

Either/Or Dialogues

Elihu Carranza, PhD



An Inky Publication

To Jean Shiota, Faculty Lab Coordinator, Center for Faculty Development, San Jose State University, for designing the cover of this book and her willingness to make available her many talents and skills in a most generous and gracious manner.

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ISBN-10:

ISBN-13:9798366567411

Dedication

To Him who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Acknowledgments | i |
| Today Lord | iii |
| Preface | 1 |
| Part 1: God Creator | 7 |
| Either God's Will or Self-Will | 9 |
| Either God's Word or Satan's Deceit..... | 19 |
| Either God or Chance..... | 27 |
| Part 2: Man Creature | 37 |
| Either Obedience or Disobedience..... | 39 |
| Either Narrow Way or Broad Way..... | 49 |
| Either Vessels of Mercy or Vessels of Wrath | 57 |
| Either Faith or Works..... | 67 |
| Part 3: God-Man..... | 75 |
| Either Jesus Christ or Self..... | 77 |
| Either Deny Self or Affirm Self..... | 87 |
| Either Sons of God or Devil's Sons..... | 95 |
| Epilogue..... | 103 |
| Glossary | 115 |
| Subject Index..... | 123 |
| Scripture Index..... | 127 |
| Old Testament | 127 |

Elihu Carranza

| | |
|--|-----|
| New Testament..... | 129 |
| Appendix A: What is the Gospel? | 135 |
| Appendix B: What is Scripturalism? | 149 |
| Appendix C: Epistemology and Sanctification..... | 157 |
| Author Books | 163 |
| About the Author | 165 |

Acknowledgments

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. (Luke 11:2)

And to Sharon Maureen Carranza for editing this work, providing valuable suggestions, adding clear language, and deleting errors to correct and clarify understanding of the content, purpose, and goal of these dialogues.

Today Lord

*Do what you will Lord, thy will be done,
You are the Potter, I am the clay.
Mold me true vessel of flesh and bone,
Formed by Christ's power, true to His Way.*

*Do what you love Lord, thy will be done,
You are the Potter, I am your clay.
Let no one else Lord, all on Your Own,
Your Potter's Hand Lord, form me I pray.*

*Do what you plan Lord, Maker Divine,
You are the Potter, I but the clay.
In pain and suffering, make me sublime,
As Your dear Son indwells me today.*

*Do what you will Lord, this day in me,
You are the Potter, working the clay.
Humbly I seek your image to see,
Fashion within me, Jesus Your Way.*

Preface

The following dialogues launch an examination of the binary biblical reality of either/or. The dialogues reflect on certain truths regarding God, creation, and creatures. These are the thoughts and thinking of two retired professors, expressed in the form of dialogues between them. The dialogists' names are Professor Tweedy Flynn (TF) and Professor Buck Calhoun (BC).

Throughout these dialogues it is well to keep in mind that, *As a man thinks, so is he*, i.e., thinking finds expression in life's realities at every level. (Proverbs 23:7) One's thinking is framed by and operates within the structure of a worldview. A worldview, as discussed elsewhere,¹ is a set of assumptions or presuppositions that function as axioms about God and all reality. These assumptions are givens; they are indemonstrable. They control all thought and determine all perception and behavior. Every rational creature develops and possesses a worldview whether acknowledged or not. Consciously or subliminally, man's thinking finds its outworking in behavior, choices, intentions, preferences, values, meaning, and a host of other human expressions which comprise the image and likeness of God known as "man."

Elihu Carranza

These dialogues are a product of the author's worldview. The worldview is Christianity or Scripturalism (*Sola Scriptura*). In brief, Scripturalism is a comprehensive view of things.

*"... [I]t takes the world, both material and spiritual, to be an ordered system. ... Instead of a series of disconnected propositions, truth will be a rational system, a logically ordered series, somewhat like geometry with its axioms and theorems, its implications and presuppositions. And each part will derive its significance from the whole."*²

In *Pathway to Apostasy?* the author offers what follows on Scripturalism:

*"Scripturalism can be thought of as the system of truths deduced from Scriptures alone. In other words, its axiom is The Bible is the Word of God from which one deduces Scripturalism, the biblical worldview or frame of reference."*³

Scripture is without error, true in all it proclaims, affirms, teaches, and implies. The Bible is the basis for the worldview known as Scripturalism. John Robbins defined this worldview:

*"Scripturalism is the logically consistent application of Christian – that is, Scriptural – ideas to all fields of thought. Sola Scriptura means an uncompromising devotion to Scripture alone. All our thoughts – there are no exceptions – are to be brought into conformity with Scripture, for all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are contained in Scripture."*⁴

The Scripture provides a library of either/or options with clear instructions to choose the biblical disjunct for it is truth itself. For example, one disjunction joins the realities of good and evil with the following advice:

"Romans 12:21. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Preface

Note. In this and other passages, good and evil are not the subjects for argument to prove their realities but are assumed. Obviously, definitions may be found throughout Scripture for those who seek them.

Similarly, no argument for the reliability or authenticity of Scripture is offered. The truths of Scripture are axioms, true always and forever since it is the God of Truth who speaks in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, each dialogue addresses not merely a disjunction but a complete disjunction. A complete disjunction has this property: to deny one alternate is to accept the other no matter which disjunct is denied. If the disjunction is symbolized as $(p \vee q)$, i.e., 'either p or q,' where the letters are variables for two alternates, then to deny one, say '*not-p*,' logically implies the alternate, '*q*.' To reject one is to accept the alternate. No third way or option. Some dichotomies are incomplete disjunctions, disjunctions that may masquerade as complete. Thus, for example: 'Either he is a democrat or a republican' is an incomplete disjunction, for the individual may be neither democrat nor republican, but perhaps libertarian in party affiliation, or independent. If a disjunction is offered as a complete disjunction when in fact it is obviously not one, then it merits the label of a 'false dichotomy.'

In this project, only complete disjunctions are assumed as subjects for exploration.

The Scriptures always pose disjunctions of doctrines as complete, closed to any third option or alternate leaving no wiggle room to avoid confrontation with revealed truth. Nevertheless, sinful, depraved, willful minds will and do seek to avoid the absolutes of God as revealed in Scripture for they

are not the frames of thought minds in mutiny will submit to. This is what "suppressing the truth" comes to, as the Apostle Paul describes the depraved condition of reprobate minds who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

"Romans 1:18. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; 19. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them."

The logic of disjunctive syllogisms (arguments) holds that deductive arguments are either valid or invalid. If not valid, then invalid; if not invalid, then valid. Furthermore, if an argument is valid, that argument is either sound or unsound; sound, if all the premises are true, unsound if one or all the premises are false.

The form of a disjunctive syllogism is as follows.

Premise 1. Either *s* or *p*.

Premise 2. Not-*s*.

Conclusion 3. Therefore, *p*. [where the letters are propositional variables as treated in symbolic or propositional logic.]

To repeat. In this project, the exclusive sense of 'or' is assumed, not the inclusive. The latter, it should be recalled, allows for the logical possibility of more than two options. The inclusive sense of 'or' may be seen in the proposition, "Either he is a politician or he is a lawyer." Obviously, the person in question may be both.

The biblical disjunctions herein are presented and discussed as complete disjunctions, closed to a third choice or one that combines elements of two alternates, or that allows one to

Preface

switch from one to the other based on a self-referenced, mutable epistemology (depending on what choice satisfies the individual on any given day or occasion.) Each either/or carries the weight and warrant of the Word of God, the God of Truth.

One popular much debated disjunction assumed correctly to be a complete one is:

Premise 1. Either God exists or God does not exist.

Premise 2. It is not the case that, "God exists." (as Scripture declares)

Conclusion 3. Therefore, God does not exist.

The believer rejects the second premise as false, for Scripture declares it to be false. (Psalm 14:1; 53:1) Therefore, although the argument is valid, this disjunctive syllogism is unsound having a false premise as well as a false conclusion.

Each of the following dialogues present a disjunctive syllogism that displays in clear language the alternates within biblical discourse.

The reader is urged to consider within each examination two ultimate unavoidable destinies: heaven or hell.

'Seek and ye shall find.' (Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9)

Notes:

1. Carranza, Elihu. *Essays on Worldview Epistemology*. Napa, CA: Inky Publications, 2021, pp. 1-10.

Elihu Carranza

2. Clark, Gordon H. *A Christian View of Men and Things: An Introduction to Philosophy*. Unicoi, TN: The Trinity Foundation, 1991, p. 24.
3. Carranza, Elihu. Appendix A: Scripturalism, in *Pathway to Apostasy?* Napa, CA: Inky Publications, 2021, pp. 98-99.
4. Robbins, John W. "An Introduction to Gordon H. Clark." *The Trinity Review*, No. 101, July/August, 1993, p. 2.

Scriptures:

Old Testament: Psalm 14:1; 53:1.

New Testament: Matthew 7:7 / Luke 11:9 / Romans 1:18-19; 12:21.

Part 1: God Creator

Genesis 1:1. In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.

Psalm 113:5. Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high?

1 Corinthians 8:6. But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

1

Either God's Will or Self-Will

"Luke 11: 2. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven so in earth. 3. Give us day by day our daily bread. 4. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil."

TF: Verse 2 in answer to one of Jesus' disciple's plea to Him, "teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples," speaks of the Will of God to be manifest on earth as in heaven.

BC: Does this mean that God's Will is frustrated in some way in space-time? God is Sovereign. His Will cannot be defeated, or in any way frustrated, appearances to the contrary. God's Will is rejected by His creatures including Satan and his fallen angels and demons, but rejection does not spell out as defeat.

TF: We on earth face a choice concerning daily life: either God's Will or the creature's. The creature has denied God's Will as the epistemological axiom for human existence just as Satan chose before the creation of Adam and Eve. Predating Adam, Satan, with whom sin originated, fell.

BC: The transformative rejection of the Will of God as the single ruling epistemological principle to, instead, a self-centered

Elihu Carranza

epistemology for all thought and life is one way to think about the fall of man and the fall of Satan. Arthur Pink provides some insights concerning Satan's fall.

TF: Yes, in his "Satan and His Gospel" Pink describes Satan's fall basing his analysis on passages from both the Old and the New Testaments. Satan was created a cherub, endowed with extraordinarily powerful gifts and a beauty that rivaled the loveliest creature imaginable. Not only was he the most powerful and most beautiful, but Satan as Lucifer was appointed to function as priest, prophet, and king over a pre-Adamic creation of angels.

BC: Yes, until what? According to Scripture until iniquity was found in him. What did Satan's iniquity consist of, according to Pink's studies?

TF: Another will (his own) to rule and guide existence; not God's Will. Satan desired independence from God and His Will. He rejected dependence upon God for anything. He sought to be like God -- independent and thus sovereign over his being (and all under his dominion). He sought to be the origin for meaning and significance. In seeking to be like God, he sought to subject the will of his very Creator to his own -- to himself.

BC: In his beauty, power, and pride, he sought to establish his will as equal to if not above his creator God Almighty.

TF: Astounding, is it not? A creature seeks to establish his authority and dominion over the very being who created both him and his assigned dominion. One wonders how or what thought or series of events may have brought to pass this determination that his own rule and reference for all thought and existence were to be preferred and prevail?

1 God's Will or Self Will

BC: Pink suggests that the motivating factor may have been envy, it springing from pride in his powers and beauty. His account is worth citing:

*"The immediate cause of his fall is clearly revealed to us. ... 'Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou has corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness.' ... instead of 'the anointed cherub' finding his chief delight in the contemplation of the Divine excellencies, he became occupied with his own beauty and, as Pro. 16:18 declares, 'Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall,' so these lofty thoughts which Satan had of himself brought about his ruin."*¹

TF: Pride gave voice. "I will ascend to heaven; I will set my throne above the stars of God, I will be like God." The "I will ..." assertions were expressions of a mind fallen into the captivity of a self-centered decision to reject dependence on God and assert himself as independent and sovereign.

BC: Pink adds that

*"His sin, therefore, consisted in the disowning of the supremacy of his Maker. He determined to be equal with the Most High. He was not satisfied with a subordinate place, but aspired to equality with the Almighty."*²

TF: There remains this: Why? What is the history of this state of affairs? Pink thinks, based on scriptures in Psalm 89 and Revelation 13 that Satan was made aware, along with the inhabitants of heaven, that God's yet to be established kingdom on earth would be ruled by another agent, not Lucifer. God spoke in Psalm 89 of establishing "my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth."

"Was God revealing to the inhabitants of heaven, before our world was formed, that it was His purpose to place our earth

Elihu Carranza

*under the dominion of man – the Man, Christ Jesus, and that this Man should be made His 'firstborn' – a title which speaks not merely of priority, but of a position of chief honor, dignity, and privilege."*³

BC: Satan was to be bypassed as the supreme ruler of the kingdom of God. Jesus, the Son of God, would come forth from the seed of Eve. Then through generations of God's people, be born of a virgin as the God-Man, and subsequently be offered as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

TF: Yes, that is a plausible scenario of the state of affairs. Seething in pride, he may have resented God's purpose, plans, authority, and power – all of which led to envy and eventually to murder, even as, lest we forget, Cain resented God's approval of Abel's sacrifice and disapproval of his own offering of the works of his hands.

BC. Cain could not murder God, but he could kill his fellow-man, his brother no less, who had been accepted of God. The blood of Abel brought Cain to the broad gate of condemnation to hell. It is no accident that Satan displayed in this manner his own plan (and concerted attempts) to murder the Son of God upon His birth, and throughout his life and brief ministry.

TF: Power, beauty, pride leading to resentment gave birth to envy which fueled Satan's desire for independence, to rise above all creation to the heights of God, his creator, and to establish himself as the ultimate reference for all thought and life.

BC: The genesis of a self-centered way of thinking and living, known only too well by ourselves, can be traced to this cherub, the anointed cherub, Lucifer, who ruled and ministered as

1 God's Will or Self Will

priest, prophet, and king of that pre-Adamic world of angels according to some thinkers.⁴

TF: Some trace creation back to the angelic reign of Lucifer and the angels who followed him into rebellion that caused the "without form and void" of Genesis 1.

BC: If so, then judgment was inevitable as some believe and argue. Lucifer became Satan.

TF: There are at least two senses of the 'origin' in relation to sin. One sense addresses the question 'How did sin begin? What were the circumstances or events that nested the beginning of sin? Another sense of 'origin' searches for the thinking or thoughts that fostered the decision to discard dependence on God and seek to be independent of God's Will.

BC: Yes. The mind-boggling question is how could an angelic creature like Lucifer, fashioned and framed most beautiful, most wise, and most powerful, in a word, perfect sin against his Creator. Was there, after all, some 'imperfection' that allowed for this outcome? If so, what was it? Was it the condition of being contingent? Was Satan a 'free-will' creation whereby God would not know the result until Satan himself made his choice(s) known?

TF: The question of the origin of sin in Satan is answered in Scripture. The answer is not one that the natural mind welcomes since that mind is enmity against God and His Word. Nevertheless, the Scripture is plain. The most perfect of all creatures created by the Triune God was created able to sin and able not to sin.

BC: God sets the parameters, knowing every outcome: He is omniscient. Both His Word and history itself reveal that in Satan and Adam, originally created conditionally perfect, i.e., able

Elihu Carranza

to sin and able not to sin, can or will remain sinless, especially when in possession of beauty, power, and authority. The creature will fail. Only one established and confirmed as *non-possesse peccare* will resist the temptation to will his independence from God, who alone is sinless, independent, and sovereign.

TF: It is a truth revealed in Scripture and demonstrated in history that Christ Jesus, the God-Man, is, was, and ever shall be the only truly perfect man -- sinless, undefiled, spotless, the perfect Lamb of God who conquered sin and death.

BC: Jesus could not sin. He was sinless because He is God, the Son of God His Father, who is also sinless and perfect.

TF: Once confirmed in the *non-possesse peccare* state, just as the holy angels, believers will realize and enjoy holiness and perfection on the day of the resurrection of their glorified bodies, not able to sin forever.

BC: A return to the origins of One Will, but this time sealed according to the promise of Jesus Christ to send the Holy Spirit of God who accomplishes in our feeble selves a progressive sanctification -- transforming the renewed image of God in the believer to the image of sinless, perfect God-Man, Jesus Christ.

TF: He who has begun a good work in the believer will complete it in the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:6) God never fails. His plan of redemption was not an afterthought. Nor is He subject to any external contingency, free will or otherwise. God's plan of redemption includes all that came to pass as to Satan, fallen angels and Adam. His plan reveals that every attempt by the creature to discard the One Free Will of God as the origin, source, and means for existence is doomed to failure. What God requires and commands, He Himself alone was able to provide.

1 God's Will or Self Will

BC: God provided the one, His only begotten Son, who would always do God's Will in active and passive obedience in thought and in life.

TF: Yes, and God having Himself provided what was the absolute requirement to establish His Will as the only Will to guide and govern all creation has set out to demonstrate this fact in history, and declared it aforehand in Scripture for all to read, ponder, and study. God is the only most wise, omniscient, and omnipotent Being. Nothing takes Him by surprise; nothing will prevent or defeat His decrees; no one can advise Him how to accomplish all that He has purposed. In Him we live, and move and have our being. (Acts 17:28)

BC: As He Himself declared; "I am the alpha and the omega; I am the first and the last; I am the Potter, the creature is the clay." Job discovered this fact, the effect being for him to shut his mouth and cease from all attempts to justify himself before the most holy God. (Job 40; Romans 9:21; Revelation 22:13)

TF: Either God's Holy Will or self-will.

BC: Moreover, the creature does not determine outcomes. God does. He creates the creature who prays, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' We cannot take credit for establishing God's Will as our own. Our will, of its own accord, will always deny God's Will, as did Satan. If Lucifer, who was created most perfect in knowledge and wisdom failed, so must any lesser being.

TF: The son of God, as the man Christ Jesus was formed a bit lower than the angels, taking on our human nature to be born as the God-Man. He was tempted as a creature by one He had created who sought His worship to himself in a *quid pro quo*

Elihu Carranza

exchange of the world's kingdoms as a gift for bowing to Satan's will, his desire to be worshipped.

BC: What pride to seek glory and honor from the one who is the owner and possessor of all creation and all that is in it.

TF: The man Christ Jesus, God Himself, fulfilled the Will of the Father perfectly. He was made a bit lower than the angels for the suffering of death and now having accomplished a perfect atonement, God has crowned Him with glory and honor. (Hebrews 2:9)

BC: We know that in heaven God's Will rules all thought and life and that even in hell, God's Will is done.

TF: It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God.

"Hebrews 12:28. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: 29. For our God is a consuming fire."

Notes:

1. Pink, Arthur W. "Satan and His Gospel." Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library, pp. 14-16.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Custance, Arthur C. "When the Earth was Divided," download at <https://custance.org/product/pdf-when-the-earth-was-divided-doorway-paper-56>. Also, Custance, Arthur C. Without Form and Void. Ontario, Canada: Doorway Papers, 1970.

1 God's Will or Self Will

Scriptures:

Old Testament: Job 40.

New Testament: Luke 11:2 / Acts 17:28 / Romans 9:21 / Philippians 1:6 / Hebrews 2:9; 12:29 / Revelation 22:13.

2

Either God's Word or Satan's Deceit

"Genesis 3:1. Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? 2. And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: 3. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. 4. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: 5. For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

TF: In these verses, we have the basis for a complete biblical disjunction: either God's words or Satan's words declare truth. Either God utters absolutely true propositions, or Satan's propositions, contradicting God's, are true. Either God is true and Satan false, or God is a liar and Satan speaks truth.

BC: There is no room in this disjunction for a compromise of any kind is there? No one can claim that this either/or is unclear or ambiguous, making an excuse to justify in any way Satan's interpretation, and following Satan, Eve's choice for self-dependent thinking and sinful action.

Elihu Carranza

TF: It is clear that God's language, formulated as complete disjunctions, speak clear choices for His creatures. Such clarity allows the creature to think, analyze, and make choices in full knowledge of what God's Will actually is. He need not guess, or be bewildered.

BC: It makes sense for the ultimate offer of salvation is made by the omniscient, wise Creator. His communication with us is precise, and when He states alternatives they always invite the reader or listener to make a wise choice, one based on truth, not based on speculation, wishes, hope, or fantasies.

TF: Either *aye* or *nay* are inescapable responses for minds that think and analyze reality according to truth in all things that pertain to God, neighbor, and one's own, including the thinker himself.

BC: As a person thinks, so is that person is a truth to ponder. Indeed, if God's Will governs the mind, there is no need to question either means or outcome, even if results do not fit smoothly with expectations. Job declared to his foolish wife when she advised him to curse God and kill himself, "... shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:9-10)

TF. Evil did not come from God, but from and through Satan. Concerning Job, Satan was determined to oppose God's Word. His own word, he declared, is truth; God had been "misinformed" about Job. God had protected Job with hedges of wealth and well-being. Thus, no wonder Job acknowledged God. *Quid pro quo* was the word of Satan; 'skin for skin,' but touch a man's bone and flesh, he will curse God, according to Satan. (Job 2:4-5)

2 God's Word or Satan's Deceit

BC: Satan's theory of truth was the correspondence theory. He sought to prove that Job's faithfulness was the response of any one who, as long as blessings flourish will honor God's Word, but the moment the reality of suffering appears, so much for God and His Word.

TF: Yes, apparently Satan presumed that man, in this instance Job, thought as he did and would therefore choose to do as he had done. He was determined to establish, not only that Job was base, but that God was profoundly wrong. God's will, judgment, and omniscience were flawed in the extreme, and he would prove it, given the opportunity.

BC: Since He allowed Satan to all but wreck Job's life, was God seeking to prove Himself right in the face of Satan's challenge?

TF: No. God is not answerable to the creature for anything. In his great patience and great mercy, however, He would prove to Satan, once again, that he was in the wrong and that his word was not true, but false.

BC: But God is omniscient. He knew Satan would not accept correction, or back down, or admit that he was in the wrong, or any such thing that would abdicate his own volition as ultimate rather than God's. So there was a more Godly purpose involved, wasn't there?

TF: Of course, long before this time, God had already passed judgment on Satan. But remember, there was and there is a huge, unnumbered audience of angels to whom God chose to reveal His truth and power.

BC: Not to mention ourselves and all who may read these words of the book of Job. God in His love for His creatures and creation invites all to the disclosure of the thoughts and

Elihu Carranza

ways of Himself. God's words express revealed truth for all to embrace and live by.

TF: God is the God of truth. God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. He is not a creature that He should lie for it is impossible for God to lie. All that He has spoken and caused to be Scripture is truth. (1 John 1:5; Numbers 23:19)

BC: Did Satan learn anything at all from this experience? By all accounts, he possesses reason and the power to make inferences based on evidence. His language reveals that he can think, plan, and cause the evils of death, and sickness to bring about the suffering and death of others. Did his mind cease to function at the level of reason and logic?

TF. Satan lost his original standing before God. Before he fell, he was in a state of being able to sin and being able not to sin. Since his rebellion and fall, it is plain that Satan is now and forever not able not to sin. He is the father of lies, deceptions and evils. He stands as the opposite of light; he is a lover of darkness. He hates God and wills only to destroy Him, and all those whom He favors. Satan stands as forever cursed. Those who follow him will come to the same judgment of condemnation in the lake of fire forever. God cannot overlook sin for God is holy. (Exodus 34:7)

BC: The boulevard to hell then is paved with the fallen dispositions of angels and men who deliberately and without regret, much less repentance, have determined their wills, thought, and life independent from their Maker to be prime and ultimate. What a tragic state for the creature and hopeless but for God's plan of redemption.

2 God's Word or Satan's Deceit

TF: Yes, and recall that God's redemptive plan makes no provision for Satan, his angels, and demons. Moreover, many passages in Scripture indicate that the fallen spirits, demons, and Satan himself are well aware of their own ultimate condemnation in the lake of fire. They are able to read Scripture as well as any informed creature. Their fate is known to them even as their hatred of God's Word is manifested at every opportunity and occasion, either in space-time or in the firmament where they find their present status. Even in the face of a merited eternal torture, Satan and his own do not cease to defy God's Word.

BC: I recall as well that even many may hope in vain, if they have not been reborn from above. Jesus declared to that seeker of truth, Nicodemus that unless one is born again, he cannot enter or see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3-5)

TF: This attests to the fact that God's plan of redemption is the product of His Will; it does not depend on a person's will works, or cooperation. Salvation from beginning to end is His Will, and will be done as He has spoken. Nothing and no one, including Satan and his army, will prevail over the Word of Holy, Omnipotent God.

BC: God declared that he was the *alpha* and the *omega*, the beginning and the end. (Revelation 21:6; 22:13) The either/or is complete: either God's Word or Satan's. Not Satan's word, for he is a liar and deceiver, the serpent of the Garden of Eden, that place where he deceived Eve and caused the fall of Adam.

TF: Eve was faced with that first of the many biblical either/or alternatives -- alternatives with holy rewards and just sanctions. life or death. She listened to Satan's words, and then she chose them over and against the Word of God.

Elihu Carranza

BC: That first human denial of God's Word following Satan's lie and tasting the fruit of the forbidden tree has proven beyond all doubt that God's Word is truth. To obey His Word will bring to pass that yet to be realized state of eternal bliss with Jesus – *non-posse peccare* existence forever.

TF: Indeed. Have you ever wondered that there is no record of surprise or shock that the serpent in the garden was able to speak to Eve in her language and converse with her about God's Word? She communicated with a speaking, able to hear, and understand animal, the serpent, indwelt of course, by Satan. Was this a common feature at that stage of creation that man could speak to animals with mutual understanding and with a dominion that was governed by the voice and the speech of Adam?

BC: Right, I have thought about it, but we know little of the state of creation prior to the fall. Clearly the serpent spoke to Eve, and she responded. How to explain this extraordinary fact?

TF: God's Word. Adam and Eve in their unfallen state, a state of probation, enjoyed all of the gifts necessary to carry out God's Will in the governance of His creation, the world and all that was and is in it. God created Adam in His image and likeness for the later incarnation of the last Adam, Jesus and the unfolding of His plan of redemption. The speech between Eve and the serpent was not figurative or in any sense the stuff of myth or fairy tales; it was quite literally true. Satan spoke through the serpent and can still speak through animals and even human beings. Note what Jesus on one occasion said to Peter,

2 God's Word or Satan's Deceit

"Matthew 16:23. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

Satan's word is commonly spoken through the creature and is heard and believed by all of fallen humanity. Corruption and depravity, exhibited daily in the lives of fallen, sinful humanity is clear evidence that it is Satan's word that is heard and obeyed, not one of many mental disorders, extenuating circumstances, or self-serving excuses with which we seek to placate conscience.

BC: Since Satan is the father of lies, he is the father of liars and deceivers. He speaks to his children even as he spoke to Eve, "hath God said ...?"

TF: And with the hiss and charm of a compelling voice, mixing false words with true fragments as when he tempted Jesus to cast Himself down from a pinnacle of the temple.

"Luke 4:10. For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: 11. And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."

BC: What an astounding event. Satan tempting the God-Man, his Creator, to sin by citing Scripture. I never cease to wonder in amazement at the depth of pride and arrogance exhibited by Satan *contra* Christ during those forty days of solitude in the desert. He ate nothing for those forty days and nights. He hungered, then Satan tempted Him to create bread out of stones.

TF: Jesus words in response were the Word of God,

"Luke 4:4. It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."

Elihu Carranza

And in answer to the other temptations, the Word of God was likewise cited:

"Luke 4:8. ... Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Luke 4:12. And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

BC: God's Word abides forever. (Isaiah 40:8)

TF: And for any who believe the Word of God, Jesus prayed to His Father on our behalf:

"John 17:17. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

Scriptures:

Old Testament: Genesis 1:3; 3:1-5 / Exodus 34:7 / Isaiah 40:8 / Numbers 23:19 / Job 2:4-5; 9-10.

New Testament: Matthew 16:23 / Luke 4:4, 8, 10-12 / John 3:3-5; 17:17 / I John 1:5 / Revelation 21:6; 22:13.

3

Either God or Chance

"Isaiah 45:5. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: 6. That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else. 7. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things. ... 9. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioned it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? ... 12. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded."

TF: Isaiah's record leaves no doubt. God is the Sovereign Being who created and governs all creation. There is no other God. Man is the clay; God is the Potter. The clay has no power over the Potter not even to ask what the Potter is fashioning.

BC: Or to inquire as to His purposes or goals. God alone determines everything that is in anyway related to the creature and creation. Even the setting of planets, moons, stars, and galaxies in which are placed his millions of creatures, including angels and beasts, was spoken into existence solely by Him.

Elihu Carranza

The entire universe is the product of God's doing, who alone is Sovereign in all perfections and over all His creation.

TF: Evolution, according to some, is the cause of all that was, all that is, or all that will be. No need for a Creator. The universe sprang out of nothing "spontaneously" and has been evolving to the present state of affairs and into the future's eventual heat death when all life will have vanished and entropy rules.

BC: The disjunction may be stated: Either God is the Creator or evolution. Some would say it is both. One theologian claims that evolution, as an explanation, is possible if and only if guided by omnipotent God. However, naturalists will have nothing to do with an evolution that requires anyone or anything other than blind chance. Otherwise, their "natural selection" thesis loses its claim to sovereignty along with their theory of evolution.

TF: Naturalism's evolution does not allow for a compromise, assuming one were possible. It is either evolution or a similar natural explanation for the creation, one that does not appeal to the supernatural in any way. Naturalists are bold in their claim even to the denial of the God of Scripture and all its claims.

BC: The natural man of science holds evolution to be an axiom for which methods to test its veracity, establish it as a fact, and much less prove its claims are deemed unnecessary. The supernatural or spiritual dimension of existence is not a reality for scientific investigation for any number of reasons among which is: "There is no God!" (Psalm 14:1)

3 God or Chance

TF: Scripture declares the fool has said, "There is no God." For the natural mind, propositions as those recorded in Scripture of a sovereign, omniscient, omnipotent, wise, creator God are foolishness.

BC: That is exactly what Scripture proclaims: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:14)

TF: Precisely. Moreover, the natural or carnal mind is enmity against God. (Romans 8:7) It builds a theory leading to nihilism, for what else is entropy (heat death) but a return to the nothingness from which all things are supposed to have evolved?

BC: Bertrand Russell's eloquent description of the final state to which evolution and all godless science leads conveys the broad way to destruction.

"Such, in outline, but even more purposeless, more void of meaning, is the world which Science presents for our belief. ... That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins – all these things, if not quite beyond dispute are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy

*which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built."*¹

TF: Nihilism. The inevitable end according to the natural-minded man is meaninglessness for nothing can stop the slow march of blind chance to that same fate from which it sprung. From nothing comes nothing. All that falls between the two nothings of evolution, no matter how noble, brilliant, or worthy is doomed to extinction and, according to Russell, this is beyond dispute. Meanwhile, man stands on the firm foundation of "unyielding despair."

BC: Did Russell provide a definition for the despair he claimed is a firm foundation, and how did he reason to this future state of affairs that awaits creation?

TF: No definition, but as for reason, Induction. According to him, all science reasons primarily with inductive arguments of the following form: " 'If this is true, that is true: now that is true, therefore this is true.' " He admits that this form of argumentation is invalid for it commits the formal fallacy of affirming the consequent. Its invalidity is illustrated in this example:

*"If bread is a stone and stones are nourishing, then this bread will nourish me. now this bread does nourish me; therefore, it is a stone and stones are nourishing."*²

BC: So, if induction is the reasoning upon which scientific laws are based, then its theories, including the theory of evolution, most certainly are not a "firm foundation," not even for unyielding despair, however it is defined.³

TF: Without the God of creation, Russell's scientific worldview presuppositions paint this version of *homo mensura*:

3 God or Chance

"Brief and powerless is Man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for Man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow fall, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day; ... undismayed by the empire of chance, ... proudly defiant of the irresistible forces that tolerate, for a moment, his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideals have fashioned despite the trampling march of unconscious power." ³

This is the worldview of a naturalist mind in tragic quest of independence from his Creator. Of course, this outcome is the product of godless science. Indeed, because it is godless, it is also hopeless, and meaningless, and false.

BC: Of course, showing that evolution or any doctrine that is opposed to God the Creator is wrong does not of necessity establish the God of Scripture as the firm foundation for belief.

TF: Correct. But recall, Scripturalism does not claim that the Word of God is true because we believe it to be true. Rather, until the Spirit of God grants one the light of understanding in regeneration, we do not believe the Scripture, the Word of God. It is upon the miracle of regeneration that belief in the truth of the Word of God is born and flourishes.

BC: Nevertheless, the natural mind in denying the reality of God and the spiritual dimension of existence will reap the fruit of its self-centered epistemology even as Satan rebelled and fell, followed by the fall of Adam and Eve.

TF: Until fallen man is born from above, regenerated, and thereby becomes a new creation, the natural mind's focus is

self – self interest, sufficiency, and a presumed free will as the measure of all that is, that it is; all that is not, that it is not. *Homo Mensura*, and before man, Satan sought to establish himself as the reference for all meaning, thought, and knowledge. The creature would subsequently invent the idols necessary to maintain and support this axiom: 'The creature as the measure of all things.' Evolution as an 'established fact' of science is one of the many idols invented to support the rejection of the Sovereignty of God for a god of blind chance. Empiricism became the basis for naturalism's epistemology. Its axiom remains. Creation is nothing but space-time matter in motion plus chance.

BC: Thus, sense-consciousness along with self-consciousness is the altar at which the fallen creature worships. He worships a lie at his right hand that he alone chooses to treat as an established fact, one well suited to his self-referenced epistemological worldview.

"Matter in motion plus evolution governed by nothing but chance is the logical product of a Godless universe. The idea that matter plus motion plus chance brought to pass our universe is a claim not subject to verification since it is an axiom and as such is assumed true, even though the notion of truth itself is not a physical but a spiritual or mental reality for it involves meanings or proposition – spiritual assets." 4

TF: Arthur Pink's discussion of science's *homo mensura* doctrine reveals plainly that the only thing science establishes are idols, not facts.

"Was not 'Evolution' an established fact of science and did not the fundamental principle of Evolution – progress and advancement from the lower to the higher - apply to nations

3 God or Chance

*and the human race as a whole; if so, we should soon discover that we had outgrown all the barbarities of the past. War was now no longer to be thought of, for those cultured nations within the magic pale of civilization would henceforth settle their differences amicably by means of arbitration. ... What a madman's dream it has all proven. The Hope of Civilization, like every other hope which has not been founded upon the sure certain Word of God, has also proved to be nothing more than an entrancing mirage, a tragic delusion."*⁵

BC: So called established facts are established by methods that themselves require to be established as valid. Since empirical methods are themselves based on the self-referenced epistemology of *homo mensura*, they are not grounded on a firm foundation but rather on sand, that is to say, on probabilities and speculations, not true knowledge.

TF: In this regard, I recall another passage related to the notion of "established facts."

*"These 'established facts' change, are always changing and function more as useful and even helpful opinions by which our Creator enables us to engage with His creation. ... Knowledge as justified true belief necessitates ultimate authority that is always ultimate, always reliable and always unchanging. These are the propositions of Scripture. They are eternal, immutable, spiritual revealed facts with a zero value-error of probability."*⁶

BC: Empirical methods and induction blended into the scientific method yield no ultimate truth. Even Einstein, when asked about his own theory of relativity said that it was probably false but would do until a better approximation theory came along. "An established fact" is an empty phrase much like Russell's

firm foundation of "unyielding despair." Sciences have no established facts for a fact, as noted, is value with a probability error of zero. The sciences are always, expectedly, and properly "updating" their data banks to the most recent results of lab experiments and research projects. To pretend, however, that latest findings constitute established facts is both misguided and misleading.

TF: Science is about probabilities, speculations, and guesses, some rather creative and interesting. Other inductive conclusions are, as Robbins wrote, useful as a means for living in a cursed, diseased world. However, neither induction nor the empirical methods of science will ever establish even one fact, for only Scripture is truth. As Jesus prayed: "Sanctify them through thy truth: they word is truth." (John 17:17). Sola Scriptura.

BC: The natural mind, therefore, cannot and does not, on its own, rise to the level of true knowledge. It may reach for knowledge and comprehension by way of the methodologies of empiricism and experimentation and even glory in its achievements, but the fact remains that it will always fall far short of the standard for truth: that which is revealed by God Himself, who is Truth Himself.

"Sensation cannot prove God, not merely because God cannot be sensed or validly inferred from sensation, but because no knowledge at all can be validly inferred from sensation. The arguments for the existence of God fail because both the axiom and the method are wrong – the axiom of sensation and the method of induction. ... The correct Christian axiom is not sensation, but revelation. The correct Christian method is deduction, not induction." ⁷

3 God or Chance

TF: Either the Sovereign of Scripture or the false god of the creature's imagination and work. Human destiny is either heaven or hell. The wisdom of the world offers a variety of worldviews. All except Scripturalism lead to death. The biblical disjunction is either the God of Scripture or the god of blind chance; life in heaven or death in hell.

Notes:

1. Russell, Bertrand. "A Free Man's Worship" in *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*. Eds. R. E. Egner & L. E. Denonn. New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., p. 67.
 2. Ibid., "Limitations of Scientific Method." p. 622.
 3. Ibid., "A Free Man's Worship." p. 72.
 4. Carranza, Elihu. *Spiritual Warfare Within*. Napa, CA: Inky Publications, p. 89.
 5. Pink, Arthur W. *The Redeemer's Return*. Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library, pp. 83-84.
 6. Carranza, Ibid. p. 96.
 7. Robbins, John W. "An Introduction to Gordon H. Clark, Part 1." *The Trinity Review*, No. 101, Jul 1993, p.3. Unicoi, TN: The Trinity Foundation.
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Scriptures:

Old Testament: Psalm 14:1 / Isaiah 45:5-7, 9, 12.

New Testament: John 17:17 / Romans 8:7 / 1 Corinthians 2:14.

Part 2: Man Creature

Genesis 1:26. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

4

Either Obedience or Disobedience

"Acts 5:29. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We must obey God rather than men.

1 Peter 1:14. As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance.

1 John 3:24. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

Hebrews 5:8. Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; 9. And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.

Psalm 94:12. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teaches him out of thy law."

TF: Obedience means compliance with a commandment, a law, or an obligation imposed by an authority.

BC: Military life instilled obedience, didn't it! Failure to obey had consequences, some of which were severe indeed.

TF. True. But even before the military, some of us were taught to obey our parents, at least until such a time as we were no longer under their care and authority. We didn't always obey willingly or lovingly; it was sometimes begrudging and accompanied by resentment, even anger.

Elihu Carranza

BC: Even our teachers punished us for disobedient behaviors. Coaches also sanctioned those who refused to follow orders or heed instruction. One form was called "being benched." This meant no participation in the sport for a specified time or event.

TF: But the admonition to take obedience to heart came first from that authority of whom none is greater.

"Hebrews 12:5b. ... My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. ... 9. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?"

BC: The only manifestation of perfect, unwavering, unquestioning, faithful obedience -- without reservation -- is that which was found in the thought and life of Jesus Christ. Once again, He is seen to be the way, the truth, and the life for all who seek to be obedient to the law of God. (John 14:6)

TF: Theologians speak and write of two aspects of obedience in connection with the life of Christ: active and passive obedience. They are not really two, but a single obedience to the one Will of God the Father.

BC: As I understand, active obedience is that which obeys the commands of another; passive obedience is submission to another, even when harm or suffering may result.

TF: Active obedience involves the performance of certain deeds, while passive obedience implies non-resistance. The former is seeking out God's commands and setting our hearts

4 Obedience or Disobedience

to do them. The latter is the state of ongoing surrender that prays, 'Not my will but thine, be done.' (Luke 22:42)

BC: The active, I take it, refers to obedience of God's Law; the passive, I understand, refers to Jesus' obedience unto death, His death of crucifixion on calvary. Why is this distinction important?

TF: I suppose His active obedience points to God's Will as expressed in His Holy Law and commandments, while the passive aspect reveals a complete, continuous, loving submission to the Will of God's design and purpose in His plan of redemption.

BC: Jesus, then, not only exemplified total obedience to the Will of His Father, but embodied that most treasured of all graces: sinlessness in His spoken words, thoughts, and life.

TF: Yes, and much more. His obedience reveals the Way for all who would follow Jesus, but also reveals that the Way is the Truth, indeed the only truth to eternal life, for Jesus declared that He was the Life.

BC: The holy pattern for thinking and living in holy, loving communion and fellowship with the Holy Trinity was made possible by this extraordinary plan of redemption, which came to fruition with the historical incarnation of God the Son as the God-Man, Jesus, who then lived a sinless life of some thirty three years and died as an atonement and redeemer for those whom God the Father gave Him.

TF: This plan of redemption God revealed in the written books of His faithful prophets, like Moses and others; and, as the Bible says, "in the fullness of time" God Himself undertook its actualization in the birth, life, ministry, and death of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Elihu Carranza

BC: Jesus Christ gave eternal meaning to that Scripture that declares that 'in Him, we live, and move and have our being.' (Acts 17:28)

TF: Concerning the obedience of Christ. A former work put it this way,

"In active obedience, a person obeys a command. In passive obedience, a person submits to another regardless of consequences. The first involves behavior of performance of certain acts; the latter involves submission, complete submission to the will of another. Jesus Christ obeyed both actively and passively. He obeyed the Law's commandments to their last detail, faithfully and truly. Then too, Jesus always did the Father's will submitting unto the horror of death on the cross of calvary."

BC: Jesus always lived in obedience to the Will of God. What He heard the Father command, He obeyed to the letter and always. He said:

*"John 5:30. I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just; because I seek, not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.
Luke 22:42. ... Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."*

TF: Jesus exemplified obedience at all times during His life and ministry on earth. Even so, Christians rely on the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence to follow His example. There simply is no way other than Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life. (John 14:6)

BC: Adam failed in this respect, did he not? He was created conditionally perfect. But for the sovereign Will of God, he

4 Obedience or Disobedience

may have obeyed the command to not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

TF: It stretches the mind to fully comprehend Adam's failure to obey what should have been an effortlessly obeyed injunction. Both Adam and Eve enjoyed full provisions and an abundance of blessings for all life -- all necessities and in all circumstances. Yet, in the face of this abundance of blessings, set in a most beautifully endowed habitation, the Garden of Eden, and enjoying daily communion with Christ Jesus, their Creator God, Eve disobeyed and persuaded Adam to disobey also.

BC. God's injunction was simple, clear, brief:

"Genesis 2:17. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

TF: Their state of perfection was lost when they chose the way of disobedience. Both, and following them, all their posterity, fell into a sorry, fallen state of *non-posse non-peccare*. Adam was able and willing to disobey the Law of God, and in so doing, reject His Will.

BC: Man was thereafter and of his own doing condemned to a self centered epistemology in which to obey God was not only constantly denied, but actively avoided and even hated, no matter the consequences. The *self* thus became the reference for all choices, decisions, preferences, motives, goals and ends.

TF: The "likeness" of the image of God included a creaturely will, first created sinless yet under probation even as the angels, some of whom, like Adam and Eve, fell into the slavery of sin and death.

BC: Other angels did not disobey; they remained faithful to God. These are the holy messengers of God who even now obey the Holy God in their ministries and obligations.

TF: Tell me, could Adam and Eve also have remained faithful?

BC: What do the Scriptures teach? God decrees all that comes to pass. Nothing that occurs in time-space history is accidental, fortuitous, or by chance. God is in sovereign control of His creatures and His creation. The Larger Catechism of the Westminster Standards addressed the matter:

"Question 13: What has God especially decreed concerning angels and men?"

*Answer: God, by an eternal and immutable decree, out of His mere love, for the praise of His glorious grace, to be manifested in due time, has elected some angels to glory; and in Christ has chosen some men to eternal life, and the means thereof: and also, according to His sovereign power, and the unsearchable counsel of His own will (whereby He extends or withholds favor as He pleases), has passed by and foreordained the rest to dishonor and wrath, to be for their sin inflicted, to the praise of the glory of His justice."*²

TF: According to Arthur Pink,

"'Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places' (Psa 135:6). Yes, such is the imperial Potentate revealed in Holy Writ. Unrivaled in majesty, unlimited in power, unaffected by anything outside Himself. ... [Some] say that to press the sovereignty of God excludes human responsibility; whereas human responsibility is based upon Divine sovereignty, and is the product of it. ... He created angels: some He placed on a conditional footing, others He gave an immutable standing before Him (1 Tim 5:21), making Christ their Head (Col

4 Obedience or Disobedience

2:10). *Let it not be overlooked that the angels which sinned (II Pet 2:4), were as much His creatures as the angels that sinned not. Yet God foresaw they would fall, nevertheless He placed them on a mutable, creature, conditional footing, and suffered them to fall, though He was not the Author of their sin. So too, God sovereignly placed Adam in the Garden of Eden upon conditional footing. Had He so pleased, He could have placed him upon an unconditional footing. He could have placed him upon a footing as sure and as immutable as that which His saints have in Christ. But, instead, He chose to set him in Eden on the basis of creature responsibility, so that he stood or fell according as he measure up or failed to measure up to his responsibility – obedience to his Maker.*"³

God does whatsoever the counsel of His Will decrees. This is the significance of the sovereignty of Almighty God. Furthermore,

"Adam stood accountable to God by the law which his Creator had given him. Here was responsibility, unimpaired responsibility, tested out under the most favorable conditions. Now God did not place Adam upon a footing of conditional, creature responsibility, because it was right He should so place him. No, it was right because God did it. ... God is sovereign. His will is supreme. So far from God being under any law of 'right,' He is a law unto Himself, so that whatsoever He does is right. And woe be to the rebel that calls His sovereignty unto question: 'Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to Him that fashioneth it, What makest Thou?' (Isa 45:9)"⁴

Elihu Carranza

BC: Jesus Christ, unlike Adam and Eve, obeyed the Will of God even unto the horror of death on the cross, having become a curse for those sinners who believe His Gospel and receive His provision of the gracious, free gift of salvation. In Christ, God the Father is well pleased. (Galatians 3:13)

TF: What is the significance of obedience to the God of scripture?

- To obey is to acknowledge the Sovereignty of God;
- To obey is to acknowledge the Will of God;
- To obey is to acknowledge the Wisdom of God; and
- To obey is to acknowledge the Grace of God.

BC: Jesus testified to the sovereignty of God when He declared that He always obeyed the Will of God. (John 8:29) Before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed to the Father, 'not my will but thy will be done.' (Matthew 26:39) Thus to obey God presupposes a relationship in which he who obeys does so as one who recognizes God's right as inherent. Obedience, in this sense, is the obedience of rendering to God what is His due.

TF: Yes, and at the same time, obedience to God, an obedience that is accomplished in gratitude and in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, is done in recognition that God owns the perfection of wisdom. Since He is omniscient, nothing is hidden. (Mark 4:22; Luke 8:17) And because He possesses perfect knowledge and holiness, He alone possesses the wisdom to decree that which He purposes, designs, and brings to pass. God is perfect in wisdom.

BC: Again, God's will is a Sovereign will. Everything that God has purposed and wills most certainly comes to pass whenever,

4 Obedience or Disobedience

however, and by whomever He wills. No one can stay His hand or inquire as to what He does, purposes, or executes. God is the Potter; the creature and creation are the clay. The Potter, not the clay, is the Creator and creates whatsoever He pleases. (Isaiah 29:16; Romans 9:21)

TF: Unless the will of man is anchored firmly in the will of God, the choice of self gravitates inevitably to sin and death. The Spirit of God indwelling the believer insures anchor. The Spirit enables the believer to do the will of God.

BC: Jesus said: 'Not my will but thine O God.' His will was governed and ruled by the God-conscious will of God the Father.

TF: To obey God in gratitude and in love is to know and respond to the gift of salvation for every one who believes the Gospel. God is the God of grace. Salvation is not a *quid pro quo* offer, not an invitation to try or examine, but deliverance from the just condemnation of a disobedient sinner to eternal hell.

BC: God is most gracious!

Notes:

1. Carranza, Elihu. *Spiritual Warfare Within*, Napa, CA: Inky Publications, 2022, p. 34.
2. Bordwine, James E. *A Guide to The Westminster Standards. Confession of Faith & Larger Catechism*. Jefferson, Maryland, The Trinity Foundation, 1991, p. 305.
3. Pink, Arthur W. *The Sovereignty of God*, Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library. Also, *God's Sovereignty*. <https://www.chapelibrary.org/pdf/books.gsov.pdf>.

4. Ibid.

Scriptures:

Old Testament: Genesis 2:17 / Isaiah 29:16.

New Testament: Matthew 26:39 / Mark 4:22 / Luke 8:17 /
22:42 / John 5:30; 8:29; 14:6 / Romans 9:21 / Acts 5:29 / Ga-
latians 3:13 / Colossians 1:15-19; 2:9 / Hebrews 12:5-6, 9 / 1
Peter 1:14; 17:28 / 1 John 3:24.

5

Either Narrow Way or Broad Way

"Matthew 7:7. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: 8. for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. ... 13. Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

TF: Either a narrow path and strait gate to eternal life in heaven, or the broad way leading to the wide gate to eternal life in hell. The choices were never more clearly or more precisely stated.

BC: This complete disjunction as to each man's eternal destiny entails two and only two paths, two and only two gates; every person enters through one or the other. He who denies the disjunction defaults to the latter, for the former requires that one be born again.

TF: The default for every creature born in Adam is the broad way and wide gate leading to destruction and in refusing has made a choice. This is revealed truth; it is absolute; it is uncompromising; it is ultimate reality.

Elihu Carranza

BC: The gracious offer of salvation to the unbeliever is prefaced by the plea to ask and seek, not to turn his back on delivery from the path to destruction.

TF: Either life or death. Since Adam's failure and Eve's complicit offer of the forbidden fruit to her husband, all their progeny fell into that state in which choices are framed in the *non-possesse non-peccare* state. Nevertheless, they may ask and seek to be rescued from this state.

BC: Indeed, for many, and perhaps the majority of human beings, the quite deliberate election has been and is, sadly, the broad way and wide gate to death -- physical and spiritual. In the modern era, the widespread and influential worldview based on naturalism's science, for instance, rejects all options that presuppose the supernatural, thus rejecting the free gift of eternal life promised by Jesus Christ, the God-Man, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. (John 14:6)

TF: The worldview axioms of naturalistic science provide a basis and false justification for choices based on a self-reference epistemology. This is the wide path in which the unbeliever finds his or her meaning, significance, and enjoyment.

BC: No epistemology that is not based on naturalism's worldview axioms is considered or is worthy of examination but is dismissed as myth, superstition, or nonsense. Naturalism's worldview is *natural*, comfortable, familiar, personal, a belief-structure that carries an assurance provided by the individual's Self and the self's will.

TF: Yes, this was the contribution of Protagoras. His doctrine *Homo Mensura*: Man (self) is the measure of all that is that it is and of all this is not that it is not. This is one of the many paths on the broad way that leads to a wide gate.

5 Narrow Way or Broad Way

BC: There appear to be at least three levels of consciousness: sense-consciousness, self-consciousness (identity), and God-consciousness. Fallen man, it would seem, being in the state of not able not to sin, makes choices and decisions on the basis of the first two, sense-consciousness and self-consciousness, while ignoring or suppressing the reality and truth of God-consciousness.

"Romans 1:18: For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; ... 25. Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. ... 28. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient. ... 32. Who knowing the judgment of God that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

TF: Another translation of portions of verse 28 reads, "God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done." Truly, as a person thinks, so is he or she. Again, a self-referenced epistemology maps the broad road to ruin.

BC: This sin-diseased state is the *modus vivendi* of all in Adam and not in Christ. Nonetheless, mans' responsibility and accountability to Creator God is not thereby eliminated, but established for it follows that man wills his choices voluntarily and rejoices in the life and thought of a reprobate mind.

TF: When Adam sinned, innate God-consciousness was not erased (lost) but displaced as the absolute (perfect) epistemological reference for all thought and life. The first two consciousness realities became scaffolds of "lust of the eyes" and

Elihu Carranza

"lust of the flesh," respectively. The suppression of God-consciousness became a 'pride of life-consciousness' *Homo Mensura* epistemology. (Proverbs 16:18)

BC: These three form the ground of identity. The unbeliever is a sinner dead in trespasses and sins forever operating (thinking and living) based on the axioms of the reprobate mind.

TF: The fallen person's search for true identity became a restless, weary burden of sin leading to death. In contrast, the narrow path and strait gate leading to life eternal is one ruled and guided by a God-consciousness awareness and affirmation.

BC: Jesus proclaimed: "... Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep." (John 10:7) It is important to keep in mind that there is only one door for the sheep to enter eternal life. Jesus is not only the door, but the way to it is narrow. Few find it. Many seek an alternative path to God appealing to their good works and other self-efforts. These are on the broad road to destruction. The sheep hear the voice of their Shepherd, Jesus, and follow the narrow way to eternal life. (John 10:7-11)

TF: Christ exemplified in His active and passive obedience to the Will of the Father a God-consciousness worldview. To understand and be guided by the sanctifying Will of God as the rule for thought and life, one ought to read and examine His thought and life, which is the record of Scripture.

BC: The contrast between wide or broad versus narrow paths is made stark and sharp in the contrast of the environments of the first and last Adam.

- The first Adam created as an adult and conditionally upright, was placed in the Garden of Eden, a setting of beauty and bounty, where all his physical and spiritual

5 Narrow Way or Broad Way

supply of blessings were available in abundance. Adam exercised God-ordained dominion over His world and was even provided with a help-meet, Eve -- created to provide comfort and companionship in a life of blessed communion as husband and wife. A veritable utopia. (Genesis 2:18)

- In contrast, the born of a virgin, sinless last Adam was sent to a fallen, evil, sinfully populated, cursed earth, under the dominion of Satan and his evil principalities and powers. He came into a world of sin, sinners, sickness, and death everywhere. Although he blessed, healed, fed, and raised the dead in love and compassion, He was despised, persecuted, and finally murdered in the most wretched manner of a crucifixion; He suffered all this and much more according to His Father's Will – always, in a veritable dystopian world.

TF: Amazing contrast. Adam was not tempted by Satan; it was Eve who enticed him to sin. Jesus was tempted thrice by Satan after a fast of forty days and nights, alone in the desert. Each temptation mirrored Eve's three-phased transgression: lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and pride of life. Unlike Eve, however, Jesus' responses, grounded in His God-centered consciousness, rejected Satan's challenges and thus did not sin, for He was sinless, perfect God-Man. (Matthew 4:1-10)

BC: In our time it seems the ease and enjoyment driven by a self-centered ego on the broad way of self-gratification is idolized as the highest, most sought after standard of life. Hedonism is the protocol by which the sinner evaluates experience. Thus the reasons, all lies, many prefer the broad to the narrow path.

Elihu Carranza

TF: The narrow way is a continuous inner and outer struggle for the believer (who is often vilified for his effort). It is not a bed of roses way of life. It involves spiritual warfare within and may call for a life of sorrow and rejection. Jesus Himself, lest we forget, was the man of sorrows. (Isaiah 53:3)

BC: Moreover, the narrow way is a life of self-denial, an often times difficult and even painful existence. It entails taking up one's cross daily, and then following Jesus Christ against the pleasant invitations of the flesh. No wonder it is described as narrow and that few seek or find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

TF: Entering through the strait gate is no easy task.

"Jesus made this clear when He instructed His followers to 'strive' to do so. The Greek word translated 'strive' is agonizomai, from which we get the English word agonize. ... those who seek to enter the narrow gate must do so by struggle and strain, like a running athlete straining toward the finish line, ... entering the narrow gate is still difficult because of the opposition of human pride, our natural love of sin, and the opposition of Satan and the world in his control, all of which battle against us in the pursuit of eternity."¹

BC: We must remember, however, that the narrow way/narrow gate analogy is not a works-salvation road trip. Grace alone saves the sinner in Christ through the gift of Faith alone.

TF: Is it any wonder that so many prefer the broad gate and way, so easily compatible with a self-referenced way of thinking and living? The *natural* is the most agreeable, most pleasurable, most comfortable way of life for unbelievers. Even their commitment to it is effortless.

BC: This way of thought and life is labelled by some as, "expressive individualism." The label is perhaps new but the way

5 Narrow Way or Broad Way

of life it denotes is but the most recent manifestation of the philosophic formula we discussed earlier. 'Man is the measure of all things, of the things that are that they are and of the things that are not that they are not.'

TF: "Expressive individualism" dates back to the first Adam, his Eve, and Satan. It was the original couple's undoing in the Garden of Eden, and originated even before them.

BC. Satan was the first in creation to reject God's way and thereby apostatized from his state of sinlessness to one of *non-posse non-peccare*. There is no salvation for fallen angels.

TF: The broad way is the highway to hell on which the sinner can indulge for a brief time his sinful passions and desires that dictate his choices and decisions. It is easy, comfortable and can be an enjoyable path. It promises and often delivers many emotionally satisfying experiences. It is thought to be free from ultimate accountability, for it is the Self who evaluates, determines, and chooses according to the Self's own standard, self, along with, of course, the sinful suppression of God-consciousness in life and thought.

BC: These two paths, and there are only two, the narrow and the broad, lead to two eternal destinies: life or death. The reality of this either/or is known by all – innately. Death is an unavoidable, universal appointment for each and all.

TF: As the letter to the Hebrews writer records:

"Hebrews 9:27. And it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. 28. So Christ was once offered to bear the sin of many; and unto them that look for him shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

Notes:

1. Got Question Ministries. "Just How Narrow is The Narrow Gate? <http://www.GotQuestions.org/narrow-gate.html>.

Scriptures:

Old Testament: Genesis 2:18 / Proverbs 16:18 / Isaiah 53:3.

New Testament: Matthew 4:1-10; 7:7-8, 13-14 / John 10:7; 14:6 / Romans 1:18, 25, 28, 32 / Hebrews 9:27.

6

Either Vessels of Mercy or Vessels of Wrath

"Isaiah 64:8. But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. Romans 9:21. Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? 22. What if God willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: 23. And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore, prepared unto glory, 24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"

TF: The Romans passage poses a rhetorical question about the power and authority of Sovereign God. Does an eternally powerful sovereign being possess absolute power over His creation? The answer is obvious, isn't it? There is no attempt in Scripture to prove the sovereignty of Almighty God. It is simply understood.

BC: It is indeed axiomatic, as are each of God's attributes -- omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, and omnitemporality. Moreover, God's Holy Spirit is sovereignly active in every regenerated believer.

Elihu Carranza

TF: All of us are the outworking of the Potter's hand. He fashions each vessel of clay in the womb of woman according to His good pleasure. Every vessel of clay embodied with life, the breath of God, is a work of the Potter not the product of human design or matter-in-motion guided by evolution.

BC: The idea that man and woman in sexual union 'create' a human being is folly. Every conception is a miracle and a gift from God. To destroy this miracle is a sin against God, the Potter. It is the clay's attempt to usurp the Potter, "What doest thou?"

TF: Is God answerable to His clay on His table? Must He explain to the satisfaction of His clay as He fashions a vessel of flesh and bone?

BC: Well, doesn't the creature have rights, natural rights? Is this not the claim? God has bestowed rights on the clay so absolute that even He, the Potter, must not violate them.

TF: The notion that Sovereign God creates a being (a vessel of clay) endowed with rights which are sovereign over Him is ridiculous on its face because it is a contradiction. It is impossible for God to create a creature that is sovereign. There is only one Sovereign, The Triune God.

BC: Contradictions are a commodity of reprobate minds. Many choose to believe contradictions, i.e., believe lies. Some of them are even called "noble lies" in service of adding a high-minded gloss to justify their belief. It makes them no less false, and belief in them no less foolish.

TF: Unbelievers habitually choose to believe lies, and invite others to join them in doing so. This is done in defiance of the revealed truths of God and in the suppression of their innate

6 Mercy Vessels or Wrath Vessels

God-consciousness. This condition is so commonplace that we don't think of it as the mental stupidity that it is.

BC: In a mutable creature (changing from day to day and even moment to moment) a worldview generated by self-referenced epistemology, as if the "I will" is the measure of all things and responsible to no one, leads inevitably to a life of tension, restlessness, and cognitive dissonance.

TF: No wonder many ask: 'Who am I?' or 'What am I?' Man does not know who or what he is.

BC: Socrates' pedagogical dogma was "Know Thyself!" His admonition to self-examination raised more questions about identity rather than advancing a method as to how a self-referenced way of thinking and knowing may result in true knowledge about who or what one is.

TF: One may indeed ask, how can an ever-changing self in self-examination of self, come to a true knowledge of self? The self can never pause or stop a mutability that ends only in the grave. No creature can know himself. True knowledge of self requires omniscience. Only God is omniscient.

BC: He fashions every vessel, vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath, vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor according to His Sovereign will for His sovereign purposes and ends. The clay may protest, may pretend free will, i.e., free from God's will, and rebel against the very idea of human accountability and responsibility to the God who creates, but notwithstanding, the truth is obvious. The clay has no natural, much less supernatural, right over the Potter, and never can or will have.

"Jeremiah 18:2. Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. 3. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work

Elihu Carranza

on the wheels. 4. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it."

TF: As the clay is in the potter's hand so are we. The hymn, "Have Thine Own Way, Lord" expresses this fact beautifully:

*1. Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay!
Mold me and make me After Thy will,
While I am waiting Yielded and still.*

BC: Its fourth stanza captures the hope of glory in each believer.

*4. Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Hold o'er my being Absolute sway!
Fill with Thy Spirit Till all shall see,
Christ only, always Living in me.¹*

For those who ask, 'Who am I?' the answer is you are a vessel of clay, one of two genres, either a vessel of mercy or a vessel of wrath.

TF: The believer has this assurance:

"Philippians 2:12. Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

For the unrepentant sinner living out his life, that life comprises the reality of a vessel of wrath. The repenting believer is refashioned into a vessel of mercy by the Potter of Grace for it is by grace alone that the believer, in sanctification, is transformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Christ alone is the divine

6 Mercy Vessels or Wrath Vessels

pattern. It was concerning Him that God the Father declared He was well pleased. (Matthew 17:5; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22)

BC: The believer is an ongoing project in space-time of God the Spirit. He regenerates the dead in trespasses and sins, and transforms him thereafter to the image of Jesus Christ -- to live, worship, obey, and ultimately enjoy communion with God forever.

TF: The unrepentant sinner, against the witness of conscience, will not admit who he or she is. Nevertheless, the Scripture is clear. He is one born in the image of Adam, and as such is a vessel fit for destruction. No manmade doctrine, religion, philosophy, or naturalistic science, no noble lie, no useful or practical or seemingly reasonable worldview, can change this truth: every human being born in Adam is destined for eternal torment in hell, unless....

BC: Unless one is born from above. Only then can the work of the Spirit begin, one that transforms the revived and renewed God-conscious state to the image of the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

TF: In other words, the believer is renewed to new life, and being transformed, receives power to become a son of God through the Spirit's sanctification work within him. The creation of perfect manhood has in view the pattern and image of Jesus Christ. (John 1:12)

BC: Does the 'I' or the 'me' of self lose identity as the transformation of the renewed image of God in the believer is conformed to the image of Jesus Christ? Does one remain in ignorance regarding who or what he is, or does the Potter's work itself disclose an answer?

Elihu Carranza

TF: The true identity of each vessel is known to God. The promise is that, in time to come, each vessel of mercy will come to know exactly "what we shall be".

"1 John 3:2. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

BC: We know this much of that future reality: believers will enjoy the state of *non-posse peccare* forever. In this manner, we shall be like Jesus, not able to sin, sinless forever!

TF: One writer thinks we will become what we behold Jesus to be. Perhaps. Scripture declares we shall see Him as He is. A vessel of mercy will possess attributes suited to the perfected identity of one not able ever to sin, in union with Christ, like Him, a son fit for eternity in heaven, who lives and thinks in the perfection of the holy will of God.

BC: Transformation of the unbeliever, by contrast, a vessel of wrath on the broad way to destruction, is to hardness of heart and rebellion *contra* his Creator. His second death will be eternal separation from God. The vessel of wrath is destined for a *non-posse non-peccare* state, justly condemned to everlasting torment from which there is no escape, according to Scripture.

TF: Each self in space-time undergoes a transformation that is not yet complete, a work in progress. The creature obviously does not create himself, as some maintain. Our choices, education, works, penance, payment, or any other means that a self generates do not create, but merely bear out that self, that vessel, which was heretofore, created on the Potter's table of clay. Only God will bring each vessel to completion.

6 Mercy Vessels or Wrath Vessels

BC: Every vessel of clay possesses innate God-consciousness that cannot be destroyed. It may be suppressed but its conscious suppression does not destroy it. Moreover, all vessels of clay have obligations that cannot be avoided and for which each vessel is responsible and accountable.

TF: The identity of a creature is therefore a congeries of meanings or unique propositions, propositions that spell out clearly who he or she is and who he or she will be. This unique set of propositions is known to God as well as every valid deduction thereby logically implied by them.²

BC: God is omniscient; He alone knows the true identity of each vessel. His knowledge of the meanings that are unique to every creature is perfect. He knows our thoughts prior to our even thinking and forming them.

TF: God is not surprised. Ever. He is never taken unawares by a creature for the creature's perfect identity is in His mind, which is eternal, immutable, and true.

BC: God's omniscience, it should be emphasized, means that He knows every proposition that can be validly deduced from identity-propositions. He does not require middle knowledge. He does not need to learn deductive logic for His mind is logic, and all that logic can imply is known to Him. (John 1:1)

TF: The true identity of each one remains, throughout his life on earth, incomplete. Self-examination does not yield true knowledge about identity, only opinion. The 'Know Thyself' exhortation is resigned to a malleable identity depending on all manner of variables such as ethnic group, class, political, religious, etc. affiliations. The exhortation fails at every turn.

Elihu Carranza

BC: Nor is the body of the creature his or her true identity. The body may undergo funeral cremation, be destroyed by an explosion, devoured by birds and beasts or even eaten by cannibals, but at the resurrection, the true propositions of identity will be spoken by God and the body to which these pertain will be reconstructed to be possessed by the soul and stand before the judgment of Jesus Christ. (Revelation 20:12)

TF: Even names may change but not one's true-identity. Thus Jacob, for instance, was renamed Israel; Saul was renamed Paul. Satan himself has many names, destroyer, deceiver, serpent, father of lies, etc. but his identity is one and fixed for it is in the mind of God.

BC: Every believer will receive a new name. (Revelation 2:17) Identities nevertheless remain fixed. God knows each and every one, exhaustively. Christ Jesus, above all, has a name above every name. (Philippians 2:9-11)

TF: Now identities undergo changes in form or appearance while in space-time when additional true meanings are assigned or granted. In fact, this may be the basis for assigning different names. Nevertheless, the transformation does not create a different identity, but distinct relationships that serve to perfect (or complete) identity.

BC: Man as a vessel is created by the Potter. This creation is not brought to consummation until all the meanings or propositions of identity form a complete, fixed, sealed, unique set of meanings to which nothing more can be added or subtracted.

TF: The complete, perfect meanings will be embodied in a new vessel, either a vessel of mercy or a vessel of wrath to the Glory

6 Mercy Vessels or Wrath Vessels

of the Potter, God Father, Son, and Spirit. Only the believer's body is glorified.

BC: God, our Creator, alone merits all credit, all praise, all gratitude, all service, all worship -- all and in every respect to the praise of His Glory.

TF: For both believer and unbeliever, "... it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Hebrews 9:27)

BC: Know thyself indeed. Is your true identity housed in a vessel of mercy or in a vessel of wrath?

TF: Yes, that is the question each faces this side of eternity.

*"In the case of the vessels of wrath, Paul raises ... – a 'what if' – to remind readers that God has the right to make such choices Paul's point is that God has the right to have mercy on whom He chooses and harden whom He chooses (Romans 9:18) ... He is making a point about God's sovereign authority. ... He has the right to bless whom He will, and He has the right to harden whom He will. If He is the Potter, how He deals with vessels of wrath prepared for destruction is His prerogative."*³

Notes:

1. "Have Thine Own Way, Lord," Words by Adelaide A. Polard; Music by George C. Stebbins. "Just like clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand." Jeremiah 18:6.

2. Clark, Gordon H. The Incarnation. Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1988, pp. 53-55.

3. Got Question Ministries. "What are vessels of wrath (Romans 9:22)?"

Elihu Carranza

<https://www.gotquestions.org/vessels-of-wrath.html>.

Scriptures:

Old Testament: Isaiah 64:8 / Jeremiah 18:2-4.

New Testament: Matthew 17:5 / Mark 1:11 / Luke 3:22 / John 1:1, 12 / Romans 9:21-24 / Philippians 2:9-13 / 2 Timothy 2:19 / Hebrews 9:27 / 1 John 1:1; 3:2 / Revelation 2:17; 20:12.

Either Faith or Works

"John 1:17. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Acts 16:30. And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31. And they said Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

Romans 3:31. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Galatians 2:16. Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Ephesians 2:8. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9. Not of works, lest any man should boast."

TF: I have often puzzled as to why a good number of people seek to establish some merit by which they may obtain the free gift of salvation when the Scripture is clear on this matter: salvation is monergistic from beginning to final consummation.

BC: Indeed. Many claim to accept the free gift, but notwithstanding seek some credit in so doing. The jailer at Philippi asked what he must do to be saved. Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." No works, only saving faith.

Elihu Carranza

TF: The jailer and his family believed unto salvation and received the miracle of regeneration immediately. No negotiations, promises, or bribes. There was no *quid pro quo* arrangement, no call to do penance before absolution; he and his family believed the Gospel of Jesus Christ and were saved.

BC: Moreover, the saving faith of the jailer and family was not itself a work by which the jailer could claim some credit. Paul explains: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:9)

TF: The question persists: 'Does man do anything at all in receiving salvation? Nothing?' The answer is that man does nothing at all that will occasion bragging or the boast of a self-meriting choice that robs God of credit in His redemption of sinners.

BC: Monergism is the doctrine that the Holy Ghost acts independently of the human will in the work of regeneration. If the jailer did anything in asking what he must do to be saved, the answer was not that he had to perform a work, but to receive what is freely given to anyone who believes.

TF: Even saving faith itself is a gift of God, according to Scripture. This is no mystery. God is the Potter; we are the clay. The clay is formed into a vessel of mercy not by free will, human-clay choices but by the Will of God alone. There is no basis for self-congratulations.

BC: Naturally the sinner, in pious hypocrisy, protests, 'How can man be held accountable then, if salvation is exclusively the work of God?'

TF: Men seem never to tire of seeking to deflect accountability away from self and onto God. God's law, presumably, must submit to man-law. But no. God is the lawgiver; God does

7 Faith or Works

whatsoever He does according to the counsels of His sovereign wise will, not according to the will of his creatures. (Daniel 4:35)

BC: The sinner's will seeks a synergistic redemption – a salvation in which man, dead in trespasses and sins, comes to life on his own, then wills and chooses freely to believe the Gospel, or merely live an upright, ethical life, and thus be saved. It is a contradiction to hold that what is dead in sins is also alive.

TF: Synergism in theology is the doctrine that the human will cooperates with the Holy Ghost in the work of regeneration. Faith plus works was the heresy Paul condemned in his letter to the Galatians.

"This was the great error of the Judaizing teachers, in the churches of Galatia. They mingled the law with the gospel, in the business of justification; and thereby they so corrupted the gospel, as to alter the very nature of it, and to make it another gospel. They taught that, except men were circumcised, and kept the law of Moses, they could not be justified nor saved. They informed the people that, while the righteousness of Christ received by faith, was necessary, their own works of obedience were also requisite, in connection with it, to entitle them to justification before God. ... Accordingly, the Apostle boldly affirmed to the Galatians, and he deliberately and earnestly repeated his declaration. That 'though he himself, or even an angel from heaven, were to preach any other gospel to them, than that which he had preached unto them, he should be accursed.' To mingle, then, the law with the gospel, or to teach men to join the works of the law, to the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, as the ground of a sinner's title to justification in the sight of God, is, according to our Apostle, to preach 'another gospel.' "1

Elihu Carranza

BC: It is of extreme importance that the believer know the difference between the law and the gospel. Either "faith or works" (Gospel or Law) is a complete disjunction. As with the prior disjunctions we've discussed, the "or" of this disjunction is not the inclusive "or" which allows the option for both faith and works in the salvation of a believer. The jailer at Philippi who asked what he must do be saved was told by Paul "believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

TF: What then is the difference between the Law and the Gospel?

By the law here, is meant, the moral law as a covenant of works and by the gospel, the gospel in its strict and proper sense. To know the difference, so as to be able to distinguish aright, between the law and the gospel, is of the utmost importance to the faith, holiness, and comfort, of every true Christian. It will be impossible otherwise, for a man so to believe, as to be filled with joy and peace in believing. If he know not the difference between the law and the gospel, he will be apt, especially in the affair of justification, to confound the one with the other. The consequence will be, that, in his painful experience, bondage will be mixed with liberty of spirit, fear with hope, sorrow with joy, and death with life. If he cannot so distinguish the gospel from the law, as to expect all his salvation from the grace of the gospel, and nothing of it from the works of the law; he will easily be induced, to connect his own works with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, in the affair of his justification." ²

BC: The Gospel of Jesus Christ is, according to the Apostle Paul, God's power unto the salvation of sinners for everyone who believes. (Romans 1:16) Concerning the Law Paul wrote,

7 Faith or Works

"Galatians 3:17. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

Galatians 3:11. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith."

TF: The promise of a savior was a faith-promise that came before the works-law. These are related but should not be conflated as so many professing believers do. The just live by faith, albeit in gratitude and obedience to the moral law of God, the law of works having been satisfied by Christ in His atonement.

"Romans 3:20. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. 21. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22. Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: 23. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

BC: Thus, to claim that salvation requires works, such as circumcision, (or any good works/deeds) as the basis for justification before God is a false doctrine.

"As this is a great, so it is a very dangerous error. If a man attempt to add any works of his own, to the consummate righteousness of Jesus Christ, as the ground of his justification before God, Christ profits him nothing. The obedience and death of Christ are 'become of no effect to him.' " ³

TF: The conflation of faith and works may not only be attributed to a failure to make proper, accurate distinctions based

on Scriptures, but also to the product of a defective epistemology.

BC: Yes. A self-referenced way of thinking and knowing, one that seeks a synergistic relationship with the Spirit of God in salvation, is the sinner's preferred plan for redemption, should a plan be present in his mind's inclination.

TF: Indeed, it is the old *homo mensura* frame of reference of Protagoras: the clay coaching the Potter in the creation of the vessel of mercy.

BC: A self-centered epistemology as a worldview cannot accept the revealed truths of Scripture regarding regeneration, repentance, confession, justification, adoption, sanctification, and perhaps even the promised glorification of the believer in Christ as a monergistic work of God from beginning to end.

TF: A strict *homo mensura* worldview declares what one preacher was fond of repeating, 'If you're going to be a Christian, be one; if not, be gone!'

BC: For a *homo mensura* worldview sinner, man must (to some extent) be the measure of the things that are required or not required, such as circumcision, for example.

"Galatians 5:2. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. 3. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. 4. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."

TF: The Law states: Do this and live. Nothing less than perfect obedience to the entire Law of God is the absolute requirement. Nothing less than perfect obedience by the sinner earns the promise of life eternal.

7 Faith or Works

BC: The Gospel states: Believe this and live. Christ has provided the way through His atonement on the cross of calvary where he paid the penalty of death for all our sins as our substitute. Our sins were imputed onto Him by God enabling God to impute the righteousness of Christ to our account and thus does one receive justification and escape condemnation forever.

*"Thus, the self-righteous formalist, resolutely sets himself in hostile opposition to the glory of redeeming grace; and so, he attempts to rob the Most High of his transcendent glory, as a God of grace."*⁴

TF: To seek or preach a law-works-salvation is to rob God of His glory, and, if taught or preached is another gospel, not the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

"In conclusion: Believers are under every obligation, not only to obedience to the Divine law, but to free and voluntary obedience. They are bound to yield such obedience, as cannot be performed under the law as a covenant of works, as cannot be performed from the principle, either of slavish fear, or of servile hope. They are under the strongest ties, to yield voluntary obedience to the law as a rule of life. They are firmly bound, but it is to free obedience; to the obedience, not of slaves or hirelings, but of sons and daughters. ... He [Jesus], with ... willingness, obeyed the law as a covenant for them, in order that they by his grace, might with sincere and in due time with perfect willingness, obey it as a rule. The law as a rule of life to believers has ... no threatening of eternal death, and no promise of eternal life, annexed to it... Made 'a willing people in the day of the Redeemer's power,' they obey willingly, and that, not from legal, but from evangelical motives. ... They forsake iniquity, because He forbids it, and in order that, they may not displease or dishonour

Elihu Carranza

*Him. And though their obedience will not be absolutely free, till it be absolutely perfect; yet the freeness of it, will always be in exact proportion to the strength and frequency, of their actings of faith and love."*⁵

Sola Fide, Sola Gratia, Solo Christo, Soli Deo Gloria.

Notes:

1. Colquhoun, John. Treatise on The Law and The Gospel, 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Ogle, Allardice and Thomson, 1819. pp. 156-157.
2. Ibid., p. 156.
3. Ibid., p. 157.
4. Ibid., p. 176-177.
5. Ibid., pp. 308-309.

Scriptures:

Old Testament: Daniel 4:35.

New Testament: John 1:17 / Acts 16:30 / Romans 1:16; 3:20-24, 31 / Galatians 2:16; 3:11, 17; 5:2-4 / Ephesians 2:9.

Part 3: God-Man

"Isaiah 9:6. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be on his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

8

Either Jesus Christ or Self

"Psalm 139:23. Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; 24. And see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way of everlasting.

James 4:1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?

1 Peter 1:14. As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: 2:11. ... I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. ... 4:2. That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

2 Peter 1:4. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. ... 2:10. But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government."

TF: The human self has been the subject of much philosophical debate and controversy. What is to be made of it, really?

BC: I always thought the self was the 'I' and the 'me,' -- the 'I-myself' person, one who is conscious of an *I* that is *me*.

TF: Yes, but what is a *person*? Are persons individuals who own sense-consciousness, self-consciousness, and God-consciousness? The last is suppressed by sinners in unrighteousness, according to Paul. (Romans 1:18-25)

BC: A self may own these states or conditions and perhaps much more, but who is that *owner* who owns them or who enjoys them in daily life?

TF: According to Gordon Clark, a '*person*' is a congeries of propositions, a collection of true propositions that are unique to each one. This collection, this complex of propositions, comprises the identity of the creature. God knows the entire collection and all valid deductions based on those propositions.¹

BC: And so the self's identity may be understood as a vast collection of true propositions and all valid deductions derived from them which would require omniscience to know. No wonder the quest to know oneself is impossible in our present state.

TF: And no wonder that man seeks to know himself exclusively (if at all) in terms of sense-consciousness and self-consciousness alone: a self-centered epistemology or way of thinking that ever searches but never finds.

"2 Timothy 3:7. Ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

BC: As such, there is no way for self to know self, given the ever-changing states of sense and self. The self, then, never rests and lacking omniscience will never rest. Thus, we are restless, until we rest in Him as Augustine concluded: "*Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it repose in Thee.*"²

8 Jesus Christ or Self

TF: Scripture reveals the true state of fallen man and, integral to that state, what motivates the self. It is not obedience according to God's Will but disobedience in defiance of any sanctions or condemnation. The self chooses self's way not God's way.

BC: The self, it seems, is that which lusts or desires and then wills to acquire the objects of desire. The will *intends* (and goes on to assert) what the self desires. Lust is the identifier of a self. It is the "I want" of self.

TF: The sinner's self is always an operative *I will!* Thus, the *non-posse non-peccare* state.

BC: Protagoras again.³ Moreover, the self's "I will" often begets justification from the self's "I deserve." *I deserve to govern myself, to determine what is best for me, to create my own identity, meaning, purpose, and goal.*

TF: "There is a way that seemeth right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Proverbs 16:25)

BC: As man thinks according to the categories of his self's senses, his will becomes captive to his sensations (feelings, emotions, preferences, etc.) He thereby forfeits the supreme rule of his God-consciousness-will for his small minded man-consciousness-will of self.

TF: I recall a very popular singer, long deceased, who sang with feeling and sincerity: "I did it my way!" The lyrics end with:

*"For what is a man, what has he got?
If not himself, then he has not;
To say the things he truly feels;
And not the words of one who kneels.
The record shows I took the blows;
And did it my way.*

Elihu Carranza

*Yes, it was my way."*⁴

BC: There is too that famous poem, "Invictus" by Henley that ends, "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul" which echoes similar sentiments:

*"It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul."*⁵

TF: Assertion of the self, and of the self's agency, is an affirmation of autonomy and is a refrain of minds which are governed by the law of sin and death from which the individual cannot escape. It persists as a closed system of thinking, knowing, and living. Every attempt to escape only re-establishes the slavery to the law of sin and death.

BC: Unless the will of man is permanently anchored in the Will of God, the end of self is always death. In a believer, this anchor is the Holy Spirit of God who indwells the believer's spirit.

TF: Jesus said, "not as I will. but as thou wilt." Jesus' Will was governed and ruled by the God-conscious Will of God the Father. (Matthew 26:39)

BC: Jesus obeyed the Will of God the Father in both active and passive obedience empowered by the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit whom he had received in full measure for Jesus was God bodily. (Colossians 1:15; 2:9)

TF: The believer, thanks be to God, is one being (however haltingly) slowly, surely transformed to the image of Jesus Christ such that his will obeys according to the Will of Jesus, even as He obeyed His Father's Will. It is the Holy Spirit who

8 Jesus Christ or Self

alone enables such transformation. By no means is it a self-generated enablement.

BC: A self-centered epistemology is actually the way of ignorance: *There is a way that seems right to man but the end thereof are the ways of death.* (Proverbs 16:25)

TF: According to Horatius Bonar, the "old self" is a believer's most formidable enemy. He wrote that it is the master curse of man. A man governed by a self-centered worldview epistemology is captive, trapped in a closed system of thinking and knowing.

*"He lives for self; his estimate of everything is its bearing upon self; the color which he casts over everything is one derived from self. Self is the horizon which limits all his views. He is not like a man looking round on a noble landscape, and forgetting himself in the beauty of the wide expanse; but he is like a man carrying a mirror with him, into which he is continually looking, that he may see and admire himself; so that every object is seen in connection with self, and is only admired as it helps to set off self."*⁶

BC: The Scriptures speak of *self* as the *heart* of man. Gordon Clark's insightful study of the word *heart*, as it appears in Scripture, indicates that it has the meaning *mind*. And this we know, "the mind of man is desperately wicked. Who can know it?"⁷(Jeremiah 17:9)

TF: The question 'Who can know it?' presumes mind and knowledge. As to its answer, obviously, only God knows every man's mind; omniscience is required and He only is omniscient.

Elihu Carranza

BC: Christ or the self? Are we to think and live according to a *Homo Mensura* epistemology or a *Deus Mensura*, a God-centered way of thinking and knowing?

TF: Lest misunderstanding take hold, it is important to note that the Bible does not teach that the self, being cursed in fallen Adam, is to be eliminated -- rather dis-enthroned, not destroyed.

*'The setting aside of self.' I do not mean 'annihilating' self, as some speak. There is no such thing, save in the dreams of a vain philosophy, or a self-righteous mysticism. I speak of giving self its proper place -- the place recognized by our Lord when he said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' Lawful self-love is not selfishness; yet we may say that selfishness is diseased self-love; and as such, is the master-sin, the master curse of man.'*⁸

Let us summarize. When sinless, though conditionally created Adam, chose his own will rather than God's, Adam brought to pass for himself and his posterity the curse of a self-will governed by lust. The *I want*, therefore *I will*, because *I deserve* trio of a self-centered epistemology encapsulated his rebellion. Adam came to know good and evil in vivifying the lusts of self, leading to evil and sin. Even if he wanted to escape, which he did not, he was dead in trespasses and sins from which it was impossible to recover or turn back the clock to his former state.

BC: Thus Adam was cursed to a self-centered ignorance unto death from which there was no way of return to his formerly sin-free state. He blamed Eve, God, and Satan, but never for one moment entertained that he was the cause of the curse of sin and death.

8 Jesus Christ or Self

TF: The story of his son, Cain, goes on to make clear that nothing, not even the truth, would cause him to confess, repent, and plead to God for forgiveness. Such is the hardened state of not being able not to sin, spiritually dead and physically dying.

BC: *Know thyself* in space-time is therefore an impossible dream. How can the creature governed by a self-willed ignorance gain knowledge, true knowledge of self, or true knowledge of anything? Only an omniscient being, God in Christ, is able to know man and to reveal (as He plainly has in His inerrant Word, the Bible) true knowledge about his condition and the way to escape the curse of self-willed stupidity. Jesus said *I am the way and the truth and the life*. (John 14:6)

TF: Of his own volition, man cannot and will not accept the way of escape. He denies its necessity. To the extent the matter is considered at all, it is more or less despised. He would rather go to hell, the existence of which he is as likely as not to deny.

BC: And so the unbelieving sinner on the broad way to destruction enters a wide gate to the lake of fire.

"Matthew 7:13. Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat."

Notes:

1. Clark, Gordon H. *The Incarnation*, Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1988, p. 96. See also Clark's, *The Trinity*, 1985, p. 106.

Elihu Carranza

2. Augustine of Hippo. The Confessions, Book I, p. 1. in Hutchins, Robert Maynard, Ed. The Great Books of the Western World, Vol. 18. Chicago: The University of Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952.

3. Protagoras (c.490 BC-c.420 BC) A pre-Socratic Greek philosopher; one of the sophists.

4. Nugent, William P. "'The Story of 'I Did It My Way'; the Defiant Theme Song of the Postmodern Age," Article #326, December 22, 2018. <bnugent.org>

"The famous song "*I Did It My Way*" (Usually titled just "*My Way*") was written in 1968 at the height of the tumultuous 1960s. The lyrics were written by Paul Anka, a performer who gained fame in the 1950s and sung by Frank Sinatra, who first gained fame in the 1940s." (c)2016 William P. Nugent. Permission granted to email or republish for Christian outreach.

5. Invictus by William E. Henley.

*Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.*

*In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.*

*Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.
It matters not how strait the gate,*

8 Jesus Christ or Self

*How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.*

6. Bonar, Horatius (1808-1889). "Self or Christ; Which Is It?" Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library, p. 1.

7. Clark, Gordon H. The Johannine Logos, Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1972, pp. 113-114. "It is the heart that thinks." p. 114.

8. Bonar, Ibid. p. 1.

9. Penn, Lee. "Ayn Rand: The Janus Face of Libertarianism." SCP Journal, vol. 35:2-35:3, Fall, 2011, pp. 16-49.

Scriptures:

Old Testament: Psalm 139:23, 24 / Proverbs 16:25 / Jeremiah 17:9.

New Testament: Matthew 7:13; 26:39 / John 14:6 / Romans 1. Colossians 1:15; 2:9 / 2 Timothy 3:7 / James 4:1 / 1 Peter 1:14; 2:11; 4:2 / 2 Peter 1:4; 2:11; 4:2.

9

Either Deny Self or Affirm Self

Matthew 16:24. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Luke 9:23. And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

TF: Three stipulations for being Christ's disciple: deny oneself; take up one's cross, and follow Him. The first of them is arguably the most difficult, although they were not ranked according to difficulty or ease of execution. Each merits careful study, but presently, the first is the subject.¹

BC: Self-denial seems to be a contradiction in terms, does it not? This came up previously: the quandary of how can a self cancel the self without employing self to do so?

TF: Exactly. Thus, it cannot mean that a self can cancel self. The Dictionary of Bible Themes defines self-denial as, "the willingness to deny oneself possessions or status, in order to grow in holiness and commitment to God." To deny self is to grow in Christlikeness.

BC: Another definition, closer to the significance of our disjunction, "Deny Self or Affirm Self," declares that

*"Self-denial for the Christian means renouncing oneself as the center of existence (which goes against the natural inclination of the human will) and recognizing Jesus Christ as one's new and true center. It means acknowledging that the old self is dead and the new life is now hidden with Christ in God."*²

TF: Again, if the natural inclination of the human will opposes denial of self, how then is it even possible? Is it a process or is it a mental or spiritual state in which the Spirit of God progressively transforms the renewed image of God to the image of Jesus Christ and in that process, denies self?

BC: It is both; both a process and a spiritual state. The state is one of conversion resulting in justification. The process is the transformation of the believer's new creation into the image of Christ. Christlikeness is achieved over time, sometimes long sometimes not, by the Spirit of God indwelling the believer.

TF: The Apostle Paul's words express the reality of self-denial well:

"Colossians 3:3. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. 5. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: ... 7. In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. 8. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 9. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 10. And

9 Deny Self or Affirm Self

have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

BC: The process of self-denial is really progressive sanctification by the power of the Holy Ghost indwelling the born-again individual. It is God who sanctifies and thus achieves the gradual transformation of the image of God to the perfection of Christlikeness. The believer is to "work out" this process in daily life.

TF: Of course, before the work of sanctification, the Spirit of God regenerates the sinner to faith in the Gospel leading to the state of justification by God. Only then, does progressive sanctification, the work of the Spirit of God, begin.

"Romans 8:29. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

BC: God knows His own. He predestinates those known ones to Christlikeness. He calls those He predestinates, justifies, sanctifies, and then glorifies. How best should the role of self-denial be understood in this program of redemption?

TF: I believe the significance of self-denial is in the transformation of the predestinated ones to be conformed to the image of Jesus. It is a feature of progressive sanctification, the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

BC: Denial of self, then, is the inevitable concomitant to the work of the Spirit of God in the believer. It is the fruit of the mind of Christ, i.e., the Spirit, in the believer when the Spirit

enables the believer to take every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ.

TF: Mortification of the sinful members of the body of death is the war between the flesh and the indwelling mind of Christ. "We have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:16c) Christ provides the means for self-denial; it is the work of the Triune God that produces the fruit of self-denial.

BC: Arthur Pink asked what does it mean for a man to utterly deny himself?

*"... It signifies the complete repudiation of his own goodness. It means ceasing to rest upon any works of our own to commend us to God. It means an unreserved acceptance of God's verdict that 'all our righteousnesses [our best performances] are as filthy rags' (Isa 64:6). ... For a man to utterly 'deny himself' is to completely renounce his own wisdom. ... It is to the 'casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ' (2 Co 10:5)."*³

TF: To deny oneself is to renounce all confidence in the flesh or in one's strength to overcome the curse's legacy to gain the promised victory. It is to renounce self-referenced way of thinking, knowing, and living. Self-will is progressively mortified and replaced by the reality of the image of Jesus Christ for every believer.

"The attitude of the Christian is, 'For to me to live is Christ' (Phi 1:21) to honour, please, and serve Him. To renounce our own wills means heeding the exhortation of Philippians 2:5, 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,' which is defined in the verses that immediately follow as that of self-abnegation. It is the practical recognition that 'ye are

9 Deny Self or Affirm Self

not your own, for ye are bought with a price' (I Co 6:19-20). It is saying with Christ, 'Nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt' (Mar 14:36)." ⁴

BC: According to Arthur Pink, to deny self is also to renounce self-idolatry, the consequence of the self's lusts and desires. The Apostle Paul urges believers to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts," and to "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." (Titus 2:12)

TF: To deny oneself, then, is to renounce self-centered thinking for a Christ-centered way of thought and life. According to the Puritan, Thomas Manton, man's self "is a bundle of idols." I would add that those idols are the axioms of a self-centered epistemology operating in and as a *homo mensura* worldview.

BC: Thus, self-denial would involve repudiation of the old self's worldview assumptions and replacing each with the axioms of a God in Christ-centered way of thinking, knowing, and living. The former self-referenced epistemology of the old self is replaced by the new creation, either instantly or gradually as God determines, by the complete and perfect image of Christ in a believer consummated at the end of time.

TF: Meanwhile, the believer should not make any provision for the lusts of the self. Rather, as Paul wrote,

"Colossians 3:23. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; 24. Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."

BC: To work out one's salvation is doable if and only if the Holy Spirit, the mind of Christ, in the regenerated believer accomplishes the sovereign purposes of God in sanctification, thus leading to the saved one's ultimate, promised glorification.

Elihu Carranza

TF: Yes indeed. And there is no possibility of failure. God's Will is a sovereign will. Everything that God has purposed and wills most certainly comes to pass whenever, however, and in whomever He wills. No one can stay His hand or inquire as to what He does, purposes, or executes. He does according to His good pleasure and there is no one who can counsel, restrain, or cause Him to change His mind. Because He is holy, His deeds and decrees are likewise holy.

"From the moment of our new birth into Jesus Christ, self-denial becomes a daily exercise for the rest of this life on earth (1 Peter 4:1–2). With the Holy Spirit now indwelling us, we are thrust into a conflict between the divine Spirit of God and the carnal self. Paul describes this ongoing struggle in Romans 7:14–25. Only by God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit can we learn to deny self: ... Through daily self-denial and crucifying the flesh, our life in Christ grows, strengthens, and develops more and more. Christ now becomes our life."⁵

BC: The just shall live by faith, the faith of the Son of God.

"Galatians 2:20: I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

TF: To deny self is to no longer to live according the self's lusts but according to the will of God. For it is God who works in the believer to do His good pleasure. (1 Peter 4:1–2).

"Philippians 2:12. Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do his good pleasure."

9 Deny Self or Affirm Self

Notes:

1. Carranza, Elihu. *Spiritual Warfare Within*. Napa, CA: Inky Publication, 2022, pp. 60-63.
2. Got Questions Ministries. "What does it mean to deny yourself?" <https://www.gotquestions.org/deny-yourself.html>.
3. Pink, Arthur W. "The Cross & Self," Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library, nd, p. 2 ff.
4. Pink, Ibid. p. 3.
5. Pink, Ibid.

Scriptures:

New Testament: Matthew 16:24 / Luke 9:23 / Romans 8:29-30 / I Corinthians 2:16 / Galatians 2:20 / Philippians 2:12-13 / Colossians 3:3-5; 7-10 / Titus 2:12.

10

Either Sons of God or Devil's Sons

"John 8:41. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. 42. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. ... 44. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar and the father of it.

Galatians 4:6. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father."

TF: We have come to our last complete disjunction: Jesus proclaimed that only two family relationships obtain in fallen space-time reality and beyond. We are either Sons of God, or sons of the Devil. We either trace our identities to God or to fallen Adam and the Devil.

BC: Of course, we have not exhausted all exclusive either/or alternatives in Scripture; there are many more. All are important for all shed light on the depth and the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. (Romans 11:33) Here is a partial list of unexplored but related disjunctions:*

Elihu Carranza

- Either saved or lost. (2 Timothy 1:9; Mark 16:16)
- Either serve God or mammon. (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13)
- Either eternal life or eternal death. (Matthew 19:16; John 3:16, 18; 6:54)
- Either heaven or hell. (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:4; Revelation 20:15)

All of the above are related in one way or another to those we have discussed. They form a system of disjunctions. Comprehending and appreciating them is essential to an understanding of God's Plan of Redemption according to Scripturalism as a worldview.

TF: Of course, verses in Scripture do not always explicitly state these and other either/ors as exclusive or closed disjunctions, but that certitude may be gleaned from their contexts which imply it. For example, in Romans 9:13, "As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" implies either Jacob as chosen, or Esau. Matthew 6:24 is another case that implies an exclusive disjunction. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

BC: Another instance where a disjunction is assumed or implied is the parable of the sower and the seed falling on different soils: either good ground or worthless soil. (Matthew 13:8) "But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold." (Matthew 13:23; Mark 4:8, 20; Luke 8:8, 15)

10 God's Sons or Devil's Sons

TF: And so it is important to keep in mind that our selection of disjunctions has not been exhaustive, nor even necessarily the most important in Scripture. Rather, our purpose in their selection has been to explore, through the lens of each of them, the Christian worldview as expounded in and by Scripture itself.

BC: This chart provides a summary of the project.

| Number | Scripture* | Either | Or |
|--------------|-------------|------------------|------------------|
| Part I: 1 | Luke 11 | God's will | Self-will |
| Part I: 2 | Genesis 3 | God's word | Satan's lies |
| Part I: 3 | Isaiah 45 | God | Chance |
| Part II: 4 | 1 Peter 1 | Obedience | Disobedience |
| Part II: 5 | Matthew 7 | Narrow way | Broad way |
| Part II: 6 | Romans 9 | Vessels of mercy | Vessels of wrath |
| Part II: 7 | Galatians 2 | Faith alone | Works |
| Part III: 8 | 2 Peter 1 | Jesus Christ | Self |
| Part III: 9 | Matthew 16 | Deny self | Affirm self |
| Part III: 10 | Galatians 4 | Sons of God | Sons of Satan |

(*See Entries under each Title for additional Scriptures.)

TF: This last disjunction (#10) makes explicit the key to our identity according to Scripture. We are either sons of God or

sons of the Devil. One cannot be a bit of both. We fall into one family or the other; either the family of Christ hidden in God, or the family of the Devil, unholy angels, and demons.

BC: Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible has over eight pages, nineteen columns (plus) of small print entries under the heading, "Son." This should demonstrate conclusively the importance of sons and family found in Scripture. To the question of identity, "Who am I?" Scripture provides the answer: either a member of the family of God as sons in Christ, or members of the family of fallen Adam and thereby captive to Satan, sin and death.

TF: The identity of a believer can be expressed in any number of ways, some of which we have explored as disjunctions, but the most important, both for earth and eternity is the identity of being sons of God. This identity is explicitly stated for us in the Gospel of John.

"John 1:12. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13. Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, but of God."

BC: This and other scriptures imply that those who believe not are not sons of God for they are not born of Him, but of their Adamic paternity. Thus, *non-posse non-peccare* is the condition of all who are not sons of God. They are dead in trespasses and sins – their identity is found to be vessels of wrath.

TF: These vessels of wrath house the nature of the "natural man" - who being born of the will of man do not know the things of the Spirit of God.

"I Corinthians 2:14. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him:

10 God's Sons or Devil's Sons

neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

BC: The sons of Adam, born of the flesh as vessels of wrath, do not receive, indeed reject, the things of Christ. The mind of the natural man is enmity against God and hates the law of God for a carnal mind is not subject to the law or will of God, nor can be. (Romans 8:7)

TF: The Holy Spirit, however, takes the things of Christ and reveals them to the renewed minds of the sons of God. Only the sons of God receive what the Spirit makes known to them, namely, the wisdom and knowledge of God. As sons of God, they are predetermined, and thus able to discern the things of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:14-16)

John 16:13. Howbeit ... the Spirit of truth ... will guide you into all truth ... and he will shew you things to come. 14. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

BC: The sons of God, formerly under the law of sin and death have been redeemed to receive the adoption of sons. God, in His sovereign and great grace, has predestinated believers unto adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself according to His good pleasure and will. (Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5)

TF: As sons of God in Christ, we are heirs and joint heirs of every blessing and in conclusion of this life, glory. All of the promises of God in Christ are bestowed upon us for we are in Christ and as sons enjoy that surpassing benediction of Him who doeth "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." (Ephesians 3:20)

"2 Corinthians 1:20. For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."

1 John 3:1. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. 2. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

Philippians 2:15. That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

Romans 8:14. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

BC: They that are not of the family of God, are reckoned as "bastards," according to Hebrews 12:8. These are sons of the Devil in whom the wrath of God abides.

TF: The question is asked from time to time whether a son of God may at some point become a *bastard* in the sense of Hebrews 12:8. A conversion in reverse, one might say.

BC: In other words, "Is there such a thing as 'an ex-son of God'? Can a son of God apostatize? Or, is there such a thing as 'an ex/former-Christian? "

TF: The clear and explicit biblical answer is a definite "No!"

"John 2:19. They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us."

Thus, clearly there is no such creature as an ex-Christian.

"If a person is truly a Christian, he/she will never depart from the faith. ... If a person who claimed to be a Christian denies

10 God's Sons or Devil's Sons

the faith, he/she was not truly a Christian. 'They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us ... their going showed that none of them belonged to us.'... A true Christian is a person who has received Jesus Christ as personal Savior, has been made a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), and is progressively being transformed into the image of Christ. A true Christian is a person who is kept a Christian by the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:13, 30; 2 Corinthians 1:22). This true Christian can never become an ex-Christian. No one who has truly and fully trusted in Christ as Savior could ever deny Him. No one who truly comprehends the evil of sin, the terror of sin's consequences, the love of Christ, and the grace and mercy of God, could ever turn back from the Christian faith."¹

Regeneration in the believer is a miracle that cannot be reversed. Therefore, there is no such thing as an ex-Christian. Anyone who claims to be "unconverted" was never truly a Christian.

BC: We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, elect in Christ since before the foundations of the world. This is a present reality in eternity; it is on full display in history as God's Plan of Redemption and is wrought from start to guaranteed completion by the Triune God of both history and eternity, our guarantor.

"Ephesians 1:4. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6. To the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

Elihu Carranza

TF: Believers are sons of God forever, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ of a glorious, gracious inheritance having received the Spirit of adoption and freedom from the spirit of bondage forever. (Romans 8:15-17)

Abba, Father.

Notes:

*Other disjunctions: Wheat or Tares; Righteous or Unrighteous; Holy or Unholy; Clean or Unclean; Lawful or Lawless; Sheep or Goats; Justified or Unjustified, and many more.

1. Got Questions Ministries. "Is there such a thing as an ex-Christian?" <https://www.gotquestions.org/ex-Christian.html>

Scriptures:

New Testament: Matthew 6:24; 13:23; 19:16 / Mark 4:8, 20; 16:16 / Luke 8:8, 15; 16:13; 23:43 / John 1:12; 2:19; 3:16, 18; 6:54; 16:13-14 / Romans; 8:7, 15-17; 9:32 / 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 / 2 Corinthians 1:20; 12:4 / Galatians 2:16; 3:10; 4:5 / Ephesians 1:5, 2:8; 3:20; 4-6 / Philippians 2:15 / 2 Timothy 1:9 / Hebrews 12:8 / 1 John 3:1-2 / Revelation 20:15.

Epilogue

This work comprises a series of thought-experiments seeking to explore biblical truth in terms of either/or disjunctions. A thought-experiment may take on different forms. One is in terms of a conditional for the purpose of examining some of its consequences. Another, as used in this project, seeks to discover or make clear a principle or effect, or to test, establish or illustrate some belief or truth. This latter type, as applied in this work, has the form: 'since such and such, what can be deduced that does not contradict Scripture and moreover, receives the support of Scripture.' The selected disjunctions are not exhaustive; there are many more, surely enough for another volume or two. However, the selections covered should suffice to demonstrate that disjunctions of binaries can serve to highlight and clarify important, fundamental doctrines of Christianity.

The work's purpose, therefore, has been to make clear that the Christian Worldview can be studied profitably via the many and varied complete disjunctions clearly stipulated or implied in Holy Scripture.

Elihu Carranza

Logic

Logic is defined as the study of necessary inference.¹ Reason is the ability to grasp necessary inference. Thus, the valid argument form of Disjunctive Syllogism has been the framework for each dialogue. Though the Preface discussed some of this, it is expanded upon here for emphasis.

In symbolic form, Disjunctive Syllogism can be symbolized in the following ways.

Version 1:

Premise 1: Either s or p. ($s \vee p$)

Premise 2: Not-p ($\sim p$)

Therefore: $\therefore s$

Premise 2 could be $\sim s$. The conclusion then would be p.

Version 2:

Premise 1: Either you are a son of God or you are a son of the Devil.

Premise 2: You are not a son of the Devil.

Conclusion 3: Therefore, you are a son of God.

Again,

Premise 1: Either you are a son of God or you are a son of the Devil.

Premise 2: You are not a son of God.

Conclusion 3: Therefore, you are a son of the Devil.

These are valid disjunctive syllogisms. And if the premises are true, sound. The disjuncts are mutually exclusive, i.e., to deny one means the other is the true conclusion. This is the significance of the exclusive sense of OR.

In contrast with the exclusive, the inclusive sense of OR

11 Epilogue

means that both disjuncts can be true or both can be false. For example, in "John is a politician or lawyer." John could be both or neither. Thus, to deny one of the disjuncts does not require that one accept the other as a valid conclusion.

In other words, the exclusive sense of *OR* disjunction can be formulated as one of two conditionals in our example above.

1. The first premise of Version 1 means that if you are not a son of God, then you are a son of the Devil.
2. The first premise Version 2 means that if you are not a son of the Devil, then you are a son of God.²

Two, and only two options pertain to, in, and with the exclusive sense of *OR*. To deny one disjunct is to affirm/accept the other disjunct.

A self-referenced epistemology will often opt for the inclusive sense, particularly in those instances where the exclusive sense is clearly meant, but rejected. When Scripture's exclusive *or* disjuncts are both rejected by a person, a self-referenced starting point may seek to formulate choices as inclusive, or fashion a compromise between them that is agreeable to the self. The exclusive sense of *or* as found in the Bible on the other hand, constrains the mind to a God-referenced way of thinking and knowing.

This Satan rejected, and caused Eve to disobey.

- Eve: 'God said, on the day you eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you shall die.' Thus, either you do not eat of the fruit of the tree and live, or you eat of the fruit of the tree and die. Conditional: If you eat of the fruit of the tree, then you die.

- Satan: 'You shall not die, Eve.' He denies the consequent of the conditional, so as to encourage Eve to eat of the fruit. Indeed, he offers Eve an additional option: "you shall be as gods!" He thus persuaded Eve to think in a self-referenced way.

As noted at the outset, the biblical disjuncts discussed throughout this work express the 'exclusive' sense, not the inclusive. The work emphasizes this for two reasons.

1. The first reason is to demonstrate that God is logical and precise in the options proffered to fallen humanity.
2. The second is to eliminate any occasion for ambiguity leading to confusion.

Either the sinner believes the Gospel or the sinner does not. Either the sinner obeys God's Law or he disobeys. Either the sinner is saved by Grace Alone, via Faith Alone, in Christ Alone, or (if he thinks to be saved by his own free will choice, his good works, with the help of Christ) he is not saved. With complete disjunctions, there is no third option or compromise between the alternatives. There is no possibility of a meeting of the minds to negotiate a peaceful, mutually beneficial solution. This is by definition. The meaning of a complete exclusive disjunction is not none; it is not both. It is either one. It is either God's way, or man's way, as that popular singer sang long ago. He sang that he was willing to take the blows for living his way, indicating that there was a choice to be made and he chose "My Way" and the consequent blows.

One recent sign used in a march by protestors read, "The Future is NonBinary." One could ask, whose future? The future of one in hell? Perhaps. There is not enough scriptural data to clearly answer questions about choices either in hell or in heaven. We know this much: in heaven the believer is and

11 Epilogue

will be always and forever sinless, holy, complete. If the glorified believer makes choices, none pose disjunctions between what is good and what is evil, what is holy and what is unclean. Heaven is Holy

The thought and life of the unbeliever in hell could be described as the negation of all that the believer in Christ and with Christ enjoys in heaven.

Thought-Experiment

Use of the present tense regarding thought and life in heaven is deliberate and serves, in closing, as an introduction to a final thought-experiment.

We are seated in the heavenlies with Christ according to Paul who wrote:

"Ephesians 1:3. Blessed be the God and Father of our lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ: 4. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. ... 2.6. And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly place in Christ Jesus."

These verses present facts, i.e., truths and promises. God's promises are sure for God cannot lie. God is Holy, Holy, Holy. The Westminster Confession of Faith states that God is not only holy but God is sovereign.

"Chapter II. Of God and of the Holy Trinity.

Section I. There is but one only living and true God, ... a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty,

*most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory, most loving, gracious, merciful, long suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and withal most just and terrible in his judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty."*³ (Exodus 34:7)

An eternal, sovereign God in possession of all the attributes listed in this section most certainly does not in any way depend on man to accomplish all He has decreed. (Romans 9:20-24)

God's redemptive plan is on display in eternity from beginning to end, for He is the alpha and the omega; He is the first and the last. All of creation's space-time history from inception to conclusion is manifest in eternity. There is nothing hidden from God; nothing waiting to happen that is not already fully revealed in eternity. We shall, in due course, come to know something of the depth, the extent, the wisdom and grandeur, the justice and grace of God's plan of redemption.

All things (no exceptions) are known to the God of Creation.

"Hebrews 4:13. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

All things are included in God's Plan and the record is an eternal treasure.

"Revelation 1:8. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." (Revelation 21:6; 22:13)

All things are wrought by eternal God.

11 Epilogue

"Isaiah 41:4. Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the Lord, the first, and the last; I am he."

If God's Plan of Redemption, from beginning to end including all of the history of events, circumstances, creatures, men and angels, creation from eternity past to eternity future is a present reality in eternity itself, then all of God's promises concerning salvation, progressive sanctification, and ultimate glorification of believers are certain. His Plan is already accomplished. Space-time history is the theatre in which generations of creatures live and experience what is already a *fait accompli*.

God is eternal. His Plan was conceived and accomplished before the foundations of the world, before space as we know it and before time as we know it.

The Kingdom of God is a creation-fact not a work-in-progress project. Entrance thereto necessitates regeneration and transformation to the image of the Son of God, Jesus Christ who created all things and for whom all things are created. (Romans 11:33-36)

Of course, this is a thought-experiment, not revealed truth. Nonetheless, it may serve to explain several matters of importance of which two may be found in Scripture.

Why does Scripture use the present tense in its description of the believers' (future) state, while they yet now live in space-time? For example:

- Believers own eternal life now: 1 John 5:11. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

Elihu Carranza

- Believers are justified sons of God now. Romans 8:1. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Read also, 1 Corinthians 6:11)

Moreover, the Confession also states:

*"Section II. God hath all life, glory goodness, blessedness, in and of himself, and is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creature which he hath made, not deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory, in, by, unto and upon them: he is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom and to whom, are all things, and hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever himself pleaseth. In his sight all things are open and manifest, his knowledge is eternal, infallible and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent or uncertain. He is most holy in all his counsels, in all his works and in all his commands. To him is due from angels and men, and every creature, whatsoever worship, service or obedience, he is pleased to require of them."*⁴

God is sovereign; all things are open and heretofore in Him, not only in the ongoing/now unfolding of His creation, but in eternity. Creation manifests God's Plan of Redemption, a plan which was complete and perfected before the foundations of the world.

The glorified believer in Christ is not glorified "in principle." He is not seated in heaven with Christ "positionally." We are present tense citizens of heaven enjoying even now, though in space-time, the realities of redemption secured by Christ, our Savior. This present heavenly citizenship gives reason for

11 Epilogue

our sense of being aliens and pilgrims in this world. Our eyes, minds, and spirits are fixed on the realities of a redemption already accomplished even before we experience its existence.

"Ephesians 1:4. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. 5. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

Ephesians 2:4. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5. Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, 6. And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7. That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

Take note: the believer is chosen before the foundation of the world in eternity past to enjoy eternity in Christ even now while in space-time existence. While many choose the phrase "in principle" to describe these realities, they are not "in principle realities" for God and his chosen ones for whom they have being even now. Believers are known to God in eternity past and if known by God, then each one's individual redemption is an existential present.

Note too, this fact about the death of Christ. He is "... the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Revelation 13:8)

Indeed, the reality that God knows our very thoughts even before our physical existence is not something alien or impossible to Him. He knows the words that express our thoughts even before we form or express them. Nothing said or done by any creature is hidden from God or unknown to God even

Elihu Carranza

before the creature is conceived in a womb. God is eternal, sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, and perfect in all His perfections.

"Colossians 1:16. For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17; And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

I Corinthians 2:9. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 10. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 11. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 12. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

Sola Scriptura

The Holy Scripture may play a prominent role in heaven perhaps equal to that in space-time existence. The Word of God is living and eternal.

- The Word stands forever. Isaiah 40:8. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

- The Word is powerful. Jeremiah 23:29. "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"

- The Word discerns the mind's thoughts. Hebrews 4:12. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of

11 Epilogue

soul and spirit, and the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

- The Word is truth. John 17:17. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

It could be that the Word of God may serve as an endless "search engine" in eternity, perhaps to come to a greater understanding and appreciation of the immense grandeur, wisdom, and beauty of His Plan in the salvation of His people to the Glory of the Triune God.

"Romans 11:33. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

1 Corinthians 2:16. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."

Of this, we are assured:

"1 Corinthians 13:12. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known."

Notes:

1. Carranza, Elihu. Logic Primer, Napa, CA: Inky Publication, 2012.

2. Ibid., pp. 88-90.

3. Clark, Gordon H. What Do Presbyterians Believe? The Westminster Confession: Yesterday and Today, Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1956, 1965, p. 26.

Elihu Carranza

For valuable insights concerning The Confession's use of the concept of "infinite," see Clark's *The Incarnation*, Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1988, pp. 60 ff.

4. Ibid.

Scriptures:

Old Testament: Exodus 34:7 / Isaiah 40:8; 41:4 / Jeremiah 23:29.

New Testament: John 17:17 / Romans 9:20-24; 11:33-36 / 1 Corinthians 2:9-12; 14-16; 6:11 / 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 / Ephesians 1:3-5; 2:4-7 / Colossians 1:16-17 / Hebrews 4:12-13 / 1 John 5:10-12 / Revelation 13:8; 21:6; 22:13.

12

Glossary

Absolute: Unconditional, supreme, possessing unlimited power or having total power and authority.

Argument: A series of connected reasons in support of a position or a conclusion.

Autonomous: Self-governing, reliant, independent, sovereign source of all meaning, truth, and value.

Axiom: First principle or premise such that it need not and cannot be demonstrated; the basis for all argument and demonstration.

Closed System: A worldview that rejects any description, explanation, or appeal to the supernatural; reality studied, interpreted, and evaluated on the basis of the axioms and methods of naturalism; the rejection of the spiritual dimension of thought and life.

Confusion: A mental condition consisting of unclear, disorderly thought and behavior; disorderly combination of elements with loss of identities and distinctions; the disorder of a reprobate mind.

Contradiction: Refers to the opposition between two propositions which cannot both be false together and cannot both be true together.

Destiny: An ultimate event or end; the predestined eternal state as decreed by Sovereign God.

Doctrine: A particular principle or tenet that is taught. Teaching imparted by an authoritative source; instruction in righteousness; profitable for reproof, for correction.

Empiricism: Theory of knowledge holding that all knowledge begins in and depends on sense experience or sensation.

Epistemology: The study of how we know what is claimed to be known; theory of knowledge.

Exclusive 'Or': Exclusive means 'one or the other, but not both.' Thus, in (a or b), the denial of one, means the affirmation of the other.. An exclusive-or rules out all other options.

Fact: "A fact is a value with a variable-error of Zero." (GHC)

False Dichotomy: An either/or disjunction in which the alternates are presented as the only options whereas others are available. (False Dilemma) A fallacy.

Gospel: The good news; revealed truth that Christ died for sins of the elect according to the Scriptures; He was buried, and He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Propositions about these historical events with consequences and implication for all creatures and creation.

Grace. Unmerited, unearned mercy or favor; divine favor toward man in the place of man's merited condemnation. (God's riches at Christ's expense.)

12 Glossary

Hedonism: A worldview that views pleasure as the highest good; the pursuit of pleasure as an ethical principle.

Homo Mensura: Formulated by Protagoras: Man the Measure. A doctrine holding that man is the measure of all things; that everything is relative to human apprehension and evaluation.

Image of God: Innate logic, truth, knowledge, meaning, understanding, and reason from God, with God as the absolute, ultimate, sole frame of reference for all thought and life; the *a priori* or innate equipment for thinking and learning.

Implication: The relation between two propositions in virtue of which one is logically deducible from the other.

Inclusive 'Or': Inclusive means 'one or the other, both, or neither.' Inclusive-or permits both alternates as well as either one of them. Thus, if *a* or *b* is true, or if both are true, then the disjunction is true.

Inference: Forming of conclusion from premises by inductive or deductive methods; the conclusion itself.

Law of Grace: The law of the Spirit is the Gospel; the good news declares 'there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.' (Romans 8:1-2)

Law of Noncontradiction: States that the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject and in the same respect: symbolized: *not both a and not-a*; or (aa)'.

Law of Sin: The law of sin and death is the law of God. Man does not obey and cannot keep God's holy law resulting in sin and death for those under the law.

Law. A rule of being or of conduct, established by an authority able to enforce its will.

Laws of Logic: The laws of identity; excluded middle; and noncontradiction.

Life: God breathed existence; the spiritual gift of contingent being from the origin, source, and sustainer of all life: the Triune God of Scripture.

Logic: the science of necessary inference; the structure of God's mind and the mind of man who was created in His image.

Man: A knowing, thinking, judging creature in the image of God; a mind (*nous*).

Materialism: The worldview that all that exists is material or matter in motion; no spiritual or non-material realities exist; no God, souls, or angels.

Meaning: The message that is intended, expressed, or signified; the idea intended in the denotation or connotation of a term, phrase, or sentence; a proposition.

Mind: A gift of the spiritual dimension comprising intellectual life of thought and reason originally meant to guide the will and control the emotion of a person created in the image of God. Intellect; Sanity.

Monergism: The view within Christian theology which holds that God the Holy Spirit alone works in the sinner to regenerate him onto salvation.

Naturalism: The doctrine or system of beliefs that the cosmos can be understood only in scientific terms, using empirical

12 Glossary

methods of observation without recourse to supernatural explanations or appeals to the spiritual dimension of existence.

Necessary Inference: Where a conclusion follows logically, strictly from premises; the conclusion of a valid deductive argument.

Nihilism: The belief that there is no value, no meaning in the universe; no value in being itself.

Non-*posse non-peccare*: Latin for "not able not to sin" describing the lost sinner's condition.

Non-*posse peccare*: Latin for "not able to sin" the heavenly, immutable, glorified state of redeemed believers in Eternity.

Ontology: Theory of reality; the metaphysical study of the nature of being and existence.

Person: Following Gordon H. Clark: A person is a congeries, a system, a collection, a complex of thoughts or propositions, for a man is what he thinks. (See his *The Trinity*, p. 106; *Incar-nation*, pp. 54, 64). A unique, composite set of propositions.

Posse non-*peccare*: Latin for "able not to sin" describing the state of Adam and Eve prior to their disobedience of God's command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in Eden.

Posse *peccare*: Latin for "able to sin" describes the original state of our first parents, a state that included "able not to sin" existence.

Pragmatism: The worldview that what is true is what works in achieving a desired state or end; the naturalist's test for truth and value.

Proposition: The meaning expressed by a declarative sentence; a form of words in which the predicate is affirmed or denied of the subject; either true or false meanings.

Reason: The ability to grasp necessary inference of logical argument.

Reference: The relation between the spoken and the written word or phrase indicating its denotation or connotation; denotative (objects) and connotative (properties) meanings.

Regeneration: An instantaneous and immediate enabling of belief (faith) in the truth of God's gift of the Good News.

Reprobate: A mind void of what is right, proper, and good; a mind unfit because of unrighteousness and idolatry of self; morally worthless, assuming self to be the ultimate reference for all thought and life.

Sanctification: The Holy Spirit's work of restoration, renewal, and transformation of the life of a regenerated believer to new life after the image of Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, and the life; the process of transforming the creature to the image of Jesus Christ from *non posse non peccare* existence to *posse non peccare* life leading to *non posse peccare* life eternal.

Scripturalism: The logically consistent application of Christian (Scriptural) ideas to all fields of thought; the biblical worldview.

Sin: Any want of conformity unto or transgression of the Law of God; lawlessness.

Sola Scriptura: Means that Scripture alone is authoritative for the faith and practice of the Christian; the rallying cry of the Protestant Reformation.

12 Glossary

Sovereign: Greatest in status, in authority, in power, and in knowledge; ultimate; supreme; superior; and autonomous over the jurisdiction of all creatures and creation.

Synergism: While monergism is the doctrine that regeneration is exclusively the work of the Holy Spirit, synergism is the doctrine which holds that the human will cooperates with the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration.

System: An organized set of doctrines or principles forming a unified coherent whole.

Thesis: A position which a person advances and offers to maintain, or which is maintained, by logical argument.

Thought-Experiment: A project undertaken in order to discover some unknown principle or effect, or to test, establish, or illustrate some belief or known truth.

Truth: All that Sovereign God declares, reveals, commands, decrees, and wills according to His good pleasure in the propositions of His Holy Word to the Glory of God, including all valid deductions from these biblical propositions. That which God Himself is.

Ultimate: Basic, fundamental, final, definitive, supreme; existing as fundamental underlying all reality.

Worldview: A set of presuppositions or assumptions that serve as axioms for a system of beliefs which persons hold, consciously or unconsciously, about the basic makeup of reality. All persons think and live according to a worldview.

13

Subject Index

A

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| absolute | 49, 57, 72 |
| Adam | 9, 43, 50, 55 |
| Apostle Paul..... | 4, 70, 88, 91 |
| argument | 4, 30, 34, 104 |
| atonement | 16, 41, 71, 73 |
| axiom | 1, 2, 9, 28, 32, 34 |

C

| | |
|---------------------|--------|
| Clark, Gordon | 78, 81 |
| closed system..... | 80, 81 |
| confusion | 106 |
| contradiction..... | 58, 69 |

D

| | |
|-------------|------------|
| death | 14, 22, 35 |
|-------------|------------|

Elihu Carranza

denial..... 28, 54, 88, 89
destiny..... 35, 49
devil.....98
disjunctive syllogism 4, 104
disobedience 43, 79
disobey.....43, 106
doctrine..... 31, 50, 68, 103

E

epistemology..... 5, 10, 50, 91
eternal life.....41, 50, 109
Eve24, 43, 53
evil.....20, 22, 43

F

free14, 32, 55

G

glory 16, 34, 60, 65
good 14, 58
gospel.....46, 47, 69
grace.....60, 99, 108

H

hedonism.....53

13-Subject Index

I

idolatry.....91

K

knowledge.....15, 32, 33, 46, 59, 63

L

law.....30, 68, 71

logic.....4, 22, 104

M

matter.....58

meaning.....1, 10, 32, 42

mind.....3, 20, 31, 52, 63

N

naturalism.....28, 32, 50

nihilism.....29, 30

O

obedience.....39, 42, 46, 52, 90

P

Protagoras.....50, 72, 79

R

rational.....1

Elihu Carranza

reason..... 22, 30, 53, 104
reprobate4, 51, 58
Robbins, John..... 2, 34
Russell, Bertrand29

S

Satan..... 10, 12, 20, 24, 31, 106
scripturalism.....2
scripture..... 61, 72, 79, 81, 95
self..... 15, 32, 47, 50
sin25, 47, 51
spirit 23, 29, 46, 57

T

thought-experiment 103
transformation.....61, 64, 81
truth 72, 80, 83, 103

W

worldview.....1, 31, 35, 50, 59, 72

14

Scripture Index

Old Testament

Genesis

| | |
|--------------|----|
| 1:1..... | 7 |
| 1:26-27..... | 37 |
| 2:17..... | 43 |
| 2:18..... | 53 |
| 3:1-5..... | 19 |

Exodus

| | |
|-----------|---------|
| 34:7..... | 22, 108 |
|-----------|---------|

Numbers

| | |
|------------|----|
| 23:19..... | 22 |
|------------|----|

Job

| | |
|-------------|----|
| 2:4-5..... | 20 |
| 2:9-10..... | 20 |
| 40..... | 15 |

Elihu Carranza

Psalms

| | |
|----------------|-------|
| 14:1..... | 5, 28 |
| 53:1..... | 5 |
| 89 | 11 |
| 94:12..... | 39 |
| 113:5..... | 7 |
| 139:23-24..... | 77 |

Proverbs

| | |
|------------|--------|
| 16:25..... | 79, 81 |
| 23:7..... | 1 |

Isaiah

| | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| 9:6..... | 75 |
| 29:16..... | 47 |
| 40:8..... | 26, 112 |
| 41:4..... | 109 |
| 45:5-6, 7, 9, 12..... | 27 |
| 53:3..... | 54 |
| 64:8..... | 57 |

Jeremiah

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| 17:9..... | 81 |
| 18:2-4 | 59 |
| 23:29..... | 112 |

Daniel

| | |
|-----------|----|
| 4:35..... | 69 |
|-----------|----|

14 Scripture Index
New Testament

Matthew

| | |
|--------------|--------|
| 6:24..... | 96 |
| 7:13-14..... | 54 |
| 7:13..... | 83 |
| 13:8..... | 96 |
| 13:23 | 96 |
| 16:23 | 25 |
| 16:24 | 87, 96 |
| 19:16 | 96 |
| 26:39 | 46 |

Mark

| | |
|-------------|----|
| 4:8..... | 96 |
| 4:22..... | 46 |
| 16:16 | 96 |

Luke

| | |
|---------------|----|
| 4:4..... | 25 |
| 4:8..... | 26 |
| 4:10-11..... | 25 |
| 4:12..... | 26 |
| 8:8, 15 | 96 |
| 8:17..... | 46 |
| 9:23..... | 87 |

Elihu Carranza

| | |
|--------------|--------|
| 11:2-4 | 9 |
| 11:9..... | 5 |
| 16:13..... | 96 |
| 22:42..... | 41, 42 |
| 23:43..... | 96 |

John

| | |
|------------------|----------------|
| 1:12-13 | 61, 98 |
| 1:17..... | 67 |
| 2:19..... | 100 |
| 3:3-5 | 23 |
| 3:16-18 | 96 |
| 5:11 | 109 |
| 5:30..... | 42 |
| 6:54..... | 96 |
| 8:29..... | 46 |
| 8:41-42, 44..... | 95 |
| 10:7-11 | 52 |
| 14:6..... | 40, 42, 50, 83 |
| 16:13..... | 99 |
| 17:17..... | 26, 34, 113 |

Acts

| | |
|------------|----|
| 5:29..... | 39 |
| 16:30..... | 67 |
| 17:28..... | 42 |

14 Scripture Index

Romans

| | |
|---------------|---------|
| 1:16..... | 70 |
| 1:18-19..... | 4 |
| 1:18-25..... | 78 |
| 3:20-24 | 71 |
| 3:31..... | 67 |
| 8:1..... | 110 |
| 8:7..... | 29, 99 |
| 8:14..... | 100 |
| 8:29-30..... | 89 |
| 9:13..... | 96 |
| 9:20-24..... | 108 |
| 9:21-24..... | 47, 57 |
| 11:33 | 95, 113 |
| 11:33-36..... | 109 |
| 12:21 | 2 |

1 Corinthians

| | |
|--------------|---------|
| 2:14..... | 29, 98 |
| 2:16..... | 90, 113 |
| 2:9-12 | 112 |
| 2:14-16..... | 99 |
| 8:6..... | 7 |
| 13:12 | 113 |

Elihu Carranza

2 Corinthians

1:20.....99
12:496

Galatians

2:16.....67
2:20.....92
3:1171
3:13.....46
3:17.....71
4:5.....99
4:6.....95
5:2-472

Ephesians

1:3-5; 2:6..... 107
1:4-6 99, 111
2:4-7 111
2:8-967
3:20.....99

Philippians

1:6.....14
2:5.....90
2:12-13 60, 92
2:15..... 100

14 Scripture Index

Colossians

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| 1:16-17..... | 112 |
| 2:10..... | 77 |
| 3:3-5, 7-10 | 88 |
| 3:23-24 | 91 |

2 Timothy

| | |
|-----------|----|
| 1:9 | 96 |
| 3:7..... | 78 |

Titus

| | |
|-----------|----|
| 2:12..... | 91 |
|-----------|----|

Hebrews

| | |
|----------------|--------|
| 2:9..... | 16 |
| 4:12..... | 112 |
| 4:13..... | 108 |
| 5:8..... | 39 |
| 9:27..... | 55, 65 |
| 12:5-6, 9..... | 40 |
| 12:8..... | 100 |
| 12:29 | 16 |

James

| | |
|----------|----|
| 4:1..... | 77 |
|----------|----|

1 Peter

| | |
|------------|--------|
| 1:14..... | 39, 77 |
| 2:11 | 77 |

Elihu Carranza

4:1-2 77, 92

2 Peter

1:4.....77

2:10.....77

1 John

1:5.....22

3:1-2 100

:2 62

3:24.....39

5:11-12 109

Revelation

1:8..... 108

13 11, 111

20:15.....96

21:6.....23, 108

22:13..... 15, 108

Appendix A: What is the Gospel?

"Romans 1:16. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Acts 4:12. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved. "

(From Every Thought Captive. Part 5: Gospel Epistemology, revised. Elihu Carranza, pp. 101-114.)

John Robbins wrote that (in 1988) there were more than two thousand organizations in the United States professing to be Christian. He noted that the differences separating many of them are irreconcilable. (Robbins, Reference 1)

Confusion among professing Christians is evident in their many slogans, their language used to create special effects. Rhetoric does not convey the intellectual content of the Gospel or any doctrine that requires clear understanding for logical assent to true propositions. Emotional appeals, moving stories, and illustrations intended to engender belief in the Gospel are soon forgotten.

Elihu Carranza

Before re-affirming what Scripture declares the essentials of the Good News to be and why it can be nothing but Good News for sinners dead in trespasses and sins, it may be worthwhile to list what the Gospel is not.

Not the Gospel

Robbins' attempt to make clear what the Gospel is began with a list of some of those slogans in order to show what the Gospel is not.

You must repent.

You must be born again.

You can perform miracles.

You must decide for Christ.

You must expect a miracle.

You must trust Jesus Christ.

You must speak in tongues.

You must let go, and let God.

You must draw nigh unto God.

You must let Jesus into your heart,

You must be filled with the Holy Spirit.

You must be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

You must make Jesus the Lord of your life.

You must put Jesus on the throne of your heart.

You must have a personal relationship with Christ.

There are many more like these, all rhetorical (sloganeering) for easy recall and convenient use by lay persons and ministers from pulpits on radio and television. However, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not something a person does, performs, executes, experiences, surrenders to, captures, or buys. It never

15 Gospel

was an ideology; it never was ideas in the interest of a group of religious zealots. The Gospel is not a product for sale or a promotion for success, or a free trial offer with a money back guarantee, if it does not work for you. The Gospel of God is not a *quid pro quo* offer for happiness or prosperity. Some preachers develop ministries that earn millions. Financially successful religious empires do not prove that the Gospel, if believed, is a good investment. Large membership rosters of professing believers are no guarantee of authentic Christianity. Remember, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 7:21)

The next verses following Matthew 7:21 present a devastating indictment at the last judgment for those who preached or taught a false gospel:

"Matthew 7:22. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23. And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work inequity."

For the Apostle Paul, the Gospel is something God purposed and accomplished in Christ from start to finish.

"1 Corinthians 15:1. Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2. By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4. And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."

Elihu Carranza

The Good News

What is the Gospel? The biblical answer is that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; He was buried, and He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. After His resurrection, many saw Him, and then He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. (Mark 16:19) Because of widespread religious confusion about the Gospel, Robbins then discussed several important aspects of the Gospel as taught by Paul. The Gospel, he wrote, concerns:

- History, not legend or myth;
- The past, not the present nor the future;
- What Christ did for His people; and
- What God accomplished in Christ, Redemption.

Robbins' analysis is to be commended:

"The Gospel concerns the past, neither the present nor the future. It is history. The Gospel does not describe any present or future action that God or man might take. The Gospel is news about actions God in Christ took 2,000 years ago to save his people, actions that are wholly outside of our experience. Just as all men are condemned by Adam's sin, which was wholly outside of us, so are all of God's chosen people saved by Christ's obedience unto death, which is wholly outside of their experience. Just as the Gospel is history, not legend; and just as the Gospel concerns the past, not the present nor the future; so the Gospel is about something that God did, not something that we must do or can do. Christ is both the author and the finisher of our salvation. We do not complete what he began; Christ said, It is finished." (Robbins, Reference 1, p. 2.)

In other words, Jesus Christ is an historical person: Jesus is

15 Gospel

not a voice from the past. Jesus is not a dream. Jesus is not a legend. Jesus is not fable, and Jesus is not a myth.

He was born, lived some thirty years, taught, witnessed to the Truth, and healed the sick. He raised the dead, comforted the weak, and had compassion on the poor. He was condemned to die on a cross, though innocent. He gave his life a ransom for many. He was buried; He rose from the dead; He ascended to heaven; and He reigns on the throne at the right hand of God. (Ephesians 1:20-23; Robbins, Reference 1, p. 2)

History

All of these events took place in space-time, in our world's history. The biblical record is the history of what God did just over two thousand years ago to save His people, not the whole world, but his elect in Christ unto salvation. It is not about what I can do, or what anyone must do now or in the future. The Gospel is about something God did, in Christ. Christ is the author and finisher of our salvation.

Christ died for the sins of His people alone, not the sins of everyone. He did not die for the sins of Pilate, or the sins of Judas, or the sins of atheists, Satan worshippers, or fallen Angels. Scripture records that lost sinners are punished in hell. Christ did not die for anyone in hell or bound for hell. God in Christ accomplished redemption for His people and this, according to the Scripture. This authoritative, true, objective, and historical message is set forth in the Scriptures in precise, clear language for all to read, study, and understand.

Propositions

Not only does Scripture deliver true, clear propositions

about the Gospel as the work of God in Christ, but those biblical propositions lead to logical implications as necessary consequences of and supported by Scripture, as Robbins makes clear.

"The Gospel, according to Paul, is embedded in something much larger. It is embedded in all the Scriptures. Not only are the Scriptures the only reliable source of information we have about life, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, but the Scriptures alone explain those events. The Gospel is not merely that Christ rose again. So did Lazarus. The Gospel is that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. And that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. The Gospel is in accord with and explained by the Scriptures, all sixty-six books of them. When Christ explained his resurrection to the disciples, he did so by explaining the Scriptures. (Robbins, Reference 1, p. 3.)

The Emmaus couple testified that Christ opened the Scriptures to their understanding beginning with Moses and all the Prophets. Christ used the Scriptures as he taught and witnessed to the Truth. This is why Paul uses the phrase "according to the Scriptures." In fact, Christ always referred to the Scriptures as he taught, rebuked, and witnessed to the Truth. He did not come, He said, to abolish the Law but to fulfill it.

"Matthew 5:17. Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. 18. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

One last passage from Robbins' essay is worthy of careful reflection. It provides a summary of his answer to the question, what is the Gospel?

15 Gospel

"The Gospel is neither accounts of our personal experiences nor commands that we are to obey. The Gospel is the good news of what Christ did for his people 2000 years ago. It is not about the new birth, nor the Second Coming, nor the activities of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. The Gospel is propositions about historical events that happened wholly outside of us. It has consequences and implications for us today, to be sure, but these consequences are effects of the Gospel, and must not be confused with the Gospel itself." (Robbins, Reference 1, p. 4.)

For Emphasis

The answer to any honest inquiry about the Gospel of Jesus Christ can be expressed by stating a fact,* "Christianity is Jesus Christ." To which someone may respond with some incredulity, "What? Christianity is a person?" "Yes, a person, a unique person, for Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the Trinity**; that is, Jesus is God, the Son of God the Father: a unique person with a unique message, the Gospel of Jesus Christ." The Gospel message, the Spirit of Truth declares in four propositions:

1. Jesus Christ died for our sins;
2. Jesus Christ was buried;
3. Jesus Christ rose from the dead the third day; and
4. Jesus Christ was seen by the apostles and many disciples.

"1 Corinthians 15:3. For I delivered unto you that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4. And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. 5. And that he was seen by Cephas ... 6. After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once ... 7. After that, he was

Elihu Carranza

seen of James, then all the apostles. 8. And last of all he was seen of me also."

These propositional truths speak of the person of Jesus Christ and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These two, the person of Jesus and the message of Jesus are inseparable, for the message is what Jesus accomplished and proclaimed during his short life and ministry on earth. He came to earth as God-Man to offer His life a ransom for many, to save sinners from the destiny of Adam's disobedience and rebellion leading to eternal death in hell.

"Matthew 20:28. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. 1 Timothy 2:5. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6. Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

Jesus Is The Way

Now if anyone thinks that the Way is a method, or system of religious practices or rituals, or set of rules or laws to achieve entrance into the Kingdom of God, in other words, a "works religion," that person should think again. When Jesus said that He was The Way, He spoke of a life of self-denial. The way of a disciple of Jesus Christ is the way of the mortification of Self, the I or Ego as the ultimate reference for meaning, significance, knowledge, truth, value, and even life -- and a turning to Jesus Christ as the ultimate reference for all life -- now and forever. (John 14:6)

The regenerated sinner robed in the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ is transformed to the image and likeness of Jesus Christ by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. This transformation is the work of sanctification accomplished by

15 Gospel

the Holy Spirit as the Spirit applies the benefits of the atonement of Jesus Christ to the life of the redeemed believer. Death, the exit from space-time existence, completes his sanctification. The believer then enjoys eternal life with Jesus awaiting the resurrection of a glorified body at the Final Judgment. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Hebrews 9:27) This Judgment precedes existence in the Kingdom of God to enjoy eternal fellowship with the Triune God,** the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Augustinian *non posse peccare* state (not-able-to-sin) is finally realized for life in eternity.

"Luke 9:23. And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me. (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34.)

Matthew 10:37. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."

The Way of Jesus is the way of a disciple who denies self, takes up his cross, and continues daily in the Word following Jesus.

Jesus Is The Truth

"John 8:31. If you continue in my word, then are ye my disciples, indeed. 32. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

John 18:38. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?."

According to James Boice,

"Pilate's response was not in the nature of a further pursuit of the matter or even a recognition of the importance of what Jesus said. Rather, it was a cynical response based on what was, to Pilate, the seeming impossibility of ever knowing

what truth was. 'What is truth?' he said, and then walked away." (Boice, Reference 2, p. 1.)

God is the God of Truth. He alone determines what is true and what is false. God is not a liar; He is not a man that could lie, nor the son of man that He changes His mind. In Him, there is no variation neither shadow of turning. (Numbers 23:19; James 1:17). God sent Jesus, the Word (Logic) of God, with a true message to save sinners:

"John 3:16. For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

The disciple, follower of Jesus Christ, must always remember that Jesus is God. For in Jesus dwells "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Colossians 2:9) Grace and truth came by Christ. (John 1:17) If God in Christ is the God of Truth, it follows that Truth exists. Truth resides in minds, the mind of God and the mind of man created in His image.

"If truth and the human mind were equal, truth could not be eternal and immutable since the human mind is finite, mutable, and subject to error. Therefore, truth must transcend human reason; truth must be superior to any individual human mind as well as to the sum total of human minds. From this it follows, that there must be a mind higher than the human mind in which truth resides." (Nash, Reference 3, p. 163.)

Moreover, truth is primarily propositional. (A proposition is the meaning of a declarative sentence.) God alone is the source of all true propositions; whatever He communicates He declares in true propositions, He being the God of all truth. It follows that truth is eternal and immutable since it originates

15 Gospel

in an eternal, immutable mind, the mind of God. To know Truth is to know something of the mind of God. If a proposition is true, it never changes. If it never changes, it never dies, and human minds can know it for the human mind is created in the image of God.

In sum, truth is an attribute of God. His thoughts are the thoughts of an eternal, immutable, sovereign mind. As such, God's mind thinks according to the laws of logic; God is not insane. He is not the author of confusion. (1 Corinthians 14:33) Logic is the structure of God's supreme, infallible thinking and reason. God Almighty is the origin and source of all propositional truth. Truth, logic, and reasoning are mental, and they are gifts of the Creator because we are created in His image and likeness. The Creator God, not man the creature, determines all propositional truth concerning knowledge, meaning, value, history, destiny, creation, life and reality, both now and in eternity to His Glory.

Jesus Is The Life

"Philippians 1:21. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

The life of a believer is the life of Christ in the believer. The disciple of Jesus enjoys eternal life even now. This is the record of the true propositions of Scripture. All those who come to Jesus believing his message of salvation, the Gospel, and "believeth on him, may have everlasting life." (John 6:40)

"John 10:28. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

The promise of Jesus is "I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:44)

Elihu Carranza

"1 John 5:20. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. 5:11. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life.

The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all who understand and believe on Jesus Christ and on Him who sent Him according to the Scriptures. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ will return to judge the quick and the dead at the final judgment:

He will come again to earth a second time. (Hebrews 9:28)

He will come personally. (Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16)

He will come bodily. (Acts 1:11; Colossians 2:9)

He will return visibly. (Matthew 26:64; Revelation 1:7)

Duty to Believe

The Bible and the Bible's truths are not for unbelievers; the promises of God in Christ are not for unbelievers; prayers and prayer life are not for unbelievers; the "pearls" of biblical truths are not for unbelievers, in particular, not for scoffers (swine) of Jesus Christ's Gospel and Christianity. The Scriptures and the scriptures' many doctrinal truths and teachings are for those who believe.

Yet the unbeliever has a duty: the duty to believe the Gospel, for the Gospel is Truth from the God of Truth. Jesus said: "I am the truth."

The unbeliever, born in fallen Adam, is created in the image

15 Gospel

and likeness of God. That "image and likeness" is sadly corrupted by sin in every one born in Adam, but the image was not thereby annihilated. The unbeliever gives abundant evidence that the image and likeness of God is alive in him although so badly corrupted that it counts as being dead in trespasses and sins -- spiritually and eventually physically.

Thus the unbeliever has a duty to believe the truth, for the unbeliever/scoffer recognizes (knows) truth when he is confronted with truth -- every time!

Another evidence that attests to an unbeliever's duty to believe the truth is that the unbeliever knowingly lies and knows when others lie to him. This ability requires knowledge of the fact of truth. Even small children know when they lie and thus are well aware of truth.

Thus no one has an excuse not to believe the truth, no one. On the contrary, every creature born in Adam has an obligation not only to believe the truth, but to obey the truth, and to worship it. Jesus said, "I am the truth."

Jesus Christ will come to consummate His salvation and judgment as numerous passages in Scripture declare. (1 Timothy 6:14-15; 2 Timothy 4:1-8; Titus 2:11-14; 1 Peter 5:4; 1 John 2:28, 3:2.)

Even so, come Lord Jesus Christ.

References

*A fact is a value with a variable error of zero, according to Gordon H. Clark.

Elihu Carranza

**If the Trinity is a false doctrine, as some claim, then Jesus is not God. Jesus said, I am in the Father, and the Father is in me. (John 17:7-11; 1 John 5:7) Therefore, the doctrine of the Trinity is not false, and Jesus is God. (John 14:8-11.)

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2. Boice, James M. "What is Truth?" Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, 1716 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103.
3. Nash, Ronald H. *Faith and Reason*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House. 1988.

Appendix B: What is Scripturalism?

2 Timothy 3:16. "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for training in righteousness, 17. that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

[Condensed from *Essays on Worldview Epistemology*. Chapter 3, pp. 23-34, revised.]

Scripturalism can be thought of as the system of truth deduced from Scriptures alone. In other words, its axiom is 'The Bible is The Word of God' from which one deduces Scripturalism, the biblical worldview or frame of reference.

Definition

In the *Trinity Review*, "How Does Man Know God?" Gordon H. Clark states that the first principle for the Christian worldview is *Sola Scriptura*.* "Let the Christian axiom be the truth of the Scriptures." (Clark, Reference 1, p. 3)

Shawn Lazar wrote concerning this first principle, "Axiom: The Bible is the word of God without error, true in all it teaches, affirms, or implies." With this definition, he demonstrates in a convincing fashion how Scripturalism passes the

tests of reason, the test of skepticism, the test of explanatory power, and the test for hard common sense. (Reference 2, pp. 19-61) These worldview tests incorporate Ronald Nash's tests of reason, outer experience, inner experience, and practice. (Reference 3, pp. 26-28)

1. The test of Reason.

By this test, Nash means logic's law of noncontradiction.

"The presence of logical contradiction is always a sign of error. ... A conceptual system is in obvious trouble if it fails to hang together logically." (Nash, Reference, 3, p. 26)

2. The test of Outer Experience.

If there is conflict with what is known about our experience of space-time reality, then objection is not improper.

"The human experience that functions as a test of worldview beliefs includes our experience of the world outside of us. ... No worldview deserves respect if it ignores or is inconsistent with human experience." (Nash, Reference, 3, pp. 26-27)

3. The test of Inner Experience.

Similarly, that which does not fit or agree with what we know about our inner experience, merits a right and even an obligation to reject that which ignores the inner world.

"Worldviews also need to fit what we know about ourselves. ... Worldviews that cannot do justice to an internalized moral obligation or to the guilt we sense when we disobey such duties ... are clearly defective when compared with the biblical worldview." (Nash, Reference, 3, pp. 27-28)

4. The test of Practice.

16 Scripturalism

Does a worldview fail the practical test of consistency or harmony with what is professed by a worldview?

"It is one thing for a worldview to pass certain theoretical tests (reason and experience); it is another for the worldview to pass a practical test, namely, can people who profess that worldview live consistently in harmony with the system they profess? Or do we find that they are forced to live according to beliefs borrowed from a competing system?" (Nash, Reference 3, p. 28)

According to Nash, many people are unaware that they own a worldview. Nevertheless, ignorance does not cancel this fact: all people operate with a worldview frame of reference. If all operate with a frame of reference, an important question to ask is who (or what) is the ultimate reference point. Is it the creature or the Creator?

Adam's Folly

Adam's folly was to frame thought and life with reference to himself as the ultimate reference determinant. With his self-referenced presuppositions as axioms, the creature's attempt to displace the Creator as the epistemological starting point began, and continues to this day. Thus, two major worldview reference sources divide humanity: God's, as the ultimate reality, and the creature's self.

Cogito

Most people go through life quite ignorant of the notion of worldviews, including the presuppositions of their own worldview. Though some do develop an awareness that everyone has a worldview, it is normally a given to consider their own exempt from the need for serious study or analysis. On the other hand, if some reflection leads to the need for self-

analysis, many will believe their own worldview to be the only true one. They assume that their perceptions of reality are the sanest, most real, most rational, in fact, the only way of viewing and judging everything. Thus, autonomy of self retains its hold as the implicit frame of reference, and becomes the willing victim of a self-serving worldview.

Scripturalism Defined

John Robbins defined Scripturalism, the Christian Worldview, as follows:

"Scripturalism is the logically consistent application of Christian -- that is, Scriptural -- ideas to all fields of thought. Sola Scriptura means 'an uncompromising devotion to Scripture alone. All our thoughts -- there are no exceptions -- are to be brought into conformity with Scripture, for all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are contained in Scripture!'" (Robbins, Reference 4, Pt. 1, p. 2; Crampton, Reference 5, pp. 52, 72f, 91)

Scripturalism as the epistemological frame of reference is what the entire Bible teaches about God who is the prime reality of creation and before creation. Scripturalism does not combine secular and Christian notions. It divides philosophically into four categories:

1. Epistemology: Propositional Revelation (The Bible is to be believed because it is God's divine, inerrant revelation to man.)

2. Soteriology: Faith Alone (Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.)

3. Metaphysics: Theism (In Him we live, move and have our being.)

16 Scripturalism

4. Ethics: Divine Law (We ought to obey God rather than men.)

Epistemology is the study of theory of knowledge. It is the key component of Scripturalism. Gordon Clark asked:

"How can we know anything? The answer to this question, technically called the theory of epistemology, controls all subject matter claiming to be intelligible or cognitive." (Clark, Reference 1, p. 1)

The Scripture reveals knowledge of God and His creation in true propositions. In Scripture alone, God reveals His plan of redemption, the way of salvation leading to ultimate glorification. The Bible sets forth the ultimate basis for moral obligations and duty to God, others, and society. Christ Jesus, the *logos* of God, is the Light that shines in every mind. Christ is meaning itself. Man is not born *tabula rasa* as some allege. The *logos* is the logic or wisdom of God that lights every mind as innate equipment.

Only the Christian Worldview reveals the truth of our hopeless state and the way of escape. It declares that we come into this world according to a purpose and design of Almighty God. No creature is born by accident or a product of chance. Birth and death are fixed times. Each individual's life history is a predetermined journey that includes agent choices governed by a worldview. Because man possesses innate knowledge of God and creation as givens but suppresses it, man is accountable to the Judge of all creation.

Scripturalism's Either/Or

Human destiny is either hell or heaven. This is the biblically true worldview of man's destiny. The world's wisdom may offer a variety of worldviews; however, all except Scripturalism

lead to death – physical and eternal. The biblical disjunction is life in heaven or death in hell. The options are mutually exclusive. The Christian worldview, expounded in Scripture, declares redemption to be the gracious offer from a gracious God.

The testimony of the failure of an anti-God worldview is near at hand, within reach of the living. A visit to any cemetery will do in most cases. There, the important questions easily come to mind without prodding, without argumentation or debate, without the uncertainty of questions of an afterlife. The cemetery, however, while providing a menu for ultimate questions offers no answers. The graves are silent. The conscience continues restless, not silenced.

Christians live in this world but are not of the world. Their view of men and things is that which is revealed in Scripture, that which is declared by the Creator of the universe in true propositions.

When we are born from above, we receive a renewed frame of reference of true presuppositions about creation and the creature's past, present, and future. Moreover, the Christian Worldview, its source being the Scripture alone, not only reveals truth about space-time creation, but true knowledge about eternity. Truth is eternal.

Robbins provides this summary of Scripturalism:

"Scripturalism – Christianity – is a whole view of things thought out together. It engages non-Christian philosophies on every field of intellectual endeavor. It furnishes a coherent theory of knowledge, an infallible salvation, a refutation of science, a theory of the world, a coherent and practical

16 Scripturalism

system of ethics, and the principles required for political liberty and justice. No other philosophy does." (Robbins, Reference 4, Pt. 2, p. 4; Crampton, References 5, p. 91)

"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever." (Isaiah 40:8)

*Scripturalism: 2 Samuel 7:28; Psalms 119:160; Proverbs 30:52; Matthew 5:18; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16; Titus 1:2 2; Hebrews 6:18; Peter 1:20-21.

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Appendix C: Epistemology and Sanctification

"Colossians 2:9. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. 10. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.

2 Corinthians 1:20. For all of the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."

[From *Spiritual Warfare Within*, Appendix B: Knowing Christ, pp. 127-132, revised.]

1. Is there a distinction to be noted between God centered and Christ centered epistemologies? Since Jesus Christ is God, it would appear that if there is a distinction, it is one of emphasis rather than difference. Adam enjoyed a God-centered epistemology before his fall. Being transformed to the image of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is an operation undertaken by the Holy Spirit after regeneration as progressive sanctification transforms the renewed image of God in the believer to the image of Jesus Christ. It would appear that such is the God-appointed way to the believer's promised glorification in Christlikeness, *non-posse peccare* eternal life.

Elihu Carranza

- a. The Spirit that indwells the believer is the mind of Christ. (Romans 8:9)
 - b. Scripture affirms that believers have "the mind of Christ" indwelling such that there is warfare between the law of sin and death and the law of the mind (Christ). (Romans 7:23-24)
2. Since believers have the mind of Christ, the Spirit of God applies the things of Christ and shows them to the believer -- enabling understanding, consent, and obedience to the law and will of God after the pattern of Jesus' active and passive obedience to the will of the Father. (John 16:13-15)
3. Since the indwelling Spirit is the mind of Jesus Christ, this indwelling can be thought of as the Christ centered way of knowing and living. As such, Jesus is the pattern or the way, as he affirmed, and the truth and life. His way was displayed in His active and passive obedience, active obedience to the law of God, passive obedience to the will of God. (John 14:6)
4. To the question how does a Christ centered epistemology work in the believer, Jesus provides the answer. The narrow way is a life of:
- a. self-denial;
 - b. bearing one's cross; and
 - c. following Him. (Luke 9:23)
5. Thus, as progressive sanctification is accomplished in a believer, the believer acquires and is ruled by the mind of Christ in thought and life. In this manner, the believer enjoys more and more a Christlikeness. The process requires the believer to take every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5; Colossians 1:27)

17 Epistemology & Sanctification

6. What then is taking every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ? The answer is that this task is accomplished as the believer lives more and more in accordance with a Christ centered way of knowing and living while at the same time denying a self-centered way of living and thinking. Both aspects are spiritual tasks realized in the spiritual warfare within the believer. (Ephesians 4:13)

7. Jesus declared that He and the Father are one. (John 14:9; 17:11) Jesus Christ, the God-Man lived the God centered way of knowing, thinking, worshipping, serving, and dying. Jesus, as our substitute died as a ransom for us and now rules at the right hand of the Father. Christ is the pattern for the believer to achieve Christlikeness. Believers do not become gods. Rather they achieve Christlikeness appropriate for the vessel (clay) of honor created by the Potter. We may recall that God the Father declared that He was well-pleased in His Son, Jesus Christ. (Matthew 3:17, 17:5; Mark 1:11; 2 Peter 1:17-18)

8. The work of progressive sanctification is one in which the believer lives "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:5) That obedience of Christ was both obedience to the law of God and according to the will of God. The believer is now stirred by the indwelling mind of Christ to submit to the will of God, and to obey His commandments rather than the law of sin in the members of his flesh. (Romans 7:23)

9. To submit to the will of God requires passive obedience to "workout your salvation in fear and trembling for it is God who works in you both to will and to do His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:12-13)

10. To obey His commandments involves the denial and mortification of the flesh's inclination to evil in every evil thought and evil act.

- a. Mortification of the members of the flesh is the way. This involves resistance to desires, denial of self, daily bearing this cross, daily following Jesus as His disciple.
- b. The mortification of self is the death of a man centered epistemology. In its place, the Christ centered way of knowing and living establishes and enables a desire to both obey and please our Maker.
- c. Taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ brings about such a transformation.
- d. Ultimately, mortification is the death of the old self and the transformation of the inner man to the image of Jesus Christ. (Colossians 3:5-10)

In sum, progressive sanctification is the process of becoming more and more Christlike. Believers are transformed by the work of the Spirit, the mind of Christ, in the believer to the image of Jesus Christ. The believer becomes more like Christ in that he denies the self as the measure of all things that are or are not, and the inner man is renewed to think and live as Christ thinks and lives. Christlikeness is the goal of sanctification towards which the Spirit wars against the flesh to a final consummation of victory.

Working out one's salvation in fear and trembling is realized only as the Spirit enables and empowers the believer to deny self, bear one's cross daily, and follow Jesus. We follow Jesus when we obey His commandments and live as He lived. Since the victory over sin and death has been accomplished in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the believer can

17 Epistemology & Sanctification

rest in the imputed righteousness of Christ, while yet working out of his salvation in spiritual warfare between the law of sin and the law of his regenerated mind. Even in this 'working out' the believer can rest in the knowledge that it will be accomplished by the Holy Spirit – to whom be the glory.

The believer can claim victory even now for we are crucified with Christ; we died in Christ. (Galatians 2:20) Believers die in Him, live in Him, and reign with Him. All believers were predestinated by God since before the foundations of the world to believe, to know, and to live as believers. (Ephesians 1:10-12) We are justified by faith in Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. The just live by faith. (Galatians 3:11)

Believers are dead, crucified with Christ, and our life is hid with Christ in God. (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:3)

"Ephesians 1:4. ... that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6. To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace 8. Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."

The Son of God, Jesus Christ will place all things, His people, and Himself under God the Father and God will be all in all.

"I Corinthians 15:28. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him that God may be all in all."

Amen.

18

Author Books

TWEEDY FLYNCH Titles

One Murder One

One Murder Two

One Murder Three

Murder by Template

Murder in Therapy

Murder Trilogy

Murder by Email

ELIHU CARRANZA Titles

Logics: An Introduction with Exercises. San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1966. (OP; co-author)

Logic Primer

Logic Primer: Exercises & Answers

Logic Workbook with Answer Key for Logic by Gordon H. Clark

18 Author Books

Poetica

Epistemic Fragments

Essays On Worldview Epistemology

Every Thought Captive

Pathway To Apostasy?

Spiritual Warfare Within

19

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Elihu Carranza, PhD, Professor Emeritus, Communication Studies, San Jose State University in California taught courses in Logic, Philosophy, Humanities and Communication Studies. He was Director of the Educational Opportunity Program; Chairman of Mexican American Graduate Studies; and Associate Dean of Student Services. On official leave from the University, he served as Provost, Evergreen Valley College, San Jose, CA. Beyond his B.A. in Philosophy, he earned his M.A. in Philosophy at Washington University in St. Louis. He was a Mott Fellow, Michigan State University where he earned his doctorate. He served honorably as a Seaman in the U.S. Navy, World War II, and subsequently as a Jet Fighter Pilot in the U.S. Air Force. He resides in Napa, CA.