Frequently Asked Questions

Jim Fowler

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

JIM FOWLER

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

James A. Fowler

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INTRODUCTION

It has been many years since 1973 when I first began to receive the revelation of "Christ in me" and "Christ as my life." As the Spirit of Christ continued to teach me the implications of this glorious gospel message, I shared these with the people in the congregations I was serving as pastor in Anthony, KS and Fallbrook, CA.

Looking back over almost forty years of pastoral ministry, conference ministry, and teaching in Bible schools and seminaries, I began to ponder some of the questions that people have asked, seeking clarification and amplification of what I was teaching. I compiled a list of "frequently asked questions," and wrote out the answers that I have provided for the questions, keeping the answers brief so as not to create a series of theological dissertations.

When considering what I would share at the conference sponsored by the Bible Study Group in Dalton, PA on Memorial Day weekend in May, 2010, I decided that the "Frequently Asked Questions" might be instructive, since this was the twelfth year of my speaking to this group of people. They were familiar with my teaching, and had asked many of these questions over the years.

The list of "Frequently Asked Questions" served a secondary purpose of identifying many of the distinctives of the Christocentric message that I teach. It "connects the dots," so to speak, providing the connections of how the emphases are tied together.

During the 2010 conference in Dalton the pre-formulated questions were presented in a "question and answer" format, with adequate explanation that the individual chosen to ask the questions was not interrogating me in an antagonistic manner.

Transparencies were prepared in advance to provide images of what I was discussing. The transparency images are included in this booklet after the answers to the questions.

May this booklet serve as an instructional aid for those desiring to better understand the Christocentric message that I teach.

Jim Fowler
June, 2010

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

#1 - Why do you insist that Christian thought must <u>start</u> and <u>finish</u> with the "character of God"?

Because everything starts with who God IS, and everything ends with who God IS. Who God IS has to do with His *character*. He is not who He IS apart from His *character*!

As a student of Christian thought and theology for many years, I have noticed that most of the theology texts begin with a discussion of what God *does*, or *has done*. They commence with God's plan, His covenant arrangements, His election, His determinations, His predestined will, His decrees, His Law, precepts or principles, etc. This is absurd! The proper study of God should *never* start with what God *does*, and then from His activity determine who He *IS*. The premise of "I *am*, because I *do*" – identity based on performance – is ***not*** true of God or of man.

Everything God *does* is determined by Who He *IS* – His character. God *does* what He *does*, because He *IS* Who He *IS*.

The character of this God who IS (the "I AM that I AM") is an exclusive character. *What* God IS, only God IS! *Who* God IS, only God IS. He is thereby distinguished from all of creation, rejecting all monistic and pantheistic theories. That is why we note that God is Holy (I Pet.

1:15,16) – God is set apart, separated from, distinct from, all that is not Himself – His absolutely Holy Self.

The theologians have often differentiated between the transferrable and non-transferrable attributes of God, believing that God can share or distribute some of His attributes to His creatures. His omnipresence is non-transferable, they maintain, but His Love is transferable. I disagree! "God *IS* love," the apostle John writes, not "God *has* some love to distribute and pass around." The entirety of God's character is non-transferable. His character is exclusive to Himself. What God IS, only God IS! God is the singular and exclusive Self-giving Self – that is what LOVE is!

God acts out of His own Being – out of Himself (*ek autos*) – to express His own exclusive character. What God IS, only God IS, and only God can express Who He IS. Man is not capable of generating, manufacturing, producing the character of God. And yet, many Christians seem to think that the objective of the Christian life is just that – to imitate God, to reproduce His character. Not so! Only God can express the character of God. "God does not give His glory to another" (Isa. 42:8; 48:11).

But, Isaiah does say that we "were created for His glory" (Isa. 43:7); and the only way for God to be glorified is when His all-glorious character is expressed unto His own glory; such glorification of God *must* be God expressing Himself – His character – within His creation. Godliness is exclusively the result of God expressing His divine character. Man is not capable of producing godly character – only of allowing God to express His godly character in human behavior, by faithful receptivity of God's activity.

That is why I declare, "Christian thought must *start* and *finish* with the character of God!"

What is the end objective of Christianity? It is NOT to build a church – an ecclesiastic enterprise or empire! It is NOT to get as many human beings as possible into heaven – corralled into a heavenly destiny! We are "created for His glory" – the expression of God's *character*.

That is why the mystery of the gospel is "Christ in you, the hope of *glory*" (Col. 1:27). The "hope of glory" is *not* the "I hope-so-wish of going to heaven someday. The living Lord Jesus comes to live in us, bringing the *confident-expectation-hope* that He will be allowed to express His *character* in our behavior to the glory of God.

All we have to do is look at the tragic relationships in the churches of today, to document that Christian people do not understand the objective of Christ living out His *character* in our behavior to the glory of God.

CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

START ⟵⟶ **FINISH**

Character of God
is exclusive to
His own Being

Character of God
is expressed unto
His own Glory

What God ***IS***, only God ***IS***!

God ***DOES*** what He ***DOES***,
because He ***IS*** Who He ***IS***!

God expresses His **character**
ek autos (out of Himself)

#2 – For several years now you have used the phrase, "God is God; man is man." Why do you regard that distinction so important?

The distinction between the *infinite Creator, God*, and the *finite creature, man*, must always be acknowledged.

The melancholy Danish thinker, Soren Kierkegaard, referred to the "Infinite Qualitative Difference" between God and man, stating, "God and man are as 'far apart' as 'far apart' can get."

The Swiss theologian, Karl Barth, (especially in his earlier theological writings) referred to God as "*the Wholly Other*," who is *wholly other* than man, despite the anthropomorphic portrayals by which our finite minds attempt to conceive of a personal God. Referring to God as "wholly other" than man does not imply any deistic detachment, but it indicates that *deity* and *humanity* are categories of "being" completely distinct from one another. *God* is *God*, and *man* is *man*!

There is a *constitutional* difference between God and man – the difference between the *infinite Creator* who has *intrinsic Being* in Himself and the *finite creature* who has *extrinsic created "being*" derived from the Creator-God.

There is also an essential *functional difference* between God and man. God is *independent* and *autonomous*, and by His divine "*free-will*" *Self-generates* His every expression of Himself, *ek autos* (out of Himself). We call such divine action, "*Grace*."

Man is *dependent* and *contingent*, with the *freedom of choice* to derive from a spirit-source other than himself. We call such human response-ability, "*faith*." The

interactions of God and man are always "*by grace, through faith*."

How, then, can man *know about* God, and come to *know* God in an intimate relational union? .. Only as God reveals Himself, and makes Himself available to indwell and function in human beings. *Divine* Being and *human* being are both forms of *relational* being. Granted, God's Being is intrinsic Self-existent Being, and human being is extrinsic, created being, but the relational being of God and man allow for real personal relationality between God and human individuals.

The distinct and unique Christian understanding of God is referred to as "*Trinitarian monotheism*." …*not* monadic monotheism, like the Islamic "Allah" or the Judaic "Yahweh," …and *not* monistic monotheism, like the Eastern religions that view god as merged and absorbed into all things. Trinitarian monotheism allows God to be an intrinsically relational Being, wherein the three Persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and H.S., have eternally enjoyed perfect interpersonal relationship. That is why John can write, "God is Love" (I John 4:8,16). The three Persons of the Godhead always relationally seek the highest good of the *other* – that's LOVE. Because they are personally and perfectly other-oriented LOVE, they desired to create other beings who could participate in their perfect LOVE relationship – both angelic and human.

After human beings chose the antithesis of God's other-seeking love-character – participating in the self-orientation of sin, the antithesis of God's character, God still *loved* the human race. In His LOVE, He is always *FOR* us, *not against* us! "God so loved the world of fallen mankind, that He send His only (and eternally) begotten Son…" (Jn. 3:16). God orchestrated the incarnation of

the Son of God in the individual person of Jesus Christ, the God-man, whose voluntary redemptive action of death on the cross could effect restored relational interaction (even union) with all receptive human beings.

That is why it is so important to emphasize that God is God, and man is man. God has taken the initiative to effect relationship with man, even though humanity initially rejected Him. That is the “good news” of the Gospel!

GOD	MAN

CONSTITUTIONAL DIFFERENCE

Intrinsic Being	Extrinsic being
Infinite Creator	Finite creature

FUNCTIONAL DIFFERENCE

Independent	Dependent
Autonomous	Contingent
Free-will	Freedom of choice
Self-generating	Derivative
Activity	Receptivity
GRACE	FAITH

CHRISTIAN VIEW OF GOD

Trinitarian monotheism

NOT monadic monotheism
NOT monistic monotheism

"Three Persons in One Being"

Intrinsically relational Being

"God IS Love"
(I Jn. 4:8,16)

#3 – Foundational to your teaching is a distinctive understanding of anthropology – the function of the human being? Can you explain the importance of your foundational premises?

Yes, I have stated that the most unfortunate phenomenon in the history of Christian thought is the failure of the Christian community to develop and articulate a coherent understanding of *anthropology* – of how God designed man to function, and how God and man are designed to have a personal relationship.

The early church councils hammered out their orthodox positions concerning the Christian view of God as Trinitarian monotheism (Three Persons in one Being – Father, Son and Holy Spirit in one Godhead), and they developed a consensus of thought concerning Christology – an explanation of the Person of Jesus Christ as the God-man – fully God, fully man. They explained this as two natures in one Person – deity and humanity. They failed, however, to adequately explain the operational function of the God-man; how He emptied Himself of the prerogative of divine function in order to function as a man, receptive in faith to God's activity in the man.

But it is the constitution and function of human beings that never received adequate clarification in Christian thought, and this has led to anthropological ambiguity, and the introduction of all kinds of psychological and sociological explanations of humanity and its relation to God.

When we consider how God constituted man when He created man, I think it is important to understand that the human being is constituted to function at 3 levels:

spiritually, psychologically, physiologically – spirit, soul, body – NOT cut in 3 (trichotomy); NOT 3 parts, compartments, partitions (tripartite); but the highest of God's earthly created order, with the capacity to interact with God by functioning on 3 levels.

Within the psychological function it is also important to note that God Self-limited His absolute power of orchestrating His creation by granting the human creature a *freedom of choice* with real consequences to these choices. This is not to say that mankind has *Free-will*, for I regard that to be God's ability alone (the divine power to Self-determine what He is going to do consistent with who He is, and the power to self-implement His Self-determination.) God has divine *Free-will* – human beings have human *freedom of choice*.

The 3-fold constitutional function of human beings, and the created privilege of *freedom of choice* – these I regard to be the essential factors of humanness – *humanum* – what it means to be human.

The essentiality and functionality of human beings is radically contrary to that of God. As noted previously, God is autonomous, independent, and Self-generative of His own character expression. Man is NOT – and can never be independent, autonomous and self-generative of character expression. Man, by His God-defined constitution and function, is always spiritually dependent and contingent, and derives all character expression from a spiritual source other than himself.

This is so diametrically opposed to all humanistic explanations of human function, which inevitably posits that man is independent and autonomous, self-generating his own character and action by his own free-will. To understand the spiritually derived function of humanity is to take one's stand on the only thesis that

counteracts the popular humanistic philosophical premises *en toto*.

The failure to understand this anthropological premise of "*derivative man*" has led to many watered-down forms of "evangelical humanism."

What does it mean to be human?

- God created human beings to function at three levels:

  spiritually – spirit

  psychologically – soul

  physiologically – body

  - NOT “cut in three” – trichotomous

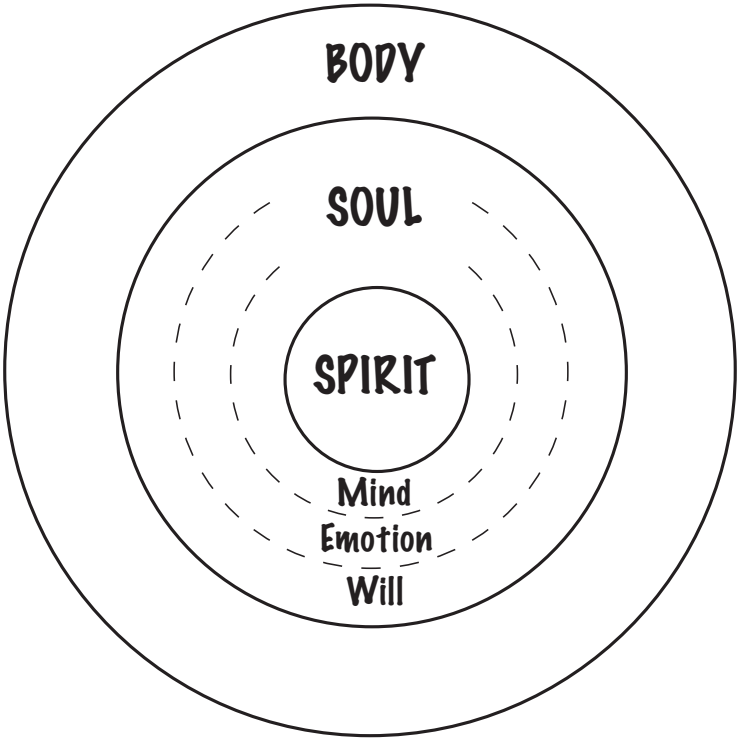
  - NOT “three compartments” – tripartite

- God created human beings with “freedom of choice”

  NOT free-will

  Freedom to derive from spiritual source

Human Constitution



#4 – You have mentioned the premise of "derivative man." Can you expand on this premise that seems to be central to your philosophical anthropology and theology?

God *does* what He *does*, because He *IS* who He *IS*. What God *does*, man cannot do! God acts out of Himself (*ek autos*). We call His action GRACE – God acting in accord with Himself.

Man is not capable of such intrinsic self-generation, whereby he might generate and produce character from his own being. God created man to be a derivative, contingent, dependent, receptive creature. Humanity cannot function otherwise, despite all the humanistically touted tenets of self-potential, self-actualization, self-help, etc. The human being is not a self-generating "independent self."

God is the only Independent Self or Being – exercising the *Free-will* to Self-determine His course in accord with His own character, and Self-implement the expression of that character in divine action. He *does* what He *does*, because He *IS* who He *IS*.

Human beings have *freedom of choice* (not Free-will), and the choice is primarily (at the deepest level) a choice from which spiritual source (God or Satan) we are going to derive character in the midst of our behavioral actions.

We do not have the choice to act "out of ourselves" (*ek autos*), as only God can do. We only have the choice to derive and receive from a spiritual source – either *ek Theos* (out of God), or *ek diabolos* (out of the devil). There is no third alternative. There is only the either/or of God or Satan.

Yet, the prevailing philosophy of fallen man is humanism, which advocates that human beings can self-generate, self-actuate, and self-actualize. The reason why this premise of "derivative man" is so central to my understanding of man's relationship with God is because any alternative other than "derivative man" is to accept the ***lie of Satan***, "you can be like God." That has been the humanistic lie from the beginning. The thesis of "derivative man" is the only explanation that rejects the humanistic thesis *en toto*.

What happens in evangelical Christian religion is a modification of humanistic thought – *Evangelical Humanism!* They reject the devil's lie that they can "be like God" in self-generating goodness and righteousness. They agree with Gal. 2:21 that if man could generate his own righteousness, then Christ died needlessly. But, apart from Jesus, they allege that man generates his own evil, his own sinfulness, his own unrighteousness. In so doing, they reject the foundational premise of "derivative man" for all character function. They fall back on a premise of *ek autos* – that sin is "out of oneself," blaming such on a straw-man called "self" – an alleged "independent self." And then they attempt to "beat up on this self" in masochistic performance efforts to "die to self" and suppress their alleged intrinsic sinfulness – trying thereby to be their own savior!

Everything about man's being and function is derivative: We have a derived spiritual *nature* (either Satan's wrath-nature or Christ's divine nature). We have a derived spiritual *identity* (either sinners or saints). We have a derived spiritual *character* (either righteousness or sinfulness). We have a derived spiritual *life* or *death*. We have a derived spiritual *image* (visibly expressing

the nature and character of the spirit within us). We have a derived spiritual *immortality*, when we are deriving from the Immortal God who brought immortality to mankind through His Son (cf. I Timothy 6:16; II Timothy 1:19).

GOD acts *ek autos*

"out of Himself"

to express His character

MAN receives by

deriving from spiritual source

– *ek Theos* (out of God)

– *ek diabolos* (out of the devil)

DERIVATIVE MAN

EVERYTHING about man's *being* and *function* is derived.

Derived *nature*
"nature of wrath" -or- "divine nature"
Derived *identity*
"sinners" -or- "saints"
Derived *character*
"sinfulness" -or- "righteousness"
Derived *image*
visible expression of God or Satan
Derived ...
"life" -or- "death"
Derived *immortality*
"Immortal God" brought "life and immortality to light through the gospel"

#5 – The premise of "derivative man" leads to another distinctive of your teaching – the idea that all human beings are indwelt and energized by either God or Satan. Can you expand on that thesis?

Yes, the premise that God created human beings as "derivative creatures" who always, at all times, derive character from a spiritual source, logically demands that human beings are indwelt and energized by either God or Satan.

Granted, some object to the thesis that all human beings are indwelt and energized by either God or Satan. The popular Christian teaching, since the time of Augustine, has been that humanity was *corrupted* by the Fall into sin, and became *inherently* sinful, capable of self-generating sinful character. I object to that thesis, for it makes humanity into sinful devils – self-generating evil ones – sin-generating adversaries of God. Nor, can I accept the thesis espoused by some, that fallen man is sub-human, or has abdicated any features or functions of his created humanness.

As derivative human beings, always functioning spiritually, psychologically and physiologically, and always having a creaturely *freedom of choice*, all human individuals are indwelt and energized by either God or Satan.

The biblical evidence has convinced me of this premise:

- Whereas, the Christian has Christ *in* him (Col. 1:27; II Cor. 13:5), the unbeliever has the "prince of the power of the air, the spirit working *in* the sons of disobedience (Eph. 2:2). (Greek preposition *en*).

- Whereas, the Christian is "*in* Christ" (II Cor. 5:17), the whole world of unregenerate persons are "*in* the evil one" (I Jn. 5:19). (Greek preposition *en*).
- Whereas, the Christians has an adequacy (II Cor. 3:5), of love (I Jn. 4:7) and goodness (III Jn. 11) derived *out of* God, the non-Christian expresses a character of sin derived *out of* the devil (I Jn. 3:8). (Greek preposition *ek*).
- Whereas Christians have become "partakers of the divine *nature*" (II Pt. 1:4), the unregenerate are "by *nature* children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3). (Greek word *phusis*).
- Whereas, Christians have the "*treasure* (Christ) in earthen vessels" (II Cor. 4:7), those without Christ put forth evil things from an evil *treasure*" (Matt. 12:35). (Greek word *thesaurus*).
- Whereas, fallen mankind is under the authority & dominion of Satan, Christians are converted to the authority/dominion of God in Christ (Acts 26:18). (Greek word *exousia*).
- Whereas, non-Christians are "in the snare of the devil, held captive to do his will" (II Tim. 2:26), Christians are willing bond-servants/love-slaves of Jesus Christ (II Tim. 2:24; Rom. 1:8; Rom. 6:16-20). (Greek word *doulos*).
- Whereas, Christians are "children of God" (Rom. 8:16) and call God, "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15), Jesus told the Pharisees that they were of their father, the devil" (Jn. 8:44). (Greek word *pater*).

These are but a few of the either/or contrasts in scripture that indicate that all human beings derive spiritual character & relation from either God or Satan – and there is no third alternative or option of self-source. Logically, this is the law of the excluded middle.

Theological quotations from Christian leaders throughout the history of the Church can also be cited to show that this has been accepted and taught through the centuries of Christian history, but one in particular stands out in my mind:

W. Ian Thomas – "As godliness is the direct and exclusive consequence of God's activity, and God's capacity to reproduce Himself in you, so all ungodliness is the direct and exclusive consequence of Satan's activity, and of his capacity to reproduce the devil in you! … iniquity is no more the consequence of your capacity to imitate the devil, than godliness is the consequences of your capacity to imitate God."

ALL Human Beings

– in spiritual solidarity with

– indwelt by

– energized by

either GOD *or* Satan

"Christ in you"	"Satan in sons of disobedience"
"in Christ"	"in the Evil One"
derive from God	derive from the devil
divine nature	nature of wrath
treasure of Christ	evil treasure
authority of Christ	authority of Satan
bond-servant of Jesus	captive of the devil
children of God	children of the devil

"As *godliness* is the direct and exclusive consequence of God's activity, and God's capacity to reproduce Himself in you, so all *ungodliness* is the direct and exclusive consequence of Satan's activity, and of his capacity to reproduce the devil in you!

…For *iniquity* is no more the consequence of your capacity to imitate the devil, than *godliness* is the consequence of your capacity to imitate God!"

W. Ian Thomas, *The Mystery of Godliness*. Pg. 86.

#6 – By indicating that either God or Satan indwells or rules over every human individual, is this not a dualistic understanding of the spiritual condition of mankind?

Some people seem to think that the positing of an either/or contrast necessarily creates or constitutes a dualism. I do not believe that to be correct.

In the either/or diametric polarity between God and Satan, there is definitely a *duality* – a contrast of two opposites: God – Satan; good – evil; truth – error; holy – sinful; love – self-orientation. This is a fixed antithesis of character, and the two polar opposites cannot be brought together in integration or compromise. But, this is not a *dualism*, or (as the question states) a "dualistic understanding of the spiritual condition of mankind."

The classic philosophical usage of the term "dualism" applies to two mutually exclusive and absolutely equal forces that oppose one another and remain in a perpetual stalemate or standoff (thought not necessarily a static *stasis* without interaction).

The Taoist dualism of yin/yang is an example of such dualism, and the Taijitu symbol used for such, pictures equal parts of two principles, each with a balancing portion of the other within. The two (the black and the white) are together within a larger inclusive circle, creating a duality within a unity – a *dualism* wherein they reside in everlasting juxtaposition – interdependent and interconnected – but forever balancing each other out.

The presence and activity of God or Satan within regenerate and unregenerate human individuals, is a

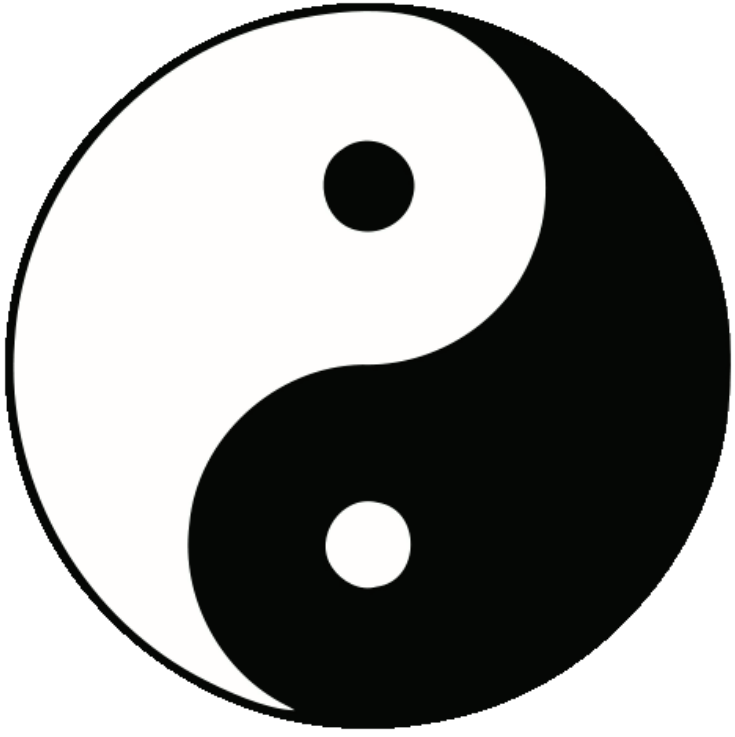
polarized duality, but not a dualistic standoff where neither can overcome the other.

God, in Christ, has defeated the forces of evil. In the death of Jesus Christ, Satan has been rendered powerless (Heb. 2:14), and the works of the devil destroyed (I John 3:8). A cosmic victory has been won, when Christ "disarmed and triumphed over the rulers and authorities of evil (Col. 2:15) by His death on the cross.

No human individual need remain indwelt and enslaved by Satan. A spiritual exchange is available to all men, wherein they can be turned/converted from the dominion and authority of Satan to the Lordship of Jesus Christ (Acts 26:18), and experience "Christ in them, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

Henceforth, it can be declared of the Christian, "Greater is He who is in you, than he who is in the world" (I Jn. 4:4).

Taijitu symbol of *yin / yang*



#7 – The origin of evil and its introduction into God's created world has always been difficult to explain. Do you have a theological solution to this difficulty?

The origin and introduction of evil or sin into the perfect universe that the Righteous God created has been an issue of much debate throughout the history of Christian thought. The discussion of such is known as "theodicy" in philosophical and theological circles.

In terms of trying to explain the origin of evil from a biblical perspective, with rather limited and debatable details, the question narrows down to a discussion of the origin of the Evil One. How did the Adversary, the devil, Satan, come into being?

Evil is contrary to the character of God – the antithesis of God's character. If (since) God is the creator of all things, how did *evil* character enter into the cosmic arena?

God is the *essential* cause of *all* things (as the Creator), but He is **not** the *culpable* cause of evil that is contrary to His character. Since He generates all things *ek autos* (out of Himself), and in consistency with Himself – His character – we cannot blame evil on God! It is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18); it is impossible for God to be the source of evil. Directly anyway!

But *indirectly* God did create derivative creatures with *freedom of choice*, and the first category of such creatures, that we know of, were the angelic beings – the angels. God Self-limited Himself (as only God could do) to create angelic beings with a *freedom of choice* that could choose to derive all from Him – or refuse to do so. But what alternative derivative source was there?

That is the "ultimate incongruity" – or what Karl Barth called the "impossible possibility."

Utilizing the historical narratives of Isa. 14:12-15 and Ezek. 28:11-19 with their apparent double entendres, along with the imagery of the Apocalypse (Rev. 12:3-9), we surmise that Lucifer, the Light-bearer, the Son of the Dawn, apparently had some form of leadership in the angelic hierarchy. Using his creaturely *freedom of choice*, he chose to reject the derivation and bearing of God's Light. Where did that rejective rebellion come from? We do not know – it's an ultimate incongruity.

But a LIE was born – "I will be like the Most High God" (Isa. 14:14) – "I will be an 'independent self'; I will function *ek autos* (out of myself) as a self-for-self. How could that be? It's an ultimate incongruity!

Did the angelic choice of Lucifer create the Adversary, Satan by his own self-choice? It does not seem possible. But by some means the Evil One came into being – the necessary fixed negative of God's positive – the enemy, the opponent, the adversary – forever cursed and irredeemable. NOT co-equal with God; not a god of good vs. a god of evil, forever in a dualistic standoff. NOT merely the absence and privation of God's good, for explanation by absence amounts to nothing.

God and Satan. There is an essential constitutional difference between them, for one is the Creature and the other a creature; One has intrinsic Being, while the other has extrinsic being. They were polarized in an essential character dichotomy of good and evil.

Satan remains a derivative creature of God. He cannot be an "independent self," self-generating character. Apparently Satan takes that which is of God; His

goodness, righteousness, loving character, and twists such around backwards into its negative antithesis. He short-circuits the character of God in grotesque distortion. In Acts 13:10 Paul calls Elymas a “son of the devil,” who “makes crooked the straight ways of God.”

I don’t know that this is an airtight solution to the problem of evil in the world, but it is the most biblical, theological & philosophical tenable explanation that I have ever heard.

Origin of Evil

Theodicy

"God is the essential
cause of all things,
but He is not the
blameworthy or culpable
cause of evil –
that is contrary
to His character."

#8 – Other speakers have stated that human beings are "spirit beings" in like manner as God is Spirit. Do you teach that also?

In the past (approximately 20-30 yrs ago), I made such an assertion. I have since recognized the fallacy of such a statement.

Human beings are NOT "*spirit beings*" in like manner as *God is Spirit*!

When Jesus told the woman at the well in Samaria that "God is Spirit" (John 4:24), He was NOT indicating that "God is Spirit-Being" or "God is a spirit-being," or stating that "God is invisible, and cannot be seen." The contextual question pertained to the *worship* of God at the temple at Gerizim in Samaria, or the temple at Jerusalem in Judea – a long-standing debate among the Jews and the Samaritans. .. Jesus' answer seems to explain that God is not confined to a geographical mountain, or contained in a temple-box "made with hands" (Acts 7:24). God is beyond all physical location and structures.

What did Jesus mean, then, when He declared, "*God is Spirit*."? He is the singular divine spiritual reality – the Divine Being. He is the singular divine object of all spiritual worship, and that is why we are called to "worship Him in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24).

If that is indeed the meaning of Jesus' statement, "God is Spirit," it is impossible that we should say that human beings are spirit-beings in like manner as God is Spirit. We are never the essence of divine spiritual reality – i.e. deity. We are never the object of all spiritual worship, for *we* are the human worshippers.

Also implicit in the declaration that "God is Spirit" is that when God is the deserving object of all spiritual worship, He is available for genuine, dynamic, personal relationality with His creation – for participation in the personal relationality of the triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – as we receive and express the worthship of the character of God, by means of the living Lord, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

So, human beings, though they are not "spirit-beings," are created with the capacity of spiritual function, so they can engage in the spiritual function of spiritual worship with the Triune God – and that in the context of a one-spirit union with the living Lord Jesus.

On the following pages you will notice that there are three types of being – Divine Being/Spirit Being/Human Being. The term "spirit-being" is utilized for the angelic realm of God's creatures. Lucifer was an angelic spirit-being who became the diabolic spirit-being – the "spirit of error" (I Jn. 4:6); the "spirit of this world" (I Cor. 2:12); "the spirit that works in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2).

God, the Divine-Being, has *intrinsic* being (being and existence that is within His own essential nature). Angels and humans are creatures, created by the Creator, and have *extrinsic* being, that derives from outside of them by means of God's creating them with such "being."

God, the Divine-Being, Self-determines His own action consistent with His character, and Self-generates or Self-actuates the implementation of what He has Self-determined, *ek autos*, out of Himself. Angels and mankind, spirit-beings and human-beings, are designed by the Creator to derive *ek Theos*, out of God – incapable

of independent and autonomous self-generation of character.

Lucifer, the angelic spirit-being, chose against such derivation from God, determining to be "like the Most High God" (Isa. 14:14). Where such underived selfishness originated is the unanswerable incongruity of theodicy. But in so doing Lucifer became the satanic adversary of God, the negative of God's positive, "making crooked the straight ways of God" (Acts 13:10).

Human-beings thereby had a real alternative of derivation, for if they rebelled and rejected the derivation of character from God, *ek Theos*, the alternative was derivation of character from the Evil One, *ek diabolos*.

These three types of being are explained more fully on the following pages.

Divine Being
God

God is the Creator, from whom, ek Theos, all things derive their existence and being.

God, the three-in-one Divine-being, is independent, contingent, Self-determinative, and Self- generative. God is the only "Independent Self" with absolute "free will," whereby He Self-determines His own action in accord with His own character, and Self-generates such action ek autos (out of Himself).

Divine Being is singularly God's Being. What God is only God is. The attributes of God cannot be attributed to any other created thing or person without deifying such thing or person. God's intent is to express His character attributes in His created beings as they choose to derive such from Him, ek Theos, and thereby "image" His invisible character. God provides the divine dynamic for such expression, ek autos, by His grace.

God functions all places at all times. He fills all in all. (This is not Pantheism – which would be God is all/All is God) God is omnipresent. Which is to say that He is Omni-locative (all locations at one time) Infinite. He is omni-temporal (all locations all the time) Eternal.

Spirit-being
Angels

Angelic spirit-beings are derivative creatures – not gods, not man.

The scant data we have concerning angelic spirit-beings seems to indicate they were choosing creatures, intended to derive their expression ek Theos, i.e. out of God's character. For example, Lucifer is identified as the Light-bearer, designed to derive, bear, and express God's Light.

The angelic spirit-being named Lucifer chose against deriving from God's character. Where such underived selfishness originated is an unanswerable incongruity – the problem known as theodicy. Lucifer became Satan, the Evil One, by his fixed choice of countering God, becoming the "negative of God's positive," the source of all sin and evil, by "making crooked the straight ways of God" (Acts 13:10).

As spirit-beings, Satan and the fallen angels are trans-locative and trans-temporal They cannot be everywhere as God is, but neither are they limited by space and time like humans. Satan is not omnipresent, for he cannot be where God is in heaven or man's spirit.

Human-being
Mankind

Human beings are derivative creatures designed to live in the space/time context of planet earth.

Human beings are choosing creatures, having "freedom of choice," but not "free will" (as only God has). Incapable of generating character or activity ek autos (out of himself), the human being was intended to derive character expression ek Theos (out of God). The only alternative was to derive sinful, selfish character from the Evil One, ek diabolos.

Human beings are not divine beings or spirit beings. Humanum is defined by spiritual function (spirit), psychological function (soul), and physiological function (body). A human being is not an "independent self" with inherent or intrinsic spiritual function or the capability of character generation. As a choosing creature, man derives all character from a spirit-source: God or Satan. The choice of deriving character from God via "the receptivity of His activity" is called "faith."

Man is a finite creature. He is not infinite as the Divine Being. He does not transcend space and time as do spirit-beings. Human beings are limited within the context of space and time. They are unilocative and uni-temporal (capable of being present in only one place at one time).

#9 – You have stated, "there is no such thing as 'human nature'." Why do you deny 'human nature'?

Yes, as recently as last year at this conference I stated, "There is no such thing as human nature." Such a statement is made within a carefully defined and limited understanding of the word "nature." And the statement should probably always have more careful clarification built into it – something like, "There is no such thing as an 'independent, human spirit-nature."

Part of the difficulty comes from the fact that the English word "nature" has to be one of the most ambiguous words in our language. J. H. Bernard, writing in *Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible*, states, "Few words have been the source of so much confusion in theology as the word 'nature.'" (III, 493-495).

Our English word "nature" is derived from the Latin words *natura* or *naturalis*, and these come from the root words *natus* or *nativus*. Etymologically, these words mean "to be born" (we get English word "nativity"). Linguistically, they referred to the innate condition of a physical object, or the essential qualities of a physical object.

The *Greeks* had previously used the words *phusis*, *phusikos* and *phusikós*, referring to the origin, source, or being of physical substances of earth, air, fire and water. Plato appears to be the first to use the Greek word *phusis* for abstract forms or ideas, beyond the physical.

The New Testament was written in the Greek language, and uses the words *phusis* and *phusikos*, not only for physical reference (cf. Rom. 2:27; 11:21), and for natural moral reference (cf. Rom. 1:27; I Cor. 11:14), but also for the essential being, constitution, or

characteristics of abstract spiritual realities. Gal. 4:8 refers to those who were slaves to idols, which by *nature* (essential being) are not gods." II Pet. 1:4 – "we have become partakers of the divine *nature*" (divine being).

In the terminology of Christian teaching today the word "nature" is used in an abundance of ways. Examples:

- The *nature* of man is trichotomous – 3-fold constitution.
- It is man's *nature* to be mortal. Mortality is the *nature* of man.
- "That man has *natural* talent for speaking. It's in his *nature*.
- It is the *nature* of man to be rational, volition, moral, affective, self-determinative
- It is the *nature* of man to be selfish, narcissistic
- A person has to go to the bathroom – "the call of nature" – biological function.

When I have stated "there is no such thing as 'human nature'," I have used the word "nature" in a rather limited biblical sense. The *nature* of an individual is the *nature* of the spiritual personage that lives in his/her spirit – either the spirit of Satan, or the Spirit of Christ. But most people when using the word "nature" would not be using it in a spiritual sense.

What happens when we use words in a specialized way – in a manner that is contrary to the way that English word is popularly and commonly used – we cut off communication with those in the world around us, and even with those within the Christian community who do not realize we are self-limiting our definition of "nature" to spiritual nature. "The natural man does not understand spiritual things" – I Cor. 2:14.

#10 – The majority of Christian teachers state that the Christian has "two natures," but you have denied such by stating that the Christian has only "one spiritual nature." Would you explain this difference?

In this case, we are definitely limiting our reference to the *spiritual nature* of the Christian person. We go back to our discussion of how derivative human beings are all indwelt and energized by God or Satan; there is no 3rd alternative called "self," or *independent, human spirit-nature*.

The apostle Paul told the Ephesians that in their unregenerate spiritual condition, prior to becoming Christians, they "were by *nature* (*phusis*) children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3). It was the *nature* of the diabolic prince of the power of the air, working in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2).

Christians, on the other hand, have had a *spiritual exchange* of *spiritual nature*. The apostle Peter explained that we have become "partakers of the divine *nature* (*phusis*)" (II Pet. 1:4). The *nature*, the being, of the Triune Godhead, Father, Son and H.S. has come to dwell in us. We are participating in the *nature* of His character.

This all gets rather fuzzy and messy, semantically ambiguous, when we turn to several of the more modern English translations such as the *Living Bible*, the *New International Version*, the *Good News Bible*, *The Message*, and the *Amplified Bible*. In these versions the translations have been most injudicious and ill-advised, failing to remember that the Greek word for "nature" is *phusis*. They have taken other Greek words for "flesh" and "soul," and translated them "sin-nature, sinful

nature, fallen nature, human nature, old nature, unregenerate nature, Adam nature, Adamic nature, depraved nature, carnal nature, flesh nature," etc. – phrases that have no legitimate basis for such translation in the New Testament Greek text. They interpolate their own psychological and theological interpretations into the text of their translation of scripture, misleading many Christian readers into thinking it is biblical teaching. I think it is quite disingenuous and abominable!

I recall one teacher who explained that when a person becomes a Christian, they now have 2 natures in their spirit – the "old sin nature" and the "new Christ nature." Can you imagine? It is inconceivable that a person could be half-regenerated. Such teaching leads to a schizophrenic understanding of ones spiritual identity; to a paranoid uncertainty of what/who is prompting and motivating my behavior; and a convenient excuse for blaming that old sinful part of me for sinful behavior. Is it any wonder Christians throw up their hands, and do not concern themselves with holy behavior?

Many who espouse "two natures" within the Christian individual are failing to differentiate between the spiritual and the psychological. What they are calling "two natures" is really the admitted conflict of "spirit and flesh" within Christian behavior. NOT "two natures," but the *desires* of the Spirit of Christ within our spirit, contrasted with the patterned *desires* within our soul that are inclined toward previous action and reaction responses of selfishness and sinfulness. There is, no doubt, a behavioral conflict within, as the satanic tempter utilizes the patterned desires that he helped develop to tempt us to quench the desires of the Spirit of Christ, and thus to allow him to energize sinful,

misrepresentative character in our behavior via our desires.

But the Christian has only one spiritual *nature*. We are "partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4), the *nature* of the Perfect Lord and Savior.

Listen to these quotes:

John MacArthur – "It is a serious misunderstanding to think of yourselves as having both an old and a new nature. We do not have a dual personality."

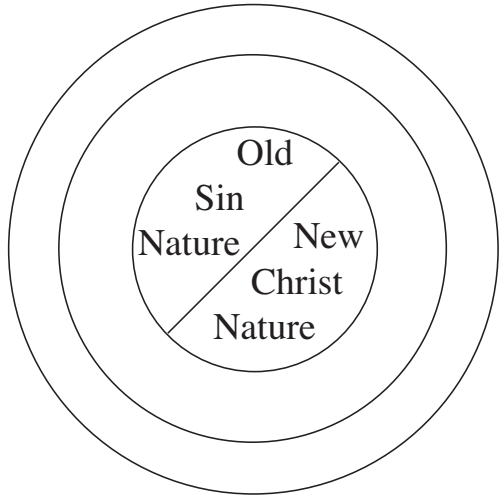
J. Sidlow Baxter – The two natures theory is unscriptural, self-contradictory, and baneful."

Non-biblical phrases:

old nature
sin nature
sinful nature
human nature
Adam nature
Adamic nature
unregenerate nature
depraved nature
corrupt nature
defiled nature
carnal nature
flesh nature
defective nature
wicked nature

Not one of these phrases found in the original text of the new covenant scriptures.

One teacher tried to
explain that the Christian
has “two natures”
in this manner:



IMPOSSIBLE to be
half-regenerated!

#11 – The majority of evangelical Christian teachers object to the distinguishing of "soul" and "spirit" in the make-up of the human being. Why do you consider it so important to differentiate between "soul" and "spirit"?

The earliest language of the Church was Greek, the language in which the New Testament was originally written. The earliest Christian writers who wrote in Greek (such as Clement of Alexandria, Origin, Gregory of Nyssa, etc.) made clear distinction between spirit and soul, between the spiritual and psychological function of human beings, indicating that the spirit was the means of relating to God; the soul was the means of relating to other people; and the body was the means of relating to the world around us.

When Augustine came to the fore in the 4th century, he was not proficient in the Greek language, and wrote in Latin instead. Augustine's thought was greatly influenced by the dualism of Persian Manichaeism and of Christian Platonism. He thought only in terms of the duality of soul and body. His concept of "original sin" was that Adam's sin caused a defective *corruption* of "human nature," especially in the fleshly tendencies of sexuality, whereby all mankind became *essentially* evil. He did not accept the spirit-source of sinful character, for the either/or duality reminded him of the dualism of Manichaeism. Slavishly following St. Augustine, most of Christian thought since the 4th century has adopted his psycho-pneumatic merging of soul and spirit.

The failure to distinguish soul and spirit disallows the spiritual understanding of the scriptures. It tends to

psychologize all spiritual realities (cf. William James – *Varieties of Religious Experience*).

Scripture connects the spirit of man with the presence of God:

Job 32:8 – "there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives understanding."

Prov. 20:27 – "the spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord" – where the light and fire of God are experienced.

The proper differentiation and distinguishing of soul and spirit, of psychological and spiritual function, is key to understanding most of the major doctrines of Christian thought.

It is the key to understanding Christian *anthropology* – how God made humanity, and how God intended to function within humanity.

It is the key to understanding *sin* – that the fall of man into sin did not create a defective or corrupt human nature that was inherently sinful.

It is the key to understanding *salvation* – that salvation is not just saving us from erroneous thinking, or from a sure slide into hell. By the "saving life of Christ," we are made safe from satanically misused and abused humanity, in order to function as God intended by the presence of the Spirit of Christ in our spirit.

It is the key to understanding *sanctification* and the Christian life. The inner conflict of "flesh and Spirit" cannot be properly understood unless we differentiate spiritual and psychological function.

If we do not differentiate soul and spirit, we end up with a plethora of religious aberrations that are inadequate for sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ – psychological

counterfeits of true spiritual worship – psychological principles of Christian behavior, rather than "worshipping in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24).

If soul and spirit and not differentiated, then Sigmund Freud is our savior! God forbid!

If *spirit* and *soul*

are not differentiated,

then Sigmund Freud

is our Savior!

GOD FORBID!

UNTHINKABLE!

#12 – When mankind fell into sin by the choice of Adam as recorded in Genesis 3, the popular explanation is that all humanity was subjected to God's punitive consequence of death. You have denied this explanation by asserting that God does not punitively punish mankind with death for sin. Can you explain your position?

For the past two or three centuries the most popular explanation for the death consequences that came upon mankind for Adam's sin have been formulated in a *penal* model wherein spiritual death, and the ramifications of such death, are viewed as God's *penalty* for sin. The atonement – the interpretive explanation of what the death of Jesus Christ on the cross accomplished, is also then necessarily explained as Jesus paying the *penalty* of a God-demanded death for humanity.

Going back to Gen. 2:17 – "from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die." Is that a *threat* that God is going to impose the *death-penalty* upon man if he sins? OR, is that an indicative statement of inevitable alternative of derivation?

What has often been projected in Christian teaching is that God is very *angry* when man does not perform in the manner He demands. So, when Adam and Eve take of the fruit of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil," in violation of God's command, their disobedience incurs God's vengeful response of imposing a *death-penalty* upon the human race. The wrathful judgment of God the Father demands a "pound of flesh" in death to atone for man's sin.

The Son of God, on the other hand, is full of *compassion* and *grace*, willing to be the substitutional *penal* sacrifice by incurring and enduring the death-penalty in His own being/Person on behalf of indicted humanity.

What does this model project? That *God the Father* is of one state of mind – *vengeance*. And *God the Son* is of another state of mind – *compassion*. When one divides the mind of God in such a manner, they bifurcate the basic and essential oneness of the Trinity.

Some have even suggested that God the Father is a child-abusing Father, if He would allow His Son to become a child-sacrifice to alleviate His own blood-thirsty demands for death upon the disobedient.

There have been many theological theories of the atonement throughout the history of Christian thought, but I am *not* sure that the one that has been most popular and predominant in Western thought for the past few centuries adequately explains the meaning of the death of Jesus Christ.

Yes, death was to be the consequence of sin. "In the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:17). But, instead of a *death-threat* by God, could this not be an indicative statement whereby God indicates that the *rejection* of His life-character in mankind, would necessarily mean that the death-character of the Evil One would inhabit and control fallen mankind? Derivative man would derive one or the other: Derived *LIFE* from God, or derived *death* from Satan. To reject the one would be to receive the other. Either/or! Hebrews 2:14 indicates that "the one having the power of death is the devil."
God is the living God – the God of LIFE who *always* desires to invest His life and character in humanity. He is not a death-dealing, death-imposing, death-demanding God.

What we see here are the far-reaching effects of the concept of "derivative man" – which I think is foundational to Christian thought. The derivativeness of man affects our understanding of sin, of death, of the atonement – the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross.

Functioning as a derivative man, Jesus voluntarily submitted to mortality – to the ignominous death on a cross, allowing the diabolic *death-dealer*, Satan, to come upon or into Him (Acts 2:24). But there was no sinful offense against God in the life of the Perfect One, and the "one having the power of death" could not hold Him. Jesus Christ was willing to take our derived death that we might once again partake of His derived LIFE! May we cease to be preoccupied with death and focus on the LIFE that is ours in Jesus Christ.

Genesis 2:17

"...from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die."

- Is that a *threat* of a God-imposed *death-penalty*?

– or –

- Is that an indicative *statement* of inevitable *alternative of derivation*?

#13 – In conjunction with the previous question, you have stated that there is nothing inherently sinful about fallen mankind – unregenerate humanity. Would you expand on that subject?

Yes, I did just state that the derivative understanding of our humanity affects our understanding of sin (as well as just about every area of Christian thought).

In the first question posed in this interrogative study, we noted that *character* is not *intrinsic* or *inherent* to humanity. We do not have any built-in human character. We cannot self-generate or develop any character. We are not inherently or innately *righteous* – nor are we inherently or innately *sinful*. Even though we have a "derived identity" of "*sinners*" (Rom. 5:19), based on our association with that Evil One from whom all sin is derived. Character is derived from a spiritual source – either God or Satan!

Contrary to the thought of Augustine (4th century), whose misunderstandings have prevailed for centuries in Christian thought, the fall of man did not create a deficient, defective, corrupt, or sinful human nature in man.

Failing to understand the derivativeness of humanity, popular evangelical teaching, while agreeing that man is not inherently righteous and cannot self-generate righteousness, has continued to assert that man is his own devil – that fallen, unregenerate individuals are inherently sinful from the time they are born, and they self-generate their own sinfulness! It's "human nature," they explain.

In the prior question that dealt with "human nature," we focused on the *spiritual nature* of human beings, noting that the spiritual nature of any individual is the *nature* of

the spiritual personage (God or Satan) that indwells and functions in that person – and spiritual character (such as righteousness or sinfulness) flows out of the *nature* of that spiritual source.

Since the "prince of the power of the air is the spirit that works in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2), and the unregenerate are "by nature children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3) – and since "the whole world (of fallen mankind) lies in the Evil One (I Jn. 5:19 – the *sinful condition* of the *derived identity* of a "sinner" (Rom. 5:19) and the *sinful character* that is inevitably expressed in *sinful behavior* (that cannot be denied – I Jn. 1:8,10), is the result of the Evil One present and functioning in all unregenerate mankind.

Unregenerate mankind is ***not*** inherently sinful! We are ***not*** essentially devils who are the source of our own sin-problems.

The unregenerate have "depraved minds" (I Tim. 6:5; II Tim. 3:8) and are "desperately wicked" (Jere. 17:9), because the source of all sin (I Jn. 3:8), Satan, inhabits them and manifests his evil character through them.

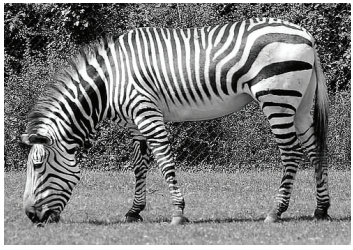
If I believed that unregenerate man was inherently sinful (as popular evangelical religion teaches), then I would have to logically surmise that there is *no* possibility of redemption, regeneration, or salvation.

Can a leopard change his spots? … his nature of being a leopard? Can a zebra change his stripes? … his nature of being a zebra? Can a man change his alleged sinful nature? No more than a leopard can change his spots, or a zebra can change his stripes.

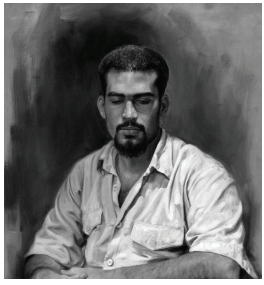
But, praise God, since man is a *derivative creature*, and the identity of "sinner" and the character of sin are derived from a usurping spirit within us, we can, on the basis of the Person and work of Jesus Christ, participate

in a “spiritual exchange,” whereby the *spirit of error* is exchanged for the *spirit of truth*; the *spirit of this world* is exchanged for the *Spirit of God*; the *spirit of Satan* is exchanged for the *Spirit of Christ*. We are “turned from darkness to light, from the dominion of Satan to God” (Acts 26:18). We are converted from “sinner” to “saint,” as the living Lord Jesus becomes our life, and we become man as God intended man to be.

Can a leopard
change his spots?



Can a zebra
change his stripes?



Can a man
change his alleged
sinful nature?

NO!

#14 – It is reported that you have taught that "there is no act or action that is (in and of itself) sin or sinful." Is that true? And if so, how do you define sin and sinfulness?

My answer to the previous question has probably set the stage, if not provided the basis of the answer, for this question.

It is a shocking statement for some people when they first hear the assertion that "there is no act or action that is "in and of itself" – i.e. intrinsically – sin or sinful!"

Some become defensive in their response, almost hostile: "Well, what about the act of adultery? "Well, what about the act of murder? "Are you going to tell me that these aren't always sinful?"

Slow down a minute!

The act of adultery is simply the action of sexual intercourse. Is there anything sinful about sexual intercourse, *per se*? No, God commanded human beings to "Be fruitful, and multiply!" (Gen. 1:22,28). Now, the context, and the question of whether the persons so involved in such sexual intercourse are in covenantal marriage relationship will have something to do with identifying the act as "adultery," But, on the other hand, if one married partner brings a derived selfish character and attitude to the act of marital intercourse in a committed marriage, can that not likewise be sinful?

It's not the act, but the *derived character* received in the midst of the act that makes it sinful!

What about murder? Murder is an action that causes the death of another person. There were occasions in the Old Testament when *God commanded* His people to put

to death every person in a city – total genocide. Was that sinful of God's people to obey God? The Old Testament indicates that civil government has a right to put a person to death for crimes against another (cf. Gen. 9:6). Most of the church has long accepted that there are occasions of "just war," and some of you have probably served in the military, engaged in such activity. Was that sinful?

But if one derives the character and attitude of selfish anger against another, and unjustly takes their life in a murderous death – that is sinful!

Just for the heck of it, moving from theology to practical application, so no one can charge me with being a stuffy, lofty, out-of-touch academic theologue: How about the action of sexual self-stimulation in masturbation? What is the act of masturbation? It is personal sexual release and satisfaction. God designed us for that, didn't He? But, if the derived character and attitudinal mind-set is filled with selfish fantasy that is desirous and willing to engage in sexual activity outside of God's designed parameter, and exploit another for one's selfish pleasure, the act of sexual self-stimulation can be turned into a sinful occasion. But, is it not conceivable that the character of Christ might be present within solo sexuality, allowing the occasion to be an act of worship that praises God for making us the sexual creatures that we are? Every act of the Christian life is intended to be an act of worship. "Set your mind on things above…" (Col. 3:2).

Now, the second part of the question was "How do you define sin and sinfulness?"

Sin and sinfulness are ***not*** in an act. Sin and sinfulness are ***not*** intrinsic to any person – there is no sinful human nature!

Sin is the *character* of Satan, the Evil One, and that is why "sin" is sometimes personified in scripture (cf. Gen. 4:7; Rom. 6:112-14). I John 3:8 is quite clear: "The one who sins, derives what he/she does from the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning." Sin is the expression of Satan's character – in *whatever act* and *whatever person* it takes place. Sin is any character contrary to the character of God.

SIN

"there is no act or action
that is (in and of itself)
sin or sinful..."

Sin and sinfulness are
NOT intrinsic to any *act*

Sin and sinfulness are
NOT intrinsic to any *person*

Sin and sinfulness are
the expression of *Satan's character*
in whatever *act*
and whatever *person*
such is manifested.

#15 – You seem to place more emphasis on the humanity of Jesus Christ rather than on the deity of Jesus Christ? Why is this so?

Well, I could wish that it was *not so*!

As the incarnate God-man – the "Word made flesh" (Jn. 1:14) – Jesus was fully God and fully man. 100% God and 100% man. Never less than God, and never more than man. That He could be so, and the dilemma of how He could be so, Soren Kierkegaard called "The Absolute Paradox," for there are attributes of deity and attributes of humanity that are diametrically opposite and incompatible! God is God, and man is man! How can deity and humanity, with their essential constitutional and functional differences, be put together in a God-man? How can *intrinsic* being and *extrinsic* being be united in one Person? It is a conundrum indeed!

Ideally, there should probably be an equal emphasis on the *deity* and the *humanity* of Jesus, as we do not want to diminish or over-emphasize either, else we end up in some form of extremism.

The first heresy of the early church was a Christological emphasis on the deity of Jesus, while regarding his humanity as but an "appearance," a phantasm. Gnostic docetism.

After the enlightenment of the 18th century, as secular humanism increasingly began to deny God and supernaturalism in general, the popular Christian teaching began to emphasize the deity of Jesus, to emphasize that He was God. Popular evangelical teaching to this very day emphasizes the deity of Christ, to establish the grounds of their proclamation that Jesus is the divine Savior of mankind.

I am probably guilty of reacting to the popular over-emphasis on Jesus' deity, because I believe that the apologetic theses and alleged "proofs" of Jesus' divinity are not really what convinces the unbelieving of the gospel. I am more interested in showing Christian people all that they have in Jesus Christ to live the Christian life. My means for doing so is to explain how Jesus lived the life that He lived, as the Perfect Man. By considering the functional *humanity* of Jesus, we can see how the Christ-life is to be lived.

Jesus could *be* God and *be* man simultaneously – fully God and fully man – despite it being an "absolute paradox. But, it does not appear possible that Jesus could *function* as God and *function* as man at the same time. God is independent, autonomous and self-generating. Man is dependent, contingent, and derivative. God and man have a totally antithetical functionality! That is why Jesus "emptied Himself" (Phil. 2:8) of the divine prerogative of function, in order to function as a man who was dependent on God the Father for every moment in time for 33 years.

God does everything at His own initiative, operating with the absolute *free-will* that Self-determines in accord with His character, and Self-implements that which He has determined.

Jesus, functioning as a man, repeatedly declares, "I do *nothing* of My own initiative…" Jesus functioned at all times on earth as a derivative man, receiving by faith from the Father. "What I do, is what the Father is doing" (Jn. 5:19,20). "What I say, is what the Father is saying" (John 12:49). "The Father abiding in Me, does His works" (Jn. 14:10). Even the miracles, wonders and signs were performed by God the Father *through* Him (Acts 2:22).

That is why Jesus told His disciples, “Apart from Me, you can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5). In His *functional humanity*, He was the perfect derivative man, fully identifying with the human functionality of faith.

It is so important for Christians to understand how Jesus lived the life that He lived as a human being, for it is the model of how we live as human Christ-ones, Christians, today.

JESUS CHRIST

“The Word made flesh...”

- John 1:14

The God-man

Fully God and fully man

Jesus “emptied Himself” (Phil. 2:7)
of the divine prerogative/right
to function as God,
in order to function as a man
who was dependent upon God the Father
for every moment in time for 33 years.

#16 – Do you believe that Jesus died spiritually on the cross? … and if so, was He "born again" in the resurrection?

In a prior question pertaining to the *spiritual death* of the human race as a consequence of Adam's sin, it was noted that spiritual death, and the other ramifications of death, are best viewed as a result of a *derived death* from "the one having the power of death, that is the devil" (Heb. 2:14), and ***not*** as the divine imposition of a death-penalty by a death-dealing and blood-thirsty offended deity. The penal substitution/penal sacrifice theory of the atonement lends itself to some serious theological problems!

In assuming essential and functional humanity, the Son of God, the "Word made flesh" (Jn. 1:14), submitted Himself to human mortality, and "humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:8). Satan, "the one having the power of death" (Heb. 2:14), was apparently allowed to come upon (or into) the only man his diabolic power had hitherto not overcome. Crying, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46; Ps. 22:1), Jesus "gave up his spirit" (Matt. 27:50; Jn. 19:30) before any death or sin expression could flow through His behavior, which would have made him guilty and culpable for sinful expression. On that cross of Calvary, Jesus was "made to be sin" (II Cor. 5:21), and the source of all sin is in Satan (I Jn. 3:8). Though the satanic sin-source may have invaded Jesus' spirit in what we call "spiritual death," in the sudden, instantaneous giving up of His spirit (Mk. 15:37; Lk. 23:46), He "laid down His physical life (Jn. 10:17,18) in physical death, for "the body apart from the spirit is dead" (James 2:26).

The diabolically derived "power of death" could not hold Jesus (Acts 2:24), for there was no sinful offense against the character of God in the behavioral life of the Perfect Man. In this process (somewhat speculative, I admit) Jesus *incurred* all of the death consequences that had *occurred* in the first Adam, in order to reverse the process of the Fall, and restore the life of God to man. The earliest theologians of the church used to state that "the *unassumed* is the *unhealed* and *unrestored*." Jesus *assumed* the "likeness of our sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3), and *incurred* the full import of the power of death by Satan. He was willing to partake of the full power of *derived death* and imputed sin that we might be restored to once again partake of His *derived Life*! … "Through *death* He rendered powerless the one having the *power of death*, that is the *devil*" (Heb. 2:14).

Perfect in all His behavior, "it was impossible for Jesus to be held in *death's power*" (Acts 2:24), and His resurrection was a type of new birth (Ps. 2:7; Acts 13:33; Heb. 5:5). He was "the first-born from the dead" (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5) --- the first to experience "life out of death" *spiritually* (cf. Jn. 5:24; I Jn. 3:14). "Taking up His life" again in resurrection, Jesus became "the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29) – (you and me) – who have also experienced spiritual life out of spiritual death.

The "last Adam" (Jesus) became the life-giving Spirit" (I Cor 15:45), making Himself (His divine life)(cf. Jn. 11:25;14:6) available to receptive individuals who can be "born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (I Pet. 1:3).

<u>A word of caution is in order here!</u> In indicating that Jesus experienced *derived spiritual death* on the cross, we must be careful not to make a wholesale equivalence between Jesus' being "made sin on our behalf" (II Cor. 5:21), and the fact that all fallen human beings were

"made sinners" (Ro. 5:19) through Adam's disobedient sin. Jesus did *not* have the *derived identity* of a "sinner" as all other men have because of their solidarity "in Adam." Neither do we want to imply (as some neo-Pentecostal teachers have done) that Jesus was "born again" in the same manner as we are "born again" into derived life. Jesus' resurrection is scripturally depicted as a birth, but He took up His underived, essential, inherent and intrinsic divine life again, when the *power of death* could not hold Him. We, on the other hand, experience a "spiritual exchange" whereby the *derived death* of Satan is exchanged for the *derived life* of God in Christ.

ATONEMENT

Penal Substititon Theory?

– Is God the Father
angry at mankind?

– Did Jesus, the Son,
try to appease the Father?

Essential Substitution Theory?

– Jesus *incurred* the death consequences
that *occurred* in Adam.

"through death He rendered powerless
the one having the *power of death*,
that is the *devil*..."
Heb. 2:14

"It was impossible for Jesus
to be held in *death's power*."
Acts 2:24

"The last Adam became
the *life-giving Spirit*..."
I Cor. 15:45

#17 – It seems to some that you tend to equivocate or waffle on the subject of "eternal security." Do you, or do you not, believe in "once saved, always saved"?

Do you want the *short* answer, or the *longer* more expansive explanation?

The *short* answer to the question, "Do you believe in 'once saved, always saved?' is ***NO!*** I do *not* believe in "once saved, always saved," because I do *not* believe in "*once saved*." If one does not believe in "once saved," it is logically impossible to believe in "*once saved*, always saved," for the latter part of the equation is predicated on the first phrase.

Why, then, do I not believe in "once saved"?

A large portion of the Christian community regards "salvation" and "getting saved" (a non-biblical phrase) as equivalent to, or synonymous with, regeneration, conversion, or being "born again." I think the new covenant scriptures use the word "salvation" and "saved" in a far more comprehensive manner than these other terms. The Greek words *soterion* and *sozo*, "salvation" and "to save," have the meaning of "making safe."

What are we "made safe" from (or to) in Jesus Christ? Is our gospel just a message of being "made safe" from going to hell, in order to go to heaven? Is the gospel just a message of being "made safe" from erroneous thinking, in order to engage in the "believe-right" religion? Is ours a mercenary message – an incentive to be "made safe" from poverty, in order to get physical and spiritual riches? ***NO***, I think the glorious new covenant message is that in union with Jesus Christ, we

are "made safe" from an abused, misused, distorted expression of humanity, deriving from the diabolic spirit of Satan, in order to be "made safe" in (and to) God's intended use and function of humanity by the indwelling presence and function of the risen and living Lord Jesus in us.

"*Once saved*" projects a static, one-time occurrence or event – a punctiliar, point-in-time, unrepeatable experience. I don't believe that the Savior's saving action is a one-time "zap" whereby we are "made safe" to be all that God intends us to be, and "made safe" to function as God intends us to function, once and for all. That is a form of punctiliar perfectionism that does not seem to be the biblical explanation of salvation. Apparently once an individual is "zapped" in such a "once saved" experience, he/she does not need the Savior anymore. Do you buy that?

In Romans 5:10 Paul writes, "we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be *saved* by His life." That is where Ian Thomas got the title for his book, *The Saving Life of Christ*. It is not just "once saved;" it is the continuing saving life and saving work of the Savior, Jesus Christ, at work in our lives to conform us to His image. If we accept "once saved," then the Christian has no need for the Savior anymore. He did His "once saving" action in our life, and henceforth He is superfluous! I can't accept that!

I think salvation is a dynamic, continuing experience whereby the Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ continues to *make us safe* from sin and misrepresentative character expression. It includes the whole process of sanctification and holiness. The saving work of the Savior has *initial*, *continual*, and *eventual* components.

Having said that, it is important to make clear that in the midst of the ongoing work of the Savior in our lives we can have a settled assurance of His work of salvation in our lives. “The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16), and as the Spirit of Christ continues to “make us safe” from selfish and sinful patterns of behavior we have the confidence and assurance that the Savior is doing his work of salvation in our lives.

"Once saved, always saved"?

What if I do not believe in
"once saved"?

static, point-in-time
experience

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

"we shall be saved by His life"
Romans 5:10

The Saving Life of Christ

Salvation is the *dynamic* experience
whereby the Savior *makes us safe*
from all that is not His character,
in order to express His character
to His glory!
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

#18 – You have defined your concept of "salvation" as "*dynamic* rather than *static*." Does this mean that you view salvation as a process?

In that "salvation" has an *initial* sense of commencement, a *continual* sense of progression, and an *eventual* sense of consummation, I do believe that salvation is a process – but ***NOT*** a process of doing more and more good works in order to merit salvation.

Salvation is always and totally effected by God's *dynamic* GRACE in Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit. The problem we encounter is that *grace* has long been viewed and defined as a *static* act of God. When grace is defined by the popular acrostic "God's Redemption At Christ's Expense," it becomes a *static* historical event wherein God sent the Son to pay the price of the death consequences of sin on the cross.

Grace is not merely an historical event – incarnation or crucifixion (as important as they are). Grace is not just a commodity – "the undeserved favor of God." Grace is not just an initial experience – the "threshold factor of the Christian life" – conversion.

Rather, *grace* is the comprehensive *dynamic* activity of God by means of the Son, the Savior, Jesus Christ. The apostle John wrote in his gospel, "*grace* and truth came through (were realized) through Jesus Christ." *Grace* is the *dynamic* of God's activity for the entirety of the Christian life – for the entirety of our salvation – for the entirety of our "being made safe" to function as God intends unto His own glory.

To get back to the question: ***Yes***, salvation is a *dynamic process* whereby the *dynamic* of God's *grace* in the living Savior, Jesus Christ, continue to *make us safe* from all

that is **not** Him – to *make us safe* from dysfunctionality, in order to function by allowing the "*saving life* of Christ" to operate in us moment-by-moment.

Salvation is *not* a static commodity dispensed to those who assent to the historicity of Jesus. Salvation is *not* a static eternal life package – a heavenly entrance pass – a possession in one's spiritual pocket. That is what Christian religion does: It takes everything about the Christian faith, and interprets it in static categories of definition – a static event; a static transaction; a static possession.

When I say that Christian salvation is a dynamic process, I am *not* falling prey to the false religious/cultic sense of a salvation-process of accumulating meritorious good works to earn one's entrance into God's heavenly favors – or realm.

NO – I am saying that salvation is a dynamic process whereby the dynamic grace of God is continuously operative in our lives as the living Savior, Jesus Christ, by His continuous "saving life" expresses His life and character in our lives.

Salvation is the dynamic process of the work of the Savior in His people.

#19 – You seem to have a unique definition of "faith," defining it as "our receptivity of His activity." Can you explain why you have chosen to redefine Christian faith?

Once again, religion takes the things of God – the terms and vocabulary of God's inspired revelation – and interprets them in static categories & definitions. Christian religion has defined "faith" as "believing the right things" – as mental assent to the historicity of Jesus, and to particular doctrinal statements.

A biblical understanding of Christian faith cannot be confined to a belief-credo – creedal statements assented to in a propositional belief-system. That is not Christian faith; that is believe-right religion – static and dead!

Faith must be understood dynamically.

I can remember about 30 years ago when I first read William Barclay's book, *The Mind of Christ*, and he wrote, "The first element in faith is what we can only call *receptivity* – not receptivity of facts or the significance of the facts – but *receptivity of Jesus Christ*." It was one of those "aha" moments of *revelation* in my thinking.

The apostle John made the same connection in Jn. 1:12 – "As many as *received* Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who *believe* in His name." *Believing* is *receiving* – not just assenting!

Faith is dynamic! The continuous receptivity of the living Christ and His activity.

When we define faith as "our receptivity of His divine activity," we avoid several aberrations that have a tendency to creep into Christian thought.

#1 – Faith is not something God does *in* us or *for* us – a long-time Augustinian/ Calvinist premise. Faith is *our* responsibility – human *response-ability* to God's grace activity! Faith is a *choice* – part of the *freedom of choice* that makes us human creatures – *faith* creatures. Faith is our chosen receptivity to Christ's activity.

Sidenote: Even though faith is our human response, it is not a "work" – it has no merit. There is no sense of contingency that predicates God's saving action on the human beings' willing to receive. Faith merely recognizes God's "good grace" and *receives* such with thanksgiving and gratitude.

#2 – The second aberration avoided when we define faith as "our receptivity of His activity," is that faith thus defined can never lead to passivism or acquiescence. James indicated, "faith without works is dead" (James 1:19,26). By its very dynamic definition – "our receptivity of His activity" – there is an implied *activity* that precludes all *passivity*.

To paraphrase James, let me do so in this manner. "*Faith* – our receptivity of God's activity – without any consequent *activity*, is meaningless, absurd, and dead, for it has voided the very meaning of faith."

Initially, faith is "our receptivity of God's activity in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Eph. 2:8,9 – "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of god; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." We *receive* the *redemptive activity* and the *very Person* of the living Lord Jesus.

But faith is dynamic and continual – not just an inaugural procedure. Paul writes to the Colossians – "As you received Christ Jesus (by faith), so walk in Him" (Colossians 2:6). The forward progression of the Christian life is dynamic – by God's grace, received through faith.

Faith – the dynamic receptivity of Christ's activity – is the continuing necessity of Christian life. There is no continuing Christian life without such! "Whatever is not of faith is sin," Paul explained to the Romans (14:23). Whatever is not "our receptivity of His activity" is sin! Heb. 11:6 – "without faith (our receptivity of His activity), it is impossible to please Him" (impossible = *adunaton* (from *a-dunamis*) = no dynamic).

FAITH

NOT "believing the right things"

NOT mental assent to:

– historicity of Jesus

– correct doctrinal forumlations

FAITH = "*our receptivity of God's activity*"

Human response-ability
to God's GRACE

Such Divine activity
precludes human passivity

#20 – Do you believe in Christian perfection, or the "eradication of the old nature"?

This question will usually be posed by those in the *holiness* tradition of the Christian faith. In so-called "holiness theology" (and this is inclusive of Weslyanism, Nazarenes, Church of God [Anderson, Indiana], Salvation Army, and others), an individual can experience a "first work of grace" when they believe in Jesus Christ for spiritual regeneration – when they become a Christian with the expectation of going to heaven in the future. But, subsequent to the first experience, believers are encouraged to seek a "second work of grace" (the very terms of 1st and 2nd work of grace create *static* experiential events!). In the "second work of grace," sometimes referred to as a "baptism of the Spirit" – but not with the same manifestation as the Pentecostals, the Christian believer is alleged to enter into a state of Christian perfection and holiness wherein it is no longer possible for the Christian to sin. (Oh, they might make mistakes and engage is misrepresentative behavior, for which they will need to go down to the kneeling bench or the "altar" to repent _ but these are not regarded to be "sin." (They have redefined sin in another static category of definition.) In the "second work of grace" the holiness teachers allege that the "old sinful nature" is eradicated from the Christian, allowing him to enter into a state of *Christian perfection* – without sin!

The question was: "Do I believe in Christian perfection, or the eradication of the old nature?"

YES, but not in the same way as the holiness teachers! I cannot follow them into their *static*, dead-end of Perfectionism.

When an individual receives the *work* of – and the *very Person* of – Jesus Christ in regeneration, that person is made *perfect* spiritually. Not inherently or intrinsically perfect, but *perfect* in spiritual identity by the *perfect* presence of the *Perfect One*, Jesus Christ in their spirit, and desiring to express His *perfect* character in their behavior. It is a *derived perfection* – derived from the presence of the *Perfect One*, Jesus Christ.

And notice – this occurs at the commencement of the Christian life – at regeneration – at conversion new-birth, rather than later at a static, sanctifying "second work of grace" experience.

The Christian is *made perfect* in a derived spiritual identity, when the *Perfect One*, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ comes to dwell in us, and we become "partakers of the divine nature" (II Peter 1:4) of Jesus Christ, Himself. This implies a *spiritual exchange* that might be termed an "eradication of the old nature," (even though "old nature, old sinful nature, old Adam nature" and like terms are non-biblical or unbiblical terms.)

The spiritual nature of wrath (Eph. 2:3), that we had when Satan, the Evil One, inhabited our spirit, has been replaced by the "divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4) of the perfect presence and character of the Perfect One, Jesus Christ.

As "righteous men made perfect" (cf. Heb. 12:23; Phil. 3:15), Christians now have Christ's perfect nature with them. Though this is their spiritual condition, this does not imply that the behavioral expression of every Christ is inevitably perfect – a perfect expression of Christ's perfect character. Paul, himself explained, "not that I have already become perfect (in experiential behavior), but I press on…." (Phil. 3:12).

So, this is *not* a *perfectionism* that claims that we cannot sin, but a recognition of the divine provision of God's GRACE in Jesus Christ, providing the total sufficiency for the living-out of the Christ-life *perfectly*. Sinful behavior is not necessary and inevitable in the Christian life. We do not *have* to sin! *In* and *by* Jesus Christ, we can *not* sin.

#21 – You have emphasized spiritual "union with Christ," having written a book with that title, and another book about Spirit-union… Is there a danger that emphasis on "union with Christ" might lead to monism, pantheism, or concepts of "oneness" that equate the believer with Christ?

Let me begin with a few words about the Christian's spirit-union with Christ, and then address some of the implicit dangers mentioned in the question.

The closest that the N.T. scriptures come to actually referring to "union with Christ" is in the statement of Paul to the Corinthians (I Cor. 6:17) – "the one who is joined to the Lord (Jesus Christ) is one spirit with Him" – a *one-spirit union* with Christ.

The later Latin writers of the early church often used the phrase *unio cum Christo* – union with Christ – to refer to the Christians' relationship with Christ.

The Orthodox churches of the East utilized the concept of *Theosis* from the earliest centuries of Christian teaching – referring to our being "partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4), and our *participation* in the functional expression of the living Lord Jesus, via the *energies* of divine grace.

Norman Grubb was instrumental in re-introducing the theme of "union with Christ" to portions of the Protestant Christian community in the 20th century. It was via his teaching and writing that I was introduced to the importance of the spiritual union of Christ and the Christian – the Spirit of Christ in the spirit of the receptive believer. Noting the N.T. analogies of the Christian as a vessel (II Cor. 4:7), a house (II Cor. 5:1-5), a temple (I Cor. 6:19), a wife (Eph. 5:25-33), and a

branch in the vine (Jn. 15:1-6), Norman Grubb repeatedly made the distinction between the Christian and Christ by stating, "the container never becomes the contents." Many times, though, he was not so careful to avoid leaving the impression that the Christian's *one-spirit union* with Christ was an *essential* union wherein the Christian is *merged* with Christ, *absorbed* into Christ, or *replaced by* Christ.

Some of Grubb's disciples certainly took the *one-spirit union* with Christ and emphasized the *oneness* factor to the point of monism and pantheism wherein everything about them and their surroundings was regarded to be Christ. There was no distinction between them and the living Christ, they declared: "I am Jesus Christ, in my form – essentially divinized so that I am no longer human – equivalent to Christ; consubstantial with Christ; indistinguishable from Christ; everything I am and do is Jesus."

That certainly evidences the dangers of pushing the "*oneness*" aspect of "*union with Christ*" to the extreme of equating the believer with Christ, as noted in the question.

Spiritual union with Christ is *not* an *essential* union whereby we become Christ, or Christ becomes us. It is a *relational* union that requires personal beings in relationship with one another. That is why Paul illustrates the Christian's union with Christ with the *relational union* of a husband and wife (Eph. 5:22-33). Husbands and wives are not merged into a consubstantial oneness. They remain two persons! "The two become one" in *relational oneness* or *union*.

For me, the emphasis on "*union* with Christ" as an amplification of "Christ in me," provided a deeper awareness of my *identity* in Christ. "Christ in us, the

hope of glory" (Col. 1:27) points primarily to the *location* of the indwelling Christ, but "union with Christ' provided a sense of *intimate relational identity*.

Once again, spiritual union and spiritual identity are *not essentiality*. We may talk about "who we *are*" in Christ – but that is not essence or nature, but identity. It is a *derived union-identity* as a Christ-one, a Christian. It is a *union-identity* that disappears if there is not the distinct living Lord Jesus from whom we *derive* that identity. We are not *identical to* Jesus, but we are *identified by* Jesus.

Union with Christ

unio cum Christo

Theosis – participation in God

"partakers of the divine nature"
II Peter 1:4

NOT ... an essential union
whereby we become Christ
or Christ becomes us

RATHER ... a relational union
... a derived union
... an identity union
... an intimate union

#22 – You have written an article entitled, "Christ *in* us, Christ *as* us, and Christ *through* us." Does the phrase "Christ as us" not open the door to identifying the Christian as Christ?

Not necessarily, but it must be admitted that some extremist disciples of Norman Grubb have used the phrase "Christ *as* us" (they even have a website by that name) to identify themselves *as* Christ. I have personally heard some of them blasphemously declare, "*I am* Jesus Christ," or "*I am* the Holy Spirit," or "anything Jesus declared Himself to be, I can likewise claim that *I AM*." Is this not blasphemy, to claim to be what only Christ IS?

So, we must be very cautious and careful about using the phrase "Christ as us," clarifying what is meant (and *not* meant) by that phrase. Some teachers of the Christ-life have decided the phrase leads to so much *misunderstanding* that they have eschewed the use of it. I can understand their concern! Admittedly it is not a direct biblical statement, though I think a case can be made for using the phrase in accord with biblical teaching.

The multiple meaning of the little 2-letter word "*as*" in the English language creates much difficulty here. "As" is *not* a verb in the English language, so the phrase "Christ *as* us" cannot legitimately be understood as "Christ *is* us." "As" *can* be used as an adverb, but "the Christian is *as* Christ," tends to convey the meaning of *equivalence* or "*the same as*."

It is the prepositional use of the English word "*as*" that we want to consider, for "Christ *in* us, Christ *as* us, and Christ *through* us" are all prepositional phrases. When

used as a preposition, "*as*" pertains to function. Jesus Christ *functions as* the basis of our identity. Jesus Christ functions to express Himself as us.

Christ in us refers primarily to the location and placement of the presence of Christ in the Spirit of a Christian – the *indwelling* Christ. ***Christ as us*** refers primarily to how "Christ who is our life" serves and functions to provide our *identity* in Him. ***Christ through us*** refers primarily to the extension of the Christ-life by means of our personalities and bodies; our *intercessory expression* of Christ for others. They all tend to merge together in expressing how the living Lord Jesus *lives within and by means of* our human form.

But the "Christ *as* us" phrase seems to convey a sense of a new *identity* as a "new creature" in spiritual union with Christ, not fully encompassed in the other prepositional phrases. Spiritually, we *are* what we *were not* before – "old has passed away, behold all has become new" (II Cor. 5:17), and Christ expresses Himself *as* the "new man" in us. It is a *derived* identity, and a *derived* expression.

The Christian life is *not* an *imitation* of Jesus, but the *manifestation* of the life of Jesus *as* us; the *re-presentation* of the life of Jesus *as* us; what some call "the contemporary incarnational expression of Christ in the Christian."

Let me share more personally: I was very hesitant to use the phrase "Christ *as* us" for many years (almost 20 years), and I still think we have to be careful of misrepresentation). But in the mid-90s, I had a few hours alone with Dan Stone, and I used the opportunity to ask him directly and explicitly, "What do *you* mean when *you* use the phrase "Christ *as* us"?

Dan explained that in II Cor. 3 Paul spoke of the Corinthians "being manifested as a letter of Christ, …written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God…on tablets of human hearts" (II Cor. 3:3). Dan then continued, "*You* may well be the only expression of Jesus that someone else may ever see – Christ *as you*. Jesus *re-presented* as you, living by means of you. That is what I mean by "Christ *as* you."

I said, "If that is what is meant by "Christ as us," I have no problem using the phrase, but we must be careful lapsing into the blasphemous idea of equivalence with Christ."

Christ *in* us ...

– the location/placement of the presence of the indwelling Christ

Christ *as* us ...

– the basis of our new spiritual identity as a Christ-ones

Christ *through* us ...

– the extension and manifestation of the re-presentation of the Christ-life

#23 – Your definition of the "flesh," as contrasted by the apostle Paul with the "Spirit," appears to be different than any other Christian teacher. Please explain the "flesh," as you understand it, and why you define it in the manner you do.

Christian interpretations of the "flesh," as contrasted with the motivation and energizing of the Spirit of Christ in the Christian, have been quite varied. As noted in a previous answer, "flesh" has often been equated with "old nature, old sin nature, human nature, Adamic nature, fallen nature, sinful nature, carnal nature," etc. (even in Bible translations). Others have identified "flesh" with an ambiguous entity called the "self" (even noting that when one reverses the letters of the word "flesh," they can be pronounced "self" with a silent "h" – silly scrabble exercises).

The most common practice in trying to explain the "flesh" is to identify it with human *physicality* – connecting "flesh" in one way or another with the *physical body* – and often creating a dualistic polarization between the *spiritual* and the *physical*, as the early Greek Gnostics did.

After struggling for some time with a definition of the "flesh" as used by Paul in Romans 7 & 8, and Galatians 5, and elsewhere in the New Testament, I determined to do an in-depth linguistic study of how the Greek word *sarx* was utilized in early Greek usage. Though the word *sarx* originally referred to the muscle or meaty part of a body, and at times was used to refer to the body in general (even though the Greek word *soma* was the primary word for "body"), or even to humanity at large,

the linguistic usage of the Greek word *sarx* began to expand in the 3rd century B.C.

The Greek philosopher, Epicurus, whose name is to this day associated with *hedonism* (synonymous Epicureanism), began to use the Greek word *sarx* to refer to "*fleshly desires*" of selfish pleasures – which he regarded as a legitimate objective of human life for the common people, i.e. those who couldn't be philosophers. Epicurus psychologized the meaning of *sarx*, and associated it with "desires."

The apostle Paul, growing up as he did in the Greek speaking world of Tarsus, was quite familiar with the Greek philosophers and poets, and even quotes them within the New Testament writings. So, when Paul uses *sarx* / "flesh" in a behavioral context (as he does in Rom. 7,8 & Gal. 5), he uses the term in a manner similar to the way Greek writers had being using it for almost 300 years. Paul refers to "the *mind* set on the *flesh*" (Rom. 8:5-7; Eph. 2:3), to "the *desires* of the *flesh*" (Gal. 5:16,17,24; Eph. 2:3), and to "*fleshly desires*" (II Pet. 2:10,18).

That historical, linguistic study serves as the basis of my illustrating the basic *desires* of mankind within the soul – the psychological function of the human being. These *desires* run through the mind, emotion and will, serving as conduits (pipelines) of character in order to actuate behavior. We all come into being (we are born) with a full-set of God-given desires. There is nothing wrong with them. They are open channels. But, in our spirit is "the spirit that works in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2) energizing his *character* of selfishness and sinfulness, which then flows through our desires, developing personal patterns of selfish sinfulness in the action and reaction tendencies of our personalities.

These God-given desires get bent, warped, and twisted into patterned propensities of selfishness and sinfulness. Every person's patterned desires are different and unique. You have your patterned desires, and I have mine. Even if we have identified some of fleshly tendencies, and are not "in denial" about them, we often do not want to divulge our weaknesses to others.

These seem to me – based on the historical linguistics of the word – to be what Paul is referring to when he refers to "the desires of the flesh." They are quite similar to the addictive, obsessive, compulsive behavior-patterns referred to in pop-psychology today. Some of these patterned desires can become very deep-seated, and are often identified by Christian teachers are "besetting sins" (Heb. 12:1), "the sins that so easily entangle us," or "strongholds of sin."

I think it is quite important, though, to emphasize that these "flesh" patterns in our desires are *not substantive*. There is not something intrinsically "bad" about me, that I must beat into submission through masochistic exercises of suppression. There is no "hunk of evil" residing in me – a boogey man – a "dirty old man" that needs to be put to death/ executed. Satan does not indwell the Christian within the "flesh," and we are not trying to oust him. Christians should not despise their God-given body or their God-given desires.

Yes, we have some unique patterns of selfishness and sinfulness in our desires. These were *not* eradicated when we were spiritually regenerated, and the Christian life is *not* a *reformation process* of trying to reform, refine, or cause our warped desires to *get better* – to become more *Christianized*!

These patterns of fleshly desires that remain within the Christian's soul, set up a *conflict* with the desires of the Spirit of Christ who wants to use those God-given conduits to express Godly character in our behavior.

"Flesh" and Spirit are not the same category of combatants in this conflict, however. The selfish and sinful patterns of our fleshly desires do *not* self-generate sinful character. They are patterned propensities of action and reaction that the tempter (who helped construct those crooked bunkers in our desires) can "plug into" in order to tempt us to manifest his selfish *character* – misrepresentative behavior – sin-action. The conflict is *not* between two antithetical "natures" (as many Christian teachers have explained), but is between the behavioral impulses of the Spirit of Christ within our spirit, and the patterned "fleshly desires" within our soul.

The means by which we Christians engage in this behavioral conflict is not by self-effort performances to *suppress* the "flesh" and *support* the Spirit. The Christian life is not that kind of performance battle of behavior-modification. "The battle is the Lord's" was the lesson the Israelites had to learn (I Sam. 17:47), and Christians need to learn it on the behavioral level as well. That is why Paul tells the Galatians, "the *Spirit* sets His desires against the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). It is part of God's GRACE provision for the Christian life.

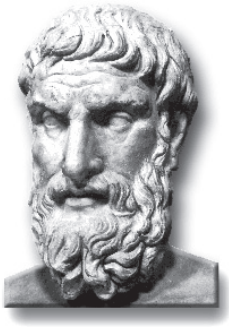
"Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh," Paul goes on to write. But, most Christians seem to have spiritual dyslexia. They think Paul wrote, "Do not carry out the desires of the flesh, and you will be walking by the Spirit," and off they go on the performance treadmill of religion.

Our responsibility as Christians is to "walk by *faith*" – our receptivity of God's activity – and allow the *positive* empowering of God's GRACE by the Spirit of Christ to override any *negative* patterns of selfishness and sinfulness that may have formed in the desires of our *flesh*.

“Flesh”

Greek word *sarx*

- muscle or meaty part of body
- physical body (Greek word *soma*)
- humanity at-large
- patterning of desires in the soul

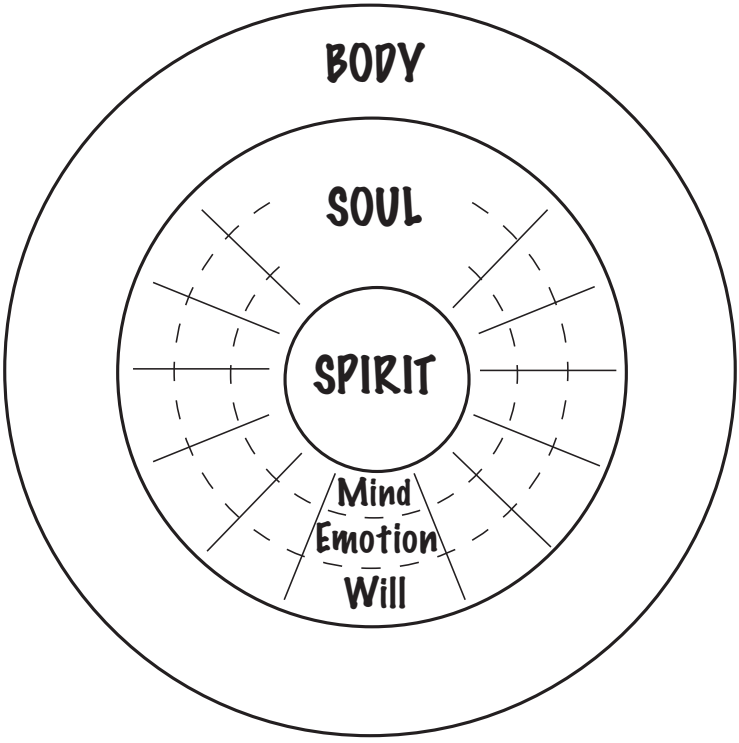


Greek philosopher,
Epicurus (B.C. 341-270)

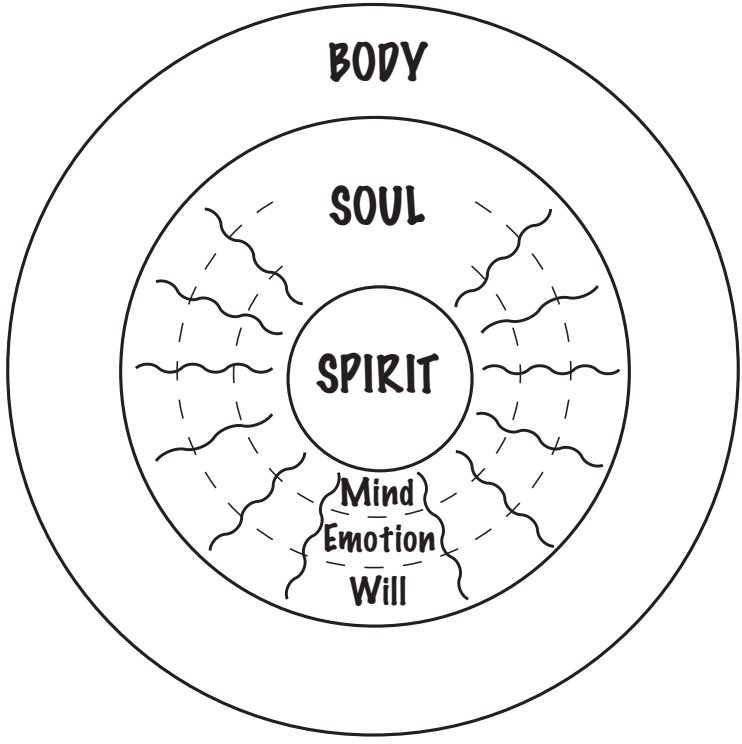
Apostle Paul apparently
aware of Epicurean
usage of word *sarx*

- “fleshly desires
- “desires of the flesh”
- “mind set on the flesh”

Human Desires



Patterned “Flesh” Desires



#24 – Why do you deny the need for Christians to "die to self," or "apply the cross," or "plead the blood of Jesus"?

In answering the previous question it was noted that some have attempted to define the "flesh" by equating it with an ambiguous straw-man entity called the "self" – and then they offer various performance techniques and procedures by which the Christian is allegedly supposed to "deny self," "die to self," "crucify the self," "apply the cross to the self," of "plead the blood" in order to resolve all conflicts.

What is this alleged "self" entity that these Christians want to die to, deny, crucify, or apply the cross and the blood to? … **Surely *not*** the "*new self*" that we have become as a "new creature," with a derived spiritual *identity* as "Christ-ones," Christians! … **Surely *not*** the distinctive "self" that we are as individuals distinct from other personalities – our *individuality* that makes *myself* different from *yourself*. … **Surely *not*** the physical *embodiment* of myself – they call that suicide! … **Surely *not*** an alleged "*independent self*" capable of self-generating character and action – that is a bogus humanistic LIE! … So, the only possible alleged self-entity that they must be *trying* to terminate with their self-discipline techniques must be the self-oriented patterns of selfishness in the desires of their "flesh." And that will never be accomplished by the self-effort of trying to "deny self," "die to self," or "crucify self."

At *regeneration* we experience the radical *spiritual exchange* whereby "the old man/self *was crucified* with Christ" (Rom. 6:4) – experientially in our spirit – and we have put on a new man/new self identity, as a new

creature in Christ. There is no further *cross-action* necessary – no additional dying, crucifying, or applying the cross within Christian experience. Just as the historical action of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross was "once and for all" (Heb. 7:27; 10:10; I Pet. 3:10), singular, unrepeatable. So, the spiritual crucifixion of the old man/old self within our spirit was "once and for all," and not an extended repetition of crucifixion performances trying to kill off an alleged "self."

Paul said, "I *have been* crucified with Christ…" (Gal. 2:20). And to the Colossians, "you *have died* and your life is hidden with God in Christ" (Col. 3:3). These verbs are in the definite, punctiliar past tense – the dying is done!

The verses often cited (and misused) to justify continued "dying to self" are Romans 8:36 – "for your sake we are being put to death all day long." I Cor. 15:31 – "I die daily…" and II Cor. 4:11 – "we are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake." These all refer to the fact that Paul's physical body was getting "beat to death" in the suffering of persecution.

Yes, there are remaining patterns of selfishness and sinfulness in the desires of "flesh" within our soul – and this is usually what Christians are referring to when they speak of "dying to self, crucifying the self, or applying the cross to self." But, as we pointed out in answering the previous question, this is *not* our battle to try to gain victory over the "flesh" by performance disciplines. "The *Spirit* sets its desires against the flesh" (Gal. 5:17). The *positive grace* of God overcomes the patterns of *selfishness* as we are receptive to His activity in faith.

J. Sidlow Baxter – "The teaching that sanctification comes through a subjectively experienced dying with Christ – this theory of death to sin by continued inward crucifixion is *error*. … It is not truly scriptural; and those who presume to act upon it are exercising, not faith, but credulity." (*Our High Calling*, pg 163).

Norman Grubb – "We are bidden to reckon ourselves 'alive unto God' … The root of this is in our realization of our identification with Him on the cross. This does *not* mean that some part of us is to die… There is no such thing as the *death of self* or *death to self*. We have passed on beyond the Cross, out of the Tomb into the Resurrection." (*Touching the Invisible*, pg. 59)

Die to “self”?

Which “self” ...

– new spiritual self-identity?

– distinct self-individuality?

– physical self-embodiment?

– self-generating independent-self?

– fleshly patterns of selfishness?

“I have been crucified with Christ...”
Galatians 2:20

“You have died, and your life
is hidden with God in Christ.”
Colossians 3:3

#25 – What persons, and what books, most influenced your thought and teaching?

I think it goes without saying, but I'll say it anyway, that the most important *Person* who defines who I am and how I think is the *living Lord Jesus*, and the most important *book* that has influenced my thought and teaching is the *Bible*.

The *secondary* sources of influence upon my thought and teaching are undoubtedly the intent of the question.

There are two persons, two writers, whom I regard as my primary *spiritual mentors*. I first became acquainted with them through their books, but then it was my privilege to spend time with both of them, and get to know them in genuine personal relationship.

The first of these was **Maj. W. Ian Thomas**, the British Bible teacher who established the worldwide Torchbearer schools. I was introduced to his writings in 1973, within 10 days of my spiritual regeneration. I read his books, *The Saving Life of Christ* and *The Mystery of Godliness*. I listened to many of his messages on cassette tape. I came to realize that the Spirit of Christ in me was not just a deposit for future benefits in heaven someday. Christ in me was the total sufficiency for living the entire Christian life, the total sufficiency for any *ministry* I would ever do. II Cor. 3:5 – "not that I am adequate to consider anything as coming from myself, but the adequacy is of God." Oh, the peace that came when I realized that the living Lord Jesus dwelling in me was the personal agent of the divine grace-dynamic to implement *everything* God wanted to be and do in and through me, that He was the dynamic of His own demands, that I could trust in His sufficiency. Later, in

1981, I met Ian Thomas personally, and enjoyed fellowship with him for many years as I taught in Torchbearer schools around the world.

I regard **Norman P. Grubb** to be my second spiritual mentor – the missionary statesman who was involved in the commencement of Intervarsity Fellowship, Worldwide Evangelization Crusade, and Union-Life. I first met Mr. Grubb in 1975 in Fort Worth, Texas, having read a couple of his books previously. From his teaching I was first introduced to the concept that the Christian believer does not have two spiritual natures simultaneously. We "*were* by nature children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3), but when regenerated we became "partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4). As "partakers of Christ" (Heb. 3:14), we are "joined in one-spirit union with Christ" (I Cor. 6:17). We are "new creatures" (II Cor. 5:17), with a new spiritual identity. Although I have often disagreed with Norman Grubb, God used him to teach me important spiritual truths.

Theologically, the man who had the most influence was **Thomas F. Torrance**. He was the head of the Dogmatic Theology Department at New College in Edinburgh, Scotland when I attended seminary there in 1968-69. I didn't understand much of what he said as I endured his lengthy lectures, but after I was spiritually regenerated in 1973, I began to read his books and appreciate the magnificent theological foundation he laid.

Sociologically, I am indebted to the French professor, **Jacques Ellul**, who served as head of the Reformed Church in France. Through his many books (such as *The False Presence of the Kingdom, Living Faith*, and *The Ethics of Freedom*) I came to a settled understanding of what it means to be "in the world, but not of the world."

And from Ellul's writings I also learned what it means to think dialectically – the *both/and* mentality.

Philosophically, I have enjoyed the eccentric Danish thinker, **Soren Kierkegaard**, who called the church back to an experiential awareness of the living Christ. I have *most* enjoyed reading his daily *Journals,* which reveal his innermost ponderings.

Those are the persons and books that most influenced my thought and teaching.

#26 – This conference was identified by many in earlier years as a "union life" conference. The primary speaker, Dan Stone, drew much of his teaching from Norman Grubb. You seldom reference these men, and do not seem to espouse what they taught. Why?

God was most gracious to allow me acquaintance and friendship with both Norman Grubb and Dan Stone. I spent many precious hours with both of them, and learned much from both of them. I have just mentioned that I regard Norman Grubb as one of my spiritual mentors, and I am most appreciative of his God-ordained emphasis on "union with Christ."

But God does not want us to be followers after men – establishing various personality cults, like the Corinthians who identified with Paul, Apollos, Cephas, or Christ. God wants us to *listen* to the Lord Jesus Christ in obedience, to study the scriptures like the Bereans, and to share and teach what we have thus come to "know" and experience.

There are many things in the writings and teachings of Norman Grubb that I do *not* agree with, but I have no problem disagreeing, even with someone I respected, because it's *ideological*, ***not*** *personal*!

Norman Grubb begins almost every one of his writings with the premise that he adopted from Jacob Boehme, that "*there is only One Person in the universe*" – God. I think that statement impinges upon the orthodox Christian formulation of the Trinity – that God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are *three Persons* in one Being – *homoousion* was the Nicean formulation.

Norman Grubb taught that *everything* in the universe was but a *form of the Self-manifestation* of this One Person – God. When charged with pantheism, he would retreat into the semantic modification of pan*en*theism.

Grubb like to say, "*God is all in all – everything is God on a level of manifestation*." He often misused I Cor. 15:28 to justify his monistic assertion. I Cor. 15:28 is Paul's statement that in the final resurrection, the Son, Jesus Christ, and all things *will be* in subjection to God the Father "*that God may be all in all*" – i.e. have the supremacy and preeminence over all things.

Norman Grubb was fond of admonishing Christians to "*see God in everything*." In a direct, literalistic interpretation, that can be a pantheistic statement, but it can also have a more experiential and existential meaning of seeing God at work in every circumstance, for "God causes all things to work together for good" (Rom. 8:28). One must be careful to distinguish what they are referring to.

Another foundational premise of Norman Grubb's teaching was the statement, "*Spirit is the only reality*." That premise goes all the way back to the Greek philosopher, Plato – that the physical realm is comprised of unreal temporal shadows, appearances, and illusions. Orthodox Christian teaching has always recognized the *reality* of both spirit and matter – the spiritual and the physical – the transcendent and the immanent.

Following Jacob Boehme, Norman Grubb posited a "*law of opposites*" that was even imposed upon God, as he posited that both good and evil were inherent within God – duality within unity – and the personal *desire* of God had to choose what kind of God He would be. This is a form of Process Theology that considers the *process*

by which God became the God that He is. Orthodox Christian thought indicates that God has always been the God that He IS – independent, immutable, perfect, holy – singularly and absolutely God – Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

Norman Grubb so emphasized the *oneness* of a Christian's union with Christ, that Christians were encouraged to declare, "*I am Jesus Christ*, in my form," and my behavior is a spontaneous expression of Christ, despite the illusory appearances of misrepresentations. Some of his followers regarded everything they did to be Jesus in action – even sinful character expressions. Oneness with God must not be so emphasized that it becomes a denial of sin.

On one particular issue Dan Stone (in his later ministry) voiced disagreement with Norman Grubb. Dan decided that he could not accept the presence and function of Satan in the unbeliever, in like manner as Christ dwells and acts in the believer. Such a conclusion effectively denies the anthropological premise of "derivative man," that I regard so essential to the understanding of the gospel. So, that is a point on which I agreed with Norman Grubb, and disagreed with Dan Stone. I believe the biblical and theological evidence is quite sufficient to assert that human beings derive from either God or Satan – no third alternative.

All in all, in the big picture, I have much appreciated both Norman Grubb and Dan Stone. Despite a number of ideological details of disagreement in philosophy, theology and biblical interpretation, I believe that their teaching and my teaching are emphasizing the central truth of the indwelling presence of the living Lord Jesus – spiritual union with Christ whereby He becomes the basis of our life and identity as Christ-ones – Christians.

#27 – In some of your writings, particularly the chapter, "Christianity is NOT a Book-religion," you seem to diminish the importance of the Bible or the Christian scriptures. Would you care to clarify your position concerning the scriptures?

Well, I certainly do *not* want to *diminish* or *depreciate* the importance of the Christian scriptures, and I do *not* think I have done so in the chapter mentioned. Paul clearly wrote to Timothy, saying, "*All scripture* is *inspired by God* (God-breathed), and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (II Tim. 3:16). I have no problem with the *divine inspiration* and *providential preservation* of the scriptures. I assent to such whole-heartedly and without reservation.

Here is what I have a problem with – and it is the issue dealt with in the chapter mentioned. When Christian teachers and leaders – and the followers thereof – elevate the *Bible* to a position of equality with the living Lord Jesus – and consider its value and authority to be worthy of the highest reverence, faith, and worship – *then* the Bible becomes an *idolatrous* object of worship – *Bibliolatry*.

The Christian faith was never intended to be a *book*-religion that reveres a sacred, holy book. *Judaism* is a book-religion with its reverence of the *Torah*. *Islam* is a book-religion with its devotion to the *Koran*. Jesus told the Jewish leaders of His day, "You search the *scriptures* because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that testify about *Me*; and you are unwilling to come to *Me*, so that you may have life" (Jn. 5:39). Christianity is a *Person* – the risen and living Lord

Jesus who becomes the very Life of the Christian, and supplies *everything* needed for the expression of His life. Christianity is not just data - propositional statements derived from a book, that tells us what we must believe and do.

The *Protestant* portion of the Western church has been the most guilty of elevating the Bible to undue levels of reverence. When the Protestant Reformation began in the early 16th century, it conveniently coincided with Gutenberg's invention of the moveable type printing press in the late 15th century. The first book printed was a Vulgate Latin Bible in A.D. 1455. The Protestant reform movement and the printing of the scripture texts were integrally united.

The *Roman Catholics* had invested the primary *authority* for Christian faith in the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Church. The *Protestants* reacted by investing the primary *authority* for the Christian faith in the printed scriptures – the Bible. The words of Jesus were, "*All authority* has been given to *Me* in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). The Christian faith is Christ-centered – the dynamic of the living Christ, serving as *authoritative* **LORD** of our lives.

But the *Protestants*, to this very day, lift high the Bible, touting it as "the Word of God." You may have noticed that I do not refer to the Bible as "*the word of God*"? I refer to "the Bible," the "inspired scriptures," to the "new covenant literature," but I do not call this book, the "*word of God*." WHY? Because I know that, *scripturally* speaking, the "Word of God" is Jesus – and I do not want to equate a book with Jesus! John 1:1 – "In the beginning was the *Word*, and the *Word* was with God, and the *Word* was God." Who is the apostle John referring to" – the Son of God – Jesus – the "Word of

God." John 1:14 – "the *Word* became flesh and dwelt among us.." – Jesus Christ, the Word! I cannot find a single reference to the word, "*Word*," in the new covenant scriptures that refers to a *book* or to enscripturated writings. They all refer to JESUS or to the gospel message of Jesus. I, therefore, reserve the phrase, "Word of God" for Jesus!

I do *not* believe that I am diminishing or depreciating the Bible in any way. I *do believe* that many Christians are diminishing and depreciating the Lord Jesus Christ by their bibliolatrous elevation of the Book in place of, or in equivalence to, Jesus.

I am extremely appreciative that God saw fit to *inspire* and *providentially preserve* the text of the scriptures. I have written commentaries – carefully exegeting the scripture text word-by-word.

Scriptures

Divine inspiration
Providential preservation

Christianity is NOT a Book-religion

Judaism – *Torah*
Islam – *Koran*

JESUS CHRIST

"You search the scriptures
because you think that in them you have eternal life;
and it is these that testify about Me;
and you are unwilling to come to Me,
so that you may have life"
John 5:39

#28 – You have faulted Protestant theology in general for an over-objectified perspective of the work of Jesus Christ. What do you propose as the alternative to such Protestant theology?

I plead "guilty" to finding fault with Protestant theology! As an "insider" who was previously duped by many features of Protestant theology, I feel qualified and obliged to point out some flaws and inconsistencies.

In particular, I believe that Protestants, since the 16th century Reformation, have fostered an *over-objectified* perspective of the work of Jesus Christ. What do I mean by that? I will use a diagram that I have used before:

The diagram has a horizontal line. *Above the line* will be the *objective* – that which is external – outside of us as individuals. *Below the line* will be the *subjective* – that which is internal – inside of us as individuals. The horizontal line will also function as a time line, and I have placed the *cross* symbol on the line to refer to the *objective*, historical Person and work of Jesus Christ during His redemptive mission on earth – from incarnation to the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit. Below the line I have drawn the concentric circles representing a human being, to show how the Spirit of Christ is available to be received into the spirit – and then into the behavior of the soul and body of a Christian individual in *subjective* experience.

I noted earlier that the **Eastern Orthodox** section of the Christian Church recognized the connection of the objective and subjective, referring to the process of *Theosis* whereby the Christian *participates* in the divine nature and derivatively draws on the divine *energies* of God's Grace.

In the Western **Roman Catholic** Church, the objective and subjective work of Christ were connected, but the concept of "*infused grace*" was regarded as *subjectively* empowering the Christian to "imitate Christ" by the "means of grace" of regular eucharistic participation, whereby the Christian contacted the "real presence" of Christ in the transubstantiated bread and wine.

The Western **Protestant** Church reacted to the divinely-aided "works" of righteousness within the Christian individual as taught by the Roman Catholics, and *over-reacted* by casting the entire work of Jesus Christ into *abstracted, objectified* thought categories. If an individual assented to the historic redemptive work of Christ, then that person was "*justified by faith*" – pardoned and "*declared righteous*" – *imputed* with the "alien righteousness" of Christ; and regarded as having a new placement or position, status and standing as an "elect one" in God's covenant family in the heavenlies. But, the one thing that traditional Protestant theology would ***not*** allow was that a Christian believer could be internally changed – subjectively "made righteous." Martin Luther declared, "The Christian is simultaneously *externally declared righteous*, but *internally still a sinner*!" D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote, "Justification makes *no actual change in us*; it is a *declaration*. The Christian is *not* a good man; he is a vile wretch saved by the grace of God" – a "sinner saved by grace," as we've heard from Christian teachers time and again. A key tenet of Protestant thought has always been that God "*declares us righteous*," but it is just a "positional truth," a "legal fiction," because He *does not make us righteous*." But, if the Protestant Christian has no provision of the Righteous One, Jesus Christ, living *in* him/her – how then can they ever manifest the character of Christ and live righteously? The best the

Protestant theologians could suggest is that we are to "*reckon*" that God has "*reckoned*" us "*as if*" we were righteous, and live with a "positive thinking" attitude, looking forward to the time when we enter into the heavenly righteousness of God's presence in the future.

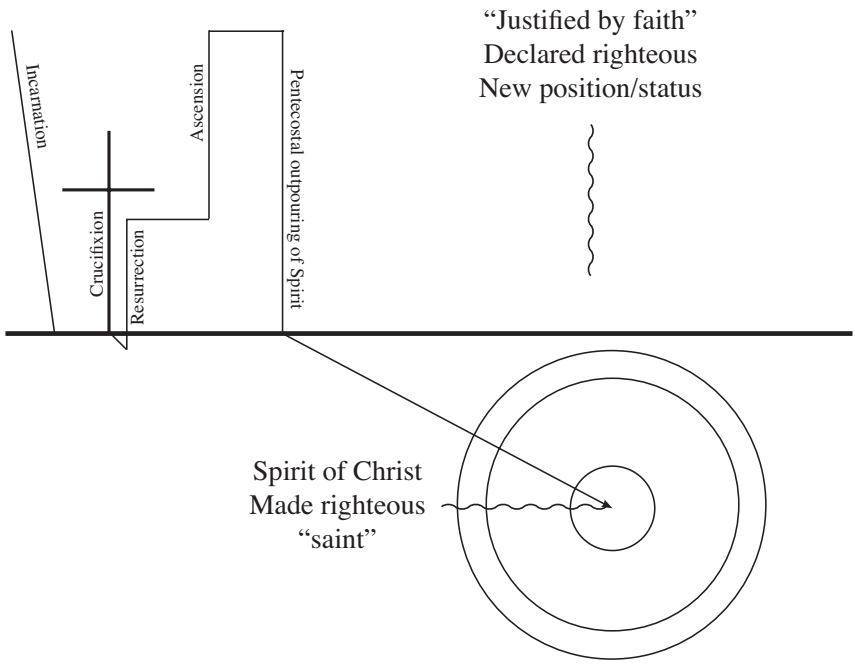
I find that abysmally inadequate! – an abomination – an heretical aberration! (Yet, that is what Protestant Christians are being taught week-after-week in the churches of America today). *That* is why I have faulted Protestant theology for an over-objectified perspective of the work of Christ!

And what do I propose as the *alternative* to such Protestant theology?

I propose that we return to the biblical gospel – the good news of God's *grace* provision of "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). We must share the wonderful opportunity of *spiritual regeneration* – of being "born from above" (Jn. 3:1-6) with the very *indwelling* life of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – of *subjectively* partaking of Christ (Heb. 3:14), becoming "partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4), becoming "new creatures in Christ" (II Cor. 5:17), "*made righteous* (Rom. 5:19; I Cor. 1:30; II Cor. 5:21) by the presence of the Righteous One (Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14), the living Lord Jesus in our spirit.

That is what I propose – the Gospel – that is tragically often not taught in the churches. And *that* is what has kept many of you coming back to this conference year-after-year to hear that *gospel*!

OBJECTIVE



SUBJECTIVE

#29 – All-in-all, your teaching tends to be primarily theological, with only a smattering of practical experiential instruction. Is that purposeful?

Yes, my teaching tends to be primarily theological!

During my four years of *undergraduate training* for a bachelor's degree, I was most interested in the *doctrine* of the sect (Independent Christian Churches) that supported the school. When I went to seminary in Edinburgh, Scotland, sponsored by the Church of Scotland, I majored in *Dogmatic Theology* – theology that explains the *dogma* of the Church. When I studied with the *Quakers*, it was *philosophical theology* that I was drawn to, as I sorted out my own thinking. And eventually I was awarded a doctorate degree in *Biblical Theology*, writing a commentary on *Revelation* as my dissertation. I have studied Christian theology all of my academic life!

And, then, when I first understood the *subjective* implications of the gospel in 1973 – and was gloriously regenerated by the indwelling presence of the Spirit of Christ (cf. Rom. 8:9,16), I soon became aware that God wanted me to utilize my theological training to demonstrate that the *subjective* implications of the gospel of the living Lord Jesus are biblically accurate and theologically defensible – that this message of "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27) is totally consistent with the historic, traditional, and orthodox teaching of the Church of Jesus Christ. This is *not* some *aberrant novelty* being introduced to Christian thought.

So, *yes*, God *purposed* that my teaching should continue to be primarily theological – but my theological emphasis is on the *internal, experiential, subjective*, and

spiritual implications of the gospel – which (as we have just pointed out) have not always found favor in the Western Church – particularly Protestantism. Am I promoting Roman Catholicism? NO. Am I advocating for Eastern Orthodoxy? NO. I am only desirous of proclaiming the living Lord Jesus who can restore humanity to God's intent by His spiritual presence becoming our LIFE.

And, *yes*, I sometimes employ theological and philosophical vocabulary or terminology to express what I say, using words that are not always familiar in popular Christian discourse. I do *not* use the "*ten-dollar theological terms*" to "show off" or flaunt my learning. They are employed only to provide the most concise and precise explanation of what I am trying to say, and to avoid misunderstanding. Paul warned Timothy about "disputes" (I Tim. 6:4) and "wrangling about words" (II Tim. 2:14). It is not the *words* that we are interested in – but Jesus Christ, the "*Word of God*" – God's divine expression of Himself to mankind in the revelation of His Son!

#30 – You seem to frame much of your theological thinking in the format of "dialectic." Does the "tensioned balance" of dialectic thinking lend itself to a denial of absolutes, and therefore to a form of relativism?

It was via the writings of Jacques Ellul, Soren Kierkegaard, and Karl Barth that I saw the value of approaching theological topics in the tensioned-balance of *dialectic* thought.

The concept of *dialectic* comes from a Greek word (*dialektos*) meaning "to talk through." It has been used in varied ways by the philosophers – by Socrates, Plato, Aristotle – by Hegel, Sartre, Kierkegaard, and others. For the purpose of simplification, dialectic can be viewed as the awareness that "there are two sides to every coin" – two positions to every argument. These two sides to every issue must interact with one another in reciprocal conversation, accepting the validity of the other without trying to destroy the other. Both positions, though they may appear to be mutually exclusive, must be allowed to go back-and-forth in dialogue without attempting to merge them in a static syncretism or synthesis. They must remain both/and.

Allow me to illustrate this with one of the foremost Christian dialectics – the recognition that Jesus Christ was/is God and man; deity and humanity. Both sides can be documented biblically – do you agree? We do not want to try to compress these together into some form of a demigod – not fully God; not fully human. But the tendency of Western thinkers, in particular, is to elevate one side of the equation to the diminishment of

the other, without keeping a *tensioned-balance* between them.

The first heresy of the church was to emphasize the deity of Jesus, while indicating that he only appeared to be a man – *Docetism*.

The *Adoptionists*, on the other hand, focused on the humanity of Jesus, indicating that Jesus was a *man* adopted by God and given the Christ-cloak or the Messiah-mantle.

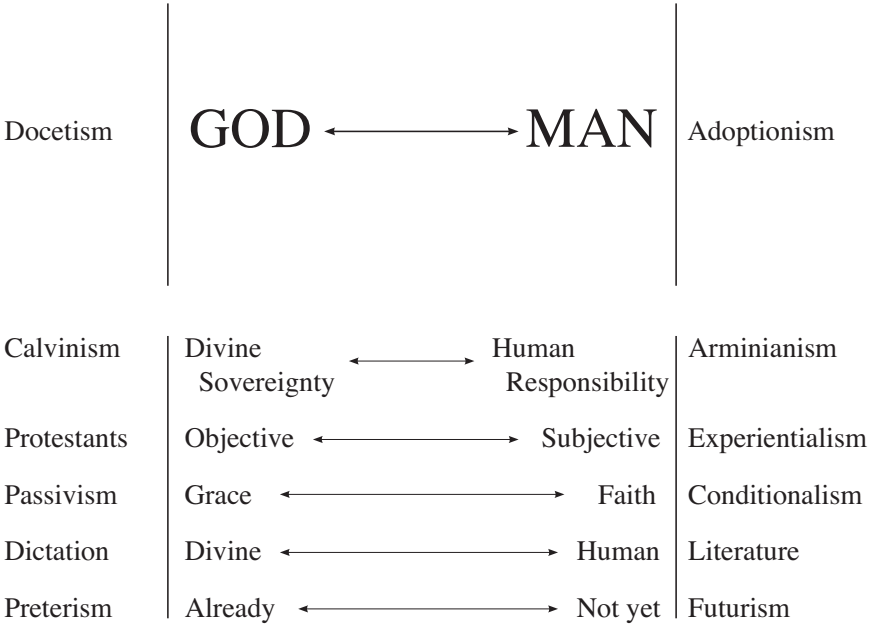
The heretical extremisms result from the failure to keep a balanced-tension of *dialectic*. And these tensions are present in every category of Christian thought: Divine sovereignty/human responsibility; objective/subjective (understanding of Christ's work); Grace/faith; Divine/human elements in the development of the Christian scriptures; already/not yet emphases of Christian eschatology.

Western thinkers are particularly uncomfortable with the indefiniteness of this kind of stereoscopic *both/and* perspective and reciprocity. They do not like the dynamic juggling action of keeping two balls in the air at the same time without catching one and letting the other go. For them it seems too wishy-washy, back-and-forth, double-minded, or even bi-polar. They want to come down on one side or the other, and determine that they have figured out the *absolute truth* of the matter. Two tenets held simultaneously seem to them to be a form of *relativism* that denies an *absolute*!

I disagree! This is another foundational area where I find myself in disagreement with Western theological thinking! Two seemingly dissonant tenets in a dialectic should not be viewed as competing with each other, but as completing each other in the complementarity of the

Divine Mystery, which just documents God's statement through Isaiah, "'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,' declares the Lord" (Isa. 55:8). The apostle Paul adds, "How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways" (Rom. 11:33). The format of dialectic thinking verifies that declaration!

Dialectic
JESUS CHRIST



#31 – Eschatology is a topic of much dispute among Christian people. Would you be willing to clearly state whether you believe in a future millennial period?

Let me begin by stating that "eschatology" is *mistakenly* considered by the majority of Christian people to be the study of what is expected to happen in the *future* according to particular prophetic passages of scripture. That is *not necessarily* the definition of eschatology! Eschatology is the study of "last things," and "last" does *not* refer only to "end times" in the future. The Greek word, *eschatos*, refers to "the last in a sequence."

Acts 2:17 – Peter, in the first sermon of the church, explains that what was happening there at Pentecost was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (2:28-32). "In the *last days*," God says, "I will pour forth My Spirit on all mankind." Pentecost and the subsequent Christian era are identified as "the last days."

Heb. 1:2 – Paul states, "In these *last days*, God has spoken to us in His Son." In Paul's mind there were the "*past days*" of the old covenant, and the "*last days*" of the new covenant.

I Peter 1:20 – "He (Jesus) was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these *last times* for your sake…"

The *last* in the sequence of what God has determined to do to restore mankind is accomplished in the "finished work" of Jesus Christ (cf. Jn. 19:30). Jesus is God's *last Word* for mankind.

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul indicates that Jesus is the "*Last Adam*," – the *eschatos* Man (I Cor. 15:45). God's "*last thing*" – "*last Word*" – His *eschatological* endeavor – is *not* a coming event – i.e. the second coming; … is *not* an expected utopian time period – i.e. the millennium; …. is *not* a final determination – i.e. judgment; … is *not* a hoped for destination – i.e. heaven. God's "*last thing*" – His eschatological "*last Word*" – is the *Person and work of Jesus Christ*, who is "the first and the *last*" (Rev. 1:7; 2:8,19; 22:13).

Whereas, in the Jewish covenant era (in the Old Testament) the "last thing" expected and hoped for was the *Messiah*, (Jewish eschatology was/is futuristic, but the Jewish religion failed to recognize Jesus as the expected Messiah), New covenant Christians, on the other hand, do *not* have primarily futuristic expectations of eschatology. We recognize that the "*last Word of God*" for mankind is Jesus Christ, the Messiah the Jewish religion expected. Participating, as we do, in the *life* of Jesus Christ, *right now*, we look *back* to the historic *last work* of God in the life, death, resurrection and Pentecostal outpouring of Jesus Christ, along with the continued subjective and experiential work of Jesus Christ in our spirits. Christian eschatology is primarily an *inaugurated* eschatology – a *realized* eschatology – for we have *realized* and experienced what God has *inaugurated* in Jesus.

The eschatological dialectic for Christians is a balanced-tension between the *already* and the *not yet*. We rejoice in ALL that we *already* have available to us in the living Lord Jesus, as well as the *consummation* and extension of His life that we still anticipate, await, and expect in the "blessed hope and appearing of Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13), and the heavenly realm.

So, as for the 1000 year *millennial* period, I am rather ambivalent as to whether one sees it more in the *already* or the *not yet* of God's "last things," but the key thing to recognize is that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of God's promise and intent.

II Cor. 1:20 – "As many as are the *promises* of God, in Jesus Christ they are YES" – affirmed, fulfilled, realized – recognized to be God's "*last WORD*" for mankind.

Eschatology

"*Last things*"

NOT necessarily *future* considerations

JESUS = *eschatos* Man

"the last Adam"
I Cor. 15:45

God's "last Word" for mankind

#32 – Much emphasis is placed by the speakers in this conference on knowing "who you are in Christ" – on knowing your identity in Christ. How does knowing your spiritual identity help one to live the Christian life?

With tongue-in-cheek, I would answer, *"It doesn't*!"

But to stop there would be very *misleading*. … To know one's spiritual identity does not ***help YOU*** to live the Christian life. YOU/*we* can't live the Christian life! We've said it in many ways, but it is necessary to repeat this – the Christian life is an *impossible life* for any Christian to try to orchestrate or implement – to reproduce the life of Jesus is impossible! *Only the living Lord Jesus can live the Christian life!!!!* He lived the life perfectly on earth during His incarnated redemptive mission – perfectly allowing God the Father to express His character and action in the man, Christ Jesus, for every moment in time for 33 years. And rising victorious over death in His resurrection, and being poured out in Spirit-form on Pentecost, He stands ready and willing to live out the Christ-life in each of us as we are receptive to such in faith.

What, then, is the value, or the importance, of knowing our *identity in Christ* – who we are in Christ?

The *awareness* of our *identity* is a key to the chosen implementation of the character of the one who forms our identity, in order that who we have become might be lived out in our behavior.

The parent who keeps telling his son that he is a "klutz" because he is physically uncoordinated and nonathletic, sets him up to act in accord with who/what he thinks he is because his father has told him he is – a klutz.

The parent who repeatedly tells her pre-adolescent daughter that she is a "slut" because of the clothing she choose to wear, sets the daughter up to "act out" in the identity-label that her mother has given her – a slut.

Our "*sense of identity*" is a starting-point for the behavioral choices that we make. That is why it is so important to have a "*positive personal concept of who we are in Jesus Christ*." This is not the same as the "self-image, self-value, self-worth, self-esteem, or self-identity" propagated by pop-psychology today (psychological props for a false sense of identity). We are talking about a *spiritual-identity* formulated by the presence of Jesus Christ in our spirit, and the recognition that we are *Christ-ones*, Christians. We can have a "*positive personal concept of who we are in Jesus Christ*," in accord with all that the new covenant scriptures indicate we have *become in Christ*. We cannot *behave* like who we have *become* in Christ, unless we know who we have *become*, and consequently choose to let His *character* be manifested in our *behavior*.

Soren Kierkegaard – "If I do not know who I am, then I am living a lie." We can only live in truth – out of the reality of our spiritual condition – when we have a "*positive personal concept of who we are in Christ*," – the springboard for the manifestation of His Life.

A *word of caution* is in order concerning the emphasis on one's *spiritual identity* in some Christian circles. Some have so focused on their *spiritual identity*, asserting "I am righteous … I am holy … I am perfect … etc." that their "*I am*" identity-focus is on *themselves*, rather than on *Jesus Christ*. It becomes another more pious form of *ego-centricity*, rather than the proper *Christo-centricity* that focuses on Jesus Christ!

One fellow I know even had the audacity to put a personalized license plate on his vehicle that read, "I AM" – which I think is rather blasphemous, since God identifies Himself as, the "I AM that I AM" (Exod. 3:14).

Norman Grubb's last two published books were entitled, "*Who Am I*?" and "*Yes, I am*!". Some people took that *identity* emphasis, and focused on themselves rather than on the Lord!

Some even went farther. They failed to distinguish between *identity* and *essentiality*. By their repetition of "***I am*** *this*" and "***I am*** *that*" they became convinced that they were essentially, inherently, intrinsically what only Jesus Christ IS. Jesus could say, "I AM the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), "I AM the light of the world" (John 8:12; 12:46), because He was *essentially* one with the "I AM that I AM" (Exod. 3:14). His was an *essential identity* as GOD! But we must constantly be aware that our *spiritual identity* is formed by Christ's indwelling presence, and is always a *derived identity* – derived from the One who lives in us spiritually.

Awareness of our *spiritual identity* is important for Christians, for by such we are constantly made aware of the One, Jesus Christ, *out of whom* we live. We never progress beyond Paul's desire to "know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings…" (Phil. 3:10).

Spiritual IDENTITY

"*If I do not know who I am,*
then I am living a lie."

- Soren Kierkegaard

Positive Personal Concept of who I am "in Christ"

NOT ... self-image
self-esteem
self-worth
self-value

#33 – Is it possible that an emphasis on God's sufficient grace in Jesus Christ – the provision of the life of Jesus Christ in the Christian – might lead to either a *triumphalism* that depreciates the presence and seriousness of sin in the Christian life? ... or a *passivism* that reduces the sense of human responsibility in the Christian life?

Not only is it possible, it seems to be one of Satan's subtlest temptations among those who teach and rejoice in God's GRACE. These kinds of responses have found ample evidence in those who would "traffic" on God's grace as an "unfettered free-ride" or an "irresponsible slide of inertia and acquiescence."

The divine dynamic of God's all-sufficient GRACE is *embodied in Jesus Christ*. The apostle John wrote, "*grace* and truth were realized through Jesus Christ" (Jn. 1:17).

Grace is the divine provision of the life of Jesus Christ in the Christian! Paul wrote, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13)

Grace is the dynamic energizing of the Resurrection-life of Jesus Christ in the Christian. "Jesus was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4), and that is why Paul simply and singularly wanted to "know Him, and the power of His resurrection…" (Phil. 3:10). The "Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8:9) is the "Spirit of grace" (Heb. 10:29). Grace is *God at work* by His Son, Jesus Christ, and the empowering of the Holy Spirit in Christian lives.

As for the possibility of *triumphalism* – God did *triumph* over the powers of evil in Jesus Christ (Col. 2:15), and

now by His grace "leads us in *triumph* in Christ" (II Cor. 2:14).

But we must be cautious of an attitude of *triumphalism* that depreciates or denies the presence of sin in our Christian lives. Triumphalism and perfectionism often go hand-in-hand.

By God's grace, the Christian will be made aware of that which is contradictory and misrepresentative of the character of Christ in our lives. This is one of the surest signs of God's grace working in us.

As for the possibility of *passivism* – it should be avoided when we recognize that GRACE is "*God in action* in accord with who He IS," and *faith* is "our receptivity of His *activity*." Thus defined, the human faith-response to the *activity* of God's grace, should never lead to inactivity, inertia or *passivism*. The very response-ability of faith is a response to the *activity* of God's grace. That is why James explains, "faith without the outworking is useless, void, dead" (James 2:17), for faith is always the *receptivity* of God's *activity* of grace.

Yes, I have observed the extremes of triumphalism and passivism among those who claim to understand and operate by God's grace in Jesus Christ. There are some who think that God's "rest" means doing nothing … sitting on one's "duff" and twiddling their thumbs until God "moves" them.

BUT more often than not, these words are empty, false charges hurled as "labels" against those who teach and enjoy God's sufficient grace in Jesus Christ. These labels are thrown at us by the performance-oriented legalists, religionists, and "works" activists, who are so afraid that if Christians live by God's GRACE received by faith --- their cushy religious positions and salaries and

retirement programs are going to fade away. They reject God's grace in favor of self-preservation, and justify their position by hurling such invectives as "triumphalism" and "passivism" at those who enjoy God's GRACE in the life of Jesus Christ.

GRACE

The divine dynamic of God's ALL-sufficient activity embodied in JESUS CHRIST

"grace and truth were realized
through Jesus Christ"
John 1:17

Grace is the divine provision of the life of Jesus Christ in the Christian

"I can do all things
through Christ who strengthens me"
Phil. 4:13

False labels hurled at those who teach and enjoy God's GRACE

– triumphalism
– passivism

#34 – You have been accused of being overly critical, and of "shooting people's sacred cows"? How do you react to such criticism?

To be "critical" can be interpreted in more than one way!

On an *attitudinal* and *emotional* level, to be "critical" may be regarded as a failure to be tolerant … a failure to accept differences … an unloving confrontational stance. On a more *noetic* or *rational* level, to be "critical" is to be discerning in one's determination of what is accurate and acceptable in Christian thought.

The Greek words *krités* and *kritikos*, from which we get the English words "critic" and "critical," pertain to the ability to make determinations and judgments – something we are all expected to do. I think it is very important to engage in coherent, *critical thinking*. Most of the time such "*critical thinking*" can be constructive, rather than destructive. It can and should be "iron sharpening iron."

By way of personal illustration, I have been in a theological discussion group in San Diego, where we have met every other Friday morning for over 15 years. These fellows (no female has ever sought to join our company) are from a variety of theological persuasions, denominations, and vocations. Sometimes our discussions have been very heated – filled with the *passion* of conviction. These men – some of the most brilliant minds and faithful Christians I know – engage in much *critical thinking*, but not for the purpose of destroying one another or their ideas. We often have to "agree to disagree."

Yes, I have been *critical* in my thinking, and sometimes to the point of *repudiating* what I have concluded to be *fallacious* ideas about God and the Christian gospel.

As for "shooting peoples' *sacred cows*" – "sacred cows" have long been associated with *idolatry*, and we should be very *critical* of such. The Hindus have long considered the *cow* to be *sacred* – even Ghandi stated, "The central fact of Hinduism is cow protection." The Israelites, following the lead of Aaron, constructed the "golden calf" in the wilderness – an idolatrous "sacred cow." God was *critical*, to the point of being incensed at their idolatry. They had just been delivered from Egypt, where the Egyptians worshipped the *Apis Bull* idol.

The phrase, "*sacred cow*," can have metaphorical reference to thoughts and practices that some people revere, and regard to be beyond questioning or criticism – not to be tampered with – of ultimate concern – *deified*. These may be idolatrous ideological constructs that have developed in the doctrines and worship practices of religious people. These "pet" preferences and practices are often so highly revered that discussion of their legitimacy is *taboo*! They probably wouldn't admit it, but they worship their idolatrous "sacred cows," and are often prepared to repudiate, reject, or wreck vengeance on those who do not likewise do so.

It is *not* that I delight in taking my theological musket to "open fire" on fallacious thought; … on aberrant doctrine; … on heretical theology; … on "sacred cows," but *someone* has to do it, and when I sense the compulsion of God's Spirit to do so, I do not flinch from the task. I have not shied away from such a *prophetic role* in exposing inaccurate, improper, idolatrous constructs of God and His activity in Jesus Christ.

The targets of my *critical* volleys are always ideas – and not the people who might hold those ideas. Though I do not shy away from "naming names" of those who are advocating false ideas.

So, the answer to the question is: YES, I have been critical, and will continue to be so.

Christian artist, James E. Seward, drew this cartoon to illustrate my propensity to exercise the critical thinking necessary to identify and expose issues of thought that are aberrant or idolatrously elevated above their proper place in Christian thought. The fellow with the smoking musket in the upper-left corner is a caricature of Jim Fowler.

#35 – Are you aware that there are some who might consider you "heretical"? What is your response to that?

There are few people who spend more time than I do in making sure that there is adequate *biblical documentation* for what I teach, and that it is in accord with the *historic and orthodox teaching* of the Church.

Let me explain that I *do* believe that there are ideas, opinions, tenets, doctrinal teachings, etc., that *can* and *should* and *must* be regarded as *heresy* – as heretical. In response to Elaine Pagels' best-selling book, *Beyond Belief*, I wrote an article entitled with a question, "*Beyond Heresy?*" Living, as we do, in an age where all pluralistic thought is accepted in an epidemic of tolerance, have we reached a point where we are *beyond heresy* – where we must accept whatever any person thinks to be true (at least for them) – where there is no legitimate criteria to establish truth and accuracy? In such a climate of relative thought, to accuse someone of "heresy" is considered to be equivalent to a "hate-crime."

Yes, we admit that Christianity is *not* essentially a "belief-system," comprised of ideological premises articulated in propositional statements, formed into a "believe-right" religion. But there *has* to be an *historical* and *theological* foundation on which to construct our experience of the living Christ. We don't want to build on quicksand!

Orthodox Christian thought has always recognized the written revelation of the scriptures as the basis of epistemological foundations. Even Jesus critiqued the

Sadducees for their aberrance of thought, saying, "You are *mistaken*; not knowing the scriptures" (Matt. 22:29).

Neither are we to be so presumptuous as to think that the Christians who have gone before us in history were not listening to the Spirit of Christ in their formulation of Christian thought. Jude 3 admonishes us to "contend for the faith which was once and for all delivered to the saints.

It is important that *orthodox* teaching of the church be distinguished from the *unorthodox*; that *biblical* and *traditional* teaching be distinguished from the *aberrant* and *heretical*. I stand *ready* and *willing* to explain why what I teach is in accord with biblical teaching and with the orthodox theology of the church.

Yes, certain features of what I teach do differ from popular explanations in some religious circles. As religion is often intolerant of differences, there have been some who have adjudged me "heretical" for some of my interpretations! If I regard their charges of sufficient import, I am quite willing and "ready to give a defense for the hope (Jesus) that is in me" (I Peter 3:15).

Let me give a *caution* at this point. Since the teaching of "Christ in us" – "Christ as our life" – does vary at many junctures from popular evangelical teaching in the contemporary churches, and we may be regarded with suspicion as "mystical, subjective, experiential, we should not, however, take pride in being regarded as "heretics" or "heretical." I have heard speakers jokingly delight in being regarded as "heretics." I do not think we should do that! I think such flippancy serves to leverage against our desire to share the indwelling presence and function of the risen and living Lord Jesus as the only "good news" of the Christian gospel. That is what we want the church at large to realize, and we do ourselves

a great disservice in flouting our differences as "heretical" – even though some *will* regard them as such!

CONCLUSION

These “Frequently Asked Questions” and the brief answers provided serve as topical sound-bytes of the distinctives of what I teach. They will probably prompt additional questions seeking clarification and amplification of subsequent details in the corpus of what one critic termed “Fowlerian theology.”

Notice how the distinctive teaching builds upon the premises of God’s singular and independent divine function, and the correlative function of human beings as derivative creatures. All of the major areas of Christian thought are affected by these foundational premises – theology and anthropology; diabology and hamartiology; Christology and soteriology; hagiology and eschatology; etc. There are comprehensive resultant ramifications to our initial foundational premises of God and man.

Any speaker or writer can only properly convey what he/she has come to “know” in his/her own revelatory walk with the living Lord Jesus. I have attempted to be straight-forward and honest in answering these questions, and I do not necessarily expect anyone to agree with all of my positions and explanations. One of the greatest needs of the Western church is to learn to “agree to disagree – agreeably.” May we all be critical thinkers seeking spiritual discernment, as we seek, above all, to “know HIM,” the living Lord Jesus!