

I. INTRODUCTION

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When a new modernism threatens to engulf mainline Christianity, the need for evangelicalism to rediscover its identity and to present a united witness to the church and the world is particularly sensitive in this time. Even in the circles of atheism and agnosticism, the loss of the uniqueness of the Christ revelation is manifest in the rise of a syncretistic mysticism. Many of the theologies of experience today assume that femininity, blackness, liberation, secularity, hope, and so on, are in themselves revelatory. Therefore, the biblical revelation is rendered unnecessary.

Today, too many evangelicals seek a continuous highest experience and avoid controversial theological issues. One danger in modern evangelicalism is new-Pietism, characterized by an emphasis on religious experience over doctrine.

It is well to bear in mind that faith is deeper and wider than spiritual experience. Faith is an acknowledgment of the claims of Jesus Christ and an obedience to his commands. It consists primarily in personal devotion to a living Savior, but it also entails a confidence in the apostolic testimony concerning who he is and what he has done.

We must constantly subject our doctrine as well as our life and experience to the criterion of the Scriptures, but we must at the same time strive for a true understanding of our faith. We can never claim to possess the truth, but we should strive to keep and maintain the truth. There is a need for sound doctrine as well as the experience of the Spirit and the new life in Christ.

One reason why Evangelicalism fell into partial eclipse in the early twentieth century is that it lacked doctrinal sophistication and a basic biblical fidelity, and thereby created false stumbling blocks to the faith. Another pitfall in modern evangelicalism still has been its pronounced individualism and its lack of prophetic insight regarding social sin.

However, in our concern for social as well as personal holiness we must beware of converting the Gospel into a political manifesto. The Gospel is a spiritual message which stands above all social ideologies. While the Gospel gives direction to the political enterprise, it must not be reduced to a political theology.

There exists a tension between Reformation theology and Pietism in modern Evangelicalism. Both these movements are important for an understanding of Evangelicalism, and both have very much offer. Especially in its later phases , Protestant orthodoxy became arrayed against Pietism and tended to devalue or even deny the mystical and existential elements in the faith. Modern new-Pietism with its emphasis on religious experience and interpersonal relations underplays the doctrinal and intellectual dimensions of the faith. Evangelicalism must give due appreciation to both religious experience and doctrinal integrity if it is to become a viable option for the church of the future, and certainly also to the call to ethical obedience.

II. THE MEANING OF ENVANGELICAL
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The theological meaning is primary of the various meanings associated with the term evangelical. Evangelical is derived from the Greek word *evangelion*, meaning message of salvation through the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

Though this witness has been muted by the rise of a neo-Catholicism with a markedly anthropocentric orientation, an evangelical witness can also be discerned in contemporary Catholicism.

Evangelicalism and Catholicism are the two themes in the Christian symphony, and Christianity, biblical Christianity, is not complete without either of them. Each of these types of theological orientation has its own peculiar emphasis, which accounts for areas of tension between them. Ideally they are complementary, but this is not always apparent.

While Evangelicalism is oriented about the primitive message of the New Testament, Catholicism is just as concerned about the institution and rites of the church. Whereas Evangelicalism upholds the particularity of the historical revelation as attested in Scripture, Catholicism gives more weight to the universality of grace and the universality of the community of faith. While Evangelicalism's concern is with outreach and mission, the concern of Catholicism is continuity with the tradition.

A true Evangelicalism will be Reformed in the theological as well as the historical sense in that it will include many emphases associated with Reformed Christendom. True Evangelicals

will be concerned for right doctrine as well as the right way of living. And yet Evangelicalism, because it values a personal faith in Jesus Christ over loyalty to creeds and dogma, cannot simply be equated with or subsumed under Protestant Orthodoxy. Protestant Orthodoxy tended in the direction of a Christian rationalism and thereby obscured the mystical dimensions of the faith.

Evangelicalism to be complete and effective must be Catholic as well. Catholicism to be authentic must be Evangelical as well. This is to speak of the evangelical message and the catholic heritage, both of which are necessary for a biblical, ecumenical church.

Evangelicalism wages a different kind of battle with Liberalism, while it is at odds with historic Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy on some important points, . In Liberalism the Gospel appears to be either reduced to ethics or translated into ontology or dissolved into mysticism. The focus of attention is placed either on moral and spiritual values or on an experience of inner enlightenment which requires philosophical conceptualization.

Liberal theology is associated with some of the leading scholars in the history of the church. It places a high premium on personal autonomy and freedom and characterized by an appeal to interior norms, such as conscience and religious experience. It is disposed to view Jesus as a moral ideal or symbol of divine love instead of a sin-bearer and mediator.

Liberal theology has an acknowledged affinity to the Renaissance and Enlightenment, while evangelical theology appeals to the Protestant Reformation and the heritage of Pietism and Puritanism. Evangelical theology has been impelled to uphold and defend certain tenets of the historic faith that palpably conflict with modern life and world views and that ipso facto disturb the proponents of an "Enlightened" Christianity.

Since it is a human enterprise, our theology needs to be constantly revised and reformed. Evangelical theology in its completed form is a systematic whole, though our human systems are but broken reflections of the absolute system, the plan of salvation in the mind of God.

Evangelical theology aims not only to be faithful to Scripture, but also to expose the unfaithfulness of the Christian community to Scripture. It must warn the church of threats to the faith from both within and without. It should say yes to the Evangel but no to modern heresies.

Among the current heresies that Evangelical theology must combat is universalism, the doctrine that all mankind either is saved or will be saved.

However, evangelical theology systematic is not to be confused with a Christian philosophy or with philosophy of religion. Its basic concern is not an overall view of the world but the faithful explication of the Word of God and the heralding of this Word to the world. Its appeal is not to the natural knowledge of God, but to the revelation of Jesus Christ given in Holy Scripture, a revelation that is absolutely unique and once for all times. In this perspective reason is not a stepping stone to faith but a useful instrument in the hands of faith.

Particularly in America, evangelicalism has had difficulty in presenting a credible witness to the world today because of its concentration on peripheral and nonessential matters. By focusing its attention on such matters it has become isolated not only from the contemporary theological debate but also from its own heritage.

Another bane of latter day Evangelicalism is that too often it has sought to equate the logical conclusions of dogma with dogma itself. It has thereby placed itself in the position of viewing as cardinal tenets of the faith such ideas as biblical inerrancy, double predestination, the second blessing, and the millennial reign of Christ on earth.

There is a need for a catholic evangelicalism that will maintain the whole catholic heritage. It will assess the tradition of the church and its own particular tradition not uncritically but in light of the Word of God in Scripture.

Yet in its emphasis on free grace the Evangelical church should take care not to minimize the means of grace, the visible aids whereby the Holy Spirit comes to us. And surely the church

is the chief of these instruments or means through which we come to know the saving truth of
Jesus Christ.

III. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

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In a time of religious transition when old traditions are being challenged, the question is often raised as to whether it is still desirable or even possible to hold on to the idea of the sovereignty of God. To affirm God as Creator and Lord also means to affirm the essential goodness of creation and the meaningfulness of history.

God of the Bible is depicted as the Creator of the universe and the Lord of history. He is not the Unmoved Mover or the Undifferentiated unity but the Almighty One who calls the words into being and whose "kingdom rules over all" (Ps. 103:19). He is not an ideal of pure reason, but a Supreme Intelligence who plans and shapes man's destiny. Nor is he a necessary postulate of reason, instead he is the One who remains hidden until he gives himself to be known in revelation. He is not a self-contained Absolute, who is unaffected by the world, but the living Lord of history, an Active Agent more than a Passive Subject.

On the basis of the scriptural testimony the church through the ages has affirmed the doctrine of creation out of nothing. This means that the world was created by divine fiat; God did not have to mold the world out of a material that was preexistent or coeternal.

God is related to the world not as Eternity is to time but as Creative Act is related to the creation. He is not simply the ground or depth of being but the Lord of being and the Lord over being. As the omnipotent God he is the source of all created life and its preservation.

God's will is supreme and unique, not arbitrary and overwhelming. The true God is active and dynamic will, not simply the depth or ground of reason. God's sovereignty is not caprice but the liberty to interpose in judgment and mercy as he pleases. His power should be distinguished from power itself, for he is in control of his power.

God's sovereignty means that he is immutable. He does not change in his innermost being and in his ultimate vision and purpose for the world. Isaiah says, "The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever" (Isa. 40:8; cf. Ps 102:25-27; James. 1:17).

A sovereign God has a sovereign plan and purpose which he chooses to realize the world. Any discussion of God's omnipotence will invariably include the doctrine of predestination.

Not only God's will but his knowledge is said to be omnipotent, therefore it is appropriate now to consider the doctrine of the omniscience of God, The meaning of God's omniscience is that there is no concealment from God. God's knowledge does not consist only in His knowing all things before they are and have been, but in His actually knowing them when they are still future.

To believe in the omniscience of God means to affirm an overarching providence that sustains the world in its sin and misery but which is not the direct cause of its sin and misery.

We should add that it is only in Jesus Christ that we know the living God and his sovereignty over the world. We experience the wrath and judgment of God outside of Christ, by we do not really know the breadth of his love and power until we have faith in Christ.

Moreover, it is necessary to uphold the sovereignty of God the Holy Spirit who implants within man the principle of the new life. The Holy Spirit is not only the originator of the new life but also the one who develops it, preserves it, and perfects it on the day of resurrection.

We see a basic distinction between the love and holiness of God but at the same time an interpenetration and indivisibility. God in his essence is both love and holiness, and therefore it is of a holy love that we must speak when referring to divinity. God is love, but his love exists in tension with his holiness, indeed it is informed by his holiness.

Holy love is not weakness or permissiveness but contains a severity that is totally foreign to the popular understanding of love. Its method is to uproot and attack all that is not of God.

Holy love does not cancel the demands of the law but seeks the fulfillment of these demands. This is why the holy love of God made inevitable the vicarious atonement of Christ on the cross. The holy love of God is inseparably related to his wrath. The concept of the wrath of God fell into disfavor with the rise of liberal theology which tended to see it as divine petulance and, therefore, not worthy of the God of Christian faith.

God is not simply a unity but a triunity. He is differentiated within himself. He not only exists by also coexists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (cf. Matt. 3:16, 17,; 28:18; John 14:16, 17; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6). God is sovereign but not solitary,

The doctrine, which was defined and sharpened in the early councils of the church beginning with Nicaea, asserts that there is one divine being in three persons. There is a trinity of persons and a unity in essence. The Trinity must be thought of neither as one God in three manifestations nor as a symmetrical triad of persons with separable function. Instead, the Trinity signified one God in three modes of existence-Father, Son, and Spirit, and each of these participates in the activity of the other.

The doctrine of the Trinity is not an explanation but a definition of the being of God and life of God. The trinity itself remains a mystery even to faith. It reflects the truth that God is intelligible but incomprehensible (Aquinas). It bears witness to the affirmation that God is known truly, but not exhaustively, in his self-revelation in Jesus Christ.

Among the perfections of God not yet mentioned is his glory. the glory of God signifies his splendor, majesty, and radiance particularly as these make an impression upon the world of the creature. The glory of God is the foundation for active service and obedience. When man seeks his own welfare and power rather than God's glory, then his good works are turned into evil works.

God wills his own glory for the sake of his creation. In himself he has full satisfaction and stands in need of nothing. Yet his children lack virtually everything. Since he is the highest good, he owes it to his children to make them aware of his perfections so that their spiritual quest and hunger will be fulfilled.

The essence of biblical piety is the desire to give glory to God in everything we say or do. And we glorify God when we love him as our Creator and Redeemer and fear him as our King and Judge. We glorify God when we surrender any claim to righteousness on our part and trust his righteousness alone, as revealed in his Son Jesus Christ. We glorify God when we dedicate ourselves to the great commission-the proclamation of the good news of salvation to a lost and despairing world. We glorify God when we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit the sick in prison, since Christ has identified himself with the poor and ailing in our midst (Matt.25:31ff.).

The concept of an Almighty God who relates himself to his creation in self-giving love was subverted first by the apologists of the early church who tried to make the faith palatable to its cultured despisers.

The sovereignty of God was again compromised by the growing sacramentalism in the church which tied his grace to the rites and rituals of the church. But the sovereign God of the Bible cannot be put in a limitation.

The true God is the holy, majestic Lord who gives himself in love but who demands our faith and love in return. He creates not because the Good must necessarily be productive or creative, but because he chooses to do so in his sovereign freedom.

At the same time we must affirm that Christ, even in the form of a servant, remains King and Lord of the universe. His absolute power, however, is now decisively attested as being in the service of his omnipotent love.

IV. THE PRIMACY OF SCRIPTURE

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Because Evangelical theology sees Scripture as the written Word of God, it appeals to the authority of Scripture . The precise relationship between divine revelation and the human writings which comprise the canonical Scripture has been and still is a subject of debate in both evangelical Protestant and Roman Catholic circles.

Unless we take into consideration that Scripture has a dual authorship, it cannot be rightly understood . It is not only a human witness to divine revelation, but it is at the same time God's witness to himself. The Bible is not partly the Word of God and partly the word of man: it is in its entirety the very Word of God and the very word of man.

We must go on to affirm that Scripture is more than a human witness to revelation. It is revelation itself mediated through human words. It is not in and of itself divine revelation, but when illumined by the Spirit it becomes revelation to the believer.

While we must resist the temptation to posit a direct identity between Scripture and revelation, we do affirm an indirect identity in that by the work of the Holy Spirit the very human words of the prophets and apostles are conjoined with the Word spoken by God to them. God 's Word is consequently not the Bible in and by itself but the correlation of Scripture and Spirit.

In biblical times, a conflict that had already emerged concerns the relation between the written Scriptures and the rabbinical and ecclesiastical traditions. Jesus himself made the Scriptures the ruling norm.

Evangelical theology holds that Scripture has primacy not only over the church but also over religious experience. In addition we affirm the primacy of Scripture over dreams, signs, and wonders. Also to be included in this connection are proofs and evidences of the faith.

Too often in the past theologians have drawn upon the creative thought of their culture as well as the Bible in constructing their theology. We must assert the primacy of Scripture over culture.

On Scriptural primacy, we must bear in mind that the ultimate, final authority is not Scripture but the living God himself. We find him in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ and the message about him constitute the material norm for our faith just as the Bible is the formal norm.

However, we must go on to affirm that the absolute authority of faith, the living Christ himself, has so bound himself to the historical attestation concerning his self-revelation, namely, the sacred Scripture, that the latter necessarily participates in the authority of its Lord. The Bible must be distinguished from its ground and goal, but it cannot be separated from them.

The Bible contains a fallible element in the sense that it reflects the cultural limitations of the writers. But it is not mistaken in what it purports to teach, namely, God's will and purpose for the world. There are no errors or contradictions in its substance and heart.

Evangelical theology affirms both the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture, but these terms must be qualified in the light not so much of modern historical research but of Scripture's own judgment concerning itself. The biblical authors did not claim to possess a synoptic or absolute perspective concerning the truth that they attested and proclaimed.

We must also bear in mind that the prophets and apostles were men of their times though the message that they attested transcended their age and every age. The enlightened biblical Christian will not shrink from asserting that there are culturally conditioned ideas as well as historically conditioned language in the Bible.

We are not willing to abandon the doctrine of inerrancy, but we must take the Scripture's own understanding of this concept instead of imposing on Scripture a view of inerrancy drawn from modern empirical philosophy and science.

The law of God is both fulfilled in and transcended by the Gospel, and this means that it is properly understood only in the light of the Gospel. Any text when taken out of its proper context and when divorced from the culminating revelation in the Bible becomes susceptible to error.

If the infallibility of the Bible were self-evident, if the divine truth of Scripture were directly accessible, then the hermeneutical task would be quite easy, but for better or were it is much more complicated. This brings us to the hermeneutical task, the problem of interpretation.

We must first recognize that the Bible is not principally a source book of data on Israel's history, but a witness to divine revelation, a witness that points beyond itself to a supernatural reality. This means that in order for us to come to a true understanding of the basic content of the Bible, our inward eyes must be opened to the divine message to which the texts attest.

We see the hermeneutical task in a series of stages. First, one must come to the Bible with an open heart and a searching mind. Second stage, one must now examine the text critically, and this means using the tools of literary and historical criticism. Finally, the interpreter must relate the text, now understood in the light of Scripture itself, to the cultural situation of his time.

The interpreter of Scripture must do all within his power to ascertain the spiritual and theological significance of the text in question, but in the process he must be open to the guidance and illumination of the Spirit.

Of course, we must take care not to read our own thoughts and imagination into the text in question. Our aim should be to discover as best we can what was in the mind of the writer, that is to say, the original or literal sense. If the writer intended to convey a figurative meaning,

then we must by no means interpret the text literalistically. At the same time we wish to discover what was in the mind of the Holy Spirit, and not simply the mind of the writer, and what the Holy Spirit would have us hear today in and through this text.

With the rise of scholastic orthodoxy in the two centuries following the Reformation, the Bible became increasingly identified with divine revelation itself, and inspiration came to be interpreted in terms of mechanical dictation.

The bane of much of modern evangelicalism is rationalism which presupposes that the Word of God is directly available to human reason. It is fashionable to refer to the biblical revelation as propositional, and in one sense this is true in that the divine revelation is communicated through verbal concepts and models.

One must remember that the basis of faith is not the trustworthiness of the manuscripts, but the saving act of God in Jesus Christ and the inward testimony of his Spirit. The historical events of the Bible, which are accessible to sense perception, are the occasion but not the foundation of faith.

Evangelical theology, at the same time, will be a theology under the Word of God. Our theological systems as well as our confessions of faith must forever be reexamined and purified in the light of the Word of God. An authentic evangelical theology will be a theology forever in the process of reformation.

V. TOTAL DEPRAVITY
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The grandeur and the misery of man are clearly affirmed by the Bible. He has been made a little lower than the angels and has been given dominion over the animals. He is created in the image of God and endowed with freedom for service and fellowship. Yet he has squandered his inheritance by seeking to be as God. He has not been content to remain within his limitation: though he is finite he aspires to be infinite. Yet even when he descends to the level of the beast he remains superior to the beast, since he sins knowingly and willingly. He is not the victim of fate or the prey of natural impulses but remains responsible in his sin. His sin is inexcusable, because he knows the good but does not do it. His misery consists in his willful defiance of the good that is his salvation.

In the technological society, man has been reduced to the level of a machine. But a machine cannot sin, for sin means a rupture in a personal relationship with God. The machine runs mechanistically, but man is a free being endowed with infinite possibilities. The tragedy is that he has misused his freedom and has thereby fallen into slavery to his own lust for power. Yet even in his slavery he remains free, though no longer to do the good but now to satisfy his selfish desires. The greatness of man is apparent even in his wretchedness.

In constructing a Christian anthropology we must not ignore the basic nobility of man. He comes from the hand of God, though he is not a part of God. He is essentially good, having been created in the image of God. At the same time we must not minimize the gravity of his sin

against his Creator. His created nature is unblemished, but his existence in the world is fallen. There is a glaring contrast between what man is truly and essentially and what he has become. Because man lives in opposition to his own God-given nature, his present nature signifies an existence in contradiction.

Reformed Christianity has been known for its emphasis on the total depravity of man, but properly understood this doctrine is integral to all Evangelical Protestantism, and it also includes a significant measure of support within Roman Catholicism. It is a doctrine that has been insufficiently grasped, and too often its proponents have only added confusion by their exaggerated versions of it.

In the perspective of biblical faith total depravity can be thought of as having four meanings, all of which are valid. First, it refers to the corruption at the very center of man's being, the heart, but this does not mean that man's humanity has ceased to exist. Second, it signifies the infection in every part of man's being, though this is not to infer that this infection is evenly distributed or that nothing good remains in man. Third, it denotes the total inability of sinful man to please God or come to him unless moved by grace, though this does not imply that man is not free in other areas of his life. Fourth, it includes the idea of the universal corruption of the human race, despite the fact that some peoples and cultures manifest this corruption much less than others.

The total depravity of man was given strong emphasis in the Reformation. Total depravity does not mean that there is no natural goodness or freedom remaining in man. The image of God has been darkened but not destroyed. It is marred by sin, but it still exists. Man continues to reflect the glory of his Creator, even in his sin and defiance. Man, even in the state of sin, has natural talents, intelligence, and also a moral sense, though because of sin it cannot be regarded as a sage or sure guide.

In the biblical perspective, sin is positive rebellion, not simply a privation of goodness or being. The essence of sin is unbelief, which appears as both idolatry and hardness of heart. Sin is an aversion from and an unfaithfulness to Yahweh himself, so it is placed in the heart rather than in the wrong deed.

Sin, in the biblical perspective, is both an act and a state. It entails separation from God as well as a deliberate violation of his will. It signifies both a state of alienation or estrangement from God and a transgression of his law.

The Scriptures often portray sin as a positive force of destruction, sometimes as a power outside as well as inside man. Eve was pressed to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil by the power of sin personified in the voice of the serpent (Gen. 3:1).

Against the idealistic and mystical traditions we contend that sin is to be located not in the subrational vitalities of the self but rather in man's spirit. Though man's nature makes him vulnerable to temptation, sin itself is an act of the will. It signifies neither a necessity of man's nature nor an invariable concomitant of his finitude, but instead an abuse of his freedom.

Our position is that the knowledge of sin comes through both the Law and the Gospel, the Law united with the Gospel. We can have sorrow over our guilt as we hear the harsh words of God's law, but we will not be convicted of our sin until we encounter Jesus Christ himself and discover that our sins cost his life. We will not truly repent and forsake our sins until our hearts are regenerated by the Holy Spirit as we hear the message of the Gospel.

While the core of sin is unbelief, its chief manifestations are pride and sensuality. Collective pride is probably the worst form of sin, since in this case whole peoples succumb to idolatrous pretension. Racism, sexism, classism, and nationalism are rightly seen as collective expressions of inward sin.

Biblical faith is very explicit concerning the penalties for sin: guilt, death, hell, moral servitude, and spiritual blindness. Man in sin forfeits his chance for happiness and becomes paralyzed by guilt and captive to forces and powers beyond his control. He faces a future that is dark and foreboding-death, and after death the judgment of God.

The bondage of the will is affirmed throughout Scripture as one of the principal hallmarks and penalties of sin. After sin man's will is no longer directed toward God but away from God. He finds himself in flight from God rather than in quest for God. In his sin he is not only unwilling but also unable to do the good and choose salvation. He may yearn for the good, but he is incapable of pursuing the good. Sinful man is like stubble, which the fire consumes, and he cannot deliver himself from the power of the flame

The story of the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 is no longer credible to many people today for several reasons. First, a literalistic interpretation has created tensions with the sciences of paleontology and paleethnology, whose findings appear to contradict certain elements in the story. Another strand in Protestant orthodoxy sees the sin of Adam imputed to his descendants by virtue of the fact that he is the Representative of the human race. This position, known as the federal theory, tends to make man a victim of destiny rather than a willing accomplice in sin.

Yet we must not underestimate the penetrating theological insights in the Genesis story, nor should we disregard the truth that it is inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. At this point it is important to establish the correct hermeneutical procedure for understanding the "myth" of the fall. In order to discover what the author really intended we must take into consideration the literary genre of the narrative. In this way the literal sense is not less but more respected.

However, it seems that the story of the fall does assume that mankind has a common ancestor or ancestors who forfeited earthly happiness by falling into sin. The story has a dual focus: it points not only to generic man but to primal man. Its message holds true in both cases:

man is not created a sinner but becomes a sinner through a tragic misuse of his freedom. We also maintain that if the symbolism of both Genesis 2 and 2 is to be taken seriously, the emergence of man is to be attributed to a special divine act of creation and not to blind, cosmic evolution.

Sin came to be understood as reason's imperfect mastery of lower impulses or ignorance of man's unique status in the universe. The Enlightenment of the eighteenth century successfully challenged the Reformation view of man and the world. Not the depravity of man but his natural goodness and perfectibility were affirmed.

In modern evangelicalism a this-worldly optimism is also apparent, despite the fact that it continues to affirm original sin. The historicity of Adam is defended, but the confession that everyone is in Adam is not given its due weight.

Luther and Calvin maintained that we can never be free from the presence of sin, but we can be free from its controlling power. Their emphasis was on the struggle against sin, not the victory over sin, and perhaps in their preoccupation with the continuing sinfulness of the Christian. The way was thereby prepared for the reaction of Pietism and Wesleyanism which rightly saw that man can overcome sin and through grace. But an optimism based on grace must be sharply distinguished from an optimism based on man's resources, the kind of optimism that is reflected in the Enlightenment and the new theology.

VI. THE DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST

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In liberalism the significance of Jesus lies in his teachings or in his unique experience of God, but not in his Person. Against theological liberalism Evangelicals have insisted that Jesus was not simply a great teacher, a spiritual master, or a prophet but a divine Savior. Much more attention is given to the life he lived and the principles he enunciated than to his atoning death and resurrection.

The emergence of higher criticism in the church drew attention to the Jesus of history, the famed man from Galilee whose life and personality could be objectively delineated by historical science; yet the pictures that resulted proved to be quite different from the Christ of traditional faith. It reminds us that the object of our faith is not Jesus after the flesh, the man of Galilee who can be directly perceived as such, but the heavenly Son of God, who was incarnate in Jesus and whose identity can only be known by faith.

Against both strands of liberalism we contend that the church must begin neither with the Jesus of history nor the Christ of faith but with the historical Jesus Christ of the Scriptures whose identity can only be perceived by faith. We further maintain that the picture that faith gives is identical with the true perception of the historical reality of Jesus.

The New Testament is unequivocal in asserting the deity of Christ. The foundation of Christological doctrine as developed in the church is to be found in the Scriptures and particularly the New Testament. In Colossians 2:9 Paul declares "For in him the whole fullness

of deity dwells bodily..." (cf. Col. 1:19). In Titus 2:13 Jesus is referred to as "our great God and Savior."

The angelic annunciation to the shepherds that a "Savior" is born "who is Christ the Lord" definitely carries the connotation of divinity (Luke 2:11). That the evangelists apply to Jesus the incommunicable name of Yahweh (Jehovah) from Isaiah 40:3 in discussing the mission of John the Baptist as the forerunner of the Lord indicates that they understand Christ as divine (Mark 1:3; Matt. 3:3; Luke 3:4).

The Messianic title Lord reappears in the Book Revelation as well as comparable titles Son of Man and Word of God, which likewise connote divinity. This book does not apply to Christ the simple title of "God," but he is represented emphatically as God himself.

The phrase Son of Man, which frequently occurs in the Gospels, can signify either a prophet called by God (as in Ezekiel) or the Messianic messenger from heaven, who carries the aura of divinity. We would do well to consider the title Son of God. In the Scriptures this term has a variety of meanings, but it is applied to Jesus Christ in a special and unique sense.

The church has declared that Jesus Christ is true God and true Man in One Person, on the basis of its fidelity to the scriptural witness. As the Creed of Chalcedon (451) so powerfully enunciates, he is consubstantial with the Father according to his divinity and consubstantial with us men according to his humanity. He is both the Revealing God and Representative Man.

God has united himself with the manhood of Jesus, and yet deity remains forever distinct from humanity. There is no simple equation of God and Jesus, but neither can there be any separation. We affirm not the transmutation of God into the man Jesus but the coinherence of God and man in Jesus Christ (John 14:11)

Since the center of his being is he Word of God, the second person of the Trinity, Jesus is humanly personal but has no independent human existence. His human nature is personalized in

the divine Logos who assumes it. Jesus Christ must not be thought of as being autonomous or self-existent. God is the acting subject, and the manhood of Jesus is the predicate of the Godhead.

The full meaning of the incarnation is likewise tied to the Virgin Birth of Christ. It is important to understand that the Virgin Birth signified the conception not of an independent human personhood but of a human nature. Jesus Christ united human flesh with his divine Person.

Although both endorse the Chalcedonian definition concerning Christ, Roman Catholic and Reformed Christologies diverge at several important points. First, the well-known Catholic (and Eastern Orthodox) concept of the interpenetration of the two natures causes some problems. In this idea the human nature is elevated to its culmination point. Reformed theology sees the danger of the altering or transfiguration of the human nature. The question can be posed as to whether Rome does justice to the full reality of the human nature of Christ.

Two general types of Christological heresy can be discerned, and virtually every erroneous notion concerning the person of Christ can be subsumed under one of these headings. The first is the ebionite type of heresy, derived from the Christian Jewish sect of the same name which denied the full divinity of Christ. Jesus is here thought of as a religious genius, the greatest of the prophets, a spiritual master, a guru, but not the very God himself. The docetic type of heresy affirms the divinity of Christ but does not do justice to his humanity. It is said that Christ only appeared in the flesh of Jesus or that he only seemed to die. While the ebionite type of heresy begins with the humanity of Jesus and seeks to relate this to his deity, the docetic type begins with the deity of Christ but never truly arrives at his humanity.

Many kenoticists tend to forget that Jesus is both God and man, not God as man, understood in a reductionist sense. In some of its forms there is no doubt that kenoticism is

heretical. Kenoticism has generally been criticized for viewing the incarnation as the abdication of deity rather than the assumption of humanity by deity.

The main difficulty with kenoticism is that it too often signifies still another attempt to overcome the paradox of the two natures of Christ by seeking to make the incarnation and humiliation credible to human reason.

We must not lose sight of the fact that Christ even in his weakness and humiliation remained God, though he was God incognito and therefore God only for faith.

A confusing picture of the Christ emerges as we turn to the contemporary scene. Docetism and ebionitism are both very much present, but the latter is dominant.

While the mainstream of contemporary liberal theology seeks in some sense to maintain the uniqueness of Jesus there is a tendency in many circles to call even his into question. It is now commonplace to see Christ-Figures in other religions.

The heresies of today like the heresies of yesterday begin not with the God-man, the Absolute Paradox, but with Jesus as a historical personage or with the Christ Spirit who transcends time and space. We reject both a Christology from below and one from above and affirm instead a Christology of the center. The object of our faith is neither Jesus as the Christ nor the New Being manifested in Jesus but the Jesus Christ of biblical faith who is in himself very God and very man.

We regard the meaning of the cross as the pivotal doctrine in Christian theology, but there is no doubt that the work of Christ is indissolubly united with his person. Each of us needs again to confess with Luther in his Small Catechism that "Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord."

VII. THE SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT

Donald G. Bloesch

Though no one theological position is completely dominant, evangelical theology contends that there is a consistent biblical witness to the atonement of Jesus Christ, . Most objective scholars will agree that the theme of vicarious, substitutionary atonement runs through the entire Bible.

The biblical witness in its fuller perspective is brought out in an examination of certain key words in the area of the doctrine of salvation. One of these is *redemption*. This term bears a close relation to *liberation, deliverance, and ransom*. Here we find the idea of a struggle between God and the hostile powers of darkness which enslave man kind.

Reconciliation is another crucial term in the doctrine of the atonement. It basically means to be brought out our alienation into a state of peace and harmony with God.

Propitiation can only be understood in the light of the wrath of God, the severity of the reaction of God's holiness to man's sin. God's inviolable holiness needs to be satisfied, and man's transgressions need to be removed.

Substitution is another extrabiblical term that nevertheless conveys the breadth and scope of the meaning of the cross of Christ. We have already noted the significance of this concept in the beginning of this section.

All these terms are associated with the shedding of the blood of Christ on the cross of Calvary. The author of Hebrews maintains that the blood atonement of Christ fulfills and

transcends the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament in that this one is wholly efficacious to absolve man from sin and is done once for all times.

Some of which reflect and others obscure biblical themes, through the ages various theories of the atonement have developed. No theory in and of itself exhausts the truth in the mystery of the atonement, but some theories are much closer to this truth than others.

In the classic view the atoning work on the cross is seen in organic relationship to the incarnation. The incarnation itself signifies the beginning of reconciliation. God take the initiative and carries through. God himself performs the sacrifice in the person of his Son. God is both the reconciled and the reconciler.

Still another approach to the atonement is the mystical theory, which was very much present among many of the early church fathers, and it continues to exert great influence particularly in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox communions.

In the moral influence theory the purpose of Christ's suffering was to subdue the alienation of man by an exhibition of self-sacrificing love. Like the mystical theory it is primarily subjective, since reconciliation is conceived of as a change of attitude that God effects in man, not a change of attitude toward man on the part of God.

We must not lose sight of the truth that both the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ played a role in the atoning sacrifice for sin on Calvary. His manhood was necessary to satisfy the legal requirements of that sacrifice. The efficacy of that sacrifice lies in the fact that it was initiated and carried through by deity.

A full theory of the atonement will include its triumphal, satisfactionist, and regenerative aspect. Any theory that neglects or obscures any one of these elements does not do justice to the breadth of the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

We should see the atonement as a triumph over the powers of darkness, and this note is definitely underscored in the so-called classic view. Christ is not simply the suffering servant but the reigning king, and his reign is already begun on the cross, but he rules through suffering love, not worldly might. His reign is realized through his passion and crucifixion, but is consummated in his resurrection.

A full theory of the atonement must also include the ideas of satisfaction, expiation, and propitiation. God's love has brought about our redemption, but the redemption is from the wrath of God against sin. God's holiness must be placated, his righteous law must be satisfied, before man can be released from the condemnation which invariably follows from sin.

Atonement means more than mere forgiveness. It is an act of God to satisfy his holiness before it is a declaration of forgiveness to sinful man. In the person of Jesus God takes upon himself our sin and guilt so that we may be released from the penalty of sin.

It can be said that Christ made satisfaction for us in a twofold way. By his life of perfect obedience he fulfilled the law for us. By his death on the cross he satisfied the law for us. The cross of Christ is "the actual execution in strict rigour of justice of the unrelaxed penalty of the law.,," This means that Christ suffered not just like a sinner but as a sinner.

We must repudiate that version of the satisfactionist theory which sees the atoning sacrifice as made exclusively or primarily by Jesus Christ as man and as intending to appease the wrath of a vengeful God who otherwise would not or could not love sinful mankind.

Another facet of soteriology that has given rise to much discussion is the exact relationship between the objective and subjective dimension of the atonement.

It must be said that the atonement does have an objective basis in the life and death of Jesus Christ. Something happened for our belief or response. Reconciliation and redemption are an accomplished fact, and objective reality that is not affected by the subjective attitude of man .

The atonement of Christ cannot be recreated or duplicated in the mass or in religious experience.

The doctrine of the substitutionary atonement signalizes that we are saved through and by Christ alone. Yet we must have in mind not only Christ on the cross but also Christ in our hearts. He saves us not only by dying for us but also by being reborn within us by his Spirit. We need to do justice to both the forensic and mystical dimensions of the work of Christ if we are to have a comprehensive theory of the atonement.

A controversy that has raged in evangelical Protestantism and that continues in conservative circles is whether the atonement of Christ is particular or universal.

In general it can be said that Reformed Christianity has emphasized the particularity of the atonement while Pietism and revivalism, including some revival movements within the Reformed churches, have placed the emphasis on universal atonement.

Needless to say there is truth on both sides of this controversy, but in our opinion those who emphasize the universal atonement of Christ are more faithful to the witness of Scripture, since we are told that God loved the whole world and that Christ gave his life as a ransom for all.

His atoning sacrifice is applicable to all and even reckoned to all in principle, but its benefits are realized only in some. Though Christ died for all only those who have been engrafted into his body in faith can be said to have died in and with him in the full sense.

In his view one cannot posit a final universal restoration as a rational conclusion of faith, since this is not explicitly asserted in the Bible. Yet one can be permitted to harbor the joyous expectation that non-Christians too will be moved to acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and King, and expectation borne of the realization that God's grace is more powerful than man's sin.

Another lingering controversy in the church concerns the obligation of the Christian in the light of Christ's all-sufficient atonement. The question is often asked whether we do not have to do something for our salvation, whether we do not suffer too. Here we must reply that the

atonement work of Christ on the cross is completed and needs no supplementation or fulfillment by man. Christ suffered the condemnation of sin in our place, and this means not only the eternal consequences of sin but also its temporal consequences. It is incumbent on us to acknowledge and receive the gift of Christ's salvation, but we no longer have to work out our debts, since these have been paid by Christ.

The Christian is no longer under the iron law of retribution, but he is now under the law of Christ (1Cor. 9:21). This means that he is granted the permission and privilege of following Christ amid suffering and death, but he is no longer obligated to make reparations for his sins because this has been taken care of by Christ. While Christ bore our guilt which is heavy, it is laid upon us to bear his yoke which is light (Matt. 11:29, 30).

The Christian is impelled to do good works out of gratefulness for what Jesus Christ has done on his behalf. He is inwardly motivated to give glory to God by upholding Jesus Christ in his words and actions. He is obliged to take up his cross and follow Jesus Christ in costly discipleship in order to demonstrate his love and gratefulness for the supreme sacrifice of his Savior.

With a few exceptions in modern theology, the traditional meaning of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross has been drastically altered. In some cases to be sure the misunderstanding is only slight, but once the door is opened to cultural or philosophical intrusions into biblical faith, grave consequences usually follow.

It is customary in modern theology to deprecate the concept of propitiation on the grounds that God's holiness does not need to be propitiated but only revealed and that consequently the sacrifice of Christ is the mediation of God's forgiveness to the world and not its condition. It is commonly said that only man needs to be reconciled to God but that God, being pure love, is already reconciled to his creation.

We maintain that reconciliation involves a change not only in man but also in God-in both his feeling toward man and his treatment of man. Both God's attitude toward us and his practical relation to us had to be changed for him to treat us as sons and daughters and not as transgressors. Yet this reconciliation took place in eternity before it took place on the cross of Calvary. This is why we can affirm that God loved the whole world even prior to the incarnation, and why the incarnation and the atonement as well must be seen as a movement of divine love toward man.

God love us before the foundation of the world, but he could not establish a fellowship of love and reconciliation with fallen humankind until the incarnation and vicarious atonement of his Son. In Jesus Christ his love and wrath are both revealed, his holiness is satisfied, and his grace is demonstrated. The cross signifies the incursion of triumphant divine love and grace into human history but for the purpose of reconciling fallen man to Eternity.

VIII. SALVATION BY GRACE

Donald G. Bloesch

Salvation cannot be earned or merited by our good behavior, the Scriptures are very emphatic that it is a free gift of God, . The reason is that our good works are not good enough to satisfy the stringent requirements of God's law. If man is to be saved he must be pardoned on the basis of the perfect righteousness of the Son of God who condescended to stand in man's place.

Whether the grace of God is particular or universal in its intention and outreach is a question already broached in the preceding chapter. God's mercy encompasses all mankind (Rom. 11:32), though whether his mercy is effectual in the lives of people cannot be separated from their response of faith.

We must pay heed to the biblical witness that grace is revealed definitively and fully in Jesus Christ. In the words of the Fourth Gospel "The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). The New Testament especially makes it clear that grace comes to man while he is yet in his sins (Rom. 5:6-8). Grace also inwardly renews and transforms, but this renewal is based on the prior remission of sins accomplished through the death of Jesus Christ. Even the sanctifying work of the Spirit is enacted in those who do not merit or deserve this.

The relation between grace and man's natural free will has been a subject of continual controversy in the church from the very beginning. The early church fathers for the most part

adhered to a synergistic orientation in which the role and activity of man were deemed highly significant in the process of salvation.

In our criticisms of modern Catholicism we must not lose sight of the fact that post-Reformation Protestantism has also lapsed time and again into a kind of semi-Pelagianism. The early Pietists and Puritans for the most part remained true to the Reformation doctrine of salvation by grace alone, but in their emphasis on the need to prepare the heart to receive the gift of salvation they created a climate in which the focal point attention shifted from God's gracious initiative to the inner conflicts of man's soul.

In our historical analysis of the controversy over grace and free will we did not intend to suggest that the truth lies exclusively on one side. Synergism is of course a real danger, but we must also recognize the complementary danger of monergism in which God is portrayed as the sole actor in our salvation.

What is necessary to understand is that the act of salvation is a paradox or mystery which defies and eludes rational comprehension. The lapses into synergism and monergism can be accounted for by the ever-recurring attempts to resolve the paradox of salvation into a rationally understandable formula.

The paradox of salvation might be expressed in this way: only the person who is transformed by divine grace can make a positive response to God's gracious invitation, but only the one who does make such a response is indeed transformed by grace. God's grace does not cancel out creaturely freedom by places it on a wholly new foundation.

But it is a poignant reminder that we must walk in the light as well as believe in the light lest the darkness overtake us (John 12:35). It bids us consider that grace that does not become the ruling factor in our first (2 Pet. 2:20-22). We are summoned not only to accept the cross upon us for the realization of our vocation; if we reject or ignore this divine command our

vocation will be aborted, and our salvation will thereby be emptied of meaning (cf. 2 Pet. 1:9, 10).

An evangelical catholic theology speaks not only of the gift of grace but also of the means of grace. God does not work directly or immediately upon the soul but through certain external channels including the Gospel, the Bible, and the sacraments. It is these means of grace that comprise the church.

It is our view that there are certain designated means of grace by which God encounters us and also infuses his energy into us. This energy is not an impersonal force but the Spirit of power. The Holy Spirit is not tied to these means of grace, but we are so bound to them, since they were commanded by Jesus Christ. God ordinarily works through the means of grace, but in extraordinary circumstances he may well pour out his Spirit upon people apart from the external means of grace, though no one will come to a saving faith in Christ apart from a knowledge of the Gospel.

We affirm that while the Word and sacraments are objective means of grace, there are also subjective means-prayer and the Christian life. These subjective means were deemphasized by Roman Catholicism and the Reformation. Roman Catholics stressed that the Christian life is a means of accumulating and retaining grace rather than bringing grace to our neighbor. For the Reformers the Christian life is more a fruit of grace than a means of grace.

In our view the Christian life can also be an objective means of grace if it is correlated with a knowledge of the Word of God. It cannot stand by itself, but neither can the preaching of the Word stand by itself. The preaching of the Word apart from love becomes a "clanging cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1). Life and Word go together. We must not only hear the Word from someone whose life testifies to the Word, but also preach the Word as well as follow the Word.

The classical debate on the relation of grace and nature has been revived with the advent of philosophies and theologies of a vitalistic and naturalistic bent. In this perspective grace is a spiritual dimension or creative force within nature. Grace does not build on nature but transfigures it from within so that man is not so much elevated above the world as united with the ground and depth of the world.

We come to the question of the meaning of justification. Justification is seen in a wider perspective today than in the period of the reformation, and much of this is to the good. It has reminded us that justification pertains not only to man's moral life but also to his intellectual life. Our theologies need to be justified just as much as our inner being.

It is also coming more and more to be seen that justification by grace alone excludes every form of self-justification. Evangelicals often appeal to the experience of justification as the guarantee of their salvation.

Man is not only an object of grace but a participant in grace, and this entails an experience of salvation and heartfelt repentance for sin. At the same time we must insist that man is a participant in grace only on the basis of grace. We are justified not by grace plus experience or by grace plus obedience but by grace alone.

IX. FAITH ALONE
Donald G. Bloesch

Faith is the means by which we receive and appropriate the salvation purchased for us by Jesus Christ on the cross. Paul declares that we receive the Spirit not "by works of the law" but "by hearing with faith" (Gal 3:2). Faith moreover is not an achievement of man but a gift of God. It is an inner awakening given to man by the Holy Spirit by which he is moved to give of himself in trust and surrender to Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8-9 says "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God-not because of works, lest any man should boast."

Faith might be defined as a radical commitment of the whole man to the living Christ, a commitment that entails knowledge, trust, and obedience. Faith is a divine work within us whereby the will is liberated and the mind illumined so that we are now enabled and moved to believe and obey Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Faith is not mere intellectual assent but an inward spiritual change in man. It is not simply a new comprehension but a new creation. It entails knowledge of the Gospel as well as commitment to the Gospel.

Faith in its essence is receiving, but it becomes giving in practice, the giving or surrender of oneself to God. Faith is both receiving and giving, the receiving from God of his mercy and the giving of oneself in dedication to God. Faith is an empty vessel as far as man's justification is concerned, but it is creative endeavor in regard to the fulfillment of man's vocation.

Sight is not faith, and hearing is not faith, neither is feeling faith; but believing when we can neither see, hear, nor feel is faith; and everywhere the Bible tells us our salvation is to be by faith. Therefore, we must believe before we feel, and often against our feelings, if we would honor God by our faith.

We need to remind ourselves that the object of faith is not a doctrinal formula but a living Person, Jesus Christ. Yet although faith is much more than doctrinal rectitude, it certainly entails adherence to doctrine. In our trust and commitment to Jesus Christ we must acknowledge him as the Savior from sin as well as the Lord of all creation. In following Christ we must also commit ourselves to the Gospel concerning Christ. We do not really know him until we understand his mission. We do not really believe in him unless we also believe what he tells us in the Scriptures. Yet our beliefs about him must not be confused with our personal fellowship and communion with him, which is deeper than belief though inseparable from it. This personal relationship with Christ definitely involves a belief in his deity and saving work, but it is possible to have the right belief without a living faith.

The theme of justification by faith alone can be found throughout the Bible, but it is especially evident in the writings of Paul. Paul drew a sharp contrast between the righteousness of works and the righteousness of faith (Rom. 3:21, 22). By the "works of the law," he declared, "shall no one be justified" Gal. 2:16). If "justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose" (Gal. 22:21). The law cannot justify because no one can keep the law perfectly, since the infection of sin has spread throughout the human race. Therefore we can be saved only through God's grace and mercy which are apprehended and received by faith alone, not by works, lest any man should boast.

Justification has logical priority over sanctification but not chronological priority. Neither movement of God's grace is superior or inferior to the other. Both aim for the glory of

God and the salvation of man. Just as we are justified by faith so we do not sanctify ourselves. Rather our sanctification consists in our participation in the sanctification of Jesus Christ.

One of the perennial conflicts between Roman Catholic and Reformed theology concerns the subject of certainty in faith. While the Reformers held that man can and must be certain of his salvation, the Catholic position has been that one cannot be absolutely sure that he is saved.

Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that a man could stake his life on it a thousand times. The certainty of faith lies not in itself but in its object, the living Christ. Our faith is certain because it carries us out of ourselves, that we should not lean to our own strength, our own conscience, our own feeling, our own person, and our own works.

The Protestant orthodoxy the certainty of faith came to be understood primarily as a rational certainty, one that has special reference to the trustworthiness of the biblical record. Faith itself came to be seen as intellectual assent, though the other elements were by no means denied. In place of the immediacy of the Spirit in our hearts witnessing that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16), the Spirit now witnesses to the authenticity of the Bible as a document of revelation.

In our own constructive statement we seek to learn from the great teachers of the past but especially from the inspired prophets and apostles of the Scriptures. In Hebrews 11:1 faith is defined as "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Faith is an assurance that concerns not only present salvation but final salvation, since the latter is the object of our hope. It is also a conviction that refers to a reality that transcends the senses of man and is, therefore, inaccessible to empirical verification.

Christian existence in the state of pilgrimage is and remains paradoxical: it remains balanced on that sharp point at which absolute certainty of God and his mercy meets persistent uncertainty about ourselves and our own state. No rational insight into God's grace-giving

action, no psychological experience of his comfort, no judgment of conscience based on hood conduct or a right use of the sacraments, none of these can give us absolute certainty of our own state of grace. Our certainty of confidence, based on faith, comes to us only because and in so far as we look to God and to his work. If at this point we doubt his grace and his forgiveness of sin, then we have neither faith nor hope in him.

On the modern scene, one of the pitfalls, is intellectualism whereby faith is defined primarily in terms of intellectual assent, and the object of faith is seen less as a Person than as a creedal formula. Those who define revelation as exclusively propositional nearly always depict faith as predominantly a rational act.

Since Christianity is a way of life and not intellectual assent to a rational message, theology consequently cannot be ruled or governed by faith, Theology must not impose traditional formulations upon the ever-new process of creative transformation. Therefore in order to understand our faith and the world about us we do not appeal to any rational criterion in faith itself. but to the empirical method. God is depicted as the source of human good, the creator and preserver of values, but not as the One who has revealed his will and purpose to the world.

We maintain that faith is indeed a rational as well as a suprarational act. The object of faith is not only a living Person, Jesus Christ, but he message concerning him, which is disclosed in the Scriptures. Faith entails not only risk and venture but also knowledge-knowledge of the mystery of the plan of salvation. It is a knowledge that transcends the senses, to be sure, but it is still knowledge. For a correct understanding of faith we must appeal not to the truth-claims of secular thought but to the truth-claims of faith itself. Faith can only be understood in the light of its object-the Word of God revealed in the Bible.

We must warn against the current , popular view that salvation is possible without explicit faith in Jesus Christ. Of all the misconceptions listed this is by far the most widespread and pernicious, for it undermines the New Testament message that there is salvation only in a living communion with Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). Salvation itself includes all people, and therefore we may regard the whole human race s belonging to the kingdom of Christ and the body of Christ.

We recognize the heresy that many of the new theologians are trying to guard against, namely, that those who have never had the opportunity of hearing the message of salvation are nonetheless condemned to hell. It is more proper to hold that such persons are spiritually lost and headed for perdition unless they come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.
