

CHRISTIAN BASIC TRAINING

by Charles T. Buntin

Buntin's guide to foundational Christian beliefs and practices, designed to ground new believers in the essentials of the faith including salvation, prayer, Bible study, and Christian living.

18 Chapters

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By:

Charles T. Buntin , M.S., M.A.R. to my wife, who put up with 20 years of military life, to Rev. Tom James and Shirley James, the Brothers on Guam at Country Church and Grace Chapel, and Bob Knight who discipled me in the Faith Once Delivered to the Saints to Dr. Jim McColl, Rev. Barry Horner, Dr. Gary Long, Dr. John Grove, Rev. Mike Garrigan, and Dr. Tom Branson who taught me the deep things of the gospel, to Rev. Jim McCay, now with the Lord, and to A. W. Pink, a giant unknown in his time, but mostly to the Glory of God Foreword to Christain Basic Training

By:

Charles T. Buntin , M.S., M.A.R. The Lord Jesus Christ came into my life in 1973, while I was serving in the U.S. Air Force on the island of Guam. I was no stranger to religion--in fact, I had been raised in a churchgoing family. However, the church in which I had been raised was a mainline Protestant church that taught "liberal" theology. By liberal theology, I mean the church and its spokesmen in my childhood denomination tended to deny some or all of the elements of Biblical faith. They thought there were errors in the Bible, they questioned the literal truth of some or all of the miracles of the Bible, and Jesus to them was not the Sovereign Lord which the Bible says He is. Their version of the Savior was something less than fully divine. The result of growing up in such a church was predictable, and was shared by the overwhelming majority of mainline Protestant children of my generation--by the time I was 16, I was a confirmed skeptic, and by the time I was 18, I was more-or-less a pagan. To me, religion was a joke, and churches were social

clubs where people came to see who was there and what they were wearing. I was familiar with some Bible-believing Christians, but I considered them ignorant fanatics.

I went to college for a couple of years, and had some association with students who were Bible-believers. For awhile, I even professed conversion, but “the root of the matter” was not yet in me--it was not real and it did not hold. I re-adopted a religion of sorts, a kind of deal with God for some Hell insurance (in case there was a hell), but it was all just playing church--my life did not change. Then came Guam. I did not want to go to Guam, but the Air Force sent me anyway. I could not take my young wife, then pregnant with our first child, because I did not have sufficient rank to qualify for government travel and housing for my family. So, it was as a single, alone, and unsaved man that I arrived on the island.

Soon after arriving in Guam in January 1973, I attended a chapel service called “Country Church.” That name seemed safe enough, and I went expecting a good, down-home singing. What I got was something else. There was a large crowd of mostly young, mostly men there--like me, these were mostly lower-ranking personnel, so only a few of us had our wives with us on the island. There was an Air Force Staff Sergeant preaching like no one I’d heard before, and saying things I’d never heard before. I was captivated, convicted, and overcome with wonder. I was not really sure what was happening to me at the time, but God was opening my heart and mind to understand the gospel and believe in His Son for salvation. It was the beginning of an experience that would dominate the rest of my life, even to eternity. The preacher, that Air Force Staff Sergeant, his wife, and the dozens of young believers there on Guam took me under their wing and disciplined me in “the faith once delivered to the saints,” (Jude 1:3). Though my Christian life took many turns, twists, ups, and downs over the years since that 15-month period on Guam, the Lord has delivered me from all snares, and He has guided my path. The foundation for steady growth and progression in my life as a believer, however, was the discipleship given to me by those wonderful people on Guam.

Many years ago, as I was teaching Sunday School classes and Bible studies, I noticed that there were large doctrinal gaps in the understanding of many believers--sometimes even in believers who had walked with the Lord for years! I realized that the 20th century American churches were not thoroughly teaching new believers the basic doctrines of the faith. Now, there are many teaching ministries that do a good job of teaching--about finances, prophecy, life issues, marital relations, etc. These are all worthy areas for our study and attention--but how many of the believers studying through these ministries can discuss the basic issues of the Christian faith with any degree of authority? How many of the believers in your congregation can discuss the doctrine of the Trinity, for instance? How many members of your congregation can explain the vital doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone, which Martin Luther called the doctrine upon which a church stands or falls? As I realized the need for believers to come to know the basics, I felt a burden from God to teach those doctrines, and I was obedient to that leading. This little book is the result of over ten years of studying and teaching the basics of the Christian Faith to believers from all types of backgrounds. To the skeptic, the cynic, the cultist, the existentialist, and any other nonbelieving “ist” that might be out there--you are welcome to read this book; I implore you to read this book--but it is not addressed to you. However, I pray that if you do read it, God may open your eyes to the Truth and bring you to Himself--but that is not my purpose in writing. This book is not meant to convince anyone; I seek to prove nothing to the unbeliever. However, God has often

used broken reeds to fell mighty oaks, so read on. To the believer--this one's for YOU! This is a book written to build up the family of God, all truly purchased by and washed in the blood of Christ, that we may all arrive at the maturity and unity of the faith that God desires of us.

Preface to Christian Basic Training

By:

Charles T. Buntin , M.S., M.A.R.

What is Truth? This is an age-old question, but in late 20th century Western civilization, it has become an accepted fact among most "learned" people that we can know "truth" (with a small "t")--but that we cannot know "Truth" (with a big "T"). We can identify pieces of data, events, conditions, etc., as being real and factual--but the big questions of the universe, ultimate Truth, are impossible to answer. In the mundane, important, tragic, comic, or happy events of everyday life, the sages of our age will allow us to perceive little bits of reality, without admitting the possibility or at least the knowability of Reality. This has been somewhat changed in the past decade by the growing popularity of so-called New Age thinking, which takes in various forms of mysticism and superstition, and which is no "newer" than ancient Babylon or Egypt. But the mushy, all-inclusive concept of Truth prevalent among these groups of neo-pagans is no closer to the real thing than the secular version.

Christianity--that is, real, Biblical, evangelical, orthodox, born-again Christianity--has the only answer to the quandary of modern men and women as they face an uncertain future with either no foundation, a false foundation, or a foundation of sand. The problem is that our churches and our professing believers (at least in America) have been so influenced by materialism, "touchy-feely" psychology, and existentialism that we are in danger of becoming a non-factor as the world plunges headlong into a great abyss. We organize politically, we write our legislators, we demonstrate, boycott, rally, and vote, but what are we accomplishing? Where is the revolutionary effect that the church had on the world of the first four centuries of the modern era? The early church revolutionized three continents without the benefits of modern communications or democratic rights, and in the face of great personal danger--where is that power today? Where is the radical, society-challenging and changing power that our spiritual forebears exercised in the Reformation, the Puritan Revival, and the Great Awakening? Has the Holy Spirit abandoned us? Or, have we abandoned His way? Oh, there are those who speak of real revival--we often hear it prayed for. There have been tiny moves of the Spirit in various places. And, there are voices popping up to urge us on to excellence. There is smoke--but where is the fire? Some polls have claimed that 60 million people in the U.S. claim to be born-again Christians. I wish it were so. If there were 60 million true believers in the U.S. consistently following Christ, abortion, the drug culture, rampant poverty in a land of richness, physical and sexual abuse, pornography, and many of our other evils would be ground into powder!

Only the Holy Spirit of God can bring the revival of true Christianity that this evil age calls for. This is not a day for the weak, apathetic, or uncommitted. This is a day for God's people to arise and follow Him (John 10:27).

There is no magic equation that will fix the 20th century American churches--there is no computer program that we can load, start, and then forget about it while it runs. What is required is what the

first church did--and it has nothing to do with controversial gifts, extraordinary phenomena, or any of the organizational ideas of the first church. The four things the first church excelled in are listed in Acts 2:42 "and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." The results? Thousands (eventually millions) were saved, and the church grew to worldwide proportions! Did extraordinary phenomena take place? Yes, the Spirit was pleased to grant such things. Were gifts in evidence? Yes, once again, the Holy Spirit was pleased to give gifts to the churches. These things, however, were by-products of revival--they followed the church's obedient, steadfast devotion to the basics. We in the 20th century American church are sadly lacking in these areas, especially in the areas of teaching and prayer--and without these two legs, the table falls, however strong the other two.

We are woefully inadequate in the area of teaching the truths of the gospel to our people, in equipping them for ministry, for being salt and light in our world. "But," someone says, "there are so many wonderful teachers, so many books, video tapes, and other materials available." True, and that only increases our guilt--for we have done little with such riches. Simply put, we may know a lot about end-times prophecy, we may be well-schooled in denominational positions on Baptism, the gifts of the Spirit, Eternal Security, etc., but are our members well-versed on the fundamentals of the faith? We may have a social outreach program of some sort to all different groups in our community, but what do we do with those we reach? How long does it take for a new believer in our congregation to become well-versed in the doctrines of Christianity? If our new believers do know essential doctrines, have they "internalized" them--do the teachings affect the way they live? The goal of this book is for local churches to awaken to their need to teach and live the basic doctrines of the Faith Once Delivered to the Saints, and to provide a supplemental textbook for that purpose. (Only the Bible can be the main text). This book is not written for scholars, but for students. It is not written to evangelize the lost, but to build up the saints. It is not written to convince the agnostic or the cynic, but to confirm the seeker and comfort and edify the believer. May God's Holy Spirit aid in that task. Soli Deo Gloria (To God Alone Be the Glory).

01 What Distinguishes a Christian from a Pagan?

Regula Fidei (The Rule of Faith) What Distinguishes a Christian from a Pagan?

By:

Charles T. Buntin , M.S., M.A.R.

Introductory Thoughts

What is a Christian? Is Christianity defined by ethnic heritage, a particular political allegiance, by living according to a set of rules, or attendance at particular rituals? Are you a Christian just because you call yourself one? Many people in the world identify themselves as Christians, or are identified by others as Christian, because of ethnicity, politics, lifestyle, or worship choice. Are these valid reasons for assigning the label “Christian” ? Still others claim the designation “Christian” based on some existential experience with very indefinite boundaries or meaning. “I saw a light, and a great peace came over me. After that, I knew I was a Christian.”

These accounts vary greatly, but they usually find their meaning in subjective feelings, and communicate nothing about repentance, faith in Christ, or subsequent dedication to holy living. Many of the people who have these feelings would be difficult, if not impossible, to identify as believers by any other measure than their own testimony of a mystic experience. Others have had an experience only slightly removed from the existential--these responded to an evangelical appeal of some kind. The appeal may have been person-to-person, part of an evangelistic crusade, or by way of a television ministry of some kind, but other than that initial experience, or perhaps some minimal activity, that is as far as it went. The two examples given have much in common. The people in both categories know little about the Savior or the life of faith, they are not part of any corporate worship body, and they are not following Christ. To use a common evangelical cliché, if they were charged with being Christian, there would be little evidence to convict them.

Back to our original question, then--“What is a Christian?” The Bible has a definitive answer to this question, as it does with most others. According to the Scriptures, Christians are those who have come to realize their own sinfulness before God and their inability to save themselves, have turned to Jesus Christ in faith and repentance, and have begun following and worshipping Christ, usually in some kind of corporate community of believers. We must also expand the definition a bit to include that to be considered a Christian, a person’s faith and life must conform to what the church has historically called the Regula Fidei, or The Rule of the Faith.

“Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and the brother of James,” (Jude 1:1) wrote to the church at large with this purpose: “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” (Jude 1:3). Very early in the history of the church, God’s servants had to write to defend the Regula Fidei. Paul was amazed to find the Galatian Christians,

only a short time after the preaching of the gospel to them, had been turned aside into “a different gospel.” (Galatians 1:6) Paul also had to caution the Colossian believers against both philosophy and legalism (Colossians 2:8-10; Colossians 2:16-23), and had similar cautions in most of his other writings. Very early church tradition tells us that John the apostle wrote his gospel to correct the heresy we now know as Gnosticism, and he warns against false teachers in his letters (1 John 2:18-23; 1 John 4:1-6; 2 John 1:7-11), as does the apostle Peter (2 Peter 2:1-22). The apostles viewed the essence of Christianity to be the Person and Work of Christ made alive in the hearts of repentant sinners awakened by the Spirit of God through the preaching of the Word of God--but this was not viewed by them as merely a subjective existential experience. There was certainly the subjective, individual experience of faith in Christ, but there was also The Faith, a set of doctrines handed down as a sacred trust to be taught, believed, and defended. This set of doctrines is the core of Christianity; absolute, finite, authoritative for eternity, unchanging, and not subject to review by either the individual believer, the church, or society.

Over the centuries, this list of doctrines became encrusted with the barnacles of Greek and Roman paganism and philosophy, Imperial Byzantine and Roman law, and with ecclesiastical dogma separate from the Scriptures--but the core remained intact. The Waldensians, St. Francis, Wycliffe, the Hussites, the Reformers, the Puritans, the preachers of the great awakening, and other great Christian saints over the centuries have periodically broken the barnacles off and emphasized the core, the heart of the faith. The time has come for this to be done again. We need to answer a question, and act on the answer: What constitutes true Christian doctrine?

Like the age of the Apostles of our Lord, the Church today is overrun with apostles of a new “Christianity” that is not true Christianity at all. It is not a denomination--it is interdenominational. It is not a just a new doctrinal perspective. It is not about culture, or preference, or any such thing. This heresy is nothing less than a denial of historic Christianity, teaching a new faith in its place. This is a Collective heresy--not centrally organized at this point, but there are many common threads. Some parts of this heresy are at odds with one another, but they tend to cooperate, and they have one central underlying theme--a denial of orthodoxy. This new heresy is characterized by:

- * Man-centeredness

- * Worldliness--the concerns are all about health, wealth, self-esteem, and worldly well-being and possessions, or perhaps it is centered in some political identity of the left or the right.

- * Ignorance of, neglect of, or downright denial of, the historic Christian faith

- * An exaltation of the person and role of the “believer,” and a denigration and lessening of the person and work of the Redeemer. This exaltation of man and denigration of God is sometimes evidenced by distinctive doctrines which refer to people as “little Gods,” and which deny the historic teaching of the Trinity. It is also evidenced by a concentration on therapeutic concerns, a “touchy-feely” faith, and a neglect of the doctrines of sin and redemption.

- * This modern heresy neglects the Scriptures, and twists the ones it does use, preferring to rely on modern-day “prophecies” by the leaders of the heresy, or by inserting secular psychology or left/right politics into the faith.

* This heresy will accept almost anyone or group as genuine if they exercise “the gifts of the spirit” under some veneer of Christianity or if they emphasize healing of the mind or body. (These last two items are not intended as criticisms of the charismatic movement, but only “where the shoe fits.”) * The teachers of this new heresy who are aptly described by Scripture:

* Php 3:18-19 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

1 Timothy 4:1-2 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.

2 Timothy 3:1-5; 2 Timothy 3:7 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God--having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. . . . always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. (NIV) In reality, the teachers of the new heresy, and their followers, are little more than another species of pagans. They have baptized what Paul calls the “rudiments” of the world--they are worshipping a false “god” of their own imaginations, and they are foreign to the reality, the knowledge, and the community of The Faith Once Delivered to the Saints. The problem is not just the existence, or even the growth and prosperity of the false teachers. The problem today is that many, if not most, professing Christians in mainline and evangelical churches are ignorant of even the most basic doctrines of the faith. Furthermore, as these church members have been educated and enculturated by the pagan way of thinking prevalent in society today, they are doubly weakened, and are easy prey for the heresies and cults that are growing swiftly. What is largely missing in American Christianity is a knowledge and appreciation of what doctrines distinguish Christianity from sheer paganism--what constitutes the absolute rule of the faith.

What should we be teaching? The doctrines of central importance have several things in common. First, they are rooted in the Scriptures. The Bible is our only acceptable source book for doctrine and practice. Church traditions, church history, and the work of God’s servants in the past can help instruct us in the Scriptures, but all must be submitted to the Bible for judgment. The central core of the faith is non-denominational. Forms of church government, style of worship, differing views on the end times, and even divergent views on the gifts of the Spirit are important issues, but they are peripheral to the faith. We are not saved or lost by our views on these matters. The central core doctrines of the faith are largely those that have been recognized by Christians since apostolic times. Some might object that the principles of Justification by Faith and Salvation by Grace Plus Nothing are innovations of more recent times, but they were plainly taught by the apostles. Furthermore, throughout history, there were minority groups and individuals that maintained the witness of the Scriptures to these things. The Reformation of the church in the 16th century was a reawakening and renewal of apostolic teachings that had been neglected. The teachings of the regula fidei are accompanied in Scripture with strong warnings--whether it is the warning of John not to add to or take away from God’s completed revelation (Revelation

22:18-19), the same apostle's warning against deviations in Christology (1 John 4:2; 2 John 1:7-11), or Paul's anathema against Judaizers (Galatians 1:1-9), there are warning signs all along the way in the Bible to let us know that God is deadly serious about the heart of the Faith. The central teachings of the Rule of Faith are all concerned with God's redemption plan in some way--they involve the Cross of Christ..

Finally, the core doctrines of Bible Christianity are practical. These are not doctrines that you put up on a shelf to admire--they are doctrines that you can and must use in your everyday walk.

Overview of the Book Briefly, the doctrines this book will examine are the following:

1. The Essential Christian Worldview--We all have a worldview, whether we realize it or not. This section asks and answers two questions--this set of questions and answers constitute the Christian Worldview. (a) What is Truth? and (b) Why are we alive?
2. The Inspiration, Inerrancy (which means "without error"), and Authority of the Scriptures--This is the most basic of doctrines for the believer. If we do not understand that the Scriptures are our final authority, then we can never be certain about the other teachings of the faith.
3. The Nature of God--What kind of God do YOU worship? The modern "god" is too small, he has no definite doctrines, his plans and providence are subject to man's whims and desires, he is a cosmic wimp. The God of the Bible is The Absolute God, who is Sovereign, Holy, Just, Wrathful, Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent, Immutable, Merciful, and Loving.
4. The Doctrine of the Trinity--the doctrine of the Trinity is the historic faith of Bible Christianity: no Trinity--no Christianity. No Trinity--No salvation!
5. The Person and Work of Christ--"What think ye of Christ . . . Who do men say that I am?" The answer to this question is the heart of hearts of the faith. Christ is Pre-existent, God Incarnate, Crucified, Risen, Coming Again.
6. Salvation: (a) By Grace, through faith, plus nothing. This is one of the major teachings that distinguishes Biblical Christianity from all other religions--Man cannot work his way to God, God must do it all. (b) Justification by Faith, plus nothing. The corollary to 6a--we contribute nothing to our salvation, and even our faith is a gift.
7. The necessity of a consistent Christian life (sanctification). "My Sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me ..." (John 10:27) The goal of the author is to be faithful to the Truth, and to be clear in telling the Truth. May God make it so.

02 What is Truth? Why are We Alive?

The Essential Christian Worldview What is Truth? Why are We Alive?

By:

Charles T. Buntin , M.S., M.A.R.

Introductory Comments

You have a worldview. Many of you might deny that you have a worldview, but you have one. If you say, "Hey, all I want to do is party, I don't have a worldview, and don't need one," then that is your worldview--the Bible describes that way of thinking as "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we may die." Philosophers would probably call such a view of life "hedonistic nihilism,"(now there's a couple of \$50 words!)--which means "have a good time and don't care about anything." Your worldview might have been shaped by religious belief and tradition, by occultism and superstition, by humanism and rationalism, by what you learned as a child from "Sesame Street" and "Mister Rogers," or by what you hear and see now on "Phil" and "Oprah," but you have a worldview. Your worldview may be clearly thought out or almost totally subconscious, it may be base or noble, it may be sensible or wacky--but you have a worldview. What is more, your worldview is very important to you. It governs the way you think and live; it guides your decisions about everything you do.

If you are a professing Christian, you have an obligation to think out your worldview. You are pledged by your covenant with the God of the Bible to learn His ways and to follow Him (John 10:27). If you are going to follow Christ, then you need to be aware of how God wants you to view the world, and you need to learn to live by His worldview.

Historically, the Christian Worldview has been determined by the answers to two questions: What is Truth? Why are we alive? These are the two most basic questions that can be asked about human existence. Of course, for us to even ask these questions flies in the face of the common modern worldviews, which deny the existence of Truth, Purpose, and Direction in the universe. For us to say, "these questions make sense," presupposes the Christian Worldview.

What is Truth? The accused stood before the Roman governor, who had the power of judge, jury, and executioner. This powerful ruler was accountable to no one on earth but Caesar himself, and his only thought was how to handle this thorny situation in such a way as to please Caesar and advance his own cause. Pontius Pilate was a typical Roman politician--skilled, devious, educated, and thoroughly cynical in his approach to life--he would have made a good 20th century American corporation man. Pilate, no doubt, was not in a fine mood. For Pilate, as for all Roman rulers of Judea before and after him, this time of the year was always a tense one, which is why he had left his normal residence in comfortable Caesarea by the Mediterranean Sea and traveled to this miserable, grim city of Jerusalem--a place full of trouble and troublesome people. The Jews were gathering for one of their interminable religious festivals where they worshipped their strange

oriental God, their uniquely solitary deity who was so jealous that He wouldn't even let them make an image of Himself. It was the Passover, the chief of their feasts, so Pilate was in Jerusalem, where he did not want to be, and he was awakened very early in the morning at the summons of the Jewish religious leaders, to handle the case of this prisoner, Jesus. Pilate had already sent Him to Herod, trying to avoid making the decision, and that wily old fox had deftly sidestepped the issue and landed it back in Pilate's lap. So here they stood, an inscrutable Jewish prophet, and the Roman governor.

John 18:33-37 Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?" "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?" Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." "What is truth?" Pilate asked. (NIV)

We know the rest of the story. Pilate, who really had nothing against this solitary prophet, tried everything he could to worm out of the situation, but when faced with a political threat to himself, ". . . If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar." (John 19:12), he turned him over to the executioners. Pilate's words to Jesus, however, ring in our ears, because they sound so current, so "now." "What is Truth?" Pilate, the cynic, probably had no idea of the answer to his own question--he most likely wasn't sure there was such a thing as truth, and so it is with many, if not most of the world's people today. We live in a civilization that will admit the existence of "little truths," and technological facts. For example, we know that $2+2 = 4$, that elements have certain chemical and physical properties, and that bodies in motion behave in a predictable way. However, our civilization officially denies the existence of ultimate Truth--the concept that Francis Schaeffer called "true truth." For the Christian, however, Truth exists, and it is ultimate, rational, and real. Your first step in developing and using a Christian worldview is to realize "Thy Word is Truth." (John 17:17). What a gift you have as a believer! The rest of humanity gropes in the dark for answers about the most basic questions of life, and you have them all, bound up in one book--the Bible. You can know where mankind came from, how we got to be where we are today, and what the future holds for us. You can discover principles and laws that will tell you what is right and what is wrong. If you want to know Who God is, what He is like, and what He wants from you, you can find that out in the Bible--the Bible can even guide your steps in getting to know Him personally. The history of God's dealing with mankind is founded in literal, historical events--they really happened, and they are recorded for us in the Bible. The first principle is: There IS such a thing as Truth, it is propositional; it is recorded in God's Word, it is to be the focal point of our lives, and it is personified in Jesus Christ. Contrary to the teachings and beliefs of human philosophers and occult religionists, Truth exists. Truth is propositional, that means it is something we can put into word, phrases, and sentences that make sense. Truth is recorded in God's Word (John 17:17). We can find the answers to life's questions in the Book of Books. Truth is meant to be the focal point of one's life. We are to know the Truth and to live it.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments

that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Truth is personified in Jesus Christ (John 14:6) Only hours before His encounter with Pilate, Jesus had said, "I am the Truth." In Him, we see the Truth of God walking in a human body (John 1:14; John 1:18). If you want to know Truth face to face, know Christ. The second major principle of THY Word is Truth is that Biblical Truth is objective "TRUE" Truth. Unlike liberal, existential forms of the Christian faith, Biblical faith teaches that the events recorded in the Bible are reliable historical facts.

If you look at the apostolic-type sermon, Acts 7:1 ff, Acts 13:16 ff, Acts 10:34 ff, you find that the preaching of the apostles was grounded in the historical truths of the Bible. This is consistent with the preaching of Moses and the prophets of the Old Testament--they were not mystics or philosophers, they preached and taught about God, who is, who acts, and who communicates through personal intervention in, and providential guidance of the history of human events. As the apostles recorded the gospel records, they were careful to stress the reality of what they were writing about the Life and Works of Jesus.

Luke 1:1-4 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

John 20:30-31 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John 21:24-25 This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

Paul in teaching on the resurrection in particular, stressed the eyewitness accounts of it, and the importance of its factuality to the Christian faith.

1 Corinthians 15:1-14 Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his

grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them-- yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Whether, then, it was I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed. But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

Why Are We Alive? This is another basic question about the universe. Why are we here? What do the various non-Christian philosophies say about the purpose of human life? To begin with, most deny there is such a thing as a purpose. Purpose implies a conscious, personal, active, involved Creator, and Existentialism, Nihilism and Humanism deny that basic assumption. A far more dangerous philosophy that is becoming very popular is the New Age Movement, which says, among other things, that our purpose is to "become one with the universe."

Another common belief system, The Self Esteem movement, wants us to feel good about ourselves. This movement is represented by popular psychology and psychiatry (including, unfortunately, many "Christian" therapists). Self Esteem is also a foundational belief of various 12-step recovery groups, who have a religious taste to them by use of the concept of "my higher power." As with any error, there is a grain of truth here--as creations of a Holy God, we are worthy of a certain dignity. But we are fallen; we are rebels. Without salvation through the blood atonement of Christ Jesus, we are not OK! If I help you with some sort of mental and emotional good feeling and heal your anguish about life, etc., and do nothing to bring you to the Cross for forgiveness, I have done nothing for you that will last!

What does the Bible say about the Purpose of Human Life? It teaches that the human race is a special creation of a personal, loving God ... and our purpose as a race and as individuals is to glorify Him, to be conformed to the image of Christ Jesus His Son, and to live with Him forever. The human race is a special creation of a personal, loving, God. Evolutionary "science," on very fragmentary evidence, has concluded that our race oozed up from some 'primordial soup', crawled out onto the shore, eventually became apes, and then progressed to our current form. This is contrary to the teachings of Scripture (and disagrees with the hard scientific facts, too--see reading list at the end of this chapter). The first chapter of Genesis plainly teaches that God created everything ex nihilo (from nothing), that He simply spoke it into existence (God said, "let there be ... and there was ..."). In Genesis 1:26-28 Moses outlines God's creation of the race, then in Genesis 2:7-25, he gives a detailed account. The race of Man was personally created by a personal God--for a purpose, for a reason. That reason is given in one of the most beautiful and profound statements in the Bible:

Revelation 4:11 "Thou Art Worthy, Oh, Lord, to receive Glory and honor, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created. (KJV)

We were created for His pleasure--simply because He wanted it that way. Well, if that is the reason we were created, what is our purpose? The verse just quoted tells us God is worthy of Glory, so as His creatures we should glorify Him. The truth is that all of the human race will bring glory to God, but not all in the same way. Php 2:1-30 says (speaking of Christ),

Php 2:9-11 "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (KJV)

God has decreed that every knee will bow to His Son, including those under the earth, which is a Biblical reference to Hell. We were created to glorify God, and every human being will. Some will do it as they rejoice in heaven over the salvation of Christ, and some will do it as they suffer the just eternal punishment for their sins. As believers, however, we have a special place in bringing Glory to God. We are to begin glorifying Him by our life as we live it now.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Corinthians 10:31 "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."... "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." (NIV) The Bible has specific instructions in many places on how to run our lives. It tells us how to run our marriage, our business affairs, our employed lives, and how to conduct ourselves in society and in the church. Our purpose in life as believers is to learn to follow Christ in such a way as to bring Glory to God. A step beyond that concept, however, is the marvelous truth of the final goal of God's working in our lives. We are to be molded into the image of Christ.

Romans 8:28-29 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (NIV)

1 John 3:1-2 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (NIV)

It is our destiny and reward as believers to be conformed to the likeness, the image, of Christ. We won't BE Him, as a pantheistic New Ager might say; we will never have His attributes of Omnipotence, Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Immutability--but our actions and our countenance will be like Him. The final part of the purpose of our existence is to Live with God forever. Oh, what a joy, to live in the presence of God eternally, to have no sin or human troubles to worry us, and to enjoy sweet fellowship with Him!

Now that we have said all this about a purpose for our lives, what are the practical implications of that purpose? How do we take this doctrine and apply it to our lives? This marvelous truth has important implications for all of life's decisions. We cannot live as if we are independent and free to do whatever we might decide to do. If we are Christians, we don't own ourselves.

One passage quoted earlier (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), said that we are "... not your own; you were bought at a price." We are not, as an old song said, "riding the trail alone." Paul reiterates this principle in 1 Corinthians 7:23, "You were bought at a price, do not become slaves of men." All believers are priests (1 Peter 2:5; 1 Peter 2:9), and are to serve God in every area of their lives. In our family, God is to rule (Ephesians 5:33 -- 6:4); our work habits are to be those He wants us to have (Ephesians 6:5-9). In our civic duties, we are to exhibit His rule in our conduct (1 Peter

2:13-18, Romans 13:1-8). Indeed, as Paul tells the Colossians, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." (Colossians 3:23) When all of this is taken together, a balanced Christian life will emerge. We will not be either lazy or workaholics; we will have an ordered family with a loving atmosphere; we will serve God in every way. This is how life is to be lived--our life is not separated into our "private, religious life" and our "secular" life. The life of a Christian is to be one seamless tapestry, with all parts working together under the direction of the Holy Spirit, by the rule of God's word, following God's Son for the glory of the Triune God. But what about when things get rough--what are the implications of this teaching in times of trial? How can God "get the glory" when His children go through trials and tribulations? There is now a movement claiming to be Christian which says that God always desires for us to be happy, prosperous, and healthy in this world. This movement, called The Word of Faith Movement, or simply The Faith Teaching, unrealistically and cruelly makes all our problems the result of lack of faith on our part. It assumes that God can do nothing without our puny personal faith. As we will learn in chapter 3, God is sovereign, that is, He rules the universe, including determining the circumstances of our lives--(Daniel 4:34-35; Job 42:1-6). So, if we are in a difficult circumstance, God has caused or allowed it to take place. Trials, therefore, are part of His purpose for our lives, and we are to glorify Him in our trials.

There are several elements to this whole concept that are beyond the scope of this book, but some things you can look at to begin to understand this principle are: (a) This world is not our natural home--we are strangers and pilgrims here (Php 3:20, Hebrews 11:13-16). (b) God's chastenings are an assurance of sonship (Hebrews 12:5-13). (c) It is normal for the world system to hate believers; when attacked and under trial from the world, we are following in Christ's footsteps (1 Peter 2:19-24; John 15:18 -- John 6:4). (d) God can and does deliver His people from trials--but not always (Hebrews 11:32-39). Therefore, our proper attitude in times of trial is to be that of the "three Hebrew children." These youths, captured by a cruel conqueror and pressed into the service of the enemy king, were faced with a choice: worship heathen idols or be fired (with real fire) Their answer is a masterpiece of theology and practical faith.

Daniel 3:16-18 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." (NIV)

God may deliver, or it may be His pleasure not to deliver--we still serve Him, whatever the case. Christian, your life has meaning and purpose--you are to glorify God in all things.

See Appendix 3 for study questions and projects for Chapter 1.

03 Inspiration, Inerrancy, & Authority of Bible

“Thy word is Truth” The Inspiration, Inerrancy, and Authority of the Bible

By:

Charles T. Buntin , M.S., M.A.R. The tall, balding, Air Force major leaned back in his chair, took another drag from his smoke. “OK. Sergeant Jones, let’s go through this again; you have tried every step in the troubleshooting manual, we have test flown the aircraft, we have talked to the engineers, we’ve even tried improvising, and we still don’t know why this landing gear is not working.” The sergeant and his assistants, standing in the windowless office around the desk of their commander, nodded in unison. Their branch chief (me, an Air Force captain at the time) watched intently from the side of the desk. The major pulled the large, grease-stained technical manual over to his side of the desk. He read through the initial setup sequences for testing the landing gear, then came to Step 1 of the troubleshooting guide. “It says, ‘check the X dimension on the main actuator, and adjust if necessary,’ “ The major read, then looked up and squinted at them through his glasses, “You did that, correct?”

Sergeant Jones, who had lighted up with the permission of his commander, gestured with his half-smoked butt, shook his head, and said, “Oh, no sir, that procedure is a real bucket of worms and never yields anything--nobody ever does that step. “ The major dropped his chin, shook his head, and turning to me, sneered slightly, turning up the right corner of his mouth. I’d been working for him long enough to know that sneer of his meant, “Captain, your sergeant is a Bozo, and you’ve been had.”

I said, “Jones, you told me you’d done all the steps!” (I’d watched him do most of them, but had missed the first two or three because of a staff meeting). The sergeant hemmed and hawed, and would not look at me. Sighing, I took the manual, grabbed my hat and radio, and said, “C’mon, let’s go fix this airplane.”

We did the prescribed first step, discovered the problem, and managed a temporary fix which got the airplane ready to fly back to its home station for permanent repairs. Later, the major and I were alone in his office; I was sitting on his couch drinking coffee. He was leaning back in his chair with his feet up on the desk, blowing rings of foul-smelling smoke into space. He chuckled and said, “Charley, chalk it up to experience, but remember the old saying--‘when all else fails read the book.’”

I took a long sip from my coffee, shook my head, looked up at him, and said, “No, boss, Jones was reading the book--the idea is to follow the book.”

I spent many years as an aircraft maintenance technician, supervisor, and officer in the U.S. Air Force. One of the great lessons I learned was that the technical manuals we had, while not perfect, were usually a lot more reliable than our own guesses, and often held just the answer we needed for problems that seemed unsolvable. Several times in years after the above incident, I

would use the method I learned from the major that day, questioning the technicians, dealing with a problem “line by line” with the book in my hand. In 90% of the cases, we found the problem before the interview was over. Reading and following the book works.

What is true about fallible but fairly reliable technical manuals is infinitely more true when we consider the infallible and inerrant Book of Books, the Bible. We must live our life, define our faith, and order our worship and praise by what is written in the Scriptures, the 66 commonly accepted books we call the Holy Bible. We saw in the last chapter that “Thy word is Truth.” In this depraved and rootless world, we as believers have a sure guide to life, we have an anchor that grips the Rock, and we have a source book of pure Truth to base everything on. The second major principle of the rule of faith, then is that the Bible is Inspired, Inerrant, Infallible, and True, and that it is a sure guide to follow for our faith and our lives.

Inspiration 2 Timothy 3:16 “. . . All Scripture is given by inspiration of God . . .” (KJV)

Inspiration is a much used and abused concept. We hear a pretty song, see a beautiful painting, witness a great theatrical performance, or hear a stirring speech, and we say “Wow! That was inspired!” An athlete goes beyond his or her normal abilities to win a contest, and the sportscaster says, “We are witnessing an inspired performance here tonight!” Sometimes, even base and ugly things are called inspired, like some of the deviant art works and pornographic literature that passes as artistic in our decadent age. In reality, the word “inspired” originally had a very special meaning which couldn’t possibly apply to any of the things above--this original meaning can only apply to a direct and infallible revelation of God’s word. The word translated from the original Greek as “inspired” in the older English translations of the Bible is theopneustos, a word which literally means “God-breathed.” The concept is that God “breathed” the words of Scripture into the minds of those who wrote them, and they wrote as they were thus “inspired.” The following two passages from the New International Version translation are the classic Biblical texts for understanding this process of inspiration.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (NIV)

2 Peter 1:19-21 And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (NIV)

We might ask (and some theologians do) “How much of the Bible is inspired?” The text in 2 Timothy 3:16 answers the question directly: “All Scripture . . .” “But,” you say, “how do we know what is Scripture and what is not?” Or, what is part of the “canon” (rule) of Scripture? A full answer to that question is beyond the scope of this book, but it is a very good question, because many opponents of the faith, including liberals, cynics, and cultists, challenge Christians on just that count. Usually, the fiction is put forth that the early church theologians and the emperors met together, decided what books they wanted in the Bible, edited them to suit their tastes, and forced them upon the people. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The Old Testament Canon The

early church basically received the Old Testament intact from the Jewish nation, though the arrangement and names of the books are somewhat different. The part of the Bible known as the apocrypha, which is attached to the Old Testament in Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Bibles, was never accepted by the Jews, and was separated from the Scripture by the most of the early church. It was never officially considered Scripture by anyone until the Roman Catholic church mandated its full acceptance in the Council of Trent in 1546. With a few exceptions, Protestants and Free Churches have never accepted the apocrypha as Scripture, though some parts of it have historical value. The New Testament Canon From the earliest days of the church, there were false letters and books circulated in the names of apostles (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2), so there was a process of sifting the churches went through to determine which books were authentic and which were not. There were only a few of the New Testament books which were ever seriously questioned, and there were only a few non-Biblical books seriously considered. Gradually, the church identified which books were acceptable by a stringent set of criteria, including content, apostolic authorship, and acceptance by the church as a whole. All the councils did was rubber-stamp what the laity had already recognized by the witness of the Spirit. The Degree of Inspiration

There is a subtle heresy around today which says “the words themselves are not inspired, just the concepts.” That is about as ridiculous as you telling the Internal Revenue Service, “Most of the numbers on my tax form are not reliable, but the bottom line is accurate!” Concepts, of course, are made up of words--if the words are not inspired, the concepts are not either. The truth is, that the Bible is full of references to the inspiration of the words themselves. “. . . More than 3800 times in the Old Testament we have such expressions as ‘thus saith the LORD,’ ‘the word of the LORD came unto me,’ ‘God said.’. . . (Thomas A. Thomas). The following Scripture references should help illustrate this. And God spoke all these words. Exodus 20:1

1 Corinthians 2:13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. (NIV)

Matthew 5:18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. (NIV)

John 6:63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. (NIV)

John 17:8 For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. (NIV)

Inerrancy:

There are no Errors in the Bible As with other issues concerning the Bible, there are those claiming to be part of the body of Christ who try to say there are errors in the Bible, but somehow maintain its authority. They do this because they are uncomfortable with some Bible teachings and want to pick and choose what to believe--kind of like “Buffet Christianity.” However, the faith of the Church has always been that There were NO errors in the original manuscripts of the Bible, and we possess ample manuscript evidence that we have received a faithful transmission of those original manuscripts, which has been translated into our English (and other modern languages)

translations. There are a handful of manuscript problems--there are a few places where there is disagreement as to what should be written. However, these places are very few, they involve none of the basic (or even secondary) doctrines of the faith, and usually the various different readings mean the same thing anyway. There are, as Peter said "Many things hard to understand" in the Scriptures, but that is not a defect in the Bible--that is a defect in our understanding.

Sometimes, people within the professing church try to challenge the authority or truth of part of the Bible, without taking away from other parts. However, the Bible must be taken altogether. Hebrews chapter 1 sets forth the unity of the Scriptures, and establishes the distinction between the giving of the Old and New Testaments:

Hebrews 1:1-2 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. (NIV) Our Lord testified to the truth of the Old Testament, including many of the parts people don't want to accept. In Matthew 12:39-42, he authenticated the story of Jonah; He stated that Moses wrote the books of Moses in Mark 7:10 (See also John 5:45-47; John 7:19); and in Matthew 19:4-5 he authenticated the creation account, that the human race started from one pair of fully developed humans specially created by God. The book of Hebrews again helps us understand the authority of (and how God revealed and confirmed) the New Testament:

Hebrews 2:1-4 We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. (NIV) Our Lord pre-authenticated the New Testament, by explaining to the apostles beforehand how they would be able to remember perfectly all He had said and done, as well as receive new teachings:

John 14:26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (NIV)

John 16:12-13 I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. (NIV)

Finally, the apostles themselves made numerous declarations as to the truth of the New Testament, and how it came to be. Peter wrote:

2 Peter 1:15-19 And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things. We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. (NIV) Paul

testified about the revelations he had received:

Galatians 1:11-12 I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. (NIV) The aged apostle John's stenographer wrote:

John 21:24-25 This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written. (NIV) A more recent attack on the truth of the Scriptures is very sneaky, but no more valid than other attacks. It is the problem of "cultural relevance." The argument goes that culture has changed, times have changed, so many of the rules in the Bible have to be changed. While it is true that our technology has come a long way, the Bible does not address technology. It does not tell us we have to use horses instead of cars; it does not tell us we can't use airplanes--it makes no statements about technology at all.

Most of human society is really the same as it was back then. Money is still money, work is still work, people are still people, and sin is still sin. The truth is that the Bible's rules having to do with the roles of women in the church, morality (to include sex outside of marriage and homosexuality), and sin were not in line with the common culture of the old world either. Israel's strict moral code was as different from the nations around it as the moral code believers are expected to follow makes us different today. The early church was asked to live New Testament standards of conduct in the midst of a society just as wild, free, and sinful as the one we live in. The real issue of cultural relevance is that sin is still sin and righteousness is still righteousness. The Authority of the Bible

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (NIV)

It does us no good to have a Bible that is inspired and inerrant if we do not recognize and use it authoritatively. I remember as a young Christian when I bought my first big study Bible--it was expensive, it was big, and I was fairly well lost trying to use its various helps. I brought it to a Bible study with me, and the pastor of our group, a crusty but loving old ex-biker rebel, spied me lugging it in and said, "Big caliber weapon there, troop, do you know how to use it?" We must learn to use the Bible, and we must use it, not just as an intellectual exercise, but in helping us learn to follow Christ daily. The ways of using the Bible given us by our text in Timothy are teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training.

Teaching (Doctrine)--All doctrine must be ". . . according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). This doesn't mean that teachers cannot write and comment on Scripture (as this book does!), but it does mean that all teaching in the church must stand to be judged in the court of the Bible itself--The Bible is the final authority. Paul stresses in many places, such as 2 Timothy 1:13 and 2:2 that we must ". . . teach no other doctrine"; in Galatians, he pronounces judgment on all who would deviate from scriptural teaching on vital doctrines such as justification by faith and salvation by grace. (Galatians 1:6-9)

Rebuke--the word in the Greek means to convict someone of sin. If a brother or sister is heading the wrong way, we are to rebuke them, in the hope of restoring them (Matthew 18:15-17, James

5:19-20; James 5:1-20:1 Corinthians 5:1-11). This discipline must be meted out in accordance with, and by the judgment of the Bible.

Correction--the word means to restore to an upright state. After the rebuke of one who is going the wrong way, the Bible can then be used to apply the oil of mercy to the wounded one, and to keep them from repeating their mistake.

Training (Instruction in righteousness--KJV) Proper Christian teaching from the Bible should have the goal of the students successfully living as followers of Christ (John 10:27). Doctrine, even deep, thought-provoking doctrines such as those about the nature of God or the return of Christ, should always be applied practically. Bible study that is a mere intellectual exercise is vain and useless. The results of the proper use of the Bible, “. . .so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work . . .” are what all Christians need in their lives. If you want to be Holy and be a faithful follower of our Lord, read and study the Bible, believe what it says without question, and accept its authority in your life. There is a popular saying, which even became a song, “God says it, I believe it, and that settles it.” That is not true. The truth is--If God says it, that settles it, whether anyone believes it or not.

See Appendix 4 for study questions and projects for Chapter 2.

04 The Nature of God

The Nature of God

By:

Charles T. Buntin , M.S., M.A.R. The Absolute God In writing this chapter, I stand on the shoulders of giants indeed. I gratefully acknowledge the tremendous help and influence that the writings of A. W. Pink, J. I. Packer, and Stephen Charnock have been over the years in helping me come to know and understand the Absolute God. The deacon shifted uneasily in his seat--this interview was not going well at all. He eyed the gentle, but (as far as the deacon was concerned) obstinate middle-aged man seated across from him. He'd been all for Reverend Dodd coming here as pastor two years ago, and the church had nearly doubled in size since his arrival, but he could not stand the preacher's teachings about the nature of God. Bro. Dodd's version of God was even a bit scary to Deacon Smith! "Now look here, Reverend, I just can't believe what you are saying! You are telling me that God's plans cannot be thwarted, and that He controls all of the events of human history for His own purposes--is that fair? I've always thought of God as a gentleman, the kind of fellow that presents His case to you, and lets you work things out. He lets human beings work out the world their own way, except when He decides to intervene in some special case." The preacher removed his glasses, rubbed his eyes, and sighed deeply. "Where do you find that in the Bible, Smitty? God never claims to be fair--only just. Fairness is a human standard that changes as often as our perceptions change--God never changes, and His decrees are never altered. God is not, and cannot be, judged by any standard manufactured by men!" The preacher opened his Bible and read several verses out loud that spoke of God's ruling the affairs of nations, and of His plan for redemption through the sacrifice of the Cross. "Smitty, was it fair for God to send His Son to die for us? Did God ever promise anywhere to take our thoughts, whims, and petty human pride into account in His eternal councils? No! Smitty, God is either absolute, or He is not God!" The deacon closed his own Bible nervously. "Reverend, I've got to go. I, uh, have a business appointment across town." Without any hesitation, before the pastor could suggest they pray, Deacon Smith got up to leave. At the door, he hesitated, turned, and said, "I'll say this--you and I don't worship the same God." Pastor Dodd never saw Deacon Smith in church again; Smith would not return his calls. He heard some time later that the Smiths had moved their membership to a liberal Protestant church across town. The story above is true, though the characters are composites. Some of the circumstances, and of course the names, have been changed, but that interview really happened to a preacher in the southern United States in the late 1970s. A prominent layman in an evangelical Baptist church, who had been in the church for many years, had a concept of God which was far removed from the Bible's picture of Him. This man thought of God as a kind of cosmic grandfather, a good Joe, a fair businessman who minded his own affairs unless some extraordinary circumstance came along. Why, "Smitty's" God would have felt right at home at the businessman's luncheon club and on the links at Smitty's country club. In short, Smitty's God was a lot like Smitty!

Psalms 50:16-23 But to the wicked, God says: "What right have you to recite my laws or take my covenant on your lips? You hate my instruction and cast my words behind you. When you see a thief, you join with him; you throw in your lot with adulterers. You use your mouth for evil and harness your tongue to deceit. You speak continually against your brother and slander your own mother's son. These things you have done and I kept silent; you thought I was altogether like you. But I will rebuke you and accuse you to your face. "Consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you to pieces, with none to rescue: He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God." (NIV) (Emphasis Added)

What kind of God do you worship? Are you like "Smitty" in our story? Are you like Israel in the passage in Psalms--do you think God is like you? Do you think of God as an errand boy, a cosmic, doddering doting old Grandpa, a gentleman who wouldn't hurt a flea. Does your God dismiss sin? Is your God at the mercy of Man or Nature? Is your God too small? Is he "Itsy-bitsy, teensy-weensy?" Or do you worship the God of the Bible? Is your God the God of Joseph, Who turns the evil intent of wicked men to His own use? (Genesis 50:20) Do you worship the God of Job, Whose greatness caused that patriarch to abhor himself and be silent? (Job 42:1-6) Do you fall down in worship of the Holy, Holy, Holy, God of Isaiah? (Isaiah 6:1-5) Do you realize that your life is ruled by the Sovereign Ruler and Omniscient God of Daniel? (Daniel 2:20-23; Daniel 2:27-28; Daniel 4:34-35) Do you trust in the God of the Psalms, who does as He pleases? (Psalms 115:3; Psalms 135:6) Do you pray to the God of Abraham, who calls those things that are not as though they were? (Romans 4:17) Have you met the God of Paul, who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords? (1 Timothy 6:14-16). In this chapter, we look briefly at seven of the many attributes of God. They are certainly not His only attributes, but they are the ones this decadent age disregards the most. Not only are these attributes of God ignored in this era, they are hated and despised by many because of the vaunted independence and self-worship of modern man. The attributes of Sovereignty, Holiness, Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Immutability, Wrath, and Love, set God apart from the false Gods of pagans, and from the false Gods of "Christians" who as A.W. Pink has said, make up their own God out of their imaginations.

Attribute #1--God is Sovereign

God is Sovereign, that is, He is THE BOSS, period. God is subject to no one--no one can tell God what to do or judge His actions. (Romans 9:1-25; Psalms 115:3; Psalms 135:6) The concept of a sovereign, that is, a ruler with absolute authority who answers to no one, is unfamiliar to most Americans. We may hear of a dictator or "strongman" who has sovereign-like powers, but that is a far cry from the classic definition of a sovereign. In history, a sovereign was a ruler who had absolute authority and who had the right to that authority, usually by heredity or conquest, but even the true sovereigns of history were only a pale reflection of the Sovereign Lord God. A knife, a bullet, poison, a fever, or at last, time, unseated every sovereign that ever lived--except the eternal Sovereign who lives forever. Omnipotence, which we look at a few pages later, talks about God's Power and Ability--Sovereignty expresses His authority by right. If we study in detail passages such as Isaiah 40:1-31 and Job 38:1-41; Job 39:1-30; Job 40:1-24; Job 41:1-34; Job 42:1-17, we find that God claims the right to rule based on His creatorship, His eternity, and His solitariness--there is no one like Him.

God defines what is right. If we do not like an action by God, or if we think God is not “fair,” that is irrelevant--whatever God says is right, is right--“Let God be true and every man a liar . . .” (Romans 3:4). Whatever God does, is, by definition, right. We do not have any basis upon which to challenge any action of His, because His is the only viewpoint that counts (Romans 9:11-21; Daniel 4:34-35).

God’s rulership is universal. It is not confined by time or place. God sovereignly rules the affairs of nations. He is not waiting to see what the latest political developments are going to be--he is arranging the circumstances of the universe to fit His purposes. He does not cause the sinful actions of men and nations in this, nor does He make people act like robots. Just how He rules is mysterious, but we know that He does it by intervention in history (Acts 17:26-27; Isaiah 46:9-11).

Psalms 115:3 Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him. (NIV)

Psalms 135:6 The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths. (NIV) Attribute #2--God is Holy

Holy is a Bible term that means “set apart.” God is separate from all other things, and is 100% pure in everything. He is set apart because of who He is. His very nature and attributes set Him apart as unique from all else, and Holiness is, in a sense, His central attribute. Like the hub of a giant wheel, His Holiness defines the infinite degree of His other perfections. Is God sovereign? Yes, and He is perfectly so, infinitely so--He is set apart in the perfection of His sovereignty. Is God loving? Yes, and His love is perfect and completely surpasses any other love by any other creature. Is God omnipotent and omniscient? Yes, and His power and knowledge are infinite, again, setting Him apart from all His creatures. Revelation 15:4 says of God “. . . You alone are Holy.” Moses, in his song says “. . . Who among the ‘gods’ is like you, O LORD. . . majestic in Holiness.” Eternity will be a joyous celebration of the Holy God. We get a glimpse of the scene in heaven by the visions of Isaiah and the aged apostle John, as well as those of the book of Psalms:

Revelation 4:8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.” (NIV)

Isaiah 6:1-3 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. (Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” (NIV) Psalms 99:9 Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his holy mountain, for the LORD our God is holy. (NIV) Psalms 33:21 In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. (NIV) Psalms 77:13 Your ways, O God, are holy. What god is so great as our God? (NIV) Psalms 89:18 Indeed, our shield belongs to the LORD, our king to the Holy One of Israel. (NIV) Psalms 105:3 Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. (NIV)

Psalms 145:21 My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD. Let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever. (NIV) Attribute #3--God is Omnipotent

God is all-powerful. The wags and lovers of arguments have much fun with this one, asking ridiculous questions like “If God is Omnipotent, can he make a mountain so big that He can’t lift it?”

If He can, then He isn't all powerful, because He can't lift it, and if He can't, then He isn't all-powerful because He can't make the mountain so big He can't lift it." Of course, the answer is that the all-powerful God is infinite, and there is no limit to His infinity! The armchair "philosopher's" question tries to impose on God a set of circumstances based on human logic and reason, like the false human standard of "fairness." The fact is, whatever God wants to accomplish, He can accomplish! There is no limit to His might! Divine Sovereignty expresses God's RIGHT to do whatever He pleases, Omnipotence expresses His ABILITY.

Isaiah 43:13 Yes, and from ancient days I am he. No one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it?" (NIV) Job 42:2 I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. (NIV) Attribute #4--God is Omniscient

God knows everything. Again, our little minds have difficulty even fathoming the breadth and depth of that statement. God knows things that we cannot even conceive--He knows our thoughts, our sins, our innermost desires (Hebrews 4:13), and He knows our destiny. God is, says the Psalmist, of "infinite understanding" (Psalms 147:4-5) Nothing can be hidden from Him (Job 34:21-23).

God also has foreknowledge, which is a concept with two aspects, prescience and preacquaintanceship. Prescience refers to God's knowledge of events, situations, and persons in general, before they happen or come into being.

Isaiah 42:9 See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you. (NIV)

Daniel 2:19-23; Daniel 2:27-28 During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven and said: "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him. I thank and praise you, O God of my fathers: You have given me wisdom and power, you have made known to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king."

Daniel replied, "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. (NIV)

Preacquaintanceship refers to God's personal foreknowledge of His People. He knows them in an intimate, personal sense--He does not just know about them He knows them.

Jeremiah 1:5 Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations. (NIV)

Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (NIV)

Romans 11:2-5 God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah-- how he appealed to God against Israel: "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"? And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who

have not bowed the knee to Baal.” So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. (NIV)

1 Peter 1:1-2 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. (NIV) Attribute #5--God is Immutable

It is a constant with life--things change, people change. A man leaves the woman who has been his companion for many years--"people change," he says. An executive who has worked faithfully for a company for 20 years is let go for no apparent reason, "times have changed," says the person who fires her. Fashion changes, music changes, politics change--everything and everyone changes, except God. God does not change. He may differentiate His manifestations to men; He may reveal mysteries previously concealed (Ephesians 3:7-11); He may even speak anthropomorphically (that \$100-dollar word means, "as if He were human," when He speaks anthropomorphically, God uses human terms in order to be understood), but God does not change in His essence--He is eternally the same. This also applies to the Son of God, the God-man Christ Jesus, and to the Spirit as well. But what about Christ becoming a man (see chapter 5)? Is this not a change? Not in the way that God defines a change (and His definition is the only one that counts). He did not change in His essence, only in the way He manifested Himself to mankind--He was the "lamb slain from the foundation of the world," Job called God "my Redeemer," many years before His incarnation (coming in the flesh).

Malachi 3:6 "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. (NIV)

James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. (NIV)

Hebrews 1:10-12 He also says, "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end." (NIV) Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (NIV)

Deuteronomy 33:27 The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemy before you, saying, 'Destroy him!' (NIV) Attribute #6--God is Wrathful This is a solemn topic for discussion, but one which we cannot avoid. The idea of an all-powerful Being Who gets mad is scary. We know that we are fallible; we know that we do things that are contrary to righteousness. The notion that we may have to answer for those faults, and worse, for specific sins, to a God Who possesses wrath is the stuff of which nightmares are made. On this topic, the author can think of no better commentary on the Wrath of God than that written by A. W. Pink:

". . . that the wrath of God is a Divine perfection is plainly demonstrated by what we read in Psalms 95:11 'unto whom I swear in My wrath.' There are two occasions of God's 'swearing': in making promises (Genesis 22:16); and in pronouncing judgments (Deuteronomy 1:34 ff.) In the former, He swears in mercy to His children; in the latter, He swears to deprive a wicked generation of its

murmuring and unbelief. An oath is for solemn confirmation (Hebrews 6:16). In Genesis 22:16, God says, 'By myself have I sworn. . . .' In Psalms 89:35, He declares, 'Once have I sworn by my holiness.' While in Psalms 95:11, He affirms 'I swear in my wrath.' Thus the great Jehovah Himself appeals to His 'wrath' as a perfection equal to His 'holiness'; He swears by the one as much as by the other! Again, as in Christ 'dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily' (Colossians 2:9), and as all the Divine perfections are illustriously displayed by Him (John 1:18), therefore do we read of 'the wrath of the Lamb.' (Revelation 6:19)." (The Attributes of God) The people who populate Modern Western civilization hate the concept of a God who possesses wrath. All people want to know about God (if, indeed they want to know anything at all) is about His love. Men create in their minds the concept of a God who is all love and nothing else--they make an idol in their heads. The Bible, however, is absolute about the fact that God is a God of wrath. As we will see in chapters 4 and 6, God's wrath is the reason for the necessity of the Gospel (Romans 1:16-18)--atonement and salvation by grace are required because of God's righteous wrath against sin. For the believer, deliverance from wrath is our great hope (1 Thessalonians 1:10), and God's wrath is turned aside (propitiated) for believers by the Blood of Christ (Romans 3:25-26; Romans 5:8-9). God's wrath against sin and sinners is so great that He sent His Son to die in the place of those who were to be redeemed--no lesser sacrifice would do. If we deny wrath, we essentially deny the gospel.

Attribute #7--God is Love

Having just written that God is a God of wrath, we turn to the other side of the coin, and speak of His love. For many, it is contradictory to speak of God being wrathful and yet being a God of love, but the Bible is full of both concepts about Him. Again, A.W. Pink:

There are many today who talk about the love of God, who are total strangers to the God of love. The Divine love is commonly regarded as a species of amiable weakness, a sort of good-natured indulgence; it is reduced to a mere sickly sentiment, patterned after human emotion. Now the truth is that on this, as on everything else, our thoughts need to be formed and regulated by what is revealed thereon in Holy Scripture. (The Attributes of God) The love of God is really more than just an attribute; it is part of His essence. In a general sense, God loves everyone (and everything) He has created. In John 3:16 "for God so loved the world," the word for "world" is the Greek word, kosmos, which in a general sense, refers to the whole universe. For instance, God sends His rain upon the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45). Some measure of caring and protection extends to the race, except where God chooses not to mollify and restrain the natural effects of our sin and rebellion. But there is a distinction between His universal care for all creation and His special love for His People.

1 Timothy 4:10 (and for this we labor and strive), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe. (NIV)

Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad--in order that God's purpose in election might stand, not by works but by him who calls--she was told,

Romans 9:11-13 "The older will serve the younger." Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." (NIV)

We do not deserve the love of God--it is unmerited and "uninfluenced"(Pink)--we cannot earn it. God exercises the expression of His love according to His sovereign will, not according to our actions, for as members of a rebel race, we really deserve nothing.

Deuteronomy 7:7-8 The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (NIV) 1 John 4:19 We love because he first loved us. (NIV) The love of God is Eternal, like His immutability, it never wavers, changes, or dies. The supreme act of God's great love was in sending His own Son to die in the place of condemned sinners. We cannot imagine the horror of Christ, the Son of God and God the Son, as He faced the cross--not the physical sufferings so much as the fact that He, the perfect, Holy, unblemished Son of God, would take the guilt of our sins upon His own shoulders and face the wrath of His own Father. Such love is unspeakable (see Chapter 5). Given this great sacrifice, this great love, this great condescension, nothing can separate a redeemed person from the love of God.

Jeremiah 31:3 The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with lovingkindness. (NIV)

Ephesians 1:4-5 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- (NIV) This is the doctrine of God's Love--but there is more to it. I am not, by nature, an emotional man, but there is something about the love of God that raises passions from deep within my soul that defy description. I cannot conceive of One so loving that He would leave the glories of heaven, walk in my shoes for 30 years, and then die for me. I cannot imagine a Being so merciful that He would as the song says, "look beyond my fault and see my need." The love of God is not some sickly sentimental thing that is like the cotton-candy love humans express to one another--it is not here today and gone tomorrow. If you grasp the scope and power of God's Love, and know the eternal significance of His grace and mercy through the Cross (see Chapters 5 and 6), there is no force on earth, no tragedy of human life, and no sin in your own past that can take away the sweetness of His love or the joy of His fellowship. The love of God is a treasure beyond price for those who know Him. Many years ago, as a young believer, I wrote a lyric which describes the eternal, powerful Love of God;

Before the world was made, Jesus loved me.

Before creation's day, He cared.

He knew my sin, He knew it all, He knew that I would reject His call, But He loved me, He saved me, He cared. When I was lost in Sin, Jesus loved me. When I profaned His name, He cared.

He bore my sin, He took my blame, Wicked men brought him to shame (including me), He loved me, He saved me, He cared. When I refused to hear, Jesus loved me. When I closed my ear, He cared.

He gently broke my wicked will, His Spirit strove with me until He found me He saved me, He cared.

These sentiments still pale beside the burning, passionate Light of His Presence--when the world has dealt us a blow, when all seems dark and we can see no light, it is then that the Lord Himself will impress on our minds and hearts the depth of His love. It is when we feel the utter joy of knowing that we are a soul set free by His sacrifice, and that nothing can keep us from His love that we can understand the utter awesome power of the words of Paul.

Romans 8:35-39 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NIV)

Summary This is the Absolute God of the Bible--He does as He pleases, he accomplishes what He sets out to do, no plan of His is thwarted by the whims and decisions of mankind. He is wrathful against our rebellion, yet loving beyond our imagination. In one of the most concise and profound statements ever written on the subject of The Absolute God, A W. Pink said:

"The 'god' of this twentieth century no more resembles the Supreme Sovereign of Holy Writ than does the dim flickering of a candle the glory of the midday sun. The 'god' who is now talked about in the average pulpit, spoken of in the ordinary Sunday School, mentioned in much of the religious literature of the day, and preached in most of the so-called Bible conferences, is the figment of human imagination, an invention of maudlin sentimentality. The heathen outside of the pale of Christendom form 'gods' out of wood and stone, while the millions of heathen inside Christendom manufacture a 'god' out of their own carnal mind. In reality, they are but atheists, for there is no other possible alternative between an absolutely supreme God, and no God at all. a 'god' whose will is resisted, whose designs are frustrated, whose purpose is checkmated, possesses no title to Deity, and so far from being a fit object of worship, merits naught but contempt." (Attributes of God) See Appendix 5 for study questions and projects for Chapter 3.

05 The Trinity

The Trinity

By:

Charles T. Buntin , M.S., M.A.R.

I was not looking forward to the next 45 days. As happens to military families everywhere, I was going away on Uncle Sam's business for about six weeks, and with a young wife and three small children at home, that was no fun. There was one thing about this trip, however, that made it bearable--I was going to have a Christian roommate. I was looking forward to the opportunity to fellowship and study with another believer, and I was definitely not going to miss having to put up with the drunken carousing of former roomies.

After performing our duties and getting settled in the first day, my roommate, Bill, and I began our first nightly devotional study. About five minutes into the study, an amazing thing became apparent to me--Bill had been taught a false doctrine of the Trinity in his church. I was appalled--he went to a large, powerful, Baptist church that was renowned for Biblical preaching, missionary work, and evangelism. I knew that he attended Bible studies through the week as well as the normal Sunday morning and Sunday night preaching services and Sunday school. He had been converted in this church three years earlier--how could he not know the orthodox teaching on the Trinity?

Over the next few days, I showed him what the Bible taught about the nature of the Triune God, and he came to see the truth. I also found out how he had come to the odd view he'd had previously. In three years of intense fellowship and study in a large, conservative, dynamic Baptist church, he had never once heard the Trinity mentioned. His understanding had come from erroneous answers his Sunday School teacher had given him when Bill brought the topic up in private conversation. In our 45 days together, we shared many things, and I found out that the "renowned" church really only stressed John 3:16, tithing, behaving, and the second coming of Christ--important doctrines to be sure, but far from the whole truth.

Throughout the history of the church, the enemies of God have attacked the Biblical teaching concerning His Nature, particularly the Deity of the Son of God. The doctrine we touch upon in this chapter is one of the most attacked (and best and most consistently defended) of all the major teachings of the Faith: God is Triune, eternally existing as Father, Son, and Spirit (three persons or personalities that are personally distinct)--yet there is only one God. This has been called the doctrine of the TRINITY since the days of the early church, but the early church wars and the philosophical debates surrounding that doctrine, have obscured the fact that the doctrine of the Trinity is solidly supported by Holy Scripture, and is directly drawn from the Scriptures. The simple statement we have made, stripped of the technically philosophical terms, expresses what the Bible everywhere teaches about the subject. I Frankly don't understand it for one second. However, I recognize fully that the Bible teaches these truths, so I believe them and teach them whether I understand them or not. Therefore, the key presupposition we must have as we approach the

doctrine of the Trinity is this: BELIEVE WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES, AND DON'T TRY TO UNDERSTAND IT. Think of it--this doctrine speaks of the very essential nature of God, how can we expect to understand it?

Indeed, nearly every cult that has departed from the evangelical Christian faith has either begun from someone trying to explain the Trinity or a perversion of that doctrine has been close to the center of the movement. Beginning with the Gnostics, who were around when the apostles were on earth, all the way through to the cults that have sprung up from the Jesus people of the 60's and the tele-evangelists of today, denial of, or perversion of the doctrine of the Trinity has been the common factor in nearly all of them.

* Today, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and The Way deny the Godhood of Jesus and the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit.

* The Mormons and the Armstrong cults (the Worldwide Church of God and its offshoots) believe in a refined form of polytheism (belief in more than one God).

* Many Pentecostal groups believe in a perversion of the Trinity which has God "pretending" to be different persons at different times, called "oneness," or "Jesus only." (Historically this is called modalism, identical to the ancient 1500-year-old cult of Sabellianism).

* The view of the entire orthodox church, including evangelicals, Eastern Orthodox, and Roman Catholics, has always been that denial of the doctrine of the Trinity constitutes departure from "the faith once delivered to the saints." (Jude 1:3) In discussing this important doctrine, I will try to avoid a dependence on technical theological language, but will instead concentrate on the simple statements of the Bible. Because of the vast importance of this doctrine, and the need to cover all the bases, I'll give you a lot of verses to look up on your own. The doctrine of the Trinity has these elements: (1) There is only One True God (monotheism); (2) There is a plurality of persons within God, and this plurality is not imaginary, pretended, or temporary; (3) The Father is God (4) The Son is God (5) The Holy Spirit is God. Being somewhat of an amateur mathematician, I have learned to express this as a mathematical formula that has no real meaning in human math: $1 + 1 + 1 = 1$ (3). That is, the sum of the three is still only one, yet there is a "threeness" that the Bible expresses clearly without ever attempting to explain.

Monotheism:

There is Only One True God

Many of the enemies of Christianity, including Muslims, Jews, and cults such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, have charged that the Trinity constitutes paganism, polytheism, the worship of more than one "god." However, the foundation of the doctrine of God's tri-unity is that there is only One God. It is emphatically taught in both the Old and New Testaments. The statement of faith of Israel was (and is) "hear oh, Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD." (Deuteronomy 6:4). When asked, Jesus said more than once that this was the most important of all the commandments (Mark 12:28-34). The absoluteness of this monism of God is stated again and again in the Old Testament: ". . . there is no god with me" (Deuteronomy 32:39); ". . . I am the LORD, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:18) ". . . before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me" (Isaiah 43:10). Similarly, the New Testament expresses the oneness of God: "There is one God

and one mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5); “. . . and this is eternal life, that they might know thee, the only True God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent . . .” (John 17:3). In the Old Testament, God proclaimed Himself under many names, each expressing different attributes of Him, but the characteristic name He used with His covenant people was YHWH (or JHVH, depending on how you express the Hebrew letters in English), a word with no vowels. This has been transliterated into English as either Jehovah or Yahweh. The reliable English Bible translations universally translate it in English as either LORD or GOD, using all capital letters to indicate that it is the NAME. Jehovah defined His Name to Moses in Exodus 3:14: “. . . I AM THAT I AM: and He said: Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me to you.” “I AM THAT I AM” . . . Jehovah owes His existence to no one or nothing--He is the self-existent One, The Only True God.

Plurality:

Within the One True God Exists a Plurality of Persons In light of the strong declarations the Bible makes on monotheism, this is a perplexing assertion. However, the Bible is just as plain on this point. There is most definitely only One God, however, there is also a plurality, a “threeness” about God that the Bible expresses, which we cannot define in human terms in light of His one-ness. First, there are plural terms and names applied to God. The most prevalent in the Bible is the Hebrew Elohim. The Cults have invented all sorts of spurious reasons why the Bible might use such a plural term to describe the One God, but a few words from that old saint John Gill should put them to rest:

“Now Moses might have made use of other names of God, in his account of the creation; as his name Jehovah, by which he made himself known to him, and to the people of Israel; or Eloah, the singular of Elohim, which is used by him (Deuteronomy 32:15-16) and in the book of Job so frequently; so that it was not want of singular names of God, nor the barrenness of the Hebrew language which obliged him to use a plural word; it was no doubt of choice, and with design . . .” (Body of Divinity, vol. 1, pp. 187-88).

Other plural terms used for God in the Old Testament include panim (equivalent to the Greek prosopa, for “faces,” “persons,” or “presence,”) which is found in Exodus 33:14-15, Psalms 27:8-9, and Deuteronomy 4:37; the literal Hebrew for Maker in Job 35:10, Psalms 149:2, and Isaiah 54:5, is the plural, Makers; for creator in Ecclesiastes 12:1, the literal Hebrew is Creators. God also is described with plural pronouns, as in “. . . Let us make man in our image.” (Genesis 1:25), see also Genesis 11:6-8 and Isaiah 6:8. Finally, in Isaiah 48:16-17 is a statement that, read in the light of the New Testament, is as plain a statement of the Trinity as anywhere in the Bible, as the Lord GOD (Adonai Jehovah) the Spirit, and the Redeemer are mentioned in the same context as separate persons. Of course, there are many Scriptures in the New Testament which speak of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the same context, and with an obvious view to distinction between them. In John chapters 14-16, there are repeated references to this distinction. The most striking is the Baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:16-17, where we hear the Father’s voice, see the Spirit descend in the form of a dove, and see also the Son standing there in the water. The Father is God This should go without saying, but for those modalists who reject the permanence of the first person of the Trinity, we say (a) Jesus is repeatedly called the Son of God, therefore God is a Father, and the Father is God. (b) There is no Scripture that even hints that the Father ever

ceases to be a separate person. (c) There are many Scriptures which establish that there is a distinction between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The problem here, as pointed out decisively by Gregory A. Boyd in his book, *Oneness Pentecostals and the Trinity*, is that when people approach Scripture with a preconceived idea (such as the false doctrine that there is no distinction between Father and Son), they find things in the Bible which are not there!

Another difficulty (prominent among Arian-type cults--those who deny that Jesus is God) is that many people misunderstand the relationship of the Father to Jesus Christ. The reason for the confusion among some is that they concentrate on statements made by and about Jesus during His period of humiliation on earth. The eternal relationship between Father and Son is one between equals (John 17:1-5, see how He talks to the Father, and Hebrews 1:1-14, where the Father orders the angels to worship Him. Such statements as “. . . my Father is greater than I.” (John 14:28) must be understood in the light of Jesus’ purpose in His earthly ministry. In Hebrews, after beginning by expounding on the exalted and absolute divinity of the Son (1:1-14) the apostle states, “but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower (or, for a little while lower) than the angels for the suffering of death . . .” (see also Php 2:5-11). Jesus came to earth to accomplish eternal redemption. His essential Godhood was veiled, hidden, in flesh. But, as our next point states:

Jesus Christ is God

He is not just the Son of God, but He is God the Son. This is the foundation doctrine of Christianity--Jesus Himself said “. . . If you believe not that I AM he, you shall die in your sins.” (John 8:24) (Note: the word “he” is not in the original.) This is not just a speculative, philosophical teaching--unless God redeems us Himself, we cannot be redeemed (see Psalms 49:7; Psalms 49:15)! First, we know He is God because He is called God. (John 1:1) Indeed, in John 20:28, where Thomas calls Jesus “My Lord and my God , . . .” the literal Greek rendering is “. . .the Lord of me, and the God of me.” Hebrews 1:4-14 is a most remarkable Scripture passage, as Old Testament prophets are quoted to show (1) God calls Christ His Son, (b) He tells angels to worship Christ, an honor belonging to Jehovah alone (Isaiah 42:8), (c) He calls the Son, God. He declares that the kingdom of Christ is eternal. The next reason we know that the Son is eternal God Himself, is that He is worshipped. Isaiah 42:8, Exodus 20:3, and many other Old Testament passages forbid the worship of anyone but Jehovah God Himself--yet we see in many passage that Christ is worshipped (examples--Php 2:9-10, Acts 7:59-60, Revelation 5:6-14, which is worship in heaven itself.

Another reason we know He is God is that the works of God are ascribed to Him. Creation (John 1:3, Hebrews 1:2) Preservation of the universe (Colossians 1:17, Hebrews 1:2-3), the sending of the Spirit of God (John 16:7) the forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:30-31) and the giving of eternal life (John 17:2-3) are just a few examples of the divine works He did.

He demonstrated His power over nature, over disease, demon powers, even over death, and on two occasions, he let the veil of His humanity up a bit. On the mount of Transfiguration, He allowed the disciples with Him to see His Glorious being as it really was, and when the soldiers came to get Him in the Garden, He knocked them to the ground by saying “. . . “I AM.” (The word he, which follows “I AM” in most translations is not in the original) (John 18:4-6). Truly He did the works of God.

Yet another reason we know that The Son is God is He possesses divine attributes. The Bible says He has Self existence (John 5:26), Eternity (John 1:2), Omniscience (John 1:48), Omnipresence (Matthew 18:20--note that He was on earth, and in the flesh, and used the present tense, showing that He had this attribute even in His earthly ministry), Immutability (Hebrews 13:8), Sovereignty (Matthew 11:27), and Omnipotence (Matthew 28:18-20). There is a strong statement of the absolute Deity of Messiah in Jeremiah 23:5-6:

“. . . Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the Earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

Here we have Jehovah God clearly speaking, and just as plainly speaking of Messiah, and the Name He gives Messiah is Jehovah-Tsidkenu-- the sovereign Jehovah calls the Messiah Jehovah! The Holy Spirit is God (Many of the notes for this part of the lesson come from the excellent book The Holy Spirit by A.W. Pink.)

Included in this statement is the assumption that the Holy Spirit is a Person, not a force, influence, etc. Many cults and sects deny His personality. He is turned into some kind of “divine electricity,” a sort of impersonal force for God and good in the world. This, of course, goes along with their denial of the Trinity. However, when we look at the Bible, we find that He has personal qualities ascribed to Him by Scripture--such as understanding and knowledge (1 Corinthians 2:10-11), will (1 Corinthians 12:11), love (Romans 15:30), and grief (Ephesians 4:30). Furthermore, He can be lied to (Acts 5:3); He can be tempted, put to the test (Acts 5:9). We also see personal actions ascribed to Him by Scripture: He speaks (1 Timothy 4:1; Revelation 2:7); He teaches (Luke 12:12; John 14:26); He commands (Acts 13:2); and, He intercedes (Romans 8:26). The Bible applies personal characterizations to Him--He is called Comforter (John 14:16), Witness (Hebrews 10:15, Romans 8:16), Justifier and Sanctifier (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Finally, in many places in Scripture, personal pronouns are used of Him (John 14:26; John 16:7). Not only is the Holy Spirit a person, but the Holy Spirit is God, just as the Father is God, and the Son is God, in some way One True God, but also in a way unfathomable to our human minds, a separate person within the Trinity. In the Bible, the Holy Spirit is called God (Acts 5:3-5; 1 Corinthians 3:16--Compare with 2 Corinthians 6:16). The Holy Spirit is also called Jehovah--It was Jehovah who spoke by the prophets (Luke 1:68-70) yet Peter says it was the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20, also compare 2 Samuel 23:2-3 with Acts 1:16). It was Jehovah that Israel rebelled against in the wilderness (Psalms 78:4; Psalms 78:17-18), but Isaiah says it was the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 63:10). In Deuteronomy 32:12, Jehovah led Israel, but in Isaiah 63:14, It says the Holy Spirit led them. Jehovah commissioned Isaiah the prophet (Isaiah 6:6-8), but Paul says (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) that it was the Holy Spirit who commissioned the prophet (Acts 28:25-26).

Throughout the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit demonstrates the attributes of God in His actions, major and minor holiness (Romans 1:4; cf. Exodus 15:11), Eternality (Hebrews 9:14), Omnipresence (Psalms 139:7), Omniscience (1 Corinthians 2:10-11) Omnipotence (Luke 1:35; Micah 3:8; Isaiah 40:28), and Sovereignty (Matthew 4:1--He led Jesus!) (John 3:8; 1 Corinthians 12:11; Acts 13:2-4; Acts 20:28). Finally, the Holy Spirit does the works of God.: He performed the works of Creation

(Job 26:13; Job 33:4; Genesis 1:2), Providence (Isaiah 40:13-15; Acts 16:6-7), Inspiration (2 Peter 1:20-21), Anointing the Savior (Isaiah 61:1; John 3:34), and Raising the Savior (Romans 8:11). The doctrine of the Trinity reveals to us a God that is vastly different from the “gods” of the pagans, but also very different from the traditional God of modern day Judaism, Islam, and of the Arian and Sabellian cults that flourish today. (The historic term for antitrinitarian monotheism is “Monarchian.” Whatever else the similarities between them and Christianity, at least two things are missing from Monarchian religions--relationship and redemption.

1. Relationship--The austere, alone, “god” that these groups worship is really incapable of relationship. He has no peer to relate to, and there is no way he can relate to mankind except as judge, benefactor, or object of worship. The Triune God, on the other hand, has experienced fellowship within Himself eternally--relationship comes naturally to Him. Through the God-man, Christ Jesus, mankind actually enters in to fellowship and relationship with the Almighty God. The Father is our Father; Christ is our adopted Brother, and the Spirit is our Comforter. We are loved, we walk in fellowship with God, who is the expert in true fellowship.

2. Redemption--The Monarchian religions have no way to accomplish bona fide (real) redemption. Their god forgives or offers mercy arbitrarily, he bypasses judgment simply because he wants to, or because he has agreed to, based on a certain set of conditions. Sin is really not dealt with in this way--there is no payment for it, their god just disregards it. There is no justice in this type of system. In Biblical Christianity, however, every sin is paid for (see Chapter 6), because an infinite Being, the God-man, died as a substitute for sinners. All those who become His by faith partake in His price of redemption. Those who do not become His pay their own penalty--eternally. The mystery of the Cross (see Chapter 5) is that God (The Father) poured out His wrath on God (The Son), yet there is only one God. It is a paradox to our minds, but it is the only way redemption could be carried out with justice. Every wrong that has ever been done by anyone against God or people is avenged, justice is settled, and the accounts of the universe are balanced. No Trinity--no redemption.

Christian, we worship a Triune God. We cannot understand it; we marvel at it; there is no explanation for it--but it is the Truth. Anything less is not Christianity.

See Appendix 6 for study questions and projects for Chapter 4.

06 The Person of Christ

The Person of Christ

By:

Charles T. Buntin , M.S., M.A.R.

There are only a few things that make the Christian faith truly distinct from the world's religions. The three most prominent differences are the nature of the Absolute Triune God, the Person and Work of the founder of the faith and the way of salvation. We've already looked at the nature of God; in Chapters 6 and 7, we will outline the drastic difference between the Faith and the world's religions as to the doctrine of what Christians call salvation, but here we will talk about the Founder. The founders of the world's religions made various claims. "I have found the way," says one, "I have seen the way, says another." Perhaps the message was, "God has shown me the way," or "I can tell you the way." In Christ, however, we have One who says, "I Am the way." In fact, Christ made the most remarkable statement any man could make--coming from a mere man, it would be a boast of fantastic proportions. He made a claim which makes Him the most narrow-minded Person who ever breathed. He said , "I Am the Way the Truth, and the Life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me." It was statements like this one and many others which led C. S. Lewis to propose the "trilemma" about Jesus Christ. He said that for those who want to say Jesus is not who He claims to be, but is still a good teacher, etc., statements like John 14:6 pose an insurmountable problem. Because of what He said, He was either a liar, a lunatic, or Lord of Glory. The greatest heresies of the history of the church were about the Person of Christ, and the greatest heresies of today are no different. In fact, they are not really new heresies, just old lies in a new outfit.

We looked at the Godhood of Christ in the last chapter, so in this one, we will look at the other aspects of His Person as our Lord and Redeemer.

Part 1: The Pre-Existent Christ The One theologians call "the divine Logos (Word)," the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, our Savior Jesus Christ, did not come into existence when He was born of the virgin Mary. That was His Incarnation (coming in flesh). He was, as the prophet Micah said, ". . .The One to be ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting . . ." (Micah 5:2, NKJV) He was pre-existent.

Christ's pre-existence is obvious from His Godhood. As God, He is Eternal and Immutable (Isaiah 9:6-7; Revelation 1:8; Hebrews 13:8; Hebrews 1:12; Psalms 102:27), so He always existed. There was never a time when He was not. ". . .In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. " (John 1:1) Christ's pre-existence is amply testified by Scripture--John 8:58; John 17:5; John 17:24; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 7:3; Revelation 22:13; Php 2:5-11--the Bible continually emphasizes it. We also see Him in the Old Testament, as His pre-existence is demonstrated by theophany, or Christophany . These two words, one applying to God generally speaking, and the other to the Son in particular, refer to a visible appearance of

God in the Old Testament.

Since it is a Bible teaching that no one has seen, or can see the Father Himself, (Exodus 33:1-23; John 1:18; 1 Timothy 1:17), most evangelical teachers ascribe all visible appearances of God in human or angelic form to the Son manifesting Himself prior to His incarnation. Judges 13:15-22; Zechariah 3:1-5; Exodus 3:16; and Genesis 18:1-33, are among many passages that Bible scholars believe are Christophanies. How do we tell from the Scriptures if a particular angelic manifestation is merely an angel, or if it is an appearance of the pre-existent Son? The following passage is a classic one that illustrates this.

Joshua 5:13-15 Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell face down to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so. (NIV) The underlined portion of the verse is the key to understanding this passage as an appearance of Christ before the Incarnation. The Commander of the LORD's army uses the same words that Jehovah uses when Moses came before the burning bush. That, and the Person's acceptance of worship, which is reserved for God alone, (Exodus 20:1-3) prove this to be a Christophany. There are many Christophanies in the Old Testament. Christ has always been--our Savior did not come into existence on the day of His birth--He came into flesh on that day.

Part 2:

God Incarnate--The Man Christ Jesus The Incarnation (Christ the Son of God coming into flesh) and the Virgin Birth (the way He came into flesh) are doctrines which cannot be understood logically or scientifically. They involve God acting outside the realm of natural law and intervening in human history in the most direct and personal way possible, by becoming part of it. The Incarnation and the Virgin Birth were part of the ancient promise given to the race about the release from the bondage of the race to Satan (who was the serpent depicted in Genesis 3:14-15). The promise was reiterated to Abraham that from his seed "all the families of the earth," would be blessed (Genesis 12:3). Job revealed his faith that ". . . I know my Redeemer liveth, and in the latter days shall stand upon the earth." The Purpose of His coming was the redemption of His people--all those who would ever believe in Him.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (NIV)

Hebrews 2:14-18 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil-- and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (NIV)

Galatians 4:4-5 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. (NIV)

Romans 8:3-4 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. (NIV) The Fulfillment of the promises and prophecies came when the angel Gabriel announced His coming birth to the Virgin Mary. The doctrine of the Virgin Birth has been attacked by critics inside and outside the church. Sometimes the critics try to slyly suggest that the words translated "virgin" in the Bible can mean something other than "virgin." However, the words of Mary herself "I know not a man," (KJV) or in 20th century common language, "I have never had sexual relations with a man," make plain that she was a virgin, and that the Incarnation and birth of the Savior was a miracle of God.

Luke 1:34-35 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" [Literally, "since I know not a man"] The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. (NIV) Paul and the apostle John both had profound comments on the mystery of the incarnation itself:

1 Timothy 3:16 Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory. (NIV)

John 1:14-18 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'" From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. (NIV)

And, it is very mysterious--how could the Holy, Immutable, Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent God become a man? The answer to the question "How?" is not given except in the equally mysterious words of Gabriel to Mary, quoted above--but it is true. Our inability to understand the Incarnation does not change the fact of it, any more than our inability to fully fathom all the forces of life and the universe changes them. Finally, the doctrine of the Incarnation was protected by some of the strongest warnings found in the New Testament--a person may be mistaken about a lot of things and still be a Christian, but a mistake in this area exposes false profession--if you do not believe that Jesus Christ is God in Flesh, you cannot be a Christian.

1 John 4:2-3 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. (NIV)

2 John 1:7-11 Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the Antichrist. Watch out that you do

not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work. (NIV)

Jude 1:3-4 Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord. (NIV) The humanity of Christ, the incarnate God-man, was Real Humanity--He was not a phantom; He was not a new type of being. He was "very God of very God," as the old statements of faith say, but He was fully and completely man as well. He went through the common experiences of manhood, He suffered the common discomforts, pains, and griefs of manhood, He suffered temptation, and He died a common criminal's death. He was in every way a man. (For examples, see Matthew 1:1; Matthew 12:23; Matthew 15:22; Matthew 21:9; Matthew 26:37; Mark 10:48; Mark 12:35; Luke 2:40; Luke 4:2; Luke 8:23; Luke 9:58; John 4:6; John 7:42; Revelation 5:5.)

Some people think that the humanity of Christ necessitated that He have a sin nature and be innately sinful Himself. However, this is not the case at all. A sin nature is our inheritance if we are children of Adam, but it was not part of man's original makeup--God did not create the sin nature. Our sinfulness was a reaction, it was a result of the sin our representative headman, the first man, Adam. We are born sinful because Adam became sinful. Christ was the "second Adam," (1 Corinthians 15:45-49), not a son of Adam. Because of the Virgin Birth, He was "the seed of the woman," (See Genesis 3:14-15), and had no human father. As He had no human father, the sin of Adam and Adam's sin nature was not passed on to Him. He lived a Sinless life in every way. In the formulation of the old puritans, "He had no sin, knew no sin, and did no sin." Yet, as the next chapter tells us in detail, the beauty and mystery of The Faith is that this perfect God-man became sin and suffered its penalty for us.

Hebrews 4:14-15 "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. (NIV) See Appendix 8 for A Biblical and Theological Answer to the False Doctrine of Kenosis.

07 The Work of Christ

The Work of Christ

By:

Charles T. Buntin , M.S., M.A.R.

Part 1: The Christ of the Cross

Galatians 6:14 “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” (NIV) In the above passage in Galatians, Paul was opposing false teachers who had perverted the gospel by leaving out the essential message of the Cross and substituting a return to the Jewish ceremonial laws. They gloried in the flesh, in man’s religion, and not in the faith of the Scriptures, not in the Cross of Christ. Paul says they did it out of love for the world and out of the fear of men. So today, the false teachers of the new heresies have ignored, denied, diverted and perverted the message of the Cross, and have done so for the same reasons. A crucified Savior, dying for the real sins of real people is not popular. He makes us face our sin, and admit to its ugliness. He brings us face-to-face with our spiritual inability, and with the depth of the darkness of our souls. He requires of us to take up our own cross, to deny our selfish desires and live for Him as He died for us. This is not the gospel of ease and enjoyment that people seek to soothe their bruised egos. For believers today, we must glory in the Cross--in the true, biblical act, fact, doctrine, and way of life that emanates from the Cross, and we must live with reference to the world in the way that Paul describes here--the world is crucified to us, and we to the world. We must ask a series of provocative, searching questions about our faith:

- * What is the essential Act, Fact, Message, Meaning and Power of the Christian faith?
- * What is far more important than therapy, miracles, health, wealth, good self-esteem, or correct politics?
- * What event is the one fulcrum, the single pivot point of the history of the universe?
- * What event was the most important battle ever fought and won in the entire history of time?
- * What deed far surpasses all the deeds ever done, even creation itself?
- * What glorious act demonstrates the wrath, justice, sovereignty, truth, love, mercy, and power of God all at once?
- * What supreme, mysterious, glorious, awesome, Act of God is the only reason His people stand today, whole, saved, and testifying of God’s greatness? This act, fact, message, meaning and power of our faith is this (and we must personalize these statements to give them the full impact of their Biblical basis):

- * The Almighty Creator, Jehovah God Himself, God the Son, became flesh for me.
- * This God-Man lived a perfect life for me.
- * This Perfect Lamb of God demonstrated His own power over nature, sin, Satan, disease, and death for me.
- * This Ruler of the Universe Incarnate was arrested, beaten, tortured, convicted in a kangaroo court, and hung on a cross for me.
- * This Sinless Substitute took my sin upon Himself, suffered the equivalent of eternal Hell, and laid down His own life for me.
- * This Fountain of Life arose from the dead for me.
- * This is the message of the Work of our Saviour on the Cross--THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIANITY IS THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

Human Sinfulness Our text in Galatians says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ." Before we can plunge into the beauty of the divine sacrifice for us, we have to ask--"Why?" What made the Cross necessary? The answer is, "our sins made it necessary." In this feel-good age of "psycho-babble" with its avoidance of blame, guilt, and personal responsibility, when the usual response to any investigation is the limp "Mistakes were made," Sin is not a popular concept. In fact, even in many church circles, the Sinfulness of mankind is one of the great neglected truths. We need "healing," we need "counseling," we need all kinds of therapeutic remedies, but far too many preachers and teachers avoid the first thing we need to do--face up to the fact of our sinfulness. The Bible is plain about the universal nature of sin's effect on the human race, as per these examples:

Romans 3:10-11; Romans 3:23 there is none righteous, no, not one . . .there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. . . . All have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God. (KJV)

Romans 3:19 Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (KJV)

And, it was this sinfulness that made the Cross necessary. Our first parents were created holy and sinless, but with an ability to choose. In the Garden of Eden, our first parents chose to rebel against God's rules. The Bible teaches that Adam, as the representative head of that first family, passed two things on to us, his children.

- * First, we have an inherited sin nature. We begin sinning as soon as we are born (Psalms 58:3)--any parent can tell you that you do not have to teach a child to sin, they come by it naturally.
- * Secondly, we inherit guilt from the sin of our representative head, Adam (Romans 5:12). This alone condemns us, and we add to that guilt by our own actions as soon as we enter the world. What is more, our sin nature renders us powerless to change our own situation! Because of our innate depravity, we are spiritually blind (2 Corinthians 4:3-4; 1 Corinthians 2:14); we are spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1-5); we cannot come to God on His terms, (John 6:44; John 6:65), and we will not come--in our human nature, we want no part of God and his ways (John 5:40). The bottom

line--because of our sin, WE ARE HOPELESSLY LOST WITHOUT CHRIST! By the standards of God's law, only the righteous will see heaven, and we are not righteous, for God's definition of righteous is perfection! What a helpless and hopeless state we are in without the Cross! The Nature of the Cross The nature of the Cross is that Christ died as a Substitute, a Satisfaction, and a Propitiation--He turns God's wrath away from those who deserve to be consumed by that wrath. The Christ of the Cross is our Substitute. The theological term for this is Substitutionary Atonement, and it is one of the most important aspects of the doctrine of the Cross. Christ actually died in the place of sinners--He specifically took the punishment that should have been theirs (2 Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 3:18).

How can this be possible, for the death of One to accomplish this? It is possible because He is infinite--He is God, and His blood sacrifice is of infinite worth. His hours of agony began in the garden the night before the crucifixion, and culminated in His death on the cross, when God the Father turned His back on God the Son as the Son bore our sins. His sacrifice for us as our substitute was the equivalent of all who would ever believe in Him (or who ever had believed in His promised coming) suffering eternal punishment. He endured all that in our place. The Christ of the Cross is our Satisfaction (of the Law's demands). The law of God demands perfect obedience to the law--Christ is the only One who ever lived who fulfilled that demand. The law demands just punishment for those who sin--He fulfilled that demand as well. The law has been upheld--it is satisfied.

Unlike the "gods" of the world's religions, who either disregard sin or forgive it capriciously, the God of the Bible can state that all the demands of His law have been met. (Galatians 3:13; Romans 3:31; Colossians 2:13-14,). The Christ of the Cross is our Propitiation. This \$50 theological term is a very important word. It means that Christ turns away God's righteous wrath against our sin and rebellion. (Romans 1:17; Romans 3:25-6, Romans 5:6-9). Christ has done it all by His sacrifice on our behalf--as the old hymn writers have said:

What can wash away my sin?--Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

What can make me whole again?--Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains!

And, can it be that I should gain, an interest in the Savior's blood?

Died He for me who caused His pain, for me, who Him to death pursued?

Amazing love! How can it be, that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

Yes, believers, as the text in Galatians 6:1-18 says, we Glory in the Cross!!! BUT THAT IS ONLY HALF OF OUR TEXT! The other half of our text says " . . . BY WHOM THE WORLD IS CRUCIFIED UNTO ME AND I UNTO THE WORLD." For the apostle Paul, and for any consistent believer, the Cross of Christ is the thing that rules the life. Our feelings about the world, our relationship with it, our walk in it, and our increasing detachment from its rule are all determined by the Cross. As far as Paul was concerned, the world was dead--the praise, advancements, approval of the world were not important . For the Apostle, as for every believer, the world was not his real home--but unlike many of us, he knew it, and he lived like it. Paul proved his allegiance to

the rule of the cross. He had made choices in his life; he had chosen the Gospel's Truth over family background, tradition, and riches.

Php 3:3-10 "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he have whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But, what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto His death;" As John Brown of Edinburgh said, it is that ". . . we view the world system as crucified, cursed, useless, of no influence, of no matter, of no importance to us at all. The world is not to be desired, listened to, followed, or worshipped."

1 John 2:15-17 Love not the world, neither the things in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. The second half of the text at the head of this chapter said, ". . . And I to the world." What does it mean to be crucified to the world? Does it mean to hide in a desert, to leave humanity behind, or to become a recluse of some type? No, it is a matter of your state of mind and way of life as you live in human society. Again, as John Brown of Edinburgh says, ". . .if I am following the way of the Cross, and preaching the Cross, and if the Cross of Christ and the ways of the Lord are first in my life, then I am crucified to the world. It is that they view me as accursed, dead, useless, of no influence, of no importance, etc." It may be that not all the world will view us this way, but as they come into full awareness of what makes us tick, they will either come under the awe of the Cross and be attracted to Christ, or they will account us to be fools.

Men who preach the Cross with words, and in the way they live their daily lives will not be loved by many of the people of this world or this world's system. Women who order their home, their own priorities, their associations, and who raise their young ones in accordance with the teachings of the Scripture will not win the praise of their worldly neighbors. Young people who live for Christ, who speak of Christ, who listen to what the Bible has to say about Truth, and who reject the worldly philosophy taught in the public schools and colleges will be thought odd, and will be rejected by the worldly arbiters of taste and "coolness." A preacher who preaches what the Bible has to say, and who cares not for the opinion of the masses, or of civil or religious authorities, will not be hailed and toasted by the princes of this earth. A Church that is valiant for Truth and fervent in its preaching of the Gospel and ministry to the lost will not be popular with the enemies of the Cross, even if those enemies claim to be friends. People of God, Christ calls us to live for Him, if necessary to die for Him, and to follow Him in every way.

Part 2: The Resurrected Christ The prophets and founders of the world's religions are dead--often, their tombs are shrines. The great but twisted minds that conceived the great humanistic

philosophies that have dominated the 20th century are also dead. Most of the scientists and inventors who laid the foundations for our miracles of 20th century technology are dead. Death is the way of the human race, as the Bible says, "It is appointed unto men once to die . . ." All must leave this life, never to return--all, that is, except One. The joyous victory shout of the Christian church is, "Christ is risen!" The equally joyous answer to that shout of victory, "He is risen indeed!" So have believers greeted each other on Resurrection Sunday for nearly 2, 000 years, and so we shall greet one another until He returns! The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the other side of His death on the Cross--as Paul said in Romans 4:25, "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." Jesus Christ was crucified in our place--He bore our penalty, took our sins upon Himself, and laid down His life for us. In the resurrection, however, is the proof of God's acceptance of His Son's sacrifice. ". . . and who through the Spirit of Holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 1:4) As Paul makes plain in his beautiful and powerful defense of the doctrine of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians, ". . . if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins." (1 Corinthians 15:17) Without the resurrected Savior, Christianity is useless and foolish. Have pity on those liberal theologians who either do not believe in a literal resurrection, or who use existential philosophy to say it is not important whether or not the resurrection was literal--it is a pointless exercise to have a "Christianity" without a risen Christ. The Bible teaches that His resurrection was a literal bodily resurrection. He was not a phantom; His resurrection was not "spiritual" only; His resurrection is not an allegory in celebration of life, or any other such nonsense. He literally rose from the grave in a body that was real and physical. You could touch Him, He was recognizable to those who had known Him before the crucifixion and He still bore the scars of His torment Luke 24:36-42 tells how He appeared to two of His followers; indeed, each of the Gospels has several factual incidents about His resurrection and His appearances afterward. The resurrection is mentioned and stressed throughout the New Testament, but as we quoted above, the most important passage in understanding its meaning for us is in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58--the whole chapter. The heart of the chapter, however are verses 12-25:

1 Corinthians 15:12-25 "But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.(NIV)

Christian, you “serve a risen Savior,” as one favorite hymn says, and as another song exalts, “Because He lives,” you can live your life with confidence that His sacrifice on your behalf has been accepted, and He is always there to help you in time of need. Yes, “Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Part 3: The Returning Christ The night was late as the seminary library closed. A stocky young man about 27 years old gathered up his notes and books, stuffed them in an old beat-up case, and trudged out the door. The young man, let’s call him Mike, was in his third year of seminary, and was completely confused for the first time in his Christian life. A required course, “Eschatology” (the study of last things, or the end times) was beating him to death. As he studied the conflicting opinions of great Bible scholars, he was completely amazed how these men who agreed on so many other things could be so different on this topic. As he slowly walked down the hallway, he spied Old John. Old John was the janitor in this building, a distinguished-looking old black man with a reputation as a very strong believer. John had rigged up a stool on his cleaning cart, and when it came time for a break, he would just park the cart wherever he was, sit in the stool, break out his coffee thermos and Bible, and read. Mike liked to talk to John, as did many of the students. With his many years of walking with the Lord, he was a great counselor about the practical problems of life. As Mike and he greeted one another, the young man saw that John was reading the book of Revelation--currently the great headache of Mike’s life. “John, I see you are reading Revelation. That book is driving me crazy! All the great Bible teachers teach so many different things on it, and it just isn’t clear to me at all. John, tell me, what in the world do you think the book is talking about.” Old John turned to the back of the book, read the last chapter aloud, then looked up and grinned at the young student. “Young preacher, the meaning of the Book of Revelation is that Jesus Wins!” No topic is more confusing to a believer than the End Times. My friend, “Mike,” in the story above, was not alone in his confusion. In this century, possibly more ink has been spilled about the meaning of the Book of Revelation and the theology of the end times than on any other topic of the Faith. Many great Bible teachers who agree on just about everything else disagree greatly on this doctrine--many teachers speak about the end times as if there was no doubt as to the exact scenario, but their scenarios do not agree in the least. This book will not address the controversies; we will not even define the controversies, for there are plenty of books that do that. What we will do is to define the basic orthodox requirements for a beautiful and vital doctrine that gets lost in the arguments over particulars. We will define the absolute minimums of the orthodox doctrine, but no more.

Christ is Returning The second coming of Christ is a cornerstone of Biblical doctrine. It is not possible to be considered orthodox and evangelical unless you believe Jesus is coming back. Our Lord promised it, the apostles confirmed it, and the entire book of Revelation celebrates it. Below are just a few examples of the verses that establish this fact.

John 14:1-3 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” (NIV)

Matthew 26:64 “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of

heaven.” (NIV) Luke 21:27 At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. (NIV) The return of Christ will be visible. He will not come in secret; He will not come “mystically,” or only to those with eyes to see Him. All humanity will witness His coming, and those who do not belong to Him will be terrified.

Acts 1:11 “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” (NIV)

Matthew 24:29-30 “Immediately after the distress of those days “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’ “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. (NIV) The Second Coming of Christ will be Bodily. He will not come “spiritually,” He will return in His Body. He has a body now, a glorious body, witnessed by the apostle John (Revelation 1:12-16), and when He comes in clouds of glory, it will be in that glorious body.

Php 3:21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (NIV)

Zechariah 14:3 Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. (NIV)

He will come in Power and Glory--unlike His first coming, His true nature will not be concealed. He will come at the head of a heavenly army, as the conquering Sovereign that He is.

Titus 2:13 while we wait for the blessed hope-- the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, (NIV) Matthew 24:30 They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

See Appendix 7 for study questions and projects for Chapter 5.

08 Saved by Grace

Saved by Grace

By:

Charles T. Buntin , M.S., M.A.R.

Justified by Faith In all the vastness of our world, in all of the diversity of religious beliefs, there are only two essential types of belief, works and Grace. There seem to be many differences between the world's religions, but they are all essentially the same--they all center around human works. All involve human beings accomplishing a task or set of tasks to achieve a goal and receive a reward. The tasks may be different, the goal may have differing names, and the reward may be called many things (Heaven Paradise, Nirvana), but the principle underlying all of them is the same--Quid Pro Quo, which is Latin for "this for that." In the world's religions, salvation (righteousness, oneness with the Infinite, perfect nothingness, or whatever is the term in a particular religion) is earned by what one does. Unfortunately, within this group of religions based on human effort are many species of religion that go by the name of Christianity.

True Bible Christianity, however, "the faith once delivered to the saints," is totally distinct from the world's religions in this area as in so many others. The thing that makes Christianity far different from all other religions is the concept of Grace. To help us understand the difference, we need to look at the at the two basic paradigms for all religions. (A Paradigm is a model, an outline, a form that something takes, that we can diagram to help us understand it.) Paradigm #1: Works (Followed by most religions, including much of "Christianity.")

World Religion

"Christian" Version

We work our way to God, salvation, Nirvana, Paradise

In salvation we are returned to where Adam was before the fall.

God (or whatever represents deity) judges our progress as we go along

Even after "salvation", we still have God as our Judge

Attainment of Godhood, salvation, Paradise, Nirvana depends upon what we do.

Our will and our efforts determine whether or not we go to heaven.

Paradigm #2: Salvation by Grace

1. Salvation is 100 percent a work of God--we are unable, because of our bondage to sin and rebellion, to do anything meriting God's favor.

2. God reaches down to save people--He conceived the plan, He sent His Son to accomplish the plan--He does 100% of the work.

3. When we experience what the Bible calls the New Birth (John 3:3-8), we are then SAVED, we pass from death to life (Ephesians 2:1-6; John 5:24; John 6:40; John 6:47).

4. As a part of the gift of Salvation, we become adopted children of God (Galatians 3:26 -- 4:7).

5. When we sin, God deals with us as a Father to a child (Hebrews 12:4-8).

6. God's Grace and actions are the determining factors in our salvation, even to include His working in our lives to develop a lifestyle consistent with salvation. (Ephesians 2:8-10; Php 2:12-13) The Grace of God is so simple, yet so profound that it is beyond the greatest minds to fully understand. It stands in opposition to the ideas that most of us have about earning our way in the world, about people getting what they deserve, about "fairness," and about the independence of human beings. The best simple definition this writer has ever heard for Grace is God's Riches At Christ's Expense. The meaning of Grace behind that simple explanation is one of the most hated teachings in the world because it so totally undermines and removes all traces of human pride. The Doctrine of Grace teaches that we are totally unable to save ourselves, to help in our salvation, to do anything to merit all or any part of our salvation, or to keep our salvation. We are saved totally as an act of God's will, and we do not deserve it in any way. Indeed, those that are saved are equally (if not more) deserving of Hell as those who actually go there! This is the most important first principle in understanding Grace--no one in the entire human race deserves any consideration from God, we are all rebels and sinners, and we all deserve Hell. Except for His own redemption plan, God could rightfully have sent the entire human race to eternal punishment long ago! The description Paul gives of believers before salvation fits the entire human race if they are without Christ:

Ephesians 2:1-3 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. (NIV) In spite of our fitness for wrath, however, God has exercised His Grace toward us in Christ.

Ephesians 2:4-10 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (NIV)

What is the meaning of Grace? We were dead spiritually; we were fit for nothing but wrath; we were rebels and in bondage to sin and Satan. In the midst of that condition, God saved us. We exercised faith, which is itself a gift of God (John 6:44-47), and God blessed us with the greatest possible gift--eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord! (John 5:24; John 6:37-40). What is more,

we can add nothing to Grace. Before we were saved, we had nothing to contribute to the process (Romans 3:10-11; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Job 14:4; Jeremiah 13:23), and During the New Birth experience, we add nothing to it. The Bible makes plain that the mysterious supernatural experience called the New Birth is an act of God.

John 3:3-8 "In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." (NIV)

2 Corinthians 4:6-7 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. (NIV)

You might ask, "If this is all a work of God, where do I fit in the process?" The answer is you must believe, you must exercise faith in Christ for salvation. (Romans 10:9-13; Acts 16:30-31). This exercise is not a work, however, because it involves no ability on our part and no effort on our part. That is the hard thing to understand about faith--it is not an action, it is a surrender, a throwing up of the hands and saying, "I can do nothing in myself."

Justification by Faith

What does the term "Justified" mean? The Bible meaning of the word is to be totally blameless and totally guiltless--to be able to stand before God clean and pure in every way. A play on the word helps us to understand its meaning. If I am Justified, it is Just-as-if-I'd never sinned, and Just-as-if-I'd always been holy and done the right things. Remember our helpless position before God--as "children of Wrath," we are unable to satisfy God--all His lovely and perfect Law can do is condemn us:

Romans 3:19-20 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. (NIV) Our Father, however, has devised a plan and made a way for us to stand righteous before Him. He has sent His own Son as a Sacrifice on our behalf, (Chapter 5) and those who believe in Him shall have everlasting life, and shall be seen as righteous in God's sight.

Romans 3:21-24 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (NIV) Romans 3:28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. (NIV) This righteousness we receive is imputed righteousness--that is a theological term which means it is put to our account, just like a deposit put in our bank account by someone else. God legally declares us to be righteous, and puts that on our record in Heaven.

Romans 4:1-5 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about-- but not before God. What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him." (NIV) The illustration below shows a ledger, an account book. In order for you to understand the principle, do the following things:

1. Write your name by the words "Account Holder."
2. Using a black or blue pen, under the column labeled "Sins on Account," write some of your known sins--don't be bashful, put several in. Then imagine how many pages the real account is!
3. You can't put anything in the column that says "Good Works Done," because you have none (Isaiah 64:6).
4. Now take a different pen--a bright RED one, and across the "Sins on Account" column, write in large letters, "Paid for by Christ's Blood!"
5. Under the "Good Works Done" column, write again in RED, "Supplied by the Righteousness of Christ."

ETERNAL ACCOUNT

Account Holder:

GOOD WORKS DONE

SINS ON ACCOUNT

- 1
- 1
- 2
- 2
- 3
- 3
- 4
- 4
- 5
- 5
- 6

6

7

7

8

8

9

9

10

10

This is Justification, to stand before God with all accounts paid, and clothed in the righteousness of His only Son, Jesus Christ. To be able know that you have “peace with God”--there is no more war between you and the Almighty. (Romans 5:1). Taken together, the concepts of Grace and Justification by Faith show the uniqueness of the Christian doctrine of Salvation. It is like the exclamation of Jonah--”Salvation is of the LORD!” (Jonah 2:9, KJV). The message of Grace is God Saves Sinners. It is His Plan, it was His Son who died and rose again, it is His Spirit who enlivens the preaching and witness of believers to awaken sinners to their need of salvation and lead them to faith in Christ.

Three of the watchwords of the revival of Biblical preaching known as the Reformation were: Sola Fide (Faith alone), Sola Gratia (Grace alone), and Sola Christi (Christ alone). These Latin terms describe God’s salvation plan in a nutshell--He has done it all, and we can claim no credit for ourselves. The result of this wonderful outpouring of His love is our salvation, and that results further in the fourth watchword: Soli Deo Gloria (The Glory to God alone).

09 The Necessity of a Consistent Christian Life

The Necessity of a Consistent Christian Life

By:

Charles T. Buntin , M.S., M.A.R.

“My Sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me . . .” John 10:27 As the old saw says, “If I’ve heard it once, I’ve heard it a thousand times.” What is it I’ve heard? It is the story that the churches are full of hypocrites, that professed believers don’t live at all like their Lord, and that the prostitutes, thieves and drug dealers down on skid row behave better. There are several responses to this old charge.

First, it is often just an excuse to avoid going to church and coming face to face with one’s own sin. Sometimes, the behavior referred to is how people in the church used to behave before they were saved--in that case, the old saw is just a confirmation of the power of the gospel. Often, the churches referred to, and the people doing the bad behavior, are not really biblical churches; they have long ago left the teachings of the Bible, and they are just religious social clubs.

However, while the cases above are often true, it is also sadly true, and far too often, that professing believers in Bible-teaching, evangelical churches live a life that makes their faith seem a lie. The fact that God saves us totally as an act of Grace on His part is not a license to live as we please. We stand before Him justified, free, and blameless because of faith in the sacrifice of Christ, but we also are now a part of His family, we are members of His royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). Believers in Christ are supposed to act like it.

It is difficult to write on this subject for several reasons. First, the writer knows his own failings, and how many times he has fallen short of God’s will in his life--that is a daily problem. Second, we don’t need any more lists of laws coming from outside the Bible to imprison believers and put them on spiritually depressing and false guilt trips. Far too often, people teaching, preaching, or writing on the subject of practical behavior fall into cultural patterns, prohibiting activities that the Bible leaves in the area of personal judgment, and creating a totally false standard. Legalism, the adding of human requirements to the gospel, is a Grace-killing and soul-chilling thing. However, it is even more prevalent today for there to be falsehoods in the other direction. Many today teach standards of behavior that are far below those the Bible exhorts us to strive for--what the Bible calls “sin,” some modern teachers excuse, ignore, or even celebrate as good. The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, we need to understand the principle of Following Christ In Our Lives. Second, we need to understand the Basic Specific Guidelines for Behavior found in the Bible.

Following Christ In Our Lives For 40 days after His resurrection, our Lord carried out a vigorous ministry among His disciples. He appeared to as many as 500 of them at one time. In the last three verses of Matthew’s gospel, we read the challenge He gave to His inner circle, the eleven. This challenge is commonly called “The Great Commission:

Matthew 28:18-20 "Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.""(NIV)

Look at the phrases in the verses above: "Make disciples" and "teaching them to obey" Do these phrases match the activities of the American church? Does our evangelism and our teaching of new believers reach below the surface and do these two things? Our evangelical churches grow numerically; people profess salvation. These people begin to live a type of "born-again" lifestyle (at least on the surface)--they listen to Christian music, read Christian self-help books, and regularly attend church. But, as we noted in the beginning of this book--where is the dramatic effect on society that the early church wielded? What have we wrought by our efforts at evangelism? According to our Founder, the goal of our evangelism is not to create church members, convince people who profess a little Christianity, or encourage them to adopt a surface lifestyle change. Our goal as a church, and as individual congregations and believers, is to make disciples who are learning to follow Christ.

Basic Discipleship

What does it mean to be a disciple, to follow Christ? As with so many other things, we need to say just a bit about what it does not mean. As already mentioned, it certainly does not mean to make a few religious gestures and change your outward style of living a bit. It also does not necessarily mean to make a lot of religious gestures and change your outward style of living radically, though that might be a part of the process depending on your former life style. It does not mean to wear black clothing and a somber facial expression, and to walk around in your life as the morals proctor for all you see. Following Christ begins with an inward change of heart, repentance, and faith, the total experience we call the New Birth--it continues to grow into discipleship from the inside out. This inside-out transformation does not occur by some sort of cosmic "auto pilot"--it doesn't just happen.

Discipleship begins with being "added to the church" (Acts 2:47), and becoming involved in the "four legs" of the church mentioned earlier, teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. A person who wants to be discipled apart from a visible, functioning congregation of believers in Christ wants the impossible. Discipleship occurs in the local Church. This means a new believer needs to seek a congregation that accepts and follows the Regula Fidei (see introduction), and that is active in teaching new believers. A new believer should not choose a church based on worship style, though active, vigorous worship is important. A new believer should not choose a church based solely on a friendly atmosphere, nor one where the people are of the same socioeconomic class and ethnic group. The first thing a new believer should look for in a church is one that is faithful to the basic orthodox teachings of the Bible, and one that has a solid teaching ministry. Once a member of a congregation of believers, the new Christian should seek to become active in attendance in as many of the worship and teaching meetings of the church as possible. Certainly Sunday School, preaching, and prayer services are a must. If there are home Bible studies available, the young disciple should seek one out that ministers to their need for teaching and fellowship. If there is a discipleship program in the local congregation, the new convert should become a part of it. The attitude a believer should have in discipleship is very important. We need

to keep constantly in our mind that we are undergoing a process of transformation that involves two sides--one we see and feel, and the more important one, the ministry that God is doing within us in secret. "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed-- not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling," (Php 2:12). This shows the side we see and feel--and it looks like we are doing a lot of original work. The rest of the sentence, however, is in verse 13, ". . .for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." The important action is what we don't see--it is the omnipotent, sovereign God working in our lives to accomplish His will.

Basic Specific Guidelines for Behavior

Whenever we deal with this issue in the church, we will find ourselves fighting the "don't judge me" syndrome. People attempt to ignore and dodge the plain meaning of Bible texts, and their life applications by an ad hominem (against the man, or personal attack) argument against the person pointing out the problem. Let's not kid ourselves, if we are in a situation of habitual rebellion and sin, and are a professing Christian, "shooting the messenger" doesn't solve the problem. People who use the "don't judge me" argument misuse several Scriptures, such as Matthew 7:1-5, which tell us how to judge properly with the right attitude, and try to say that judgment is never proper in any case--"it is all between me and God." This is purely an attempt to hide behind a supposed technicality. We are not to judge in the sense of self-righteous condemnation, but as individual believers, we have an obligation to confront open sin, prayerfully, lovingly, humbly.

Galatians 6:1 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. (NIV)

James 5:19-20 My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins. (NIV)

Corporately, the truth is that the local church MUST judge its own people when they are caught up in a real sin problem, or it is dishonoring both our Lord and other congregations. In 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 1 Corinthians 6:1-20, Paul severely chastens the church in Corinth because they were not taking care of business by judging an openly rebellious believer, and they were committing disputes between members to the secular courts. The real perspective is that we are to do as Jesus told us in John 7:24, and "judge righteous judgment." Professing Christians are not independent actors--we have an obligation both to our Lord and to other believers, our local congregation, and the church in general to live as Christ would have us to live.

Once we are past the "don't judge" syndrome, we have to realize that there are many instructions in the Bible for how Christians are to behave. Our lives are not to be centered on what we don't do--BUT there are lifestyle rules, things a Christian should Do and should NOT do. Rather than give a laundry list, we will talk about general categories of Scripture teaching in this area, along with a few hot specifics. A believer's personal values are not for him or her to decide--the Bible tells us what they should be. The Christian Worldview from Chapter 1 of this book is a good place to start--if we know why we are here and what Truth is, we are already on the right track to an obedient life. We need to combine this with a recognition of the continuing influence of sin in our lives and the necessity to combat sin in our lives with God's help.

Believers in Christ should have a Respect for Human Life, because God is the author of each life, and He tells us not to commit murder. This places Bible-believing Christians in direct opposition to the pro-death agenda (abortion and euthanasia) so dominant in our society today. Christians should have a Respect for Government. This applies to God's providence in our individual lives and the secular government He has established to govern society. We should have a Respect for the dignity of humanity in general and of individual people over and above the plant and animal kingdom, as well as above personal needs, desires, and material possessions. God created people to live with Him eternally--we are created in God's image. People are more important than animals, and the movement to equalize animal rights with human rights is sheer paganism. This doesn't condone needless cruelty, but it recognizes the Bible teaching that we have dominion over the animal kingdom, and they are ours to use for our benefit.

Genesis 1:26-28 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (NIV)

Christians should exercise Personal responsibility--we should always live our life with the willingness and effort to work to support ourselves by honest means.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. (NIV)

2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. (NIV) The hottest issue today for believers is probably Submission to God's rules regarding sexuality--specifically, that legitimate sexual activity is restricted to relations between a man and a woman who are married to one another. This recognizes that the Bible teaches that same-sex relations, adultery, premarital sex, incest, and bestiality are wrong behaviors, and are not to be accepted by Christian believers in their own lives. Not only are we not to live that way ourselves, we may not, as a body, tolerate that kind of behavior in a congregation, nor can we as a congregation or as individuals approve of it in the lives of others--we must express ourselves in love, but we cannot affirm and approve lifestyles that are contrary to God's laws.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (NIV)

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. (NIV)

Romans 1:25-27 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator-- who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. (NIV) To guide us in our behavior, we have the portions of the Old Testament Law and writings repeated or re-emphasized in the New Testament, or which are consistent with the New Covenant. For example, we find 9 of the 10 commandments repeated in the New Testament--the exception being the Sabbath. We find in the Old Testament Law specific prohibitions against sexual immorality and perversion which are repeated and augmented in the writings of Paul. We find in the Old Testament specific prohibitions against idolatry and pagan religious practices, and we find a wealth of practical advice and warnings from Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. Finally, we have the many examples from the Historical narratives of how people struggled with sin and found hope and help in God. Paul tells us that these things "occurred as examples." (1 Corinthians 10:6) to help us in our daily lives. In the New Testament, we have many commands (I have read that there are over 1300 commands in the New Testament, but I've never counted to see). In general, however, these commands tell us how we are to live in the Church, how we are to live in the Family, and how we are to live in Society. Our Savior calls upon us to follow Him in our lives--let us do so.

10 Appendix 1 Holy War--Spiritual Warfare Primer

Appendix 1 The Holy War--A Spiritual Warfare Primer

By:

Charles T. Buntin , M.S., M.A.R.

Ephesians 6:10-13 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. (NIV)

Whether you are a new believer or an experienced saint, you may not realize something very important--you are a soldier in an ongoing war. This is not the philosophical "struggle between good and evil," but is part of an ancient rebellion between the forces of Satan and the Almighty God. This is not a battle between equals--there is no comparison between the power and knowledge of the Almighty and the relatively weak opposition that is doomed to fail. In a sense, there is no real struggle, for the battle is progressing according to God's plan, and God wins in the end. The Forces Involved

There is an unseen world--there are spiritual forces that we cannot see, but they affect our world and wage constant battle in and around human society. On the one side are Satan and his demon forces. Satan was originally the high point of God's creation--he was the chief of God's heavenly beings, and was a creature of beauty and praise to God. However, he became jealous, desired to become God, and rebelled against the Almighty. Originally his demons were angels--God's special messengers, whose purpose was to glorify Him and minister to His people. However, a portion of the angels (the Bible says one-third--Revelation 12:1-17) rebelled against God under the leadership of Satan, and became what we know now as demons. Satan and his demons have powers that seem awesome to humans. The goal of the demonic forces is to harass, attack, and corrupt Christians, prevent conversions, and dishonor God. On the other side of the eternal conflict are God and the Holy Angels. The Angels are perfect, sinless, and also very powerful.. They are ministering spirits that carry out God's plan, and who work for the benefit of God's people. Their goal is the carrying out of the great commission, and the saving of God's people. The people of God, born-again believers, are part of this angelic army, as well as being protected by its hosts.

Two Current Problems

Currently, there are two extreme viewpoints about the Holy War, with a small middle ground in between. On one side are those who, because of a fear of anything even remotely charismatic, either ignore the Holy War, totally reject our having any role in it, or adopt a strange kind of mystic agnosticism about it. They admit such a thing exists, but are unwilling to go past that admission to

a study of it or taking part in it. On the other side are those (mainly in the charismatic camp) who either adopt a mystical approach that is unbiblical, or who go 'way out of bounds and see a demon under every tree--like the McCarthyites of the 1950's saw a communist behind every bush. The Truth about Spiritual Warfare is in between these two extremes. We will look at six areas that may help us understand the Holy War: (1) There is a war; (2) the battle is the Lord's; (3) our part in the battle; (4) our weapons described; (5) the problem of speculation and superstition; (6) the solution--study, believe and obey God's Word. The Holy War

There is a war going on. It began with a rebellion in heaven (Isaiah 14:12; Revelation 12:7-9), and has had many skirmishes (Daniel 10:12-13, for example). The Bible lets us know some things about the method of the enemy (1 Peter 5:8; Job 1:8-12, etc.), and we are graciously given some glimpses of the armies of the LORD (Joshua 5:13-15; 2 Kings 6:1-33). However, the Bible does not explain the Holy War in detail; the rules of engagement are not carefully drawn up for our understanding, and we are given only a few insights as to the specific composition of the armies involved. Most of the war remains hidden from our sight. Unlike the doctrines of salvation, the Deity of Christ, or the other doctrines that are vital and basic to the faith, we are given no minute details on the nature of the war or its players. Whose Battle is It? The Battle is the LORD's--it is God's battle, not ours. As with any military campaign among the nations of man, the commander determines the course of the battle, assigns the duties, and conducts any conversations that take place with the enemy. With God's army, the Commander does even more. He Himself bears the sword in battle (Joshua 5:13-15; Exodus 15:3). He personally commands a vast army of heavenly hosts that is at His beck and call (Matthew 26:52), and He often tells us, His earthly army, to merely stand and watch while He does the work (2 Chronicles 20:15; 1 Samuel 17:47; Exodus 14:11-14; Deuteronomy 1:30; Deuteronomy 3:22; Deuteronomy 20:4; Joshua 10:14; Joshua 10:22; Joshua 23:3; Joshua 23:10). Just as the Old Testament battles were God's, so with gospel salvation and evangelization. He gives us a charge to evangelize the world, but His power insures its success (Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 1:8, Revelation 17:14) "The Battle is the LORD's"

What is Our Part?

Though the battles of the Holy War are mainly fought out of our sight, we do have a part in them. Our part, however, is not mystical, magical, exalted, or highly visible, and it is not flashy or earth shattering. We are told to submit ourselves to God and resist the devil (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9); we are to cast down imaginations and strongholds in the minds and hearts of people and bring every thought into obedience to the gospel (2 Corinthians 10:4-6). We are to take the Word of God to all the world (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 1:8) and continually study to show ourselves approved by God (2 Timothy 2:15). This is how Christians war! We are not to war with voodoo-like incantations, or prayers of "claiming" or "dominance," nor are we to war with human philosophy (1 Corinthians 2:1-6)--we are to war with the pure Word of God. We fight the good fight with the gospel!

2 Corinthians 10:4-6 "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete. (NIV) The verses above are among the most misapplied in the Bible.

Often, preachers will quote them as justification for some kind of mystical, semi-magical powers to deal with demonic forces. These preachers tell us we are to “claim dominion,” and “declare our dominance,” and make real or imagined demons flee from us. While it is true that believers have authority over the other world, if they are in the will of God, and if they are following God’s directions, the normal way of conducting spiritual warfare is not direct confrontation with evil spirits.

Furthermore, we are never instructed to claim power over demonic forces and demand they depart, etc., as the normal “procedure” is in “deliverance” ministries. While the Bible relates instances of confrontation between our Lord and the demonic, we must realize that He was and is totally distinct from us in power, authority, and ability--He always knew God the Father’s will for His life, because He was God as well. As Appendix 1 told us, He retained all His power and authority while on earth. Indeed, there were several instances when demon forces were terrified by His very presence, because they knew who He was. There were also some confrontations between the apostles and the demonic, but they were relatively few and far between, and confrontations of that nature should only be attempted by pure-living and mature believers after much prayer and fasting. This type of direct confrontation was so rare that there are really few instructions on it in the Bible. The primary and ordinary type of spiritual warfare that should be part of everyday life for a believer, however, is described fully in the Bible, and that is the type of warfare that many ignore.

What Are Our Weapons? As the apostle says plainly in 2 Corinthians 10:1-18, quoted above, our weapons are those that demolish arguments, imaginations, and strongholds of error, and capture the thoughts of people to bring them into captivity. As we said before, our weapons have to do with the gospel. We have to put on “the full armor of God,” as we read in Ephesians 6:10-13 at the head of this Appendix. What is this armor?

Ephesians 6:14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. (NIV) The first weapon is the belt, or harness of Truth. Truth is the first mentioned, because it is the most vital, it is the basis for everything else. Even if we really possess righteousness and salvation, even if our faith is great, we will be a poor soldier without truth. Just as the Roman soldier’s belt or harness held all of his implements of warfare together, it is truth that gives us the framework within which to work. In the end times, those who love shows, spectacle, and signs and wonders will be lost--those who love and cherish the Truth will be saved.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. (NIV) The next piece is the Breastplate, the armor that protects the heart and vital parts of the soldier. For the Christian, this breastplate is righteousness, which is ours only by the finished work of Christ (Romans 3:21 -- 4:25; Php 3:1-10). If we seek to go to war in our own righteousness, we are leaving a vital defensive link of our armor behind. On our feet is the

“preparation of the gospel of peace.” In the Bible, stumblings are often mentioned in the walk of believers. If we have so learned the Gospel that its peace dominates us (Php 4:1-9), then our feet will not suffer injury on the battlefield of the Holy War. Our shield is the shield of Faith. Notice that Faith is not an offensive weapon--we do not use faith to claim victory or to declare dominance. Faith is defensive--when the enemy accuses us, when fiery darts are hurled at us, we prevail over the attack by our faith in Christ. When all seems lost, we “ walk by faith, not by sight.” Our helmet is salvation. Our head cannot be crushed in the battle, because the impenetrable helmet of salvation protects us. If we are truly God’s children, we cannot perish in this battle (John 10:26-29; Romans 8:31-39). Such are the defensive weapons of our armor. The two offensive weapons are the Sword of the Word of God, and the weapon that John Bunyan called “All-Prayer.” Just as Truth holds the whole of the armor together, and the Truth of the gospel protects our feet, the Truth of the Word of God casts down imaginations and overthrows strongholds in the hearts and minds of people. All-Prayer reminds us that the battle belongs to God--through it, we stay in contact with headquarters, and we can call for “air and artillery support,” from the Commander-In-Chief Himself. This was not a complete rendition of all that you need to know about Spiritual Warfare, but it is a good start. The Suggested Reading Section below will help you find more help in this area. Remember, you ARE a soldier in God’s Army.

11 Appendix 2 A Good Tool Chest

Appendix 2 A Good Tool Chest

By:

Charles T. Buntin , M.S., M.A.R.

We are blessed in this century and especially in America, with outstanding study aids to help Bible students learn and study the Bible more effectively. The books, Bibles and study aids mentioned below are those I have found most helpful in over 20 years of Bible study. A Good Study Bible--This is very helpful to any consistent Bible Study program. Study Bibles have built-in concordances, so you can see how words are used in different parts of the Bible, and they have articles that can help you understand facts about archeology, etc. Though I have several kinds of study Bibles, I would NOT recommend that a new student pick one that has footnotes on the same page as the text. By far the best study Bible for me, and one I use constantly, is the Thompson Chain Reference Bible, which comes in King James, New American Standard, and New International Version translations.

1. An exhaustive concordance. This tool helps you locate any Bible word, and trace how it is used throughout the Bible. By far the best two types are the Young's Analytical Concordance and Strong's Exhaustive Concordance.

2. A Good Bible Dictionary, such as the one published by Zondervan.

3. Books on Various Topics, as listed in the chapter bibliographies Suggested Supplemental Reading for Chapter One 1. The Francis A. Schaeffer Trilogy, by Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer, Crossway Books, 1990.

2. Worldviews in Conflict by Ronald H. Nash, Zondervan, 1992 3. The Genesis Record by Henry Morris 4. Genesis in Space and Time by Francis A. Schaeffer Suggested Reading to Supplement Chapter Two 1. The Battle for the Bible, Harold Lindsell 2. Studies in Theology, Lorraine Boetner 3. The Canon of Scripture, by F. F. Bruce 4. Evidence That Demands a Verdict, and More Evidence That Demands a Verdict by Josh McDowell Suggested Supplemental Reading for Chapter 3 Knowing God by J. I. Packer The Attributes of God by A W Pink The Sovereignty of God by A W Pink The Existence and Attributes of God by Stephen Charnock Suggested Supplemental Reading for Chapter 4 Studies in Theology by Loraine Boettner Oneness Pentecostals and the Trinity by Gregory A. Boyd Systematic Theology by L. Berkhof Gill's Body of Divinity by John Gill Schaff's History of the Christian Church, Volumes 2 and 3, by Phillip Schaff Suggested Supplemental Reading for Chapter 5 The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah by Alfred Edersheim More Than a Carpenter by Josh McDowell Studies in Theology by Lorraine Boettner Suggested Supplemental Reading for Chapter 6

Bible Passages: Romans chapters 1-5; Galatians chapters 1-4; Ephesians chapters 1 and 2; John chapters 3, 10, 17; Acts chapter 15.

Grace and Justification: Romans 3:21 -- 4:25 by D. M. Lloyd-Jones The Doctrines of Justification and Sanctification by A.W. Pink All of Grace by C. H. Spurgeon Suggested Reading and Study Materials for Spiritual Warfare The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare by Dr. Ed Murphy Arming For Spiritual Warfare by George Mallone

12 App 3 Essential Christian World View

Appendix 3 Study Questions and Projects for The Essential Christian World View

By:

Charles T. Buntin , M.S., M.A.R.

Questions

1. If you are a believer, what was your view of absolute truth and of the purpose of human life before you became a believer?
2. If you are not a believer, what is your view of these things?

Projects

1. Watch one episode of at least four different secular talk shows, and write down statements of the host and others on the show that reveal their worldview.
2. Ask non-believers you know to respond to the two basic questions addressed in Chapter One. Note their response.
3. If you are a parent of school-age children, ask some or all of your children's teachers to respond to the two basic questions. Note their response.
4. If you have school-age children, ask them to respond to the two questions.
5. Ask professing Christians you know who are not members of your church to respond to the two basic questions. If you did the similar project for the preface, ask different people.
6. Look up all the verses mentioned in this chapter, and study their contexts.

13 Appendix 4 Study Questions ch 3

Appendix 4 Study Questions and Projects for The Inspiration, Inerrancy, and Authority of the Bible

By:

Charles T. Buntin , M.S., M.A.R.

Questions 1. What is the correct understanding of "inspired" when that word is applied to the Bible?

2. What are some examples of incorrect uses of the term "inspired"?

3. How much of the Bible is inspired?

4. Are the words of the Bible themselves inspired?

5. Is any area of human life exempt from the Bible's authority?

Projects

1. Using the advertising section of your phone book, pick out five to ten churches from different denominations, and call their pastors on the phone. Ask the pastors the following questions: a. Do you believe the Bible is verbally inspired, literally true, and without error? b. Do you believe the historical accounts depicted in the Bible actually happened? c. Do you believe the Bible is authoritative in all matters of faith and life?

2. Call five or more pastors from the same denomination as yours, and ask them the same questions as above.

14 App 5 Study Questionsch 4

Appendix 5 Study Questions and Projects for The Nature of God

By:

Charles T. Buntin , M.S., M.A.R.

Questions 1. Define each of the attributes of God mentioned in this chapter in your own words: a. b. c. d. e. f. g.

2. Now, go back to your Bible, and for each of the seven attributes mentioned, find one Bible verse that best defines that attribute of God for you. a. b. c. d. e. f. g.

Projects

1. Call seven local pastors at random, and ask each of them to define only one of the attributes mentioned in this chapter. Write their responses here for discussion in class later. a. b. c. d. e. f. g.

2. Talk to seven Christians you know (preferably from a different congregation) and ask them to each define one attribute. Write the answers here. a. b. c. d. e. f. g.

3. Talk to seven unchurched people and ask the same questions of them. a. b. c. d. e. f. g.

15 Appendix 6 Study Questions ch5

Appendix 6 Study Questions and Projects for The Trinity

By:

Charles C. Bing

Questions

1. According to the Bible and His own testimony, is Jesus The Eternal God? Name at least two Bible verses that support the Godhood of Jesus.
2. Name at least one verse that shows the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit manifesting at the same time.
3. Is the Holy Spirit a Person? Name at least two Bible verses that support that answer.

Projects 1. Call five pastors of churches different from your own, and ask them the following questions. a. Do you believe in the doctrine of the Trinity? b. Is Christ Jesus The Eternal God? c. Is the Holy Spirit a Person? d. If you believe in the Trinity, when is the last time you preached a sermon or taught a series on that topic?

2. Call five Christians you know and ask them the first three questions. Then ask them when was the last time their pastor or associate pastor preached or taught on the Trinity.

16 Appendix 7 Study Questions ch 6

Appendix 7 Study Questions and Projects for The Person of Christ

By:

Charles T. Buntin , M.S., M.A.R.

Questions 1. Did Christ exist before He was born into this world?

2. Was Jesus the Messiah born of a virgin?

3. Did Jesus the Christ die on the Cross for sins, and as a substitute for sinners?

4. Was Jesus Christ literally and bodily resurrected from the dead?

5. Is Jesus Christ going to literally and bodily return to earth at a time in the future?

Projects

1. Study your earlier answers from pastors of various churches. Ask the questions above to pastors who told you they did not believe the Bible to be literally true and without error. Ask the same questions to pastors who believed the Bible to be true and without error.

2. Ask the above questions to at least five Christians from congregations other than your own.

3. Ask the above questions to five unchurched people.

17 Appendix 8 The Empty God

Appendix 8 The Empty God

By:

Charles T. Buntin , M.S., M.A.R. A Biblical and Theological Answer to the False Doctrine of Kenosis

Introduction An increasingly prevalent teaching in evangelical circles, particularly in charismatic circles, is the doctrine of Kenosis. This false teaching is drawn from impure wells, it is dangerous because of the other false doctrines it leads to, and it flies in the face of the heart of Christian teaching. What is it? The doctrine teaches that the Messiah, in order to assume the form of a servant and become incarnate (into human flesh), had to give up some, several, or even all the powers and attributes of God and "live as a mere man." The advocates of this heresy, in an effort to assume an orthodox posture, try to say that the Son somehow "remains God," though He has given up all parts of that being. This teaching, which denies so much of the heart of the orthodox faith, comes from the misinterpretation and misconstruction of one Greek word. This word, and the doctrine it describes, refer to the deep, mysterious, but vitally important passage of Php 2:5-8, and especially in verse 7, where it says Christ "made himself of no reputation," or "emptied himself." The word in the original is *ekenosen*, from the root word *kenoo*, which can mean "to empty." The other references to the word are Romans 4:14, where the meaning is "made void," 1 Corinthians 1:17, where it means "of none effect," 1 Corinthians 9:15, where it means "make void," and 2 Corinthians 9:3, where it means "to be in vain." These references all refer to abstract principles, such as faith, preaching, or boasting--none of them refer to a person, or even to an object. Therefore, the use of the word as it is used in Php 2:7 is unique. The question, which shall be repeated later is "of what did Christ empty Himself?" The teachers of Kenosis say that what Christ did was to "empty Himself of all power." The doctrinal area in which we are dealing is not academic, it involves the very heart and center of our faith. It is also not just a matter for scholars, but is for all of us. Kenotic teaching has become prominent in charismatic circles, and is the basis for much of what they promulgate. Indeed, much of the weird theology that surrounds the so-called "faith" movement is based on a Kenotic understanding of the incarnation, combined with a new-age-like leap of logic that says that since Jesus left His powers and attributes behind and lived as a mere man, we born-again believers are ". . . just as much an Incarnation of God as Jesus was" (Kenneth Copeland) In another leap of logic, these teachers move then to the Mormon-like doctrine of apotheosis (we are little Gods). This trend so concerned Walter Martin that the last thing he wrote before going home to be with the Lord was a contribution to a book refuting these theological trends among TV evangelists. 1 This paper on Kenosis is not a detailed analysis, but is instead an expanded outline with footnotes, covering these major areas:

* The Doctrine of Kenosis This part of the paper includes reference material that traces this view to the 19th-century German liberal theologians that first promulgated the Kenotic teaching, and compares it with modern Kenotic teaching.

* The orthodox position on Christ's humiliation. Includes quotations from noted Evangelical Scholars on the subject.

* A Critical Refutation of the Kenosis doctrine.

* An alternative method of handling the "problem verses" without deviating from orthodox Christology.

I. The Doctrine of Kenosis A. Classic Kenotic Teaching

1. "About the middle of the nineteenth century a new form of Christology made its appearance in the Kenotic theories."² This is how Berkhof introduces the subject. He then delineates three forms of Kenotic teaching--the first, and least offensive, seems to fit the general view: "Thomasius distinguishes between the absolute and essential attributes of God . . . and His relative attributes, which are not essential to the Godhead, such as omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience; and maintains that the Logos while retaining His divine self-consciousness, laid the latter aside, in order to take unto Himself veritable human nature."³

2. "The essence of the original kenotic view is stated clearly by J. M. Creed. 'The Divine Logos by His Incarnation divested Himself of His divine attributes of omniscience and omnipotence, so that in His incarnate life the divine Person is revealed and solely revealed through a human consciousness.'"⁴

3. Charles Hodge classes this view under Modern Forms of the Doctrine [Christology], and includes it under a class of doctrines called Theistical Christology taught by various German theological liberals of that era. ⁵ One form of the view is as follows. "...that the Eternal Logos, by a process of self-limitation, divested Himself of all his divine attributes. He ceased to be omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. He reduced Himself, so to speak, to the dimensions of a man."⁶

B. Comparison with the view of Kenneth Copeland (as a representative of the "Faith Message" school of thought). This seems to be the general view of the entire "faith message" school of thought, and it is becoming prominent in other charismatic circles as well.

1. "Jesus hadn't come to earth as God; He'd come as a man. He'd laid aside His divine power and had taken on the form of a human being--with all its limitations."⁷

2. "They [orthodox Christians] mistakenly believe that Jesus was able to work wonders, to perform miracles, and to live above sin because He had divine power that we don't have...They don't realize that when Jesus came to earth, He voluntarily gave up that advantage [deity] living His life here not as God, but as a man. He had no innate supernatural powers. He had no ability to perform miracles until after He was anointed by the Holy Spirit... He ministered as a man anointed by the Holy Spirit."⁸

C. General Comment The writer of this paper has encountered this teaching in other theological circles, and in at least one other prominent tele-evangelist who is not from the "faith message" camp.

II. A Positive Affirmation, from Scripture, of the Orthodox Position on Christ's Humiliation in Relation to Php 2:5-11.

Includes quotations from noted Evangelical Scholars on the subject.

A. The self-emptying of Christ was mainly an emptying of the external trappings and Glory of Deity. The context of Php 2:5-11 is that Christ emptied Himself by taking on the form of a servant. Indeed, the overall issue, from Romans 2:1 through the end of verse 15, is on various forms of outward expression, Christ being the example for the life of the saints in Philippi.

1. Paul was stressing to the Philippians that they should be self-sacrificing, and should not have personal glory in mind as they live their life. Then, he used the Incarnation as an example. (2:1-5)

2. Christ, says Paul, was in the form (morphé, an outward expression of an inward reality) of God, and did not consider this Glory, this expression of equality with the Father something to be grasped, or held on to (see John 17:1-5; John 17:24).

3. Most modern translations say in verse 7 "emptied Himself", but the King James and the New King James read, "made Himself of no reputation." About this difference, one evangelical scholar wrote "The A.V., while not an exact translation, goes far to express the act of the Lord."⁹ (In this quote, A.V. stands for Authorized Version, or King James). Then it says, "taking the form of a servant." As we have been talking about outward expressions, vainglory, outward form, etc., and as that is the subject from here through verse 15, the plain sense of scripture here is that Christ's self-emptying was of the outward glory and majesty of Godhood, and that He accomplished that action by taking the form of a servant. This, of course, is what Paul is asking the Philippians to do. Context is vital here--Paul is not telling the Philippians to lay aside, discard, or disregard their natural abilities and talents, (attributes and powers), he is telling them to submit them to the will of God and the good of the whole church. a. Possibly because of the negative theological background for it, B.B. Warfield went so far as to call the literal translation of kenó as "emptied Himself" a "mistranslation."¹⁰ b. "Nothing in this passage teaches that the Eternal Word (John 1:1) emptied Himself of either His divine nature or His attributes, but only the outward and visible manifestation of the Godhead."¹¹ c. "He emptied, stripped Himself of the insignia of Majesty"¹² (Emphasis added) d. "When occasion demanded, He exercised His divine attributes."¹³

4. Verses 8-11 continue the thought--Christ is "...found in appearance as a man...", and continued His voluntary humiliation through to the Cross, then is exalted by the Father (as He discussed with the Father in John 17:1-26).

5. Other Scriptural references that establish the same principal: a. John 1:1-14. After laying out His perfections, [(1) "The Word was God"--Deity; (2) "He was in the beginning with God," Eternity; (3) "All things were made through Him..." Creator; (4) "In Him was life..." Self Existence;] John says "and the Word became flesh." It is not that God the Son gave up anything, but that He added something--He took humanity to Himself. b. 2 Corinthians 8:9 "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." He gave up the external glories of His riches, but did He really give up ownership? No--in His earthly ministry, He claimed to be Lord of the Sabbath, and exercised dominion over natural phenomena, disease and demonic forces, and even demonstrated His possession of the power of life and death. His poverty did not consist as much in what He gave up (for He still retained title to it) as in what He took on--our nature. c. 2 Corinthians 5:21 "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in

Him." In His act of atonement, did He give up His own essential Holiness? No, again, it was not that He gave up anything, it was that He added something--He took our sins upon Himself.

B. Do the Scriptures bear out that He possessed the attributes and powers of deity while on earth? The first, and most obvious reference is His personal conversation with the Father in John 17:1-26--He asks (in a "man to man, equal to equal" way) for the return of His Glory. He never mentions the return of His power or attributes--because He still retained them!

1. Omniscience--John 11:11-14 ("...when Jesus was fifty miles away...")¹⁴ John 2:24-25; John 6:64; John 6:70-71. As for the instances when He seems to be claiming ignorance, they have to do with Him speaking from His humanity, and taking our place, and involve a complete understanding of the orthodox teaching concerning the relationship between the Divine and Human in Christ, which will be discussed in section IV.

2. Omnipotence: (demonstrated most vividly in the power over life and death) John 10:17-18; John 5:21-23, Luke 7:14, John 11:43-44, Matthew 28:18-20, John 18:5-6.

3. Omnipresence: Matthew 18:20, John 1:48 (Psalms 139:1-24, Genesis 16:13), John 3:13 (MAJ . . . Text)

4. Providence: Hebrews 1:1-3--Note that "upholding all things" was predicated of Him in the context of His earthly ministry of declaring God's truth, and before His atonement, resurrection, and exaltation. Colossians 1:17--"In Him all things consist [hold together]" The universe is upheld by His word of power--He holds it together--that is an essential part of who He is. There is no intimation anywhere in scripture that He gave up this function upon Incarnation.

5. Sovereignty: Mark 2:28, Matthew 11:27, John 17:1-26:2 John 3:35 C. Having looked at the issue piecemeal, we can now conclude it with the powerful testimony of the book of Colossians.

1. Paul says that in Christ ". . .are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," (2:3) and ". . . Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (2:8-9, emphasis added)

2. The argument might be (and has been) made that those verses apply to Christ in His exaltation, and not in His humiliation. First, that logic leans to the Gnostic idea of "progression," that the Logos after His exaltation was materially and essentially different (and improved) as a person from what He was during His humiliation. This is the very idea that Paul was fighting in the book of Colossians! The clincher, however, lies in the earlier verses in chapter 1: ". . . It pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself...through the blood of His cross." (1:19-20) All the fullness of God dwelt in Him bodily during His earthly ministry!

III. A Critical Refutation, from Scripture and from Evangelical Scholars, of the things implied and taught by the Kenosis Doctrine. The theologians who crafted Kenotic doctrine were trying to deal with two problems. The first problem was in how to deal with those texts of scripture (as used by the cults) which seem to indicate that Christ was less than fully God, yet do justice to the obvious Biblical teaching that He was "Very God of Very God." The second problem was posed by their understanding that He lived His life in submission to the will of the Father, and largely as a man with a full indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They could not reconcile that in their minds with His full

deity. The problem with these teachers was that they were theological liberals--they did not accept the verbal, plenary, inspiration of the Bible. Because of this, they crafted an erroneous philosophical theological answer, and ignored the fact that the problems were already solved by scripture, and had been fully worked out by the teachers and leaders of the early church during the period from A.D. 250-451. In their effort to improve on the Council of Chalcedon, they created many more problems than those they sought to solve--and did not really solve what they had originally perceived to be problems in the orthodox faith.

A. The philosophical and theological bases for the Doctrine of Kenosis are highly suspect. The thought process began with an incorrect concept of God as the Absolute and Almighty God.

1. Thomasius of Erlangen, one of the first and leading proponents, ". . . distinguishes between the absolute and essential attributes of God," and taught that omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence ". . . are not essential to the Godhead..."¹⁵ This is patently ridiculous, and there is absolutely no Biblical basis for classing the three "omni" attributes as non-essential for Deity. Philosophical theologians may find a way to make this add up, but in the words of one of this century's great Bible teachers, ". . . There is no other possible alternative between an absolutely supreme God, and no God at all."¹⁶ It is impossible to conceive of any being worthy of the title of I AM who does not possess the essential attributes continually posited to God by the Bible. The Bible never mentions God as anything but absolute. The three attributes in question, absolute Knowledge, Potency, and Presence, are foundational to who Jehovah is. The sarcastic charges made by Jehovah against false "gods" usually center in their ignorance, impotence, and immobility (Deuteronomy 4:28, Isaiah 45:20, Jeremiah 10:5; Jeremiah 10:15). In comparison to idols, Jeremiah says "He who is the Portion of Jacob is not like these, for He is the Maker of all things...the LORD Almighty is His name." (10:16) Indeed, if one reads the awesome passages like Is 40, Job 38:1 -- 42:6, Psalms 90:1-17, Romans 11:33-36, etc., as well as the countless other verses and passages that extol and marvel at the greatness of the Almighty Jehovah, there can be no other conclusion but that God is Absolute. There is no Biblical way that the Son could give up his divine knowledge, potency, and presence, and remain "in essence" God. The distinction is strictly one of human philosophy. Concerning Kenosis, Charles Hodge, the leading American evangelical scholar of the last century, wrote:

"The theory in question is inconsistent with the clear doctrine both of revealed and natural religion concerning the nature of God. He is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and immutable. any theory, therefore, which assumes that God lays aside His omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, and becomes as feeble, ignorant, and circumscribed as an infant, contradicts the first principle of all religion..."¹⁷

It must be pointed out here that Hodge fully accepted the doctrine of the incarnation, that God came in the flesh, as an infant and a man. However, he saw it in the light of historic Christology, as discussed in section IV, that while all of that was true, Christ was not confined to that form of a servant, and was not limited by it, except that He willingly gave up the exercise of His Glory, and sometimes chose not to use His other powers, though He retained them fully.

2. Berkhof shines more light on the philosophical antecedents of Kenosis when he writes: "The theory is based on the pantheistic conception that God and man are not so absolutely different but that the one can be transformed into the other. The Hegelian idea of becoming is applied to God,

and the absolute line of demarcation is obliterated."¹⁸ The theologians who concocted this heresy were German scholars steeped in the insidious philosophy of Hegel, the forerunner of both communism and fascism.

B. The vital doctrine of Immutability is completely destroyed by Kenotic teaching.

(Cf. Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; Hebrews 13:8)

1. Biblically, there was no essential change of the nature of the Second Person of the Trinity in His Incarnation, because He did not lose the essential attributes of deity, He took on human flesh and a human nature. In His own essence, He did not change (Hebrews 13:8).

2. Beyond its effect on the immutability of the Son, it would destroy the integrity of the Triune God if He ceased to be fully and totally the Absolute God during His Incarnation, . "It means a virtual destruction of the Trinity, and therefore takes away our very God. The humanized Son, self-emptied of His divine attributes, could no longer be a divine subsistence in the Trinitarian life."¹⁹

C. If the God-Man who died on the cross was not both fully God and fully Man, then the integrity of the atonement is destroyed. The Blood that redeemed the Church was the "Blood of God." Acts 20:28 If He was any less than God, then His blood sacrifice was not infinitely powerful and able to redeem all who believe in every age.

IV. An alternative method of handling the "problem verses" without deviating from orthodox Christology.

There are three Biblical concepts which are at the heart of this method: (A) Understanding the biblical doctrine of the two natures of Christ. (B) Understanding His role as our Kinsman-Redeemer and substitute, and (C) Understanding and admitting the existence of the Biblical concept of "mystery"--the fact that there are some things which must be just believed, because there is no way to understand them.

A. Understanding the biblical doctrine of the two natures of Christ. The Trinitarian Controversy (A.D. 320-381) led directly into a great controversy over the Nature of Christ's Person. Understanding the doctrinal dimensions of this fight, and understanding the conclusions reached by the church are vital to understanding how to combat the cults in this area, since the cults of today are merely the heresies of yesterday refried. During this period of Church History, there were many evil things done in the name of one doctrine or another, yet miraculously, truth triumphed.

1. As the early church wrestled with understanding the Biblical teaching about Christ, there were three views that became most prominent. I will try to illustrate these views by assigning different ways of writing the term , "God-Man" to each view. a. The Monophysites taught that Christ was the God-man, that is, He was not fully God and Fully man, but a third entity which was a fusion of the two natures (The Kenotic teaching is closest to this among the early heresies.) This heresy was basically a leftover of the Origenistic tendencies of Arianism, and grew strongest in the areas that had been strongest for the Arian view. The battle cry of this party was that Mary was the Theotokos, or Mother of God. The Monophysites carried this erroneous teaching (which survived, though without the Christological conclusions attached) to extremes, and made of Christ a new

category of being, with one nature, will, and personality, each a fusion of God and Man. 20 b. The Nestorians taught that Christ was the God, Man with two natures so separate as to be a split personality. This teaching developed because of the objections of the church and theological school of Antioch to the growing cult of Mary among monophysite believers. 21 c. The orthodox view, which was approved by the Council of Chalcedon in 451, and which has been accepted and proven to be fully Biblical by evangelical Christians since the Reformation, was that Christ was the God-Man, fully God and fully Man, one person with two unmixed natures. 22

2. The important key concept in the orthodox doctrine is whatever Christ did, He did as a whole person. For instance, when His human body was beaten, tortured, and died, He suffered as a whole person, so that though God cannot be killed, it can be said that God Died for Our Sins. 23 3. Because of the Truth of the two natures, we can Biblically say:24 a. Christ is infinite OR Christ is finite b. He existed from all eternity OR He was born in Bethlehem c. He was omniscient OR He was limited in knowledge d. He is David's Lord YET David's son e. He is the Ancient of Days YET He was born as an infant f. He is God over all YET He is the son of Mary g. He upholds all things YET He is weary with His journey h. Without Him was nothing made that was made YET He can do nothing without the Father i. His natural form is the form of God YET He takes on Him the form of a servant j. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, YET He increases in stature k. He Knows the Father perfectly YET He increases in wisdom l. In His own name, he gives a new and more perfect law and proclaims Himself Lord of the Sabbath and greater than the temple, YET He is born under the law and is subject to the law m. He is the Prince of Peace YET His souls is troubled n. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, YET He goes to death at the order of a Roman governor o. He is with us always unto the end of the world, YET The disciples saw Him being received into heaven out of their sight.

B. Understanding His role as our Kinsman-Redeemer and substitute.

Why was is necessary for the Redeemer to be the God-Man? Why is the doctrine of the two natures of Christ so important? The answers lie in God's law of the goel, or Kinsman-Redeemer, (Leviticus 25:1-55) illustrated beautifully by the historical story of Ruth. Scofield summarizes the principle concisely in his note on Isaiah 59:20:25

1. The kinsman redemption was of persons, and an inheritance (Leviticus 25:48; Leviticus 25:25; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:7; Ephesians 1:11; Ephesians 1:14.).
2. The Redeemer must be a kinsman (Leviticus 25:48-49; Ruth 3:12-13; Galatians 4:4, Hebrews 2:14-15).
3. The Redeemer must be able to redeem (Ruth 4:4-6; Jeremiah 50:34; John 10:11; John 10:18).
4. Redemption is effected by the goel (Kinsman-Redeemer) paying the just demand in full (Leviticus 25:27; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Galatians 3:13).
5. Therefore, what we see as Christ's humiliation was done as our goel, our redeemer, our substitute. When He was living, acting, speaking, suffering, denying full knowledge of events, claiming total dependence on the Spirit, etc. as a man, he was doing these things out of His human nature, and in our place. Yet, because He was also God, He could pay the whole price--he lived, acted, spoke, and suffered as no other man ever had or ever could.

C. Understanding and admitting the existence of the Biblical concept of "mystery."

There are some things which must be just believed, because there is no way to understand them.

1. God is unsearchable (Ecclesiastes 3:11, Isaiah 40:28, Romans 11:33-36, Job 5:9, Job 11:7) 2. There are many mysteries in the gospel (1 Timothy 3:16, Ephesians 5:25; Ephesians 5:1Colossians 15:51)

3. Christ Himself is a mystery (Romans 16:25; Romans 16:1-27:1 Corinthians 2:7, Ephesians 1:9; Ephesians 3:4; Ephesians 3:9, Colossians 1:27) D. The three core concepts related above should help us understand how Christ lived His life on earth.

He lived in appearance as a man (Isaiah 53:3, Php 2:8), and submitted His will to the Father, and lived His life as a man anointed by the Spirit (Luke 4:16-21). Yet, He retained all His powers, and demonstrated His abilities often as a vindication of His messiahship and proof of His authority (Mark 2:1-12). In the mysterious verse John 5:17, ". . . My Father has been working until now, and I have been working," we are given a clue that He did many of His works "in His own right," though they were always in accordance with the will of the Father. On one occasion, He even lifted the veil of His flesh, took off His servant nature, so His three closest disciples could see Him as He really was (Matthew 17:2). On another occasion, He "lifted the hem of His veil a bit"--when they came to arrest Him, He said "I AM," and they all fell down (John 18:4-6).

If we were to make an illustration of Jesus as if He were a policeman going under cover in a bad neighborhood, the Kenosis doctrine has the policeman leaving his weapons at home, along with his badge and other symbols of authority. He can call on headquarters for help, but he himself is helpless and defenseless. The orthodox teaching has the policeman himself as a "lethal weapon", he is a martial arts expert who can kill with a blow--he is skilled on the level that he can reach within a man's chest and pull out his still-beating heart--he can defeat multiple opponents. He can leave His I.D. , badge, uniform, etc., behind just like cop number one, but he cannot cease to be the walking weapon that he is. He looks normal, he appears as helpless as the first policeman, but he has the ability within himself to defend himself. He might choose to call for help; he might even choose to allow himself to be shackled, hurt or killed for the good of the mission--but he has the ability within himself to defeat his enemies. Raise that illustration, and the powers of the second policeman to infinity, and the illustration shows the difference in the two doctrines.

One of the beauties and glorious mysteries of the cross is that He who hung there was at that moment sustaining the universe--the very breath of the Roman soldiers was in His grip. He could have destroyed the Roman empire with a wink, with a thought, but He voluntarily restrained His great power, submitted to the plan He and the Father had agreed to before the world was made, and laid down His life. The entire Trinity was involved here--The Father pouring out His wrath , the Son Propitiating the wrath (Romans 1:18; Romans 3:25-2; Romans 5:8-11), and the Spirit involved in a way the Bible does not specify (Hebrews 9:14). This is a great mystery, but it cannot be solved by reducing the Son to something not quite God.

E. It is from applying the core concepts above that we can construct meaningful and orthodox answers to the questions of those who refuse to believe in the God of the Bible. The answer is not to deviate from Truth ourselves through less-than-precise theology--it is to present the whole Truth unvarnished and uncut.

J.I. Packer, the dean of living evangelical theologians, completely rejects the doctrine of Kenosis, as illustrated in his book *Knowing God*. He says plainly, "The Kenosis theory will not stand."²⁶ I encourage the reader, to see what this Christian leader says about the subject. I hope that my study will be of help, and if you have been infected with this false doctrine I pray you will seriously consider modifying your views in this vital area.

1 Walter Martin's last published writing was a refutation of apotheosis in the book *The Agony of Deceit*, (Moody Press, 1990). Included in that same book is an article by Dr. Rod Rosenblatt entitled *Who Do TV Preachers Say That I Am?*, which refutes, among other things, the teaching of Kenosis.

2 L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, (Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1940) pg 327.

3 Ibid.

4 Ralph P. Martin, *Kenosis*, *The New Bible Dictionary* (Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), pg 6:89 5 Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* vol. II/III, (Reprint by Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977) pp 428-440.

6 Dr. Rod Rosenblatt, *Who Do TV Preachers Say That I Am? The Agony of Deceit*, (Moody Press, 1990) pp 114-115.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 W. E. Vine, (Edited by F. F. Bruce) *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Fleming H. Revell Company, 1981) N. T. Vol. 2, pg 25.

10 Berkhof, op. cit. pg 328.

11 C. I. Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible* (Oxford University Press, 1917), pg 1258.

12 Lightfoot, cited by Scofield, *ibid*.

13 Moorehead, cited by Scofield, *ibid*.

14 Scofield, op. cit. pg 1145.

15 Berkhof, op. cit. 327.

16 A. W. Pink, *The Attributes of God* (Baker Book House, 1975) pg 29.

17 Hodge, op cit, pg 439.

18 Berkhof, op. cit. pg 328.

19 Ibid. 329 20 Phillip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. III (Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977) p705-783.

21 Ibid 22 Loraine Boettner, *Studies in Theology*, (The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1973) pp 195-203.

23 Hodge, op. cit.

24 Boettner, op. cit. 197.

25 Scofield, op. cit. pg 765.

26 J. I. Packer, Knowing God, (InterVarsity Press, 1973) pg. 52.

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