died as our substitute.

1 TIMOTHY 2:6

Here is a deliberate echo of Jesus' words: He gave himself an *antilutron*. The prefix *anti-* implies substitution: Jesus' life replaces ours as the payment for sin.

TITUS 2:14

'Redeem' translates *lutroo*. We have become hopelessly trapped in lawlessness, and need rescuing at a price. Jesus is himself the price.

1 PETER 1:18

“Peter reminds his readers of the cost of redemption [*lutroo*]. The value of redemption is the value of the Person of the Messiah himself” (Edwin Blum): he was holistically pure.

HEBREWS 9:12

Because of the superiority of Christ’s blood the purchased redemption (*lutrosis*) is eternal, and the price is paid once.

TEXTS USING APOLUTROSIS

Warfield describes this compound noun as “the specialty of NT usage”.

The preposition *apo-* draws attention to the deliverance achieved by the payment of the ransom price indicated by *lutrosis*.

i. *Hebrews 9:15*

Christ’s death is the ransom price of redemption. It is the ‘covenant sacrifice’

ii. *Ephesians 1:7,14; Colossians 1:14*

1. The blood of Christ is the ransom price.
2. It was needed to deliver us from the tyranny of evil powers.
3. Forgiveness is ‘the central feature of redemption’.
4. Atonement is a work of the Triune God.

iii. *Romans 3:24*

Jesus Christ was himself the payment for sin.

Verse 25 defines how he was the payment – as the mercy seat where his blood was presented and God’s anger was tranquillized so that he could meet with people in true fellowship.

iv. *Luke 21:28; Romans 8:23; Ephesians 4:30*

These texts speak of the ultimate eschatological effects of the ransom paid by Jesus, including our complete reconstitution as human beings in the image of God.

v. *1 Corinthians 1:30*

Christ crucified became for us the ransom price – and God did it: the NT constantly emphasises God’s initiative in providing atonement.

LUKE 24:21 (*lutroo*); 1:68; 2:38 (*lutrosis*); ACTS 7:35 (*lutrotes*)

Although these texts “stand on the plane of Old Testament dispensation...they doubtless were written down with Calvary read into their heart” (Warfield).

SUMMARY OF TEACHING ON ATONEMENT

from NT passages using *hilaskomai* and *lutron* vocabulary:

- 1) The background to atonement is the guilt of sin to which we are hopelessly enslaved, and which has disrupted our relationship with God.
- 2) The focal point of atonement is Jesus: he is the mercy seat where God’s anger towards us is tranquillized.
- 3) On the cross Jesus sacrificed himself as a sin-offering.
- 4) Jesus’ shed blood was the price of compensation to God in place of the sinner’s death, the offering which appeased God’s anger.

- 5) Jesus' death was therefore substitutionary: he died instead of us.
- 6) The atonement Christ achieved was once-for-all: it needs no repetition.
- 7) Jesus was qualified to achieve atonement because his life was morally perfect.
- 8) It was God himself in love, mercy and grace, who provided atonement in his Son.
- 9) The outcomes of Christ's atonement include forgiveness, eternal life, the privilege of service and the eventual complete reconstruction of human being.

3. Other relevant NT passages

1. *The Passion Narratives*

i) THE LAST SUPPER

Jesus tells that his life is to be sacrificed for others (Lk. 22:19). His blood seals the new covenant, of which remission of sins is the defining feature (Matt. 26:28; Mk. 14:24; Lk. 22:20).

This is a Passover meal: Jesus fulfils the significance of the Passover lamb (cf. 1 Cor. 5:7), which died in place of the firstborn.

ii) GETHSEMANE

The imagery of the cup (Matt. 26:39,42; Mk. 14:36; Lk. 22:42; cf. Jn. 18:11) symbolizes God's wrath and its consequences (eg. Ps. 75:8; Isa. 51:17; Jer. 25:15-17,27-29; 49:12f; Hab. 2:16; Rev. 14:10; 16:19). Jesus endured that wrath.

iii) THE TRIAL

Jesus' innocence is stressed (Matt. 27:4,19,24; Mk. 15:14; Lk. 23:4,14,15,22,41; Jn. 18:38; 19:4,6). He is qualified to be the Lamb of God.

iv) THE CROSS

The Son is abandoned by the Father as he becomes the embodiment of the world's evil (Matt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34).

v) THE VEIL

The tearing of the veil (Lk. 23:45) from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51; Mk. 15:38) declares that God may meet people safely because his anger is tranquillized.

2. *The Epistles and Revelation*

1) **The need for atonement** (Rom. 5:6,8,10; Rom. 8:3; 1 Pet. 3:18; Rom. 4:25).

2) **Atonement as a purchase price** (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; 2 Pet. 2:1; Rev. 5:9; 14:3; Gal. 3:13; 4:5).

3) **The sacrificial nature of atonement.**

- i. *the frequent references to Jesus' blood* (Rom. 5:9; 1 Pet. 1:2; Col. 1:20; Heb. 9:12,14).
- ii. *The explicit use of the language of sacrifice* (1 Cor. 5:7; Eph. 5:2; Heb. 7:27; 9:14,26,28; 10:10,12,14)
- iii. *The description of Jesus as the Lamb* (28 times in Revelation from 5:6).
- iv. *Hebrews' portrayal of Jesus as our High Priest* (12 times from 2:17 + a further 7 times just 'priest').
- v. *His blood secures our cleansing* (1 Jn. 1:7; Heb. 1:3; Rev. 1:5)

4) **The substitutionary nature of the atonement**

- i. *The preposition **hyper**.*

- a) with reference to persons (*for us* [Rom. 5:8; cf. Gal. 2:20; Rom. 5:6; 2 Cor. 5:14f; Eph. 5:25; Heb. 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:18]). He died on our behalf – so we do not have to.
 - b) with reference to sins (1 Cor. 15:3; Gal. 1:4; Heb. 10:12). He died in our place because of our sins
 - ii. *The condemnation our sins deserve came to Christ* (Rom. 8:3; Col. 2:14).
 - iii. *He bore our sins* (Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 2:24), which means that he bore their penalty (cf. Num. 14:34; Ezek. 18:20) as our substitute.
 - iv. *He was made sin* (2 Cor. 5:21). Some understand this to mean that Christ was made a sin-offering (echoing Isa. 53:10). However, it may mean more: Christ became the personification of evil.
- 5) **The unity of the Godhead in providing atonement**
- i. *God was in Christ* (2 Cor. 5:19). God himself is the reconciler.
 - ii. *God delivered Jesus up* (Rom. 8:32; cf. 4:25), *but Jesus delivered up himself* (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:2,25).
 - iii. *The cross demonstrates God's love* (Rom. 5:8; cf. Gal. 1:4)

FORMULATION OF DOCTRINE

The Early Creeds

Although the doctrine of the atonement is not addressed as such in the creeds, there are five pointers towards it:

1. The Creeds jump from Jesus' birth to his death.
2. The Creeds pile up terms to portray the fact of Christ's death.
3. The Creeds are clear that the real purpose of the incarnation was a saving purpose.
4. The Creeds teach Jesus' descent into hell. (Calvin understood this to have taken place on the cross).
5. The Creeds mention Christ's resurrection, ascension, and present position at the Father's right hand.

The Reformation Confessions

1. The three main themes

- 1) The atonement as a sacrifice.
- 2) The atonement as a substitution.
- 3) The atonement as a satisfaction.
This term originated with Anselm of Canterbury in 1098: he understood that Christ, as a member of the human family, offered the infinite payment needed to satisfy God's offended honour.

2. Two further emphases

- 1) The suffering of Jesus was both physical and spiritual.
- 2) The basis of the atonement was divine mercy.

3. Two comments

- 1) The descent into hell.
The Heidelberg Catechism reads this phrase as a summary of the truths of substitution and exchange.
- 2) The reality of the resurrection.
The Confessions see the resurrection as God's declaration that Christ's death has in fact achieved satisfaction. The Second Helvetic Confession recognizes that this statement only makes sense if Jesus truly did rise from the dead (cf. 1 Cor. 15:17).

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

1) The extent of the atonement

THE ARMINIAN VIEW: Christ died for everyone to make salvation possible; salvation becomes actual through faith.

THE REFORMED VIEW: Christ died for the elect to make their salvation actual; through faith this actual salvation is applied.

THE ISSUE: what was God's purpose?

- was it to put a potential salvation on offer?
- or was it to save his people from their sins?

IN OTHER WORDS: has Christ's atonement tranquillized God's anger against every single human being, or only against those whom the Holy Spirit leads to trust in the work of Christ?

THE CHOICE FOR THE ARMINIAN:

1> Christ died for everyone so God is not angry with anyone, so everyone will be saved.

OR

2> Christ died for everyone so God is not angry with anyone, but still punishes some anyway.

THE SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE for the doctrine that the atonement was particular and definite rather than universal and indefinite in its intent:

1. The particularistic vocabulary of Scripture (Matt. 1:21; 20:28; 26:28; Jn. 10:11,15; Ac. 20:28; Eph. 5:25; Isa. 53:8,11f).
2. The way the Bible speaks of atonement makes it necessarily particular rather than universal.

A sacrificial death (1 Cor. 5:7) is necessarily substitutionary. The four prepositions used indicate substitution (*peri* [eg. 1 Pet. 3:18]; *hyper* [eg. Rom. 5:6]; *dia* [eg. 1 Cor. 8:11]; *anti* [eg. Mk. 10:45]).

Substitution means that Christ paid the penalty for others: everyone for whom he died is necessarily discharged from guilt. God cannot be unjust and inflict punishment twice for the same sins, nor can he punish those whom he sees as not guilty.

Consequently, universal atonement must logically lead to universal salvation.

If we deny universal salvation, we must affirm particular atonement.

HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND THOSE SCRIPTURES WHICH SEEM TO TEACH UNIVERSAL ATONEMENT?

ROMANS 8:32

The word 'us' limits the word 'all': the surrounding verses define the group in view.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:14-15

The context shows that 'all' means every one of his saved people.

1 TIMOTHY 2:6

The emphasis here is on the exclusive nature of the ransom for every human group.

HEBREWS 2:9

This verse is concerned with the uniqueness of Christ: all must go to him for salvation. There is nowhere else to go.

JOHN 3:16

This verse certainly teaches a universal love of God, but it says nothing about whether the atonement was universal in design. Indeed, the implication of 'whoever believes' is that there is a limitation. So a particular atonement is one (the greatest) manifestation of a universal love.

1 JOHN 2:2

'World' here may mean the entire created order. Notice that the words *the sins of* are in italics: they are not part of the original text. One effect of Christ's atonement was the preservation of the fabric of the universe.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:19

The definite article is not present in the original: *God was in Christ reconciling a world to himself*. This raises the question, Which world? The answer is the world of his elect people.

TWO FINAL COMMENTS

- 1) The term sometimes used for the Reformed view (particular and definite atonement) is 'limited atonement'. G.I. Williamson points out that in fact it is the Arminians who limit the atonement: they reduce it from the event that saves a people to an event which makes the salvation of people possible.
- 2) The term 'limited atonement' is unfortunate in that it can give the impression that the reformed view believes that God's elect is a very limited group in comparison to the human race as a whole. However, Reformed Christians have not always believed that. Both Jonathan Edwards and Charles Hodge believed that God's elect includes the vast majority of the human race.

2) The current penal substitution debate

In 2003 Steve Chalke and Alan Mann published *The Lost Message of Jesus*.

They described the penal substitutionary doctrine of the atonement as "a form of cosmic child abuse – a vengeful Father punishing his Son for an offence he hasn't even committed".

They offer this alternative account of the atonement:

"On the cross [Jesus] absorbed all the pain, all the suffering, caused by the breakdown in our relationship with God and in so doing demonstrated the lengths to which a God who is love will go to restore it".

In 2004 Steve Chalke published a follow-up article entitled *Crosspurposes*.

He makes the following claims:

- 1) Atonement is a multifaceted concept.
- 2) Any substitutionary element which there may be in atonement is not penal.

Chalke says that the idea that God is angry and is appeased only by the violent death of His Son is unbiblical, divides the Godhead, and was formulated only in the nineteenth century.

- 3) The picture of God underlying penal substitution is basically wrathful and retributive.

Chalke finds this in contradiction to Jesus' portrait of God in the parable of the prodigal son.

- 4) Penal substitution makes God a hypocrite.

Jesus tells us not to be angry and to love our enemies, and yet he burns with wrath and will not love without appeasement.

- 5) Penal substitution makes all but the last weekend of Jesus' life unnecessary.
- 6) Chalke replaces the doctrine of substitution with the theory of absorption.

From July 6th – 8th 2005 the British Evangelical Alliance held a Symposium on the Atonement in London. One of the best presentations in defence of penal substitution came from Dr. Garry Williams of Oak Hill Theological College, London. He made the following points:

1) Penal substitution does not turn God into a hypocrite.

There are certain things which God does which we should not do because we are not God (eg. Rom. 12:19).

2) So to emphasize *God is love* that we find no place for holiness, justice, wrath and retribution is very obviously to present a lop-sided and unbiblical picture of God.

3) It is not true that penal substitution divides the Persons of the Trinity.

- i. Jesus was the willing object of the Father's punishing.
- ii. The Father was the willing object of Jesus' appeasing.

To deny the possibility of the Persons of the Trinity acting upon each other is close to unitarianism.

4) The Father's role in punishing the Son is clearly taught in both Testaments (Isa. 53:6; Rom. 8:3).

5) Chalke is incorrect about the origins of the doctrine of penal substitution.

In the early church the doctrine was articulated in terms of the union of Christ as the head with his members as the body.

6) The life of Jesus is not irrelevant to penal substitution.

As the true Israel Jesus suffers exile (Israel's punishment). His life therefore embodies the pattern of penal substitution.

7) The allegation of child abuse is inept on two counts.

- i. it overlooks the fact that Jesus was a mature adult who willed to co-operate with the Father's will.
- ii. the term is borrowed from feminist criticism of Christianity which is ultimately and intentionally atheistic.

8) There are other models of atonement in Scripture in addition to penal substitution, but it is the explanatory power of penal substitution which makes all the other models coherent.

3) Historic non-penal theories of the atonement

In a booklet written in 1973 entitled *What did the cross achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution* Jim Packer has made a threefold categorization of atonement theories.

- 1) Theories which teach that the cross has an effect entirely on human beings.
- 2) Theories which teach that the cross has its effect primarily on hostile spiritual forces outside us by which we are enslaved.
- 3) The theory which teaches that the cross has its effect first of all on God (penal substitution): on the cross Christ offered God satisfaction, God thus propitiated himself, and his rejection of us was turned to acceptance.

Packer then makes the point that what the first two categories say is correct, but neither is complete in itself: it is the Godward aspect of the third category which makes sense of the other two.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- 1. Seek to understand the principles of atonement better.
- 2. Remember that the doctrine of the atonement is foundational, and foundations need to be right.
- 3. Check that your picture of God is correct.
- 4. Rejoice in the security of the sinner for whom Christ has taken the place of substitute under punishment.
- 5. Identify with Jesus as your only access to God.

6. Meet with God.
7. Preach the gospel to everyone so that all for whom Christ died may be gathered to him.
8. Maintain the vision of a world in which grace abounds more than sin, and pursue the conversion of millions in prayer and evangelism.
9. Do not lose your love and gratitude to the God whose love has secured propitiation.

SALVATION

We look at 7 of the major themes of personal salvation.

1. Justification

EXEGESIS OF KEY PASSAGES

Old Testament

- 1) *The big question*: is there such a thing as human righteousness? (Job 4:17; 9:2; 15:14; 25:4)
- 2) *The answer*:

Genesis 15:6

Abraham – the paradigm of justifying faith: the LORD accepts faith as equivalent to righteousness.

Habakkuk 2:4

The LXX reads: *the just shall live by my faith*. Righteousness is tied to the LORD's reliability.

Isaiah 53:11

This life-securing righteousness is provided by God through his righteous Servant.

New Testament

ROMANS

- 1:17** – the righteousness of God is a righteousness which God confers so that a person can enjoy true life.
- 1:32; 2:5; 3:4-5** – God's righteous judgment looks for righteousness in a person; where it is absent there is death and wrath.
- 2:13,26** – eschatological justification results from doing the law. This is only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- 3:10** – no one in the world is righteous.
- 3:20** – no one will ever be justified by keeping the law.
- 3:21** – there is a righteousness which God confers in which keeping the law has no place.
- 3:22** – it is obtained by the faith of Jesus Christ: we are justified because Jesus lived the life of faith, and our believing joins us to him.
- 3:24** – justification comes to us freely because of his faithful obedience unto death.
- 3:25-26** – God's righteousness is not compromised by giving righteousness freely to unrighteous people, because his justice was satisfied by Christ's blood.
- 3:28,30** – the faith of Jesus Christ is the only thing which secures righteousness for anybody in the world.
- 4:2-3** – Abraham was accounted righteous because he was persuaded of the reliability of God's word.
- 4:5** – God provides righteousness for the ungodly by accounting to them the faith of Jesus Christ.
- 4:6** – the justified person is blessed with forgiveness.
- 4:9,11,13** – justifying grace is universally available.
- 4:22-23** – to believe is to entrust oneself to the faithfulness of God, which has now been lived out by Christ.
- 4:25** – Christ's resurrection verified that his life and death were our justification.
- 5:1** – the result of justification is peace with God.
- 5:9** – the just life of Jesus had to be sacrificed for our justification.
- 5:16-17** – justification is a gift of grace.

- 5:18-19** – the righteousness which is accounted to the believer is Jesus' faithful obedience to his Father.
5:21- God's grace accounts to us Jesus' righteous life of faith, and so we receive life.
6:7 – in justification God discharges us from guilt.
6:13,16,18-20; 8:4 –*righteousness* here is a moral term: these verses are irrelevant to the issue of justification.
7:12 – the righteous law is what defined the life of Jesus.
8:10 – justification is the basis for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
8:30 – justification is set in the chain of events leading from eternity to eternity.
8:33 – to be justified is to be unchargeable.
9:30-31 – righteousness by pursuit of the law is unattainable, whereas righteousness based on faith is attainable.
10:3 – to try to establish righteousness on the basis of works of the law is a tragic error.
10:4-5 – *the goal of the law was Christ-for-righteousness for all believers*. Christ is the only one who attained life by doing the works of the law, and believers receive his righteousness.
10:6,10 – the noun *faith* refers to Christ's faithfulness; the verb *believe* describes the way his righteousness is received.

GALATIANS

- 2:16** – we do not obtain God's verdict of approval by works of law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ which becomes ours through believing on him.
2:17 – since we are sinners only Christ can secure God's approval for us.
2:21 – the idea of righteousness through the law makes the cross pointless.
3:6,8 – Abraham is the model of justification for the whole world: it is in the faithfulness of Abraham's seed, Jesus Christ, that righteousness is obtained.
3:21,24 – the law was never intended by God to be life-giving: it's purpose was to lead the Jews to Christ to be justified by his faith.
5:4 – any attempt to be justified in the law makes Christ's righteous life an irrelevance.
5:5 – the verdict of acquittal at the final judgment is anticipated when we entrust ourselves to the faith of Jesus Christ.

SUMMARY OF THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- 1) The absence of righteousness in a human being results in wrath, condemnation, and death.
- 2) No one in the world has achieved the righteousness defined by God's law.
- 3) In justification God confers righteousness on a sinner to render that sinner acceptable to him, so that the sinner will not perish on the day of God's righteous judgment.
- 4) Justification is an act of sheer grace.
- 5) Justification is based in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ expressed in his life of righteousness and his redeeming death.
- 6) Justification is the accounting to us as our righteousness of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.
- 7) We receive justification through entrusting ourselves to Jesus Christ.
- 8) God acts justly when he justifies the ungodly because his justice has been satisfied in the cross of Christ.
- 9) Justification leads to forgiveness, peace with God, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and eternal life.
- 10) Justification is universally available.

FORMULATION OF DOCTRINE

The Early Creeds

I believe in... the forgiveness of sins.

- the cancellation of past trespasses;
- release from the burden of sin.

The Reformation Confessions

- 1) The definition of justification: God accepts and accounts the pardoned sinner as righteous.
- 2) Justification entails the pardon of sin.
- 3) Justification comes to us freely, based on Christ's sacrifice.
- 4) Justification glorifies God's justice as well as his mercy.
- 5) Justification means the imputation of Christ's righteousness.
- 6) Christ's righteousness is embraced by faith alone.
 1. Justification is apart from works.
 2. Faith is the personal appropriation of God's promises.
 3. Only 'true faith' will justify.
 4. It is not faith itself which justifies but Christ whom we embrace by faith.
- 7) The justification of the elect was decreed in eternity, but is not actual until the Holy Spirit applies Christ to them.
- 8) The results of justification include confidence, peace and eternal life.
- 9) Justification is the same in both Old and New Testaments.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Justification and the 'New Perspective' on Paul
with reference to **Tom Wright** (Bishop of Durham).

In my judgment some of the new insights which have emerged can be incorporated without throwing out the traditional understanding of justification.

Wright defines justification as *the declaration by the judge that a party is in the right*.

Justification presupposes: (1) the sin of Adam and its universal consequences; (2) the covenant of grace.

How justification is achieved:

STAGE 1: the promise to Abraham of a world set to rights by the creation of a single worldwide family.

STAGE 2: the calling of Israel as a light to the nations.

God is righteous (faithful to the covenant):-

- 1) he is determined to restore the cosmos.
- 2) he is resolved to create a worldwide family.
- 3) his commitment to work through Israel is unbreakable.

JESUS is (1) the true Israel; (2) the revelation of God's covenant faithfulness. In him the single worldwide family is established.

That family will be vindicated at the final judgment, and is identified in the present time by their faith in the God who raised Jesus from the dead. It is this membership of the covenant family which is justification. Their justification is by free grace, because they were guilty, defenceless sinners. Their faith is evidence of the work of the Spirit.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

1. Be aware of – and preach – our natural unrighteousness and helplessness.
2. Rejoice in – and proclaim – God's gracious imputation of a righteousness thoroughly acceptable to himself.

3. Be grateful to Jesus whose faithful life is the basis of our justification.
4. Remember that true faith is the conscious entrusting of oneself to Jesus.
5. Beware of slipping back into a works-religion approach to maintain a righteous standing.
6. Avoid driving a wedge between the Testaments and losing the sense of unity in God's saving plan.

2. Regeneration

- which makes justifying faith possible.

EXEGESIS OF KEY PASSAGES

Old Testament

The OT looks forward to the era of the new covenant with promises of:

- the circumcision of the heart (*Deuteronomy 30:6*).
- the inscription of the law on the mind and heart (*Jeremiah 31:33-34*).
- a united heart to fear the LORD (*Jeremiah 32:39-40*).
- a new spirit and a heart of flesh (*Ezekiel 11:19-20*).
- the indwelling of God's Spirit (*Ezekiel 36:26-27*).

New Testament

John 1:13

Being born of God is a work which is entirely of God: there is no human contribution at all.

John 3:3-8

1. Being born again is a must (vv.3,5,7)
2. Being born again makes you as totally different from your pre-conversion state as if you did not exist then.
3. Being born again is the work of the Spirit (vv. 5,6).
4. Being born again is a marvel (v. 4), and yet is not to be marvelled at (v. 7)!
5. Being born again by God's Spirit is not something which we can control (v. 8).

Titus 3:5-7

Regeneration is the work of the Spirit which leads on to justification.

James 1:18

The instrument of rebirth is the word of truth.

1 Peter 1:3,23

1. For us to be born again is God's work.
2. The basis of regeneration is God's mercy.
3. The means of regeneration is God's word.

1 John

The phrase *born of God/him* occurs 9 times (2:29; 3:9[x2]; 4:7; 5:1[x2],4,18[x2]). John is pointing to evidences that regeneration has taken place: practical righteousness, love, believing that Jesus is the Christ, overcoming the world.

FORMULATION OF DOCTRINE

The Reformation Confessions

- 1) Why regeneration is necessary: by nature we are dead in sin.
- 2) How regeneration is defined: it involves enlightenment, the gift of a new heart and spirit, the renewal of the will, and new life.
- 3) The agent of regeneration: God alone.
- 4) The means of regeneration: the gospel call by word and Spirit.
- 5) Regeneration and human nature: we are passive at the moment of rebirth, but immediately we actively believe and repent.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

In recent times a man-centred approach to regeneration has come in.

George Cover: *How can a person be born again?*

(1) Choose to be born again. (2) Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. (3) Receive him. (4) Repent. “These four steps will result in the new birth.”

Sometimes regeneration is put across as the result of praying ‘the sinner’s prayer’.

This approach stems from the teaching of **Charles Finney**. He saw regeneration as the result of voluntary action on the part of the sinner.

In response to this approach, **Charles Haddon Spurgeon** insisted:

1. regeneration is hidden;
2. regeneration is instantaneous and once-for-all;
3. the time of regeneration belongs to God;
4. regeneration is known by its effects – and 2 invariable effects are repentance and faith.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

1. Rejoice in the goodness of God in giving you new life and making it possible for you to believe.
2. Since it is his word which God generally uses to bring regeneration, preach that word zealously so that others may be born again.
3. Since regeneration is beyond human power, pray in faith that the Holy Spirit will do what only he can do.

3. Adoption

EXEGESIS OF KEY PASSAGES

Old Testament

Several texts point to the LORD’s adoption of Israel, though without using that actual word (*Exodus 4:22; 6:7; Jeremiah 31:9,20; Hosea 11:1*).

- 1) The LORD’s adoption of Israel was entirely of God’s gracious initiative.
- 2) The adoption of Israel brought her into covenant relationship with the LORD who is unfailingly faithful.
- 3) The adoption of Israel conferred value and dignity upon her.
- 4) The LORD’s adoption of Israel was rooted in his love.

New Testament

Israel's adoption is mentioned (*Romans 9:4*).

The adoption of believers:

John 1:12

It is necessary to become a child of God – it is not natural.

Romans 8:15

Our adoption is the work of the Holy Spirit. Adoption is a term which relates to legal standing.

Romans 8:23

The 'adoption' metaphor is now used of our completed salvation which includes the total renovation of our bodily life.

Galatians 4:5

For Jewish believers adoption meant deliverance from the law's guidance into mature adulthood in Christ.

Ephesians 1:5

Believers were predestined to adoption. It is achieved through Jesus Christ, stems from God's benevolence and brings him pleasure.

Revelation 21:7

Overcomers inherit all things, and our adoption is the basis for the right of inheritance.

FORMULATION OF DOCTRINE

The Reformation Confessions

BAPTIST CONFESSION OF 1644

- 1) Adoption is based on the unity of believers with the Triune God.
- 2) Adoption leads to heirloom.

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION

- 1) Adoption is linked with justification.
- 2) Adoption is in and for Christ.
- 3) Adoption is entirely by grace.
- 4) Adoption makes us God's children.
- 5) In adoption God puts his name upon his people.
- 6) Adoption gives us access with boldness to the throne of grace.
- 7) Adoption leads to an assurance of God's Fatherhood.
- 8) As adopted sons we are destined to inherit God's promises.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Dr. **Tim Trumper** calls adoption "the forgotten facet of the jewel of soteriology". He notes that adoption language is unique to Paul in the NT, and that the idea of the metaphor is a new status accompanied by freedom from slavery.

Trumper refers to **James Scott**, who finds the background to Paul's use of adoption language in 2 Samuel 7:14. For Paul adoption is the means of entry into divine sonship.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

1. Appreciate the high privilege of your status as sons of the living God.
2. Worship such a God who chooses us as his own, despite our undeserving.
3. Rejoice in your security: a loving Father will not disown his sons.
4. Preach this privilege to other believers for their joy and comfort.
5. Invite unbelievers to Christ, in whom they may become God's children.

4. Sanctification

The term 'sanctification' can be understood in 2 ways:

1. definitive/positional sanctification:
 - we are set apart for God.
2. progressive sanctification:
 - gradual growth in grace and holiness.

Our concern is with the second aspect.

EXEGESIS OF KEY PASSAGES

Old Testament

Leviticus 11:44-45; 9:2; 20:26

As a redeemed people Israel was called to be a nation in the middle of the world reflecting the holiness of the LORD.

Leviticus 20:7-8

The LORD sanctifies his people, and his people must sanctify themselves. Transforming grace confers new power.

Numbers 15:40

Holiness is defined by the LORD's commandments.

New Testament

Leviticus' challenge to holiness that reflects God's character is quoted by Peter (*1 Peter 1:16*) and alluded to by Jesus (*Matthew 5:48*).

John 17:17: the instrument of sanctification is God's word.

Romans 6:1-19

Verses 1 & 15 raise questions which arise naturally in the light of the truth of justification apart from works of the law.

The passage falls into two balanced parts: each states two spiritual truths followed by an exhortation.

PART 1 (vv. 1-12)

First Truth: we are dead to sin.

Second Truth: we walk in newness of life.

Exhortation: reckon, count on these truths; work out what it means and live accordingly.

PART 2 (vv. 13-19)

First Truth: we have been set free from sin.

Second Truth: we have become slaves of righteousness.

Exhortation: present your members, put them at the disposal not of sin, but of God.

2 Corinthians 7:1

Holiness is based on adoption: we must live in a way that is fitting for God's sons and daughters. This includes separation from filth. As yet our holiness is imperfect, but we have a responsibility to grow in holiness.

Ephesians 1:4: holiness is the purpose of our election.

Ephesians 4:17-6:9

The word 'holiness' comes in 4:24, but the whole passage defines holiness in principle and in practice, with reasons.

The Principles (4:17-24)

1. Holiness involves separation from the surrounding evil environment (vv. 17-19).
2. Holiness is what Christian discipleship means (vv. 20-21).
3. Holiness involves a complete break with your own sinful past (v. 22).
4. Holiness is promoted by a change of thinking and thought-processes (v.23).
5. Holiness involves a deliberate commitment to living the new life exemplified by Christ (v. 24).

The Practice (4:25-6:9)

Holiness is to be expressed in truthfulness, self-control, generosity, pleasant talk, kindness, sexual purity, verbal purity, contentment, time management, temperance, Biblical worship, gratitude, relationships.

The Reasons

These include:

- the interrelationship of believers (4:25)
- the need to guard against the devil's incursions (4:27)
- the work of the Holy Spirit within (4:30; 5:9,18)
- the imitation of Christ (4:32; 5:2,25)
- obedience to God (5:1; 6:6)
- sanctification is an indispensable part of salvation (5:5-7)
- separation from evil (5:11)

1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:7

1. Holiness is progressive.
2. Holiness is defined by God's commandments.
3. The chief expression of holiness in a world of uncleanness is abstinence from sexual immorality.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

When the Lord returns we shall be entirely sanctified throughout our entire being.

2 Thessalonians 2:13

1. Sanctification is God's original purpose for us.
2. The agent of our sanctification is the Holy Spirit.
3. The means of sanctification is belief of the truth.
4. Sanctification is the route to final salvation.

Hebrews 12:10-11,14

1. Holiness is absolutely essential to salvation
2. Holiness is something which we must pursue
3. Holiness is linked with peaceful relationships with others

FORMULATION OF DOCTRINE

The Reformation Confessions

- 1) Sanctification is essential in the believer: the doctrine of justification by faith alone does not mean that good works are unnecessary after conversion.
- 2) Holy living is inevitable in a true believer: renewal by the Holy Spirit is part of salvation.
- 3) Sanctification is real and personal.
- 4) Sanctification proceeds by battle.
- 5) Holiness is defined by God's moral law.
- 6) Although our obedience has no saving merit, God does reward it as a gift of grace.
- 7) The motives for sanctification: thankfulness, the glory of God, joy, witness.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Perfectionism

1) *John Wesley*

- 'perfect love'
- love purifies the heart from sin
- wrought in the soul by an act of faith instantaneously

2) *Charles Finney*

- 'entire sanctification'
- that state of devotedness to God required by the moral law
- law cannot require more than man has the ability to do

3) *The 'Keswick' teaching*

- a decisive anointing by the Holy Spirit as the impetus for sanctification
- a new counteractive power to overcome sin
- "holiness by faith in Jesus, not by effort of my own"

B.B. Warfield's critique of the 'higher life movement'

- 1) Perfectionism tends to divide salvation
- 2) Perfectionism divides Christ
- 3) Perfectionism makes the human will the decisive factor in salvation
- 4) Perfectionism has a reduced understanding of what God accomplishes in saving a sinner
- 5) Perfectionism has an inadequate concept of sin
- 6) Perfectionism is driven by impatience

2. The Law in the Life of the Believer

1) *The threefold division of the Law*

- this has been questioned recently; it is often alleged that the term 'moral law' originated in the Middle Ages
- however, the term can be traced back at least as far as Augustine; the threefold division is also recognised by Jewish interpreters
- it is impossible to carry through the rejection of the distinctions consistently
- the threefold division is Biblical: 1 Sam. 15:22; Hos. 6:6; Prov. 21:3; 1 Cor. 7:19; Rom. 2:25-27; etc.

2) *The moral law as the believer's rule of life*

Some have denied that Christians need the moral law as summarized in the ten commandments.

- 1) NEW COVENANT THEOLOGY sees the ten commandments as the foundation document of the old covenant given to Israel alone and only for a particular historical epoch. God's will for the new covenant believer is revealed in the New Testament.
- 2) DOCTRINAL ANTINOMIANISM believes that the Christian is sanctified by the Holy Spirit working directly without the instrumentality of the law.

However, the NT sees the law as the vital instrument of the Spirit in our sanctification (Matt. 5:17-20; Rom. 2:13-15,26-27; 3:27; 8:2,4,7; Heb. 8:10; 10:16; Jas. 2:8; 2 Jn. 6; Rev. 12:17; 14:12; 22:14).

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

1. Make sure that becoming holy is your great aim.
2. Remember that holiness is mainly about relationships.
3. Ponder and preach the 10 commandments.
4. Avoid legalism, which imposes rules not given by God.
5. Be men of the word, the chief means of grace.
6. Work out holiness in detail, not just in general.
7. Be constantly working at making progress in holiness.
8. Avoid any contaminating influences.
9. Take particular care in the area of sexual purity.
10. Don't expect to get to heaven without fighting the good fight.
11. Meditate deeply on God's grace in Christ – it is the most powerful incentive for holy living.

5. Perseverance

Can a true Christian lose his salvation?

EXEGESIS OF KEY PASSAGES

Old Testament

The LORD's promises to be faithful to Israel may be applied to the Christian life (*Deuteronomy 7:9; Isaiah 49:15-16; Jeremiah 31:3*).

New Testament

John 10:28-29

1. Jesus' gift to his sheep is life which is eternal.
2. Jesus' sheep are his Father's gift to him.
3. Jesus states categorically that they shall never perish.
4. It is impossible for them to be snatched out of the hands of Christ or the Father.

1 Corinthians 1:8-9; Philippians 1:6

Our preservation is connected with God's faithfulness.

1 Peter 1:5

Kept by the power of God, we persevere in faith.

Matthew 24:13

Endurance to the end is a 'condition' of final salvation.

FORMULATION OF DOCTRINE**The Reformation Confessions**

- 1) Believers certainly persevere to the end.
- 2) It is the power of God which enables the believer to persevere.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT**1. Perseverance and the Synod of Dort**

The Arminians acknowledged that no one could pluck the believer out of God's hands, but raised the question whether a negligent believer might remove himself.

The reply by the Canons of Dort:

- 1) Perseverance in one's own strength is impossible.
- 2) God preserves his people to the end.
- 3) A negligent believer may fall into sin and lose his joy.
- 4) However, God never permits his children to perish.
- 5) God renews the negligent believer to repentance.
- 6) Preservation in grace is by God's mercy.
- 7) The believer may have assurance of salvation.

2. The 'Christians-can-fall-away' passages

It has been claimed that the following Scriptures deny the certainty of final perseverance: Matt. 24:10,12; Rom. 14:15; 1 Cor. 8:11; 1 Tim. 1:19; 4:1; 2 Tim. 4:10; Heb. 6:4-6; 2 Pet. 2:20-22.

Robert Reymond offers 2 possible explanations:

1. They teach 'temporary faith'
2. Warnings are the means of preservation.

On Heb. 6 R.T. Kendall and G.H. Lang both suggest that the issue is not loss of salvation but loss of reward.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

1. Be confident that God's power will keep you to the end.
2. Preach this encouragement to your people.
3. Praise God for his unfailing reliability.
4. Keep on, and be prayerful and watchful.

6. Glorification**EXEGESIS OF KEY PASSAGES**

Old Testament

Psalm 73:24 asserts that glory lies beyond this life.

New Testament

A selective look at NT texts on this theme: *Romans 2:7,10; 3:23; 5:2; 8:17-30; 1 Corinthians 15:43; 2 Corinthians 4:17; Ephesians 5:27; Philippians 3:21; Colossians 1:27; 3:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 5:1,4,10*

SUMMARY OF THE BIBLE'S TEACHING

- 1) Glorification means the restoration of man's original glory as the image of God.
- 2) Glorification is the fullness of eternal life, including resurrection of the body, freedom from corruption, and moral renewal.
- 3) Our glorification is to share in God's glory revealed in Christ and to be conformed to Christ's resurrection life.
- 4) The weight of future glory will be proportionate to present suffering.
- 5) The whole creation will share in the ultimate glory.
- 6) Through the indwelling Christ we have a foretaste now of the glory to come, and this hope is the stimulus for our joy.

FORMULATION OF DOCTRINE

The Reformation Confessions

THE CANONS OF DORT define glory as reigning with the Lamb in heaven.

THE WESTMINSTER LARGER CATECHISM emphasizes that our glory is to participate in Christ's glory.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Professor **John Murray** stressed 2 things about glorification:

1. the chief end of our glorification is God's glory;
2. our glorification is the final stage of the glorification of Christ.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

1. Make sure that the glory of God in the glorification of Christ is the chief motive for everything you do.
2. Rejoice in the hope of glory and cultivate the foretaste in relationship with Christ.
3. Hold before your people the hope of glory.
4. Don't let affliction drag you down into misery.
5. Strive after glory by striving after holiness.

7. Election

- the starting-point for the whole process of salvation.

EXEGESIS OF KEY PASSAGES

Old Testament

Two themes: I. The election of Israel.

II. The Messiah as the true Elect one.

Deuteronomy 4:37-40; 7:6-8; 10:14-15; 14:2

- 1) The basis of God's election of Israel is love.
- 2) This love of God is entirely self-motivated.
- 3) God's electing love is tied up with covenant faithfulness.
- 4) The results of election:
 1. deliverance from bondage.
 2. a holy people.
- 5) The proper response to election is obedience.

Isaiah 14:1

- 1) Election is defined as having mercy.
- 2) God's election of Israel is irrevocable and irreversible.
- 3) Election is the ground of Israel's security.

Isaiah 41-49

1. Israel as God's elect

(41:8-10; 43:10,20-21; 44:1-2; 45:4)

- 1) Israel's election was rooted in the covenant.
- 2) Israel was chosen despite her demerit.
- 3) Israel's election is irreversible.
- 4) Israel's election was to "intelligent faith".
- 5) God's providence is ordered for the sake of his elect.
- 6) Election entails responsibility: praise and service.
- 7) The results of election are God's presence and aid.

2. The Messiah as God's Elect (42:1; 49:7)

- 1) As God's chosen and the object of divine pleasure the Messiah receives support from the filling of the Spirit.
- 2) As God's chosen the Messiah is finally vindicated.

Isaiah 65:9,15,22

- 1) God's elect are indestructible.
- 2) God's elect are a thrill to him.
- 3) The results of election: inheritance, name, joy.

New Testament

1. The Election of Israel (Romans 9-11)

The Jews failed to recognize Jesus as Messiah: has God's promise failed?

There is a distinction between the children of flesh and the children of promise: God's choice is not based on works.

Is God unfair? No, because he deals in mercy. The hardening of Israel has led to the global expansion of mercy.

A remnant of Jews is preserved by the election of grace. God has not finished with Israel: the whole of Israel's final generation will be saved.

2. The Election of Christ (Luke 23:35; 1 Peter 2:4,6)

Jesus' incarnate existence was what God chose for the salvation of the world.

3. Election of Sinners for Salvation

- 1) ELECTION IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS

John 15:16,19

- i. Election removes the believer from the world.
- ii. Election carries implications for life.

2) ELECTION IN THE REST OF THE NT

Acts 13:48

- i. Eternal life is in the nature of an appointment.
- ii. Being one of God's elect involves duty as well as privilege.

Romans 8:29-30,33 (cf. 1 Peter 1:2)

- i. Predestination is based on foreknowledge (foreordination – cf. 1 Pet. 1:20).
- ii. Predestination has an end in view: likeness to Jesus.
- iii. Having predestined us God secured all the means of bringing us to glory.
- iv. In justifying his elect God places them beyond the reach of any accusation.
- v. Predestination is “filled with the warmth of love”.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 (cf. James 2:5)

- i. God's choosing leads on to his calling.
- ii. God's choice has tended to settle on those whom the world despises.
- iii. God's purpose in choosing the outcast was to demolish human pride.
- iv. Election to salvation is part of God's decree and providence.
- v. To belong to God's elect is to be 'rich in faith'.

Ephesians 1:4,5,11

- i. We are chosen in Christ.
- ii. We were chosen before time began.
- iii. The goals of election are holiness and relationship.
- iv. The basis of election is God's will and purpose.

1 Thessalonians 1:4

There is no reason to doubt election when we see response to the gospel, since this can only come through the work of the Spirit.

2 Timothy 2:10

The doctrine of election does not lead to inactivity, because God has not only chosen who will be saved, but also how they will be saved – through the preaching of the gospel.

FORMULATION OF DOCTRINE

The Reformation Confessions

- 1) Election means that God has chosen to deliver some from wrath for eternal life.
- 2) Election took place before the foundation of the world.
- 3) The cause of election is not found in anything foreseen in the elect, but only in God's good pleasure.
- 4) Election is an expression of love.
- 5) The ultimate goal of election is the glory of God in his mercy.
- 6) Election is in Christ.
- 7) Election appoints the means by which the elect are saved as well as the salvation itself.
- 8) In the case of any unable to be called by the gospel the Holy Spirit may work by other means.
- 9) Election is necessary because all people are dead in sins.
- 10) The elect are a definite number.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Election and the Synod of Dort

The Arminians claimed that election was not of persons but of conditions (chiefly, faith), and any who fulfilled these conditions would be saved.

The reply by the Canons of Dort:

- 1) The receipt of the gift of faith proceeds from God's decree.
- 2) Election is defined as God's choice of according to his purpose.
- 3) Further aspects of the truth of election:
 1. Election is of persons.
 2. The elect are not better than others.
 3. The basis of election is nothing foreseen in man, but God's good pleasure alone.
 4. The ultimate goal of election is to demonstrate God's mercy.
 5. The children of believers who die in infancy are numbered amongst the elect.

2. Objections to the doctrine of election

Wayne Grudem considers 6 objections:

<i>OBJECTION</i>	<i>ANSWER</i>
Election means that we have no choice whether we accept Christ or not.	A genuine choice cannot be independent of our nature.
Election makes us puppets or robots.	We have personal wills.
Election means that unbelievers have no chance of being saved.	Without election no one would have any chance of being saved.
If God elects some he is unfair not to elect all.	We cannot project our intuitive sense of fairness on to God.
The Bible says that God desires to save everyone.	For reasons hidden from us God may will not to satisfy all his desires.
Election amounts to fatalism.	Fatalism is impersonal; election is motivated by love.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

The Reformation Confessions themselves find in the doctrine of election 5 practical implications: it is a source of:

1. comfort and assurance;
2. humility;
3. love and praise for God;
4. diligent striving;;
5. hope for all people.

Lorraine Boettner rightly says that this truth "leads us to be more charitable and tolerant towards the unsaved", and that a church holding to the doctrine of election will be "truly broad and tolerant".

2 Peter 1:10 also gives a practical implication of election.

Research Papers

Answer one question (4000 words – 7000 words for graduates):

1. Show how the different Biblical terms for sin together give a complete picture of what sin is.
2. Explain the teaching of the following Christological heresies, and show from Scripture why they are wrong: (1) Docetism, (2) Apollinarianism, (3) Eutychianism, and (4) Symbolic Christology.
3. Does the Bible teach penal substitution, and does it matter?
4. Is there a Biblical basis for the threefold division of the law?