

# Spiritual Warfare Within

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Inky Publication

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ISBN:

ISBN-13:9798798741625

## DEDICATION

To our Lord God, Savior and Redeemer Jesus Christ  
Who is The Way, The Truth, and The Life. (John 14:6)

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## Acknowledgments

To God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God for enabling the author to complete the appointed task.

To Sharon M. Carranza for editing the work and providing valuable suggestions to clarify, to correct, and to facilitate understanding.

# 1 To the Reader

This project is intended for a particular audience of believers who have been recipients of the Grace of God in regeneration, justification, and adoption. Others who are not of this small group of humanity may be interested for whatever reasons, but nothing here is addressed to them.

The reason is simply this: the natural man has little or no interest in the spiritual dimension of existence. Rather, the natural man's nature is ruled by a self-centered way of knowing, an epistemology that rules out any reference to the spiritual or supernatural. The natural man "receives not the things of the Spirit of God." (1 Corinthians 2:14)

This project's focus is on the spiritual dimension of existence as it is experienced within the reality of the believer's sanctification. The physical or material dimension of existence is the universe of space-time of matter in motion. It provides the data for the senses and a man-referenced epistemology. It is the world we all know and experience daily. It is the frame of reference or worldview of naturalistic science with its closed system of matter, motion, and chance.

How does the spiritual differ from the physical dimensions of existence?

By "spiritual," we mean *mind*, mental realities. The

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assumption is that man is essentially mind, spirit or *nous*. True, mind is clothed with a body, a body of clay formed by God of the dust of the earth to which it returns on death. Mind obviously is not physical; although, the naturalist would have us believe, mind is nothing more than a name for "brain." Our brain is physical; our mind is not. Mind is spiritual; it is a form of life. God is life and the source of all life.

Our minds enjoy a wide range of gifts or talents that are not the products of matter in motion plus chance. These gifts form the essentials of the image of God as man. There are talents, innate equipment for created minds such as, for example, memory, meaning, knowledge, truth, and language, to name but a few. There are other properties of mind: dreams and dreaming; wills and willing; thought and thinking and much more for mind is a vast complex of talents that enable man to carry out a host of mental as well as physical activities and projects, including duties and obligations to God and neighbor.

The physical or material dimension of existence begins at human birth. It enjoys the charm, beauty, and utility of physical objects appropriate for communion and communication with other creatures, and even the Creator. It has a life span, i.e., a start and a finish, a beginning and an ending, a birth and a death. It records a history or a narrative, unique in many respects, but long or short, it ends at a grave.

Now that this much is clear about our project, what

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is its purpose, design, and goal?

### Purpose

This project is a thought-experiment in which two questions are addressed.

1. What can be known of the nature, purpose, design, and goal of the inner conflict in a believer between the flesh and the spirit? How may one best understand its reality in the believer who has been regenerated to new life by the power of the Holy Spirit?

2. What can be known of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in His work of sanctification? If the Spirit's work is the transformation of the renewed image of God as man to the glorified image of Jesus Christ, how is this accomplished?

The purpose, then, is to consider the reality of a God-centered way of knowledge or knowing the essentials of sanctification life. The renewed image of God in the believer that occurs at regeneration initiates the spiritual warfare within the believer. This inner, spiritual war between the flesh and the Spirit is progressive sanctification in the believer.

How the Holy Spirit works to transform the renewed image of God in the believer to a Jesus Christ-centered way of belief, knowledge, and knowing is but another description of this thought-experiment.

### Design

Spiritual reality is taught plainly in many passages of Scripture. All scripture is profitable for instruction, for

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knowledge, and for correction. (2 Timothy 3:16) Thus Scripture provides for the essentials of sanctification life, a reality known to believers and unknown to unbelievers.

The latter are circumscribed by a man-centered or self-centered way of knowing and of knowledge. For such, "the universe is all there is, all there ever was, and all that will ever be," as one naturalist never tired of repeating. It is a world of nothing more than matter in motion, in space-time, which is presumably governed by chance or the probabilities of correlations.

Any reality beyond the naturalistic is either assumed not to exist, or, if it does, has nothing to contribute to the closed system of the naturalist. Evolution is the god of chance; it determines all events, all outcomes, and all destinies. The final destiny is entropic heat-death of the universe, and long before that event, the death of all living, most certainly all humanity. It is with this scenario that naturalism ends in nihilism. It is a worldview of a life of "unyielding despair," first eloquently penned by Bertrand Russell, but before him by Nietzsche. It was Nietzsche's hero, the Superman, who as the creator of a new reality signaled, it was believed, the death of the God of the Christian.

The believer is not the slave of this godless ideology. In this project, there is no attempt to refute it or replace it with something less fatal. That project is left to the apologist, or those who believe that God requires the creature to come to His defense. God has no

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need of defenders nor problem-solvers. He is all-powerful, omniscient, and wise. God has no problems. Men who seek proofs, seek to defend God using the elements of a man-centered epistemology.

In this project, a God-centered epistemology is the basis of inquiry. Hence, what can be known of the spiritual dimension of existence based on a God-centered way of knowing?

### Goal

What is the goal? In a word, the goal is knowledge of God, His being, His works, His ways, and knowledge of His plan of redemption and salvation of His people as the Spirit works progressive sanctification in the believer.

As a thought-experiment, the work will explore a Christ-centered way of knowing the reality of the spiritual dimension of existence. Obviously, no creature can know all things. Only God is omniscient. Nevertheless, the goal is clearly spelled out by the Son of God Himself: to know God, i.e., to know all that God discloses of Himself for worship, obedience, service, communion, and enjoyment of Him forever. This is revealed truth. (John 17)

### Note on Repetition

One of the oddities and, perhaps, obviously noticed by the reader is the repetitious language used in this project not only in the terminology of certain words and phrases, but in the repeated use of some biblical



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texts. The reader should keep the following in mind.

First, biblical passages when repeated are designed to highlight different applications or to support related but different logical implications that make different claims from previous applications, uses, or premises.

Second, the nature of thought-experiment projects allows for establishing conclusions drawn from related but different premises as thought develops a thesis in the construction of a model.

Third, although repetitions are useful to make emphasis of certain key propositions, emphasis alone without consideration of (1) and (2) above should not be overdone. Obviously, once some point or other has been establish, there is no need to re-establish it unless the considerations of (1) and (2) above are necessary.

Thus, the reader may wish to consider what other application or different conclusion the author has in mind upon encountering instances of repetition.

All learning is humility before the facts.

## 2 Preface

*"Romans 7:23. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"*

Apostle Paul

**T**he Apostle Paul confessed that in his flesh no good thing dwelt. This fact is true of the unbeliever as well, but with a difference. The state of the unbelieving fallen man is the state of *non posse non peccare*, not able not to sin. The regenerated believer is able not to sin because those regenerated by the power of the Spirit of God, who upon this birth from above, are indwelt by the mind of Christ, or what Paul calls "the law of my mind." The believer now enjoys *posse non peccare* state, unlike the unbeliever.

This book is the product of a thought-experiment. A thought-experiment is in some ways similar to an hypothesis or supposition: a proposition or principle which is supposed or taken for granted in order to

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draw a conclusion or inference of the point in question. It may consist of a single proposition or a set of propositions setting forth the parameters for an investigation. That investigation itself will pursue an examination of what the Apostle Paul describes as a warring between the "law in my members" and the "law of my mind." This inner conflict or tension within the believer is an ever present state in his life. It is the product of sanctification of the believer by the Holy Spirit, a project in which the renewed image of God in a regenerated believer is transformed to the image of Jesus Christ. God is gracious. He always brings to realization an even higher blessing for the redeemed, for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose: the achievement of Christlikeness in the believer. (Isaiah 64:4; 1 Corinthians 2:9)

### Parameters

First, the project limits itself to the conflict described by Paul. It is a conflict between the law of the flesh and the law of the spirit. This conflict expresses itself as a tension from which Paul cries out: 'Who shall deliver me from this body of death?'

Second, the process of sanctification is not treated as a "works sanctification." Reformed theology made a significant recovery of an all-important truth: *sola fide*, salvation by faith alone. *Sola Fide* means *not* a works salvation, *not* a salvation the creature earns by performing worthy works or by performing any number of rituals or practices. On the contrary, *sola fide* is a rejection of

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works altogether for there is no one who does good, no not one. (Romans 3:10-12) What then is the dynamic of sanctification?

Third, the project limits itself to what can be known, the revealed truth of Scripture. It seeks to understand the biblically enunciated process of transformation which the Spirit of God undertakes in every believer. What does this transformation consist of?

Fourth, the project aims to discover the role of the regenerated believer. What does man contribute to sanctification, if anything? If sanctification is not a works-sanctification, just as saving-faith is not by works, is it a work by God the Spirit from beginning to end?

Fifth, the life of sanctification is not a fiction, it is a reality of Christian life. It occurs in the here and now. It is a God-ordained progressive and necessary process. Why? To what end?

### Logic

Given these parameters or criteria, to which other criteria or limits may be added as the investigation progresses, the means envisioned whereby the significance and meaning of a believer's sanctification may be addressed is that of logic. If something or other is the case, then what must follow logically? With a thought-experiment thus framed, there is no attempt to prove a theory, doctrine, or position, but to explore the logical consequences that flow from an assumption that if

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true would provide a plausible thesis worth exploring.

What is the biblical method for living in the tension of two laws: the Law of Sin and the Law of Grace? The Scripture makes plain three phases of the process of sanctification. Three requirements are declared by Jesus Christ Himself: self-denial; bearing a cross; and following Him.

*"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."  
(See also, Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34)*

Do these requirements constitute something other than a "works-sanctification?" Are these in some sense the causes of sanctification, or are these elements the result of the work of the Holy Spirit? Is there a sense in which both the believer and the Spirit "cooperate" in the progressive sanctification of the believer?

These and related questions in subsequent chapters will be investigated in search of the essential elements, causes, and results of sanctification.

With this in mind, the God-centered epistemology of Scripturalism will be our frame and guide. Scripturalism as the worldview will provide the basis for a model of the Christian's life of sanctification. Sanctification life is a life regulated by two laws, the law of sin and the law of grace.

This project is one person's witness to the truth. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6) May

## 2 Preface

the Word of God guide this witness to the truth.  
Amen.

### 3 Introduction

*"2 Timothy 3:16. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17. That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."*

#### Weltanschauung

A worldview is a set of assumptions (presuppositions) assumed to be true without question. A frame of reference or worldview controls all perception and thought about reality. These presuppositions work as axioms of a system. The axioms of a worldview are the set of basic beliefs that determine perception.

A worldview can be self-serving when self, chosen as the ultimate reference for meaning, truth, purpose, and value controls choices, thinking and behavior. This is descriptive of the various worldviews held by unbelievers. Believers, on the other hand, know the experience of being 'born from above,' a born-again reality of life and thought -- the grace of regeneration. Thus,

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for believers, the reality that 'as a man thinketh, so is he' is not a matter of opinion or poetry, but revealed truth unfolded as sanctification – the work of the Holy Spirit in their experience and life. (Proverbs 23:7; John 3:5-8)

In this project, it is assumed that everyone owns a worldview and perceives reality through the lens of worldview assumptions. Most Christians know that worldviews reveal the human divide: that of believer and unbeliever, the saved and the lost, i.e., those on the narrow way to heaven and those on the broad way to hell.

Another way to think about worldviews is in terms of epistemologies: man-centered versus God-centered ways of knowing. This project examines biblical truth about the relationship of these two worldview epistemologies warring within the believer as he sustains what we know to be progressive sanctification. This experience is absent, needless to say, in the life of the unbeliever.

### Sanctification Life

What then is sanctification? The Westminster Catechism's definition is as follows:

*"I. They, who are once effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are*

## 3 Introduction

*more and more weakened and mortified, and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.*

*II. This sanctification is throughout, in the whole man, yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part, whence arises a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.*

*III. In which war, although the remaining corruption, for a time, may much prevail; yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part does overcome, and so, the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (Reference 1, pp. 75-77)*

### Thesis

Christians know that their lives are a warring between two worldview epistemologies: the man-centered way of knowing and knowledge and the God-centered way of knowledge. The thesis in this project is this: the tension Christians experience is one of inner warfare between these two ways of knowing, ruled by two laws: the law of the flesh and the law of the mind.

Paul wrote of his inner war, a spiritual warfare within his soul. Some have thought Paul's account was his state prior to his regeneration by the Spirit of God. This author disagrees. The working assumption in this project is that Paul's account described the inner tension every regenerated Christian experiences in space-time life. The state is one in which the Christian is able to sin, made obvious by the law of the flesh, and able

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not to sin, made a reality by the law of the mind. Sanctification life consists of an ongoing mortification of the members of the body, a mortification brought about by the denial of self, bearing one's cross, and following Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life. (Colossians 3:5-10) This three point spiritual strategy is the battle plan Jesus commanded: "... If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23)

Paul wrote at length and in detail concerning his experience of sanctification life in Romans 7:4-25.

Dead to the law by Christ:

*"4. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."*

Law of the flesh brings death:

*"5. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death."*

Delivered from the law of sin to newness of life:

*"6. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."*

The Law reveals sin:

*"7. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."*

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Without law, sin is dead:

*"8. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead."*

Sin revives and brings death:

*"9. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."*

The commandment to life brought death at disobedience:

*"10. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death."*

Sin slays:

*"11. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me."*

The law's commandment is holy, just, and good:

*"12. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."*

The commandment shows sin to be exceeding sinful:

*"13. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful."*

The law is spiritual; I am carnal:

*"14. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin."*

What I hate, I do:

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*"15. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I."*

Doing what I would not proves the law is good:

*"16. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good."*

Not I but sin in me:

*"17. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."*

Able to will good, but to do good is elusive:

*"18. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not."*

What I would not, I do:

*"19. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."*

To do what I would not is sin in me:

*"20. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."*

A law to do good finds evil in me:

*"21. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me."*

I delight in the law of God in me:

*"22. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man."*

Another law in members warring against law of mind:

### 3 Introduction

*"23. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."*

Who delivers from body of death?

*"24. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"*

God alone delivers as the law of God wars against the law of sin in my flesh:

*"25. I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."*

In short, Paul's overwhelming testimony expresses an experience of sanctification life which was one of spiritual warfare. Paul's account testifies to the reality of regeneration, for without regeneration spiritual warfare within is absent. A professing believer who has no experience or knowledge of this inner conflict between the flesh and the mind of the inner man being renewed after the image of Christ is no Christian. Such a one is deceived, if he should think otherwise.

#### Questions

The questions posed in this project, therefore, are those suggested in the Preface and here made explicit.

1. What is the role of the regenerated person in the progressive work of sanctification? Does man contribute any work of any kind to the sanctification life by the Holy Spirit? In other words, is the work of the Holy



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Spirit a "works by man sanctification" or is sanctification an exclusive work of the indwelling Spirit? Or, is it a cooperative work of regenerated man and regenerating Spirit?

2. What are the spiritual dynamics of sanctification? How best should we understand this spiritual work? For example, are the denial of self, bearing one's cross, and following Jesus Christ the causes of sanctification or the effects of the work of the Spirit? In other words, what is the relation between two states in the regenerated believer, the state of *able to sin* and the state of *able not to sin*? Are these states governed by two laws, the law of the flesh, and the law of the mind? Is such the essence of warfare that Paul sets forth in Romans 7?

3. Does the model of two epistemologies, man-centered and God-centered, provide a frame that clarifies the roles of the regenerated sinner and the regenerating Spirit?

The Scripture is clear, the regenerating Spirit is the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:16)

*"Romans 8:9. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."*

The Spirit of God, that is, the mind of Christ indwelling the man offers this assurance:

*"John 16:13. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things*

## 3 Introduction

*to come. 14. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. 15. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine and shall shew it unto you."*

In this passage Jesus Christ speaks words of comfort to His disciples, describing the work of Holy Spirit and declaring that the Father is the source of all truth. The fullness of the trinity, Christ the Son, the Father, and the Spirit all participate in the life of sanctification in each believer. With this assurance what remains for man to contribute to his or her sanctification?

### Summary

The prolegomenon for this project can be outlined as a chart of elements contrasted and compared.

Spiritual Warfare Within Believer	
Man-Centered	Christ-Centered
Mind of Man	Mind of Christ
Law of Sin.	Law of Mind
Law of Flesh (Body)	Law of Spirit (Truth)
Carnal Man	Spiritual Mind
Old Natural Man	New Inner Man

The chapters that follow will explore some logical implications of this spiritual warfare within the soul of every Christian born from above. Likewise, discussions will explore the meaning and significance of the *yoke* Jesus offers to followers. His yoke, He tells us, is easy.



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With His easy yoke, the burden a Christian bears is made light. (Matthew 11:30)

*"Matthew 11:28. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

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#### Reference

1. Bordwine, James. E. A Guide to the Westminster Standards. Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1991.

## 4 Regeneration

*"John 3:5. Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."*

Adam and Eve

Adam was created in the image and likeness of God, according to the Genesis account (1:26). When he and Eve sinned, the loss of their covering signaled a profound loss, much more than mere physical covering rendering them naked. That the loss was more than physical is evident from all that followed: judgment on Satan, Eve, Adam, and creation. Recovery from so total a loss due to the fall requires a new birth – a birth from above. Regeneration. Jesus declared to Nicodemus, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)

This was a God-centered declaration of the spiritual dimension of existence. Nicodemus response clearly

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indicates that he was operating with a man-centered epistemology when he responded, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" (John 3:4) Only later did Nicodemus come to understand that there are two kinds of birth, a birth from the flesh, and a birth from the Spirit. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (vs. 6)

### New Life

Regeneration precedes sanctification logically and theologically. Without it, no sanctification is possible and without sanctification there is no spiritual warfare within man – regenerated man.

The London Baptist Confession of Faith states the change that takes place at regeneration. It is a spiritual or mental change, which is radical, permanent, and effectual.

*"1. Those whom God hath predestinated unto life, he is pleased in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of the state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.*

*2. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, nor from any power or agency in the*

## 4 Regeneration

*creature, coworking with his special grace, the creature being wholly passive therein, being dead in sins and trespasses, until being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit; he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it, and that by no less power than that which raised up Christ from the dead."(Reference 1, pp. 19-20)*

### From Above

Regeneration, then, is a spiritual birth accomplished by the Holy Spirit in each elect saint in Christ. The believer is appointed, called out of his lost state of death and unbelief to a new state by the renewal of his mind which now can understand and embrace the free offer of salvation. In short, by grace alone the sinner becomes a regenerated believer, enjoys a Christ-centered way of coming to know and believe the Gospel, There are no proofs, logical or otherwise, no *quid pro quo* deals, no caveats of any sort. On regeneration, the unbeliever becomes a believer who understands his sinful condition and the just judgment that awaits all those who die in their sins. He understands the way of salvation, Jesus Christ. He knows that it is by the grace of God alone that a believer is redeemed, and after that sanctified, and ultimately glorified in eternity.

### Again

*"They who are once effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection,*

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*by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed." (Reference 2, p. 75)*

The regenerated soul is transformed in mind and spirit, a change that is perfected at death and enjoyed in eternity. The breath of God (life), the Light of God (meaning) is present in each created being. It is in this way, i, e., regeneration, that the believer comes to an understanding of the revealed truth: we live and move and have our being in God. (Acts 17:28)

Scripture thus reveals two categories of humanity: believers and unbelievers; saved and unsaved; born of the spirit and born of the flesh; those who live and walk by faith and those who walk and live by sight. The regenerated believer is granted a new cognitive state on the route to yet another more blessed one. As in concert with the unbeliever, the believer was once dead in trespasses and sin, cursed by the law in the depravity of a nature ending in eternal death. His state was the state of *non posse non peccare*, not able not to sin. He was carnal, sold under sin to the lusts of the body, a body of death, according to the Apostle Paul. With regeneration, the believer now acquires a state of *posse non peccare*, able not to sin, for the life of the mind hates sin. Of course, the believer lives in a body of death, physical death, and as such experiences the war between the law of sin in his members and the law of God in his mind. The result is spiritual warfare within, a war that is waged by the flesh against the indwelling Spirit of Truth. The law of sin cannot triumph over the power

## 4 Regeneration

of God. God is all-powerful. The regenerated believer is now an adopted son of God almighty. Victory is certain.

### Election

Moreover, regeneration is an instantaneous, immediate miracle of new life that begets the renewal and restoration of the image of God in man by the Holy Spirit. The miracle of regeneration is a predestinating act of God for the elect in Jesus Christ. In regeneration there is no coercion, as difficult as that fact may seem to be. It is important to keep in mind that the miracle of regeneration and the doctrine of election are axiomatic principles, not subject to the proofs demanded by a man-centered epistemology. God always makes clear to the believer the limits of his worldview epistemology. Every realized limit calls for the worship of our God. His ways are past finding out.

Beyond regeneration and sanctification is glorification and the perfected Christ-centered epistemology of thought and life. This fact guarantees the believer a future state of *non posse peccare* with Christ forever. (1 John 3:2) God is in no sense a being, who as Satan suggested to Eve, holds back His blessings, including all that the creature needs to know and believe in order to be redeemed and transformed to an intended Christ-likeness for eternity. He provides not only all that is required to believe and prosper, but abundantly, as the Psalmist prayed; "my cup runneth over." (Psalm 23:5)

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*"1 Corinthians 2:9. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered in the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

*Romans 8: 28. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."*

Since the origin and sustainer of life is God, He alone determines how one ought to live as one exercises the endowment of creaturely freedom. "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:8) Nevertheless, a miracle was required: to be born of the Spirit. Regeneration is a new beginning brought about supernaturally. This new birth can be understood as a resurrection from materialism's meaningless existence to new life of the Spirit indwelling the creature. It overcomes and reverses the results of Satan's lies and Adam's disobedience in a miracle of God's grace.

### Summary

While regeneration is immediate, sanctification is definite, then progressive in its transformation of the renewed image of God in man. A new frame of reference, a Christ-centered worldview for knowing and thinking guides the believer. Christianity is a renewal of the whole person by the indwelling Holy Spirit. A renewed mind, really the mind of Christ indwelling, means a changed (sanctified) life. So that as a man thinketh, so is he.

## 4 Regeneration

Unless one is born from above, supernaturally, nothing else - not science, not philosophy, not religion - sheds light on one's lost condition and what to do about it. To repeat. The miracle of regeneration by the Holy Spirit is necessary for the subsequent progressive transformation of the renewed image of God in man to the image of Jesus Christ.

Regenerated Believer	
From	To
Physical Body of Death	Spiritual Mind of Life
Unbelief of Truth	Belief in Truth
Not able Not to Sin	Able Not to Sin
Death Eternal & Misery	Life Eternal & Peace
Hell as Destiny	Heaven as Home

*"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."*

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*"Romans 7:19. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 21. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. 23. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."*

### War

The Apostle Paul spells out in vivid detail the experience of the transformative work of the Holy Spirit in the soul of every believer. His description has been subjected to careful analysis by theologians and scholars. Some believe that the Apostle's testimony refers to his pre-regeneration life. Others hold the view that war between "the law of my mind" and "the law of sin" is descriptive of the progressive sanctification in every believer.

According to John Owen, "where there is law there is power." The law of sin and the law of the mind or

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spirit are two principles indwelling every regenerated sinner, every believer. These two principles are opposed; each seeks dominion. The result is warfare, spiritual warfare within, as the Apostle testifies. His is the experience of conflict within, an experience no believer can avoid if indeed the indwelling Holy Spirit is an existential fact in the life of the believer. (Owen, Reference 1, p. 16 ff.)

Clearly, according to the Apostle, no Christian is exempt from the sanctifying work of the Spirit. No Christian is on leave, or on holiday from the sanctification struggle. This work is the result of regeneration, wherein there is a new birth from above enabling the sinner to repent on recognition of his lost, hell bound condition, and receive the free gift of grace in lieu of righteous condemnation. The Holy Spirit applies the benefits of the atonement by Jesus Christ to all those who believe the Gospel and accept the gracious offer of salvation and redemption.

### Work Out

*"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."*

What does it mean to work out one's salvation in fear and trembling? Before addressing this somewhat puzzling passage, several questions come to mind:

1. Does the phrase "work out" indicate a works-sanctification in which the regenerated believer has a

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set of tasks or practices that, if effectively and religiously performed or executed, will achieve the holiness of sanctification, with the help of the Spirit? In other words, is progressive sanctification a cooperative work between the indwelling Holy Spirit and the regenerated believer?

2. If sanctification is not a believer only works-sanctification, what does the phrase "to work out my own salvation" indicate? Is the work, though understood not to be physical, nevertheless a mental or spiritual exercise of some sort which is called for? What could that be?

3. If the work is exclusively spiritual rather than physical, what is the Spirit's role? Is the work strictly a work of the Holy Spirit that precludes any active participation or cooperation by the believer?

4. Why does the working out of one's salvation require a state of "fear and trembling"? Is it because the working out is a holy work of God the Spirit in the believer's soul -- an ongoing, holy undertaking by the Spirit in the creature? In other words, is progressive sanctification an ever present miraculous work of the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer?

5. Finally, assuming that sanctification is not a believer works-sanctification, but rather a mind-renewal sanctification wrought exclusively by the Spirit of God in the regenerated believer, how does this produce the required result: Christlikeness?



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These questions inquire as to the nature and action of the process of sanctification. What is actually taking place in the soul of the believer as the Spirit of God transforms the renewed image of God in the believer to the image of Jesus Christ?

### Obedience

Before addressing these questions, definitions distinguishing two types of obedience may be helpful. What is the difference between active obedience and passive obedience?

In active obedience, a person obeys a command. In passive obedience, a person submits to another regardless of consequences. The first involves behavior or 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.

*"In reference to God, active obedience is seeking out His commands and setting our hearts to do them. Passive obedience is the state of ongoing surrender that says, 'Not my will but yours be done' .... Jesus exemplified both active and passive obedience at all times during His ministry on earth, and Christians are to rely on the Holy Spirit's power to follow His example. (Acts 1:8)." (Reference 2)*

Jesus always lived in obedience to the will of God. What He heard the Father command, He obeyed to the

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letter and always. No exceptions. He testified,

*"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."*

### Sinlessness

On another occasion, Jesus charged those who sought to murder him with the question, "which of you accuses me of any sin?"

*"John 8:46. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?"*

Jesus spoke that He was the way as well as the truth and the life. He not only demonstrated that He was the life by resurrections of the dead on several well documented occasions, but that He always spoke and taught truth. He never voiced a falsehood or contradiction, but every proposition spoken by Him was propositional truth. As to the way, He not only taught that He was the way, but He lived the way in perfect obedience to God's law and will.

*"Through Jesus' active obedience, He fulfilled the totality of the law's requirements. He said, 'I always do those things that please Him' (John 8:29). In passive obedience, Jesus submitted Himself to cruel and unjust treatment because it was the will of God (Isaiah 53:7)." (Reference 2)*

While it is true that the Scripture does not make

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mention of the obedience of Jesus to the law and the will of God in terms of either active or passive obedience, nevertheless, His comportment before His accusers and His prayers to His Father demonstrate the truth of both. (1 Peter 2:23)

### Ergo

In light, therefore, of this distinction regarding the obedience of Jesus, what implications follow in response to our initial questions?

1. Progressive sanctification of the believer is the active work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's inner life; the believer rests in passive obedience to the will of God as applied by God the Holy Spirit. (Philippians 2:12)

2. The command to work out your salvation is a function of the believer's active obedience to the commandments and doctrines of the law of God in daily life as he journeys the life of an alien in this world. (Philippians 2:13)

3. The believer obeys the indwelling Holy Spirit's work passively. The role of the Holy Spirit is to take the things of Christ and show them to the illuminated mind of the believer who receives these truths transforming the renewed image of God to the image of Jesus Christ. (John 16:13-15)

4. The believer works out salvation in fear and trembling because he lives an inner (passive obedience) and an outer (active obedience) life in the realization that

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infinite God is at work in a miraculous (supernatural) transformative sanctification of his very being. The believer is both a spectator and an actor in this unique Christian experience of progressive sanctification. (John 16:7-11)

5. The believer's transformation to Christlikeness is not brought to perfection in this life, but the measure of sanctification that is achievable as an alien in this world is next to the last. Progressive sanctification in this life is penultimate. The perfection of final or complete sanctification is in eternity. (John 17)

### Meanwhile

Sanctification life for a Christian is not the life of one who has arrived. Our destination is that heavenly city which Abraham sought, a city not built with hands. In the meantime, Christians, like Abraham live as aliens in this world – aliens in every respect, not seeking to join the world or any kingdom in the world, but seeking those things which are above -- in the eternal realm of heaven – a city in the kingdom of God. (Hebrews 11:10 & 16) The Christian is to live "the way" even as Jesus lived and died.

*"Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matthew 7:14)*

A Christian is not in the dark as to his thinking, learning, following, and living. Jesus provided not only teaching, i.e., doctrine, but also displayed boldly and clearly how a believer must live daily life in whatever



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circumstances God places him.

*"With Jesus as our perfect model and the Holy Spirit as our strength, we must pursue lives of both passive and active obedience (Acts 1:8). It takes both to fulfill commands such as this: "As far as it is up to you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18). Passive obedience overlooks wrongs and leaves judgment with God. Active obedience seeks ways to do good and avoid evil. When we live this way, we glorify our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16). A Christian is to remain in a constant state of passive obedience to God. Walking in the Spirit means we stay sensitive to His leading and respond the way He wants us to (Galatians 5:16, 25). When hardships come, we endure (James 1:2). We live in the knowledge that God will work everything together for our good (Romans 8:28), so we need not pursue vengeance (Romans 12:19)." (Reference 2)*

The believer knows that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are actively working in the believer's inner being (spirit) both to will and to work God's good pleasure. (Philippians 2:13) It is not an option for the believer, nor is it something a believer will resist. Being made willing to receive the benefits of the atonement in a progressive sanctification comes with being born again. (Galatians 6:9)

*"However, passive obedience is only half of the responsibility of the Christian. God has specific commands He wants us to obey, and many of them are contrary to what we would naturally choose. Jesus told us that in order to follow Him we must "deny ourselves and take up our crosses" (Luke 9:23). ... Among other things, we are told to*

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*"be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18), "flee sexual immorality" (1 Corinthians 6:18), "love one another" (1 Peter 1:22), and "pursue holiness" (Hebrews 12:14). Those commands all require active obedience. First Thessalonians 5:12–2 is a list of commands from Paul to the church. (Reference 2)*

### Sola Fide

Salvation by faith alone was the teaching the Reformers proclaimed and the Roman Catholic magisterium anathematized.

The Counsel of Trent:

*"After months of intense debate, the council ruled against Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone: a person, the council said, was inwardly justified by cooperating with divine grace that God bestows gratuitously. Indeed, both of the "either/or" doctrines of the Protestant reformers - justification by faith alone, the authority of Scripture alone - were anathematized, in the name of a "both/and" doctrine of justification by both faith and works on the basis of the authority of both Scripture and tradition." (Reference 3)*

Contrary to Roman Catholicism, the Reformers believed as the Apostle Paul taught that works cannot save a sinner from God's condemnation and punishment.

*"Galatians 3:10. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."*

According to the Reformers the faith that saves is

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not alone. Saving faith always produces the fruit of good works, yet must never be conflated with that which justifies, that which saves – faith alone.

*"Galatians 3:3. Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"*

The just shall live by faith in active and passive obedience to the law and will of Holy God. The fruit is the fruit of the new man progressively sanctified by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

*"Colossians 3:5. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: 6. For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: 7. In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. ... 10. And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."*

The law of sin in the believer wages a war against the law of the Spirit indwelling the believer. And the law of the Spirit wages war against the law of sin. This is total opposition, a war to the extermination of the opposed law.

*"Galatians 5:17. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things you would."*

The law of sin dwells in the believer, according to Owen: it is a law in the believer but not to the believer. Its rule is broken, its strength weakened and impaired

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but nevertheless, at war with the law of the Spirit. Thus, the spiritual warfare within described by the Apostle in Romans 7. The law of the Spirit indwells the believer. Each law seeks total dominion and total obedience. There is no question as to the outcome. The law of the Spirit is the law of omnipotent God. Victory is certain and will be fully realized when the time decreed for progressive sanctification of the believer is completed.

### Two Laws

Thus, the life of a Christian is one of spiritual warfare within. This is the Apostle Paul's testimony, a war between the law of the flesh (sin and death) and the law of the Spirit.

Owen treats these two "principles" as laws. There are two laws: the law of God and the law of sin. He states that where there is law there is power, power to legislate and power to rule. Although, the law of sin in the believer has lost its complete dominion, it is a still a law.

*"But even in believers, it is a law still, though not a law 'unto' them: ...it us a law 'in' them. And though it has not a complete and, as it were, a rightful dominion over them, yet it will have a domination as to some things in them. It is still a law, and that in them, so that all its actings are the actings of a law. It acts with power, though it has lost its complete power of ruling in them. Though it is weakened, yet its nature is not changed. It is law still, and therefore powerful."*  
(Owen, Reference 1, p. 17)

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There are two duties imposed by these two laws: to obey and to submit. The law of the flesh has both rewards and sanctions just as the law of the Spirit. The rewards of the law of the flesh are the obtaining of sinful desires and pleasures, all of which lead to death. "The pleasures of sin – [are] rewards that most men lose their souls to obtain." (Owen, Reference 1, p. 17) The rewards of the law of the Spirit are the glory of Jesus achieved by means of progressive sanctification, the work of the indwelling Spirit.

No believer can avoid or negotiate a truce to terminate the spiritual warfare within. Progressive sanctification means spiritual warfare within. This spiritual warfare is the biblical revealed means for an accurate understanding of the process by which the Spirit applies the benefits of the atonement of Christ to a believer. The application of the benefits of the atonement of Jesus Christ is the work of God in the believer, for it is God who works both to will and to do His good pleasure. (Hebrews 13:21; Philippians 2:13) God is the potter who forms the vessels of honor. The regenerated believer is the clay being molded into that vessel of honor by the Potter-God-Spirit.

Another perspective for thinking about the spiritual war within the believer is to frame the conflict as one between two epistemologies: Adam-centered epistemology and Christ-centered epistemology. Two opposed worldview epistemologies are in perpetual conflict for dominion and rule in the life of a believer. The

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conflict is one of mortifying each element of Adam-centered way of knowing in the power of the Spirit, and the gradual realization of Christlikeness, the image of Christ in the believer. This is the complete dominion of Christ-centered knowledge and truth.

The conflict is ongoing and a burden. The yoke is the easy yoke of Jesus; the burden is light for it is the Spirit of God who enables mortification of sin and the members of sin in our bodies. Sanctification is a necessary element if the believer is to enjoy God forever.

Complete sanctification means a state of *non posse peccare*, not able to sin life, for ever. Every Christian will be perfected at glorification to live abundant life, in abounding joy, in worship in spirit and truth, in service to the Triune God, and in gratitude for the grace of God in His plan of redemption.

### Summary

In other words, the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer launches a two-fold sanctification project, one passive and the other active. This is progressive sanctification, one that includes definite sanctification on the occasion of the sinner's regeneration and justification. The thief on the cross who asked Jesus to remember him was regenerated, justified, and sanctified; although his life of progressive sanctification was perhaps the shortest ever recorded. (Luke 23:43) The project starts with an indwelling work of the Holy Spirit in the inner man. In this process, the believer exercises passive obedience for it is God who works in him both to will and

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to do His good pleasure. The work of the Spirit is spiritual warfare within and as such is transformative. This warfare transforms the believer's renewed image of God to the image of Jesus Christ. It is a transformative work of mind-renewal from the old nature's remaining man-centered way of knowing and living to a Christ-centered epistemology for thought and life.

Transformation within the believer results in a changed life wherein the former works become rejected, avoided, and hated. A renewed mind produces renewed works, and the call of God in Christ to a new way of thought and life. This latter is an expression of the believer's active obedience to biblical commandments. Jesus said, if you love me, keep my commandments. (John14:23-24)

Passive obedience bows in worship to our Triune God, offering prayers and supplications with thanksgiving and in humility to the will of God. The peace of God then guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)

*"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."*

The just live by faith -- in both salvation and sanctification.

*"Romans 1:17. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."*

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## 6 Easy Yoke

*"Matthew 11:28. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

### Rest

To take Jesus' yoke means to actively and passively conform to the will of His Father for all thought and life even as He did. Jesus is the Way. His way was the way of abiding by God's law and will, to cede control of mind and body to the rule of God as guided by Scripture and the indwelling Holy Spirit.

It is in this state that the believer can learn from Jesus Christ, for all learning is humility before the facts, the truths of Scripture. Furthermore, a believer, yoked with Christ's easy yoke and following Christ is one who yearns most willingly to lead a life of self-denial, even as Jesus did. Christ's easy yoke and pride of life are mutually incompatible. Pride and humility enjoy no peace

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together, but are but another indicator of spiritual warfare in a believer. The unbeliever, on the other hand, is always restless, always seeking, lusting, and coveting for enough is never enough. His burden is heavy and the yoke of sin is not easy for any unbeliever who may seek rest from the labor of daily sinful thought and life.

### Promise

Jesus declared "my yoke is easy and my burden light." (vs. 30) Easy in comparison to what? Light in contrast to what or who? Jesus and the Apostles did not leave us without unequivocal and truthful answers.

These questions and others related to the way of thought and life Christ teaches are addressed by Jesus and the Apostles in Scripture.

For example, the Apostle Paul groaned: "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24) He sought deliverance from the burdens of legalistic systems of works, the corruption of sin, and the goads of conscience. A self-centered way of knowing gives birth to the sins of pride and self-righteousness. The consequence of self-idolatry is guilt, a guilt that causes ongoing cognitive dissonance – a very heavy burden indeed, and one that cannot be placated with counseling and drugs.

Jesus tells all who are heavy laden and weary to come to Him for rest. Of what does this rest consist? Matthew chapter 23 spells out plainly how grievous the yoke of unbearable hypocrisy is. The legacy of sin only

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adds to the burden of the yoked-unbeliever. "We are restless until we rest in thee," according to Augustine. This restlessness is the product of dissonance in the unbeliever. Jesus, by contrast, has a message and promise of eternal rest and peace.

*"Jesus was saying that any kind of law-keeping is burdensome and amounts to a "heavy yoke" of oppression because no amount of law-keeping can bridge the gap between our sinfulness and God's holiness. God says through the mouth of the prophet Isaiah that all of our righteous deeds are like a "polluted garment," and Paul reiterated to the Romans that "no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law" (Romans 3:20). The good news is that Jesus promises to all who come to Him that He will give them rest from the heavy burden of trying to earn our way into heaven and rest from the oppressive yoke of self-righteousness and legalism. Jesus encourages those who are "heavy laden" to take His yoke upon them, and in so doing they will find rest for their souls. The yoke of Jesus is light and easy to carry because it is the yoke of repentance and faith followed by a singular commitment to follow Him. As the apostle John says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3)." (Reference 1)*

### Yoke and Burden

The yoke is easy because, to those who believe on His name, the atonement of Jesus Christ repeals the curse of sin and death. Christ offers the easy yoke of His imputed righteousness to all who believe His Gospel. This is good news. There is none better. The burden is light because Jesus bore the full weight of the



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burden of our sins, becoming a curse for us. The Apostle declared:

*"Galatians 3:13. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."*

Thus, the gracious invitation to come to Jesus all who are heavy burdened by sin, the weight of guilt, and the penalty of death. What more gracious offer of rest and true freedom from the burdens of self-righteous works? His way is the path of relief and rest from the weight of sin and death. Moreover, it never fails because He never fails; the blood of the lamb cleanses from all sin.

Scripture teaches that the sinner does not earn salvation nor can he ever merit it by works – no matter how pious, noble, or worthy they may be by human standards. Any sinner's works presumed to be payment for salvation are as filthy rags; believers are justified by faith alone in Christ alone, "... not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Galatians 2:16)

*"2 Timothy 1:9. Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."*

The Apostle Paul's groaning question, 'Who shall deliver me from this body of death?' is answered in the following verses:

## 6 Easy Yoke

*"Romans 7:25. I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. ...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."*

*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."*

### Free at Last

Christians experience a spiritual warfare within. True. But the end thereof is to be a freedom from not only the yoke of sin and death but from the heavy burden of living in a body of death. Yes, the law of sin and death still exercises some power in the life of a believer but not dominion, and he takes encouragement in bringing to remembrance that his sanctification is progressive, and its outcome is guaranteed.

In sum,

*What makes Jesus' yoke easy and His burden light is that in Jesus' own active obedience (i.e., His perfect fulfillment of the Law of God), He carried the burden that we were meant to carry. His perfect obedience is applied (imputed) to us through faith, just as His righteousness was exchanged for our sin at the cross (2 Corinthians 5:21). Our obedience to Jesus then becomes our "spiritual worship" (Romans 12:1). Furthermore, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit who works in our lives to mold us into the image of Christ, thereby making the yoke of Jesus easy and His burden light. The life lived by faith is a much*

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*lighter yoke and a much easier burden to carry than the heavy and burdensome yoke of self-righteousness under which some continually strive to make themselves acceptable to God through works." (Reference 1)*

To be yoked in Christ is not to wear a spiritual strait-jacket or put on a bullet-proof vest that will serve as armor against the slings and arrows of sinful living. Rather it is to know that there is now no condemnation for those saved in Christ, who bear now the imputed righteousness of his atonement and are now free from the penalty and guilt of sin. Having received the free gift of faith and gracious offer of salvation, the believer enters a life of progressive sanctification, a work of the Holy Spirit within the believer, one that produces the fruit of the Spirit.

This fruit is the not the product of a "works-salvation," but the fruit of God's righteousness at work in the believer. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23) We now, the Apostle says, live in the Spirit and so can walk in the Spirit, no longer harnessed in the heavy yoke of sinful works and the burden of a body of death, for God in Christ bore these burdens to free us from the law of sin and death. (vs. 25)

Thus, there is now no condemnation for those who walk in the Spirit bearing the light yoke of Christ. The burden is light; because obedience to the law and will of God is in the power and work of the Holy Spirit

## 6 Easy Yoke

who cannot fail.

*"Isaiah 64:6. But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities like the wind, have taken us away. ... 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."*

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### Reference

1. "My Yoke is Easy and My Burden is Light", Got-Questions.org <<https://www.gotquestions.org/yoke-easy-burden-light.html>>.



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*"Romans 12:1. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."*

### Definitions

One dictionary defines 'transform' as "to change the outward form or appearance of" something. The same dictionary offers a second *definiens*, "to change in composition or structure." The latter comes closer to the meaning of our text, 'to be transformed by the renewing of the mind.' However, neither definition offers the explicit option of a change from the inner (mind) to an outward demonstration of that change or transformation. The change or transformation in our text is an inner change that is made visible in changed behavior and life, a life no longer conformed to this world. Transformation by the renewal of the mind is a work of the indwelling Spirit

of God in the spirit of man, the mind.

Rather than bringing about a change in the mind by means of a menu of practices, exercises, or behavior modifications, the Apostle's approach urges a rejection of that worldview which conforms one to the world's idolatry of self-worship. A man-centered epistemology or way of knowing reality and life is to be replaced by that which is reasonable service, namely, the body offered as a living sacrifice, the opposite of self-worship. A believer lives a life of self-denial, for this is reasonable, given the reality of his now renewed mind. This transformation begins in the mind and is a profound mental change that inevitably becomes visibly empirical reality as a changed life. As a result, the body is presented as a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God and is evidence of the inner man transformation-work of the Spirit.

This transformation, while a work of the indwelling Spirit in the believer, is among other things, a change in worldviews: from what remains of the man-based worldview's-presuppositions to a God-centered way of knowing and life. Progressive sanctification continues the transformation from the former (self-centered) to a Christ-centered epistemology, one that takes every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5)

Thus, the sinner's mind is renewed first by the Spirit of God in regeneration of the image of God. The believer's renewed image of God is then transformed by

the renewal of the mind to the image of Jesus Christ in the progressive sanctification work of the indwelling Spirit of God.

In this manner, the reality of the transformation that takes place in a sinner begins with regeneration and definite sanctification. The transformative work then proceeds from definite sanctification to progressively attain the Christlikeness of a living sacrificial life -- all in preparation for a glorification that the believer will receive and enjoy in eternity. Thus, for a believer, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (Philippians 1:21)

#### Christlikeness

According to James Boice, "God finds us. God calls us. God perfects us. And God never begins a thing that He does not intend to finish." (Boice, Reference 1, p. 174)

*"... Paul speaks of God's great purpose in calling the Christian, which is 'to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.' God is so delighted with Jesus Christ that He has set the whole course of creation and human history in motion just so He could call out a race of sinful human beings, put His life within them, and transform them to be like His Son. The result is that there will be then be millions of 'Christs' where there was only one before. This does not mean that we shall become divine, of course. The Bible does not teach that. But we shall be like Him. We shall be like the Lord Jesus and we shall be so inevitably, because it is God Himself who does the transforming. (Boice, Reference 1, p. 174)*

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The Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and shows them to the believer. This was an important teaching in the discourse Jesus had with His disciples as He consoled them in the face of His death and departure. In this discourse, Jesus declares that it is imperative that He depart for only then would the Holy Spirit come to dwell in each. The Spirit's mission: to comfort them and continue their sanctification empowers them to proclaim the message of the Gospel to unbelievers everywhere.

*"John 16:14. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. 15. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."*

The truths spoken by Jesus, truths that the Spirit makes known to the believer in and through sanctification serve to comfort and encourage the believer in his walk and life. At the same time, the Spirit's work transforms the mind of the believer to a Christ-centered way of knowing and life. Transformation to the Christlikeness envisioned in Scripture is the hope of Glory, Jesus Christ in the believer forever.

*"2 Corinthians 3:18. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."*

*Colossians 1:27. To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."*

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For the believer, Christlikeness will be a perfected sanctification celebrated in the glory of Jesus Christ. This was His prayer for all those whom God had given Him even before the foundations of the world. Believers in heaven are partakers of the glory of Jesus, a glory that unifies God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus prayed to the Father:

*"John 17:24. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."*

Believers are destined to be one in God and Christ. Thus, as God the Father is in Christ, Christ the son is in the Father, and believers are one even as Father and Son are one. Therefore, believers rest in Christ and their lives are in Christ hidden in God. (Colossians 3:3)

The yoke of Christ is an easy yoke and the burden is light, for it is the Spirit of God who works in us both to will and to do his good pleasure. Taking of the yoke of Christ is to cease from all labor of self-righteousness and to enter the rest God has prepared for His elect.

Thus, to be like Christ means to be united with Him in thought and life forever. Believers will be one with Him in God. (John 17:21ff.)

### Image of Christ

Transformation, then, is a change in the mind whereby it increasingly acquires the capacity to take every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ.

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The goal of progressive sanctification is the transformation of the renewed image of God to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. As Jesus always obeyed God's law and will, believers, following Christ, are being transformed to an ultimate state of *non posse peccare*, always and forever obedient to the law and will of God, just as Christ thought and lived.

*"God's desire for all who know Him is for us to become more like Christ. We do this by first growing in our knowledge of Christ. .... The deeper our knowledge of Christ, the deeper our understanding of Him, and the more like Him we become. ... Romans 12:1-2 tells us emphatically that the process of filling our minds with the knowledge of God not only brings us closer to Christlikeness, but obedience to that knowledge aligns us with the perfect will of God: '... to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God ... . Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.'... Luke sums it up best when he describes what Jesus told His disciples: 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.' ... (Luke 9:23-24). The cross was an instrument of death, and Jesus encourages us to take up our cross in order to put to death our old sin nature upon it. ... Therefore, conforming to the Word of God is conforming to Christ." (Reference 2)*

### Self-Denial

#### I. What is the significance of self-denial?

Essentially, the denial of self by the self is a seeming impossibility for in denying self, it is the self who

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does the denying. Is Jesus then recommending the impossible? No! Jesus reminds his disciples that what appears impossible for men does not imply impossible for God. Man is not the measure of what is or what is not possible. Jesus said: "For with God nothing shall be impossible." (Luke 1:37) Nevertheless, God is not the God of contradictions nor the God of confusion. (Numbers 23:19; 1 Corinthians 14:33) Therefore, Jesus is not teaching something that is impossible, i.e., something that is logically incoherent, when he states that if any man will follow Him "let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23)

The denial of self, therefore, is not only possible but the inevitable result of progressive sanctification, the work of the Spirit of God in the believer. It is the fruit of the mind of Christ in the believer when he takes every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ.

Mortification of the sinful members of the body of death continues in a war between the flesh and the indwelling mind of Christ. "We have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:16c)

Arthur Pink asks what is the meaning for a man to utterly deny himself? (Pink, Reference 3, p2ff.)

*"First, 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*

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*own wisdom. ... "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight" (Isa 5:21). "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom 1:21). When the Holy Spirit applies the gospel in power to a soul, 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" (2Co 10:5). ... ." (Pink, Reference 3, p. 2)*

1. To deny oneself is to renounce all confidence in the flesh or in one's strength to overcome the curse's legacy or gain victory over evil.

*"It is the heart bowing to Christ's positive declaration: 'Without me ye can do nothing' (Job 15:5) ... Then let us "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2Ti 2:1)." (Pink, Reference 3, p. 2)*

2. To deny oneself is to renounce self-referenced way of knowing, thinking, and living. Self-will is replaced by God's Will.

*"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 not your own, for ye are bought with a price" (1 Co 6:19-20). It is saying with Christ, "Nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mar 14:36)." (Pink, Reference 3, p. 3)*

3. To deny oneself is to renounce self-idolatry, the consequence of the self's lusts and desires.

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*"A man's self is a bundle of idols" (Thomas Manton, Puritan, 1620-1677), and those idols must be repudiated. (Pink, Reference 3, p. 3)*

4. To deny oneself is to renounce all self-centered thinking for a Christ-centered way of life. No exceptions and forever.

*"Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom 13:14). It is to be constant, not occasional. ... It is to be spontaneous, not forced, performed gladly, not reluctantly: 'And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord.' (Col 3:23)." (Pink, Reference 3, p. 3)*

*"The grace of God is 'teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.' (Ti 2:12)." (Pink, Reference 3, p. 3)*

In sum, self-denial is the way of active obedience to the law of God and passive obedience in submission to the will of God following the pattern Jesus displayed in His life and ministry.

### One's Cross

II. What is the meaning of bearing the cross daily?

Jesus invites all who are weary and heavy burdened to come to Him for rest and peace. (Matthew 11:28) He beckons sinners to learn from Him, to "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:29-30)

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Bearing one's cross daily does not at first glance appear to harmonize with talk of easy yoke and light burdens. Appearances to the contrary, however, cannot dispel the truth of Jesus' propositions: If we learn from Him, it will be while yoked with His easy yoke. If we find rest for our souls in Christ, it will be the rest of a burden that is light.

There is no contradiction between bearing one's cross daily and the easy yoke and light burden of daily thought and life, not if the Holy Spirit is transforming the renewed image of God in the believer to the image of Christ. The cross then is the burden of progressive sanctification within the believer by the indwelling Spirit of God. The believer's cross is the passive obedience of submitting to the will of God in Christ made real by the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit.

Bearing one's cross is in the fear and trembling required in working out one's salvation, for it is God who works both to will and to do His good pleasure in every believer. (Philippians 2:13) We can do all things through Christ which strengthens us. (Philippians 4:13)

Arthur Pink's analysis is worth careful study and repeated readings. His discourse is a Scripture based discussion concerning the meaning and significance of self-denial life.

*"And take up his cross.*

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*This refers to the cross not as an object of faith, but as an experience in the soul. The legal benefits of Calvary are received through believing, when the guilt of sin is cancelled, but the experiential virtues of Christ's cross are only enjoyed as we are, in a practical way, "made conformable unto his death" (Phi 3:10). It is only as we really apply the cross to our daily lives, regulate our conduct by its principles, that it becomes efficacious over the power of indwelling sin. There can be no resurrection where there is no death, and there can be no practical walking 'in newness of life' until we 'bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus' (2Co 4:10). .... It is his 'cross' and not his creed, which distinguishes a true follower of Christ from religious worldlings. ... To walk with Christ necessarily involves sharing his humiliation: 'Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach' (Heb 13:13. ... Make no mistake, here it is utterly impossible to keep in with the world and have fellowship with the Holy Christ. Thus, to 'take up my cross' means that I deliberately court the enmity of the world through my refusing to be 'conformed' to it (Rom 12:2). But what matters the world's frowns if I am enjoying the Savior's smiles!*

*Taking up my "cross" means a life voluntarily surrendered to God. As the act of wicked men, the death of Christ was a murder; but as the act of Christ Himself, it was a voluntary sacrifice, offering Himself to God. It was also an act of obedience to God. In John 10:18 He said, 'No man taketh it [His life] from me, but I lay it down of myself.' And why did He? His very next words tell us: "This commandment have I received of my Father." The cross was the supreme demonstration of Christ's obedience. Herein He was our Exemplar. Once again we quote Philippians 2:5, 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.' In what follows we see the Beloved of the*



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*Father taking upon Him the form of a Servant, and becoming 'obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' Now the obedience of Christ must be the obedience of the Christian voluntary, gladsome, unreserved, continuous. ... The cross is more than the object of the Christian's faith, it is the badge of discipleship, the principle by which his life is to be regulated. The 'cross' stands for surrender and dedication to God: 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, your reasonable service' (Rom 12:1)." (Pink, Reference 1, pp. 3-4)*

### Following Christ

#### III. How does the believer follow Jesus Christ?

Following Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life, who strengthens us to active and passive obedience to the law and the will of God is to follow his footsteps, for he lived a life most holy and worthy of imitation and worship. Jesus Christ was rejected by his people and the world. He was despised, insulted, impugned, and hated without a cause. Indeed, he was hated because He spoke the truth. He went about doing good, healing the sick, blind, diseased, and demon-possessed. Yes, He forgave sins and was charged with blasphemy in so doing. Even His miracles motivated the slander of enemies who claimed that they were wrought in the power of demons and Satan. He was sinless, perfect, meek, humble, gracious, loving, kind, wise, gentle, and forgiving; no one could accuse Him of any wrong doing. He was obedient throughout his sinless, perfect life. He prayed to His Father: "not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Matthew 26:39) He always did

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the will of His Father.

Following Jesus means taking every thought captive to Christ's obedience. Because of His obedience to the will of the Father, sinners are regenerated, redeemed, and sanctified to ultimate glory with Jesus Christ forever.

### Summary

Regenerated, sanctified, transformed Christians "... have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him: ... Christ is all and in all."(Colossians 3:10-11)

*"For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it' (Mat 16:25). Words almost identical with these are found again in Matthew 10:39, Mark 8:35, Luke 9:24, Luke 17:33, and John 12:25. Surely, such repetition argues the deep importance of our noting and heeding this saying of Christ's. He died that we might live (John 12:24): so must we (John 12:25). Like Paul we must be able to say, 'Neither count I my life dear unto myself' (Act 20:24). The 'life' that is lived for the gratification of self in this world, is 'lost' for eternity; the life that is sacrificed to self-interests and yielded to Christ, will be 'found' again, and preserved through eternity." (Pink, Reference 3, p. 5)*

To repeat. Transformation is the process of change from the image of God renewed in fallen man to the image of Christ in the regenerated believer. It will be the state of ultimate Christlikeness for the regenerated, sanctified believer in Glory. Transformation is a change within from one nature to another. The old nature dies;

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the new nature or the inner man has eternal life. Even so identity of person is not lost.

*"Jesus invites us to follow Him, and we have His example of obedience (John 15:10), sacrificial love (John 15:12-13), and patient suffering (1 Peter 2:19-23). ... Becoming more Christlike is the result of Christian growth. When we are first saved, we are immature in wisdom and knowledge and inexperienced in grace and love. But then we grow. In each of these things, our charge is to become stronger—and more Christlike. 'Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ' (2 Peter 3:18). 'May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else' (1 Thesalonians 3:12). Right now, God works in us: 'We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord' (2 Corinthians 3:18). One day, however, the process will be complete: 'When he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is' (1 John 3:2). The promise of being fully Christlike in the future is in itself motivation for becoming more Christlike now: 'Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure' (1 John 3:3)." (Reference 4)*

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## 8 Potter and Clay

*"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?"*

### Vessels

The Apostle Paul asks his readers in Romans 9:20 "Nay but, O man, who art thou that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"

These questions, though rhetorical, serve a purpose as any useful analogy does. As clay, we are that from which our Creator shapes predetermined, predestinated vessels whether, for honor or dishonor to be used for whatever purpose and goal He intends. This does not sit well with many who are governed by a self-centered epistemology. The self demands some role in the creation, life, and destiny of the vessel. That role, specified by a self, is nothing less than the exercise of the will to determine for oneself whether the vessel is for honor or dishonor. Thus, the question, "Why have

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you made me thus?" The creature enjoying a 'free will,' it is assumed, has the right to ask the Creator: 'What have you done?' or 'Why have you done as you have done?' The Creator, according to the self, clay with a 'free will,' is subjected to a deposition, conducted by no less than the clay, a piece of talking, thinking, judging, choosing lump.

### Presumption

The potter-clay analogy, not only reveals the presumption of man demanding an accounting from his Creator, but is an affront to God's sovereignty, as the clay demands an accounting from Him. In so doing, the creature assumes autonomy. If anyone can imagine a more ridiculous piece of blasphemy, it would have to be one in which God does as He is told, debasing Himself in humiliation to incoherence. Of course, God cannot be and will never be subject to the whims of the clay no matter how demanding they may be. Man is not autonomous.

God created man in His image and likeness with a rational mind and all that was required for communication and fellowship between Creator and creature. That included the gifts of language, meaning, understanding, thinking, knowing, judging, valuing, and making appropriate choices. Adam's disobedience was deliberate, and calculated to achieve knowledge on his terms, and in defiance of the sanction – his death. He chose what was prohibited. He understood both the prohibition and the penalty. But even Adam did not ask

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God his Creator, "Why have you made me thus?" He perhaps came close to voicing something similar when he blamed God for the woman Eve. Although even in blaming God for Eve, Adam did not call on God to account either for the prohibition or its penalty of death when violated.

### Infinite Spirit

In short, God is Sovereign, infinite in wisdom, power, knowledge, and truth. As infinite Spirit, as Sovereign He is subject to no one at any time or for any reason. God cannot be less than God. Moreover, among the impossibles God cannot do such as lie or think and speak contradictions, He cannot sin, die, cheat, deceive, think any corrupt thought, or do any evil act. God cannot create a creature to whom He must bow in worship and obedience. The Potter cannot be accountable to the clay from which He creates vessels for either honor or dishonor. Impossible. This "cannot" is no claim to omniscience; rather it affirms that God is the God of truth, the source of all truth and all other perfections.

When Adam plunged humanity into the abyss of sin and death, God was not surprised or demoralized. He did not have to come up with Plan B. There was no Plan B; in fact, Scripture does not record even a Plan A. The Potter and clay analogy does not suggest a plan that went wrong. The clay has been fashioned into whatever Sovereign God predetermined according to His will to serve His purposes in achieving the ends He

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has decreed. Man has a role, of course: to worship and serve God his Sovereign Creator according to God's holy law and will. Man is accountable for man sinned not because of a free will, but against knowledge – true knowledge. Adam knew the prohibition and consequence of disobedience. He was not ignorant. He had knowledge and sinned against that knowledge. He sinned against his God, his Creator – who was all and only good to him. And to us.

### All-Powerful

God's power is infinite. One suggested meaning of infinite is "past finding out." Epistemology, even a man-centered one, pertains to what can be known. Epistemology also points out what is past finding out. Limits are known and play roles in daily thought and life. All know we are powerless to avoid death; powerless to save ourselves; powerless to create life; and powerless to control the forces that rule creation and creatures. Man presumes otherwise when he thinks himself to be the measure of the things that are that they are and the things that are not that they are not. Protagoras thought as Satan. Both were wrong.

### All-Knowing

It is past finding out for man to grasp the significance of this fact: God is Omniscient. The human mind realizes the depth and extent of its ignorance in contrast to knowing as infinite God knows. As difficult as it may be for us to understand God is omniscient, such is a fact of revealed truth. God knows everything,

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always, without error, and without exception. He knows all, always has, and always will. There are no unknowns, no secrets, no hidden facts that await God's research and discovery. It is impossible for God not to know all: everything in heaven, earth, or the cosmos.

### Love

The love of God for His Son and for His creation is beyond finding out. God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son as an atonement to save His people from the consequences of Adam's disobedience -- death and hell. Here is love, not that we loved God first and then God loved us in return. No. God loves His people, His creation, and His Son and it is His love that is at work in the redemption of His people and creation. (1 John 4:19)

### Autonomy

A man-centered epistemology deems man to be if not sovereign, at least autonomous. This means that man is accountable to no one but himself. His thinking, his desires, his will are sovereign. This is the consequence of a self-centered frame of reference. If it is folly to think that man is autonomous (and it is), then man becomes folly, i.e., man becomes a fool who is turned over to foolish thinking and a foolish life. This is what a reprobate mind thinks. Man is a creature; *ergo*, sovereignty for man is a lie of the father of lies, Satan.

### Sovereign

What then does it mean that God is sovereign?

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*When we speak of the sovereignty of God, we mean He rules the universe, ... God is described in the Bible as all-powerful and all-knowing (Psalm 147:5), outside of time (Exodus 3:14; Psalm 90:2), and responsible for the creation of everything (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1). ... The fact that God is sovereign essentially means that He has the power, wisdom, and authority to do anything He chooses within His creation. ... God has the ability to do anything, to take action and intervene in any situation, ... . God's "sovereignty" means that He is absolute in authority and unrestricted in His supremacy. ... ." (Reference 1)*

The Shorter Catechism's question "on the being of God contains perhaps the most concise answer in the literature.

What is God?

*"God is Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." (Reference 2, p. 7.005)*

To whom be glory forever!

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2. Westminster Confession of Faith. The Shorter Catechism, Q4. What is God? #7.005, The Book of Confessions. Office of the General Assembly, New York: The United Presbyterian Church in the USA. 1970.

## 9 The Knowing Self

*1 Corinthians 6:19. What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."*

### Ergo Sum

**D**escartes' familiar slogan, "Cogito, ergo sum," if inadequate as a basis for a philosophical system, at least takes note of self-centered epistemology. The emphasis is unmistakable: "I." Of course, this is supposed to be a deduction, not a statement in ontology; nevertheless, there is no mistaking his starting point: the self.

Others have opposed his axiom, citing "dubito, ergo sum" or "sum, ergo cogito, ergo dubito" as examples of the futility of his starting point. Such discussion falls beyond the scope of this project and is introduced here only to emphasize the role of self in epistemology.

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### Self-Esteem

Once upon a time, the author attended a committee chaired by a government official seeking educational strategies for introducing and teaching self-esteem classes in prisons. The official claimed that prisons were full of persons who had committed various crimes primarily because they lacked self-esteem. He proposed self-esteem training for felons as a form of rehabilitation and to prevent recidivism, for felons are prone to repeat their crimes. A worldview that avoids addressing the question of sin and sinful natures as the causes of crime is tantamount to the blind leading the blind. The avoidance of self-blame and self-responsibility is a reminder of the fall of Adam and Eve. They were the first to blame others while trying to avoid responsibility. We sin because we are sinners; we are not sinners because we sin, although we do sin. Indeed we, born in Adam, are unable not to sin. To blame the lack of self-esteem as the cause of evil is a case of false cause, a fallacy.

Sin however will not let up and as a result, when we sin, someone or something other than the sinner is to blame and responsible. If not the lack of self-esteem, then the environment, poverty, or even our genes must be the cause for wrongs. Self-justifications are also a product of sinners and sin.

### Blame

Adam blamed first his Eve, then his God. No mention, however, of the lack of self-esteem in either case,

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and Satan blamed no one. In fact, he, of all, did not lack self-esteem.

*"Isaiah 14:13. For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: 14. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."*

The "I" in Satan's plan is the "I" of self, the person of Satan. If self refers to "person," a self-centered epistemology should define what is meant by "person."

Here, we follow Gordon Clark who provided the following definition of *person*, one with which the author agrees.

*"Accordingly the proposal is that a man is a congeries, a system, sometimes an agglomeration of miscellany, but at any rate, a collection of thoughts. A man is what he thinks and no two men are precisely the same combination." (Clark, Reference 1, p. 106)*

A person (a self) is a collection of thoughts, a unique composite set of propositions. These propositions or meanings when anchored as Satan anchored his (I will ...), yields the self-centered epistemology of not only Satan, but Adam and all born in his image. This exchange from a God-centered epistemology to a man-centered way of knowing, to disobedience of God's law and rebellion against His rule yielded for Adam and his posterity God's judgment and curse.

Holy Writ makes clear that the fall of our ancestors

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was cause for the curse that fell on both creature and creation. The curse of a corrupted self at the core of human existence has been the legacy for all humanity since the disobedience of Adam and Eve.

### Self

Horatius Bonar wrote that self is "the master curse of man." In his exposition of the importance and significance of a Christ-centered theology, he declares that it requires the setting aside of self.

*"I do not mean the annihilation of self, as some speak. There is no such thing, ... 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. 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." (Bonar, Reference 2, p. 1)*

Self-idolatry is another aspect of a man-centered epistemology. This way of thinking and knowing is the cursed state of unable not to sin (*non posse non peccare*). Depraved at the core, his self, man cannot overcome his sinful nature. To be "dead in trespasses and sins"

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means total inability for renewal. A corpse is not capable of self-resurrection. This is the curse of a self-centered way of knowing and thinking.

*"They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Romans 3:12)*

There is no one who does good, no not a single self, not a single person. Such is the extent and depth of the curse of sin. How then can man escape the just condemnation?

### Substitute

According to Bonar, the substitute for sinful self and the curse of self is the Lord Jesus Christ. He comes into the place of self and indwells the spirit of man to begin and continue the work of the Spirit's progressive sanctification.

*"In turning from self, we do not leave ourselves without an object to live for, or to die for: we get one infinitely more worthy than we possessed before. Instead of self, we get the Son of God: the glorious one. He fills us, occupies us, engrosses us henceforth. He is all to us what self was before. He takes the place of self in everything from first to last, great or small. He is the Substitute for self, first of all, in the matter of our standing before God. As the first thing the Holy Spirit does is to set aside self, in the matter of justification and acceptance, so His next is to present to us the Son of God as the true ground of our acceptance. ... Having taken Him in the place of self, we find ourselves at once accepted of the Father, accepted in the beloved, accepted, not because self has been improved, but because self has been*



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*set aside and the son of God substituted in its room." (Bonar, Reference 2, pp. 3-4)*

No session of self-esteem therapy or education are called for simply because self-esteem epistemology presupposes self-idolatry which cancels and negates any admission of need for a substitute or any way of escape. Only Jesus Christ is the way and the life. In Him,

*"we find an object worth living for, an object that we can carry through everything through every part of life, into every region of life. We make Him our Alpha and Omega, our first and out last. ... Thus, in living and in dying, Christ is all. ... You are not your own at any time, nor in any circumstances, but His, His only." (Bonar, Reference 2, p. 4)*

The exchange our original parents chose is repaired in the reversal from man-centered life and knowledge, to Christ-centered life and way of knowing. Henceforth, the life of sanctification follows the pattern and way Jesus Christ lived and sets forth His plan for all who follow Him, for he said to his disciples:

*"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matthew 16:24)*

Luke also wrote of Jesus' three-fold plan: denial of self; taking up one's cross, and following Christ, he added that the cross-bearing is **daily**. The plan cannot be compartmentalized so that one can accomplish, say, self-denial and dismiss the others. No, the plan is a

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unity of three. Each component is necessary and is accomplished in the sanctification life of the believer.

### Summary

The chart that follows displays the contrasting elements of the Holy Spirit's progressive sanctification in the mind and life of the believer.

Self-Fallen to Self-Sanctified	
Autonomous Self	Sovereign Christ
Self-Esteem	Self-Denial
Self-Rehabilitation	Substitution
Self-Worship	God Worship
Death	Life
Hell Destiny	Heaven Destiny

Jesus Christ declared that the whole law of God could be summarized in this manner:

*"Luke 10:27. And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.*

*Deuteronomy 6:5. And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." (See also Deuteronomy 10:12)*

Note the universal "all." All thine heart or mind; All thy soul; All thy might or strength; God first and always, then neighbor, and last self. No exceptions.



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This is the biblical order of love: God, neighbor, and then, self. But what of self? Is one to love self, sinful-self, but only last, in the proper order of God, neighbor, and only then, self? Yes, self is last. It is at that precise place that one is to deny self, and love God above all, then one's neighbor as one's self. In this denial of self, the Christ-centered way of knowing and living is established and love of self-restored to its proper place and role. In so doing one loves oneself, but only after love of God and neighbor.

Jesus replaces the self at every point when the believer takes every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5) His obedience was to always do the will of His Father – always both actively in obedience to all of the law of God, and passively to the death on the cross. (John 5:30)

Only then is it possible to bear one's cross daily, and follow Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life. Such is the way of a Christ-centered epistemology, to know Him and to live and die as unto Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. (Galatians 2:20)

*"Romans 14:7. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. 8. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. 9. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living."*

For to me, as the Apostle Paul preached and taught, to live is Jesus Christ, and to die is gain. (Philippians

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1:21)

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*"Philippians 4:8. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."*

### Self Knowing

**E**pistemology has been the focus of this thought-experiment concerning the meaning and significance of the work of the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer. The Spirit's work of definite and progressive sanctification is silent, invisible, effective, and powerful. These qualities cannot be measured or subject to naturalism's scientific methodology for they are not empirical. Their reality is based not on the naturalism's empirical methods but on the truths of revelation. Many of their effects are observable, but not the cause, He being the third person of the Holy Trinity.

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The transforming work of the Holy Spirit is spiritual; it is supernatural. It is primarily a work that takes place in the spiritual dimension of existence, a dimension that is part of the image of God as man.

As mentioned repeatedly, man is what he thinks, and what he thinks is framed by worldview presuppositions. If these presuppositions rule out that which pertains to the spiritual, i.e., the supernatural, then there is no scientific way for explaining a host of qualities that every human experiences and enjoys. Thought, meaning, knowledge, truth, value and much more are not quantifiable observables that can be subject to the methods of science to either discover their origins or subject them to empirical tests of verification. The tools of naturalism are practical for the realities of the physical dimension of existence and, for the most part, have proven valuable, although not without sometimes serious unintended consequences. In short, spiritual assets are simply not the data for experimentation or empirical tests in some laboratory. Nevertheless, these innate realities are indispensably necessary for the study of the physical realm.

The very language we use springs from the spiritual, not the physical dimension of existence. Brains do not think, intend, plan, conceive, or even believe. Minds do. Nor does matter in motion plus chance produce a single quality of the spiritual dimension of existence. Science makes use of all these non-physical realities to

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study the physical and to exercise dominion to the extent possible over nature. However, no science or man-centered epistemology is able to explain or provide an account for a host of qualities that every human experiences and enjoys. To repeat. Thought, meaning, knowledge, truth, value and much more are not quantifiable observables. Nor are they subject to the methods of science to either discover their origins or duplicate them in some fabricated creation.

Of course, the physical dimension of existence has its "deity," evolution. 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 propositions – spiritual assets.

Naturalistic science in many ways captures the essential attributes of a man-centered way of thinking, knowing and living. Its mantra or, if you prefer, its motto is Protagorean in worldview: "Man is the measure of all that is, that it is, and that is not, that it is not!" To the question, who is man? it answers, Man is autonomous matter in motion ruled by chance, and as such, sovereign over all that is physical or exists in the physical realm. Moreover, since all is physical or nothing, man can dispense with all that is labelled spiritual. A

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Protagorean worldview embedded in naturalistic science has no access to the spiritual realm of existence nor does it seek it, for it is considered to be myth.

### Recap

A completely alien way of knowing for man with a self or a man-referenced epistemology is described, elaborated, and explained in the revealed truths of Scripture. These truths are proclaimed by the source of all knowledge and truth, God Almighty. He is the Sovereign Creator of creation and creatures, men and animals and all that is. God is spirit, infinite spirit in wisdom, knowledge, justice, truth, and love. God is the source of life, language, morals, values, and of everything good, virtuous or of good report, and therefore, desirable and worthy of worship and sacrifice. Man is created in His image and likeness and therefore, possesses innate God-like qualities of rational thought, moral knowledge of right and wrong, and mental abilities which enable him to exercise dominion over much of creation and nature – to the end that man may flourish, thrive, and enjoy. These mental attributes were meant not only to enable man to rule over the physical realm, but more important, to have communion with his Creator and to enjoy God forever. The latter was lost when Adam rejected a God-centered way of thought and life.

A Christ-centered way of thinking and knowing is acquired only when the image of God as man is renewed. Born from above. Born of the Spirit is the act

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of regeneration of the image of God as man enabling him to enjoy again those innate qualities of the spiritual dimension of existence that naturalistic science regards as myth – at best. The natural man cannot know these as truths and therefore has no knowledge and no interest in such matters. They are foolishness to him; something akin to mental rubbish. What is required is a literal renewal of the mind brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration.

The Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth and the Spirit of power, and the Spirit of life. God the Spirit is the necessary, essential and only cause of the resurrection of the mind of a sinner dead in trespasses and sins. A regenerated sinner is given new life, and brought back to that former state of *posse non peccare*. Man is enabled to realize the truth of his sinful lost condition, the justice of the penalty of death, the sentence of hell to follow, and to repent and ultimately know the truth of a God-centered epistemology. However, this is not all.

Man, centering his thought and life on Sovereign God who is love and who has provided a way of redemption to an even more spiritual state of *posse non peccare*, is offered the way of escape from all that spells death and hell to union with God forever.

The way of escape becomes more fully understood, and appreciated at the realization of a Christ-centered way of thinking and living in the progressive sanctification work of the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer.

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The Spirit of God takes the truths of Christ and changes the believer's renewed image of God to the image of Christ.

Moreover, infinite God at Christ's incarnation took on to Himself human nature to be the God-Man forever. The incarnation, as such, is the expression of God's love for the believer to show him the way to live life in the physical dimension of reality.

The progressive sanctification in the believer reveals him to be an alien in this world. His citizenship is in heaven where Christ dwells. His physical realm existence will end upon his entrance to the spiritual, the eternal, at death.

### Assumptions

In any thought-experiment, thinking that seeks to address the inquiries of worldview epistemology serves as a heuristic model. This statement, in itself, is a worldview's presupposition about worldviews. A worldview, according to Nash, is a person's belief-system. It is a structure of basic beliefs that function as axioms in a system. Therefore, they enjoy the prestige of truth without the necessity of proof or argument. All persons think and live according to their worldview belief system. It is unavoidable whether they admit to its existence or not. (Nash, Reference 1, p. 16)

Of course, human beings can live in almost total ignorance of worldview thinking. It is a given that we

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think, reason, i.e., make inferences; that we believe certain propositions, and that we enjoy these mental gifts in communication with a language that conveys all of the above and much more. Persons also dream, remember, plan, hate, love, and ask questions, such as how do you know? And, when did you know? And, how much do you know? Asking questions about persons, events, conditions, circumstances, positions, and even beliefs is common human activity. One does not have to be a scientist, philosopher or theologian to ask questions. Even babies soon learn to ask questions, sometimes in persistent, incessant fashion. Of course, children frame their thought within a structure of acquiring beliefs and adding to their system of beliefs according to their training, upbringing, culture, and education. Most persons take it for granted that their way of thinking and living is rational and grounded in sober thinking, for the most part.

### Critical Incident

For some, only when some crisis of life occurs (and there can be many, some unexpected others unavoidable) will an individual pause to consider and wonder. Perhaps some tragic experience visits a person, causing perplexity or calamity in thought and life. Only then might he begin to reflect on the significance of existence. All know that life has a beginning; all know eventually that life has an ending as well. Thus, each knows that life is a history of all that falls within one's beginning and one's ending. Therefore, it is no surprise that

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an individual will at some time in his history ask: What does it all mean? Or why is there something rather than nothing? And there are many more questions known as ultimate questions seeking true answers about reality and life.

It is not unusual to ignore and dismiss these inquiries for the task of pondering them involves time, serious effort, and can elicit even more perplexing inquiries with each faint glimpse of illuminating clarity. One soon discovers that some things are past finding out. Other things are perceived through a smoked glass clouded with smudges of prejudice, lust, pride, and sin. Even so, as a man thinketh, so is he.

The Preacher thought: "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven." (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8) There is a time to be born, to live life, and a time to die. In between there is, by the grace of Creator God, a time to think, a time to ponder, a time to address the questions embedded in one's epistemology.

### Christ the Way

Christ is the way. The significance of this truth is of utmost importance for it addresses the question of how to live life in peace and to some extent, enjoyment, in the face and realities of sin and death. What is the way of Christ? His answer was and is self-denial, for it is the self, when it assumes or presumes to be autonomous, and the sovereign measure of all things that is the cause of false, stupid living and thought. Man is not

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equipped for meaningful life via a self-referenced frame of thought about reality. Adam's history provides the data for this truth about reality. Christ, God in the likeness of flesh, took to Himself the nature of humanity, becoming the God-Man Jesus, to demonstrate to all how to live, think, and whom to worship, for all humans worship something or someone at some time or other. Idolatry is common, erroneous practice in thought and behavior for all born in the image of Adam. The creature was created to worship his Creator (not an idol or self), and enjoy Him forever.

### Christ the Truth

What is truth? To be confused in one's answer is fatal. No question is more vital or important. Here we do not bow to worship the "truths" of science, or the maxims of ideologies, or the inductions of philosophy.

Arthur Custance in his otherwise worthwhile volume wrote: "I am fully persuaded that an established fact is as sacred as a revealed truth."\*

Custance wondered whether a so called scientific fact had the sacred authority of revealed truth. If in fact he thought that the "established facts" of science and revealed truths of Scripture enjoy an equal status in authority, then clearly he was wrong. Science is not the Word of God, but the undertaking and propositions of a man-centered epistemology. Moreover, science is ever changing, old models and theories are proven false or less useful and so discarded for the latest and the most workable. Science and "scientific

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facts" are ever being revised, updated, and even discarded on the basis of newer data, more sophisticated instrumentation, and the latest discoveries based on lab experiments.

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. The mind does not enjoy rest in a sea of chance, probabilities, guesses, theories, or speculations. 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. Thus, they never fail to guide thought and life in what Christ called the narrow way. He said there are but few who find it. Christ is the way of truth. He is truth. His offer to all is based on love and knowledge, true knowledge, i.e., justified true belief. The Word of God endures forever. (Isaiah 40:8)

### Christ the Life.

Life is the breath of God in man; God breathed life into the body form He called Adam. Christ promises eternal life to anyone who comes to Him, believes on Him, calls on Him, asks of Him. Anyone who does so is not rejected -- no matter who, when, where or what circumstances of life and history obtain. All who labor under the heavy burden of a body of death are invited

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and by the word of truth, Jesus Christ, granted life eternal in eternity with Him in the kingdom of God forever. Faith alone, i.e., belief alone in the understood good news of this Gospel is the sole requirement of all that follows: regeneration, justification, adoption, and sanctification, leading to future glorification of *non posse peccare* life and thought. (John 14:6)

### Summary

Spiritual warfare within the believer is the reality of progressive sanctification. Sanctification is the work of the Spirit who indwells the believer. This progressive work is designed to achieve the image of Christ in the believer. Only then will the believer receive the glorification promised by Jesus in eternal life with Him.

In eternal life with Him, the state of *non posse peccare* obtains, one in which we will be able:

1. To love God with all one's strength, all one's heart, soul, and mind; and
2. To love one's neighbor as one's self. (Luke 10:27)

Along the way, Jesus declares that His yoke is easy and the burden light for all who come to Him for rest and peace.

*"Romans 12:2. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."*



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## 11 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 the Sovereign God.

**Doctrine:** Teaching imparted by an authoritative source; instruction in righteousness; profitable for reproof, for correction, to help one understand the will of God for one's life.

**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.

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

**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.)

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

**Idolatry:** The worship of anything or any person including self, object, or image that is not the true Sovereign God. (Violation of the Second Commandment)

**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; apriori or innate equipment for learning.

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

**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: God.

**Logic:** the science of necessary inference; the structure of God's Mind and the mind of Man created in the image of God.

**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.

**Meaninglessness:** A pseudo-message that conveys no meaning; nonsense, gibberish.

**Meditate:** Think or reflect deeply and at length on a subject as for spiritual purposes.

**Mind:** The gift of the spiritual dimension of life consisting of 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.

**Naturalism:** The doctrine or system of beliefs that the cosmos can be understood only in scientific terms, using empirical 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 Clark: A person is a congeries, a system, a collection, a complex of thoughts or propositions, for a man is what he thinks. (*The Trinity*, p. 106; *Incarnation*, 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 ancestors, a state that includes "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) of 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.

**Sovereign:** Greatest in status, in authority, in power, and in knowledge; ultimate; supreme; superior; and autonomous for all thought and life.

**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.

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## 13 Appendix A: Know 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 there are more than two thousand organizations in the United States (1988) professing to be Christian. He noted that the differences that separate 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



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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.

Before a re-affirming what the Scripture declares the essentials of the Good News 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. 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.

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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 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?"*

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*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."*

### 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;

## 13 Appendix A: Know the Gospel

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 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?

*"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*

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

## 13 Appendix A: Know the Gospel

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

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and likeness of Jesus Christ by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. This transformation is the work of sanctification accomplished by 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

## 13 Appendix A: Know the Gospel

*"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 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)

*"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:

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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 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

## 13 Appendix A: Know the Gospel

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.

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### References

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

\*\*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.)

1. Robbins, John. W. "What is the Gospel?" The Trinity Review, No. 60, Mar/Apr, 1988.



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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. Academic Books, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House. 1988.

## 14 APPENDIX B: Knowing Christ

*"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."*

What is the difference between God centered epistemology and Christ centered epistemology?

1. In our thought experiment, these two ways of knowing were distinguished for the investigation of the work of the Holy Spirit. Progressive sanctification is the work of the Spirit, the mind of Christ, transforming the regenerated believer to a Christ centered way of knowing and living. This is the appointed way by God to the promised believer's glorification of Christlikeness, *non posse peccare* eternal life.

- a. The Spirit that indwells the believer is the mind of Christ. (Romans 8:9)
- b. Scripture affirms that believers have "the mind

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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

## 14 Appendix B: Knowing Christ

process requires the believer to take every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5; Colossians 1:27)

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) There is only one God but more than one way to approach Him, either through a God centered way or a Christ centered way. Obviously, 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. Recall, God the father declared that He was well-pleased in the 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 "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the

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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 empowered by the mind of Christ indwelling to submit to the will of God, and to obey His commandments in spiritual warfare between the mind of Christ and the law of sin in the members of the 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 mortification of the members of the flesh. Denial 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 for believers. 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 the power to submit to the will of God and to obey His commandments.

## 14 Appendix B: Knowing Christ

- c. This transformation takes place in man is one that requires taking every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ.
- d. Ultimately, mortification is the death of self and the transformation of 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 rest in the imputed righteousness of Christ while he works out his salvation in spiritual warfare between the law of sin and the law of the mind.

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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 the God the father and God will be all in all.

*"1 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."*

## 15 APPENDIX C: Knowing God

*"Job 9:1. Then Job answered and said, 2. I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God? 3. If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand. ... 10. Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number.*

*Job 11:7. Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? 8. It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?"*

(From Every Thought Captive. Part 3: Christ Centered Epistemology (CCE), Elihu Carranza, revised, 2022, pp. 69-85.)

Man now is in a state of fallenness, a state from which no man-initiated recovery is possible. Man became dead in trespasses and sins, doomed to a carnal life of sin and corruption leading to death and hell. Only the God-Man, the last Adam, sent by His Father to make atonement, reconciling man to God, would avert the judgment of eternal

death. God's plan of redemption called for a transformation to restore the image of God in man and, through sanctification, achieve a Christ-centered epistemology, a knowledge of and belief in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The good news of salvation portends restoration of fellowship with God on earth, and in heaven, a higher state of *non posse peccare* forever.

The biblical record reveals that the first man was created morally upright with all that was needed to comply with and perform God ordained obligations of obedience. How could a morally upright sinless creature, endowed with properly functioning mental equipment which understood clearly all that God commanded disobey God's prohibition? Moreover, Adam enjoyed all the benefits of a garden in Eden, in the companionship of Eve, his helpmeet. They both met with and spoke with their Creator daily in the cool of the evening. Yet both disobeyed when they ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Why?

Eve was deceived by Satan with "Hast God really said ...," to test God's veracity. Adam was not deceived. Adam joined Eve only to later blame her (and God) for his own disobedience. God's judgment was comprehensive and according to His perfect justice. It included the bare hope of a future restoration, for the sentence of death was not immediately executed. God allowed the pair to live on, although not in the garden of Eden but in a world bearing the curse of Adam's

self-centered defiance and disobedience.

Conditional

God is omniscient. He knew that Adam would freely choose to disobey the command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. If Adam was created morally upright, sinless, with a "free will" to obey or not, it is not the case that God was ignorant of Adam's, as well as Eve's, fatal choices. Yet God's foreknowledge of their transgression did not coerce them to disobedience, for Holy God is not and cannot be the author of sin. Still, if God knew that both Adam and Eve would disobey, why not provide them with the necessary moral integrity of *non posse peccare*, the attribute of the regenerated, glorified state of redeemed sinners?

God is the cause of all that comes to pass, for He is the Creator. He is not only omniscient, but omnipotent and possessor of all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. God is also the Law-Giver. God cannot act contrary to His nature. God is morally perfect, holy, just, good, and true. He is the Potter, we are the clay. God is our Father, we are the work of his hand. (Isaiah 45:9; 64:8) As such, the clay has no claim to legislate law or to question the Potter's decrees or prohibitions. (Romans 9:20)

*"Romans 9:22. 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*

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*of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared to glory."*

It is axiomatic that God cannot sin nor cause the creature to sin. Therefore, God is not the author of the fall. Adam and Eve chose to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil even in the face of the warning of death if they did. The garden of Eden had another tree: the tree of life, a choice they could have made freely. Indeed, God ejected the pair out of the garden, lest they eat of the tree of life and live forever.

*"Genesis 3:22. And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: 23. Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken."*

The cause of the fall of our first parents was the probation, the law of God's 'Thou shalt not ... .' The result was that great exchange of epistemologies from a God-centered epistemology of law and grace to an Adamic or Man-centered epistemology of sin and death.

To repeat. God, being omniscient, was not in the dark about Adam's fall from a state of original holiness and righteousness, *posse non peccare*, able not to sin, to the state of not being able not to sin. The fall of Adam and Eve was sovereignly decreed, not due to a lapse in God's omniscience. God did not have to wait and see what Adam and Eve would choose to do because they

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enjoyed a "free will." God does not handicap Himself by willing unknown choices by His creatures. God said, "I make peace, and create evil: I the lord do all these things." (Isaiah 45:7)

The following chart summarizes the two models of epistemology framed according to the theology of two Adams, the first Adam who fell, the last Adam who obeyed God actively and passively. Actively, Jesus Christ obeyed the law of God fully and perfectly down to every jot and tittle. Passively, He submitted to the will of God even to the suffering and death of the cross. In so obeying, He provided thereby the basis for God's free grace offer of salvation, redemption, sanctification, glorification, and eternal life to all who believe, repent, and exercise the gift of saving faith.

Two Epistemologies: ACE to CCE	
Man-Centered	Christ-Centered
Satan-father of Lies	Jesus Christ-Truth of God
Law of Sin	Law of Grace
Body of Death	Spirit of Life Eternal
Broad Way to Death	Narrow Way to Life
Non Posse Non Peccare	Non Posse Peccare

*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*



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*past finding out! 34. For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? 35. Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? 36. For of him and through him and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."*

Truly, God's ways are past finding out.

On the occasion, when man's search and reach encounters limits of human understanding, man realizes the reality of finite being: ignorance and dependence, among other limits. Such encounters should be the occasion to worship God in awe and wonder of His being. For God is infinite spirit, past finding out.

### Past Finding Out

Archibald Brown wrote that God is past finding out in His being, works, ways, and salvation. (Brown, Reference 1, pp. 238-248)

God's being is past finding out.

*"But do you say, 'Who is God? What is God?' ... 'He is past finding out.' ... We find Job saying, in the 11th chapter, at the 7th verse, 'Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?' ... Thou mayest search, but thou canst not discover.' There is no data to start from. There is no standard which you may compare; and therefore, God says, 'To who, then, will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.' ... 'No man can see me and live' is the language of deity. Clouds and darkness are round about him, and then, ... he maketh light his garment.' Light can hide as fully and completely as darkness. ... A God that could be comprehended would be smaller than the man who comprehended him;*

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*and therefore, let faith be strengthened, and not staggered by the utterance, 'He is past finding out.'" (Brown, Reference 1, pp. 238-239)*

Job declares that God does great things past finding out; God does wonders without number. (Job 9:10)

God is past finding out in His ways. God's ways, like His being and His works span into infinity in meaning and purpose. What human mind is capable of grasping the content of the mind of infinite God? Brown, for his part, would not worship a God who is less than past finding out.

*"Does not Jehovah say, 'As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts?' ... God has his loving purpose, and he is carrying along everything towards it. '...God's ways are past finding out.'" (Brown, Reference 1, pp. 242-243)*

The same characteristics regarding his being, works, and ways apply to His salvation. Job asked, how can man be just with God? (Job 9:2) God so loved the world that He gave His Son, the Son of His love, offering Him as the lamb of God to provide for the salvation of all those predestinated to be vessels of honor. These vessels will forever display His grace and love for them.

*"It pleases the Father that in him, Christ Jesus, should all fulness dwell. 'Why, I wonder that you do not leap up from you seats and sing, Hallelujah, what a Saviour? ... 'As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.' How far*



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*does the pardon go? Oh, it is past finding out."* (Brown, Reference 1, pp. 243 ff.)

As Paul so eloquently expressed what he knew to be a fact, "... 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." (1 Corinthians 2:9)

### Fallen World Life

A follower of Jesus Christ, governed by the transforming Christ-centered way of knowing is commanded to live according to this ideal: "... bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:5) Three tasks are commanded: self-denial, cross bearing daily, and following Christ.

*"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." (See also, Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34)*

1. The Christian's life of sanctification by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit evokes and evinces a life of self-denial. What does self-denial mean? It signals an ongoing transformation within the believer, a transformation of the Adamic image to the image of Jesus Christ via a Christ-centered epistemology of knowledge and truth. The process is gradual and real. It involves the mortification of the members of the body and the struggle to think and live according to the will of God even as Jesus did. Jesus provides the template for a believer's sanctification..

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*"Colossians 3:5. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: 6. For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience."*

2. The Christian is to take up his cross, a daily task, one described by Paul as a war between the old and the inner man, the old nature living under the law of sin and death, and the inner man living under the law of grace. Paul found these two laws or principles alive and active in his life, a struggle that would end in victory upon his death and entry into eternity.

*"Romans 7:23. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."*

3. The Christian is to follow Jesus Christ. How? Even as Jesus always did the will of His Father. Jesus discerned God's will via prayers, supplications, worship, and scripture – the Word of God abiding and guiding Him. In short, taking every thought captive to the obedience of a God-centered reference for all thought and life.

*"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 my own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."*

*John 14:21. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."*

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The following chart contrasts the essential characteristics of two ways of knowing and living. The goal of sanctification, the image of Jesus Christ, is achieved through self-denial, bearing one's cross daily, and following Jesus.

Sanctification Life	
Adam Centered	Christ Centered
Law of Sin & Death	Law of Grace & Love
Non Posse Non Peccare	Posse Peccare & Posse Non Peccare
Wide Gate & Broad Way of Destruction	Strait Gate & Narrow Way to Life
Bondage of the Will: Sin & Death	Freedom of the Will: Holiness & Life
Thought in Obedience to Human Depravity	Thought in Obedience of Jesus Christ
Dissonance of Unyielding Despair	Peace of Unyielding Faith
Destiny Hell	Destiny Heaven

To summarize. The Christian's life of sanctification is one regulated by two laws, the law of sin and the law of grace. (Romans 7:23) The knowledge of the tree of good and evil is a reality for all the living. Only the

## 15 Appendix C: Knowing God

Christian believer will realize a final victory. The victory is life eternal with Jesus Christ. This victory has already been won by Christ at the cross of calvary. The believer can rest in the assurance of a future consummation in a glorified resurrection body that is permanently endowed with many graces. Among these will be the grace of *non posse peccare*, not able ever to sin in thought, motive, choice, speech, or life throughout eternity.

*"Romans 6:22. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. 23. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

§ Every thought free from the obedience of Jesus Christ is a thought captive to a *non posse non peccare* state, a not able not to sin life.

§ Every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ is a thought freed to the state of *posse non peccare*, able not to sin life.

Two Adams: First & Last	
Will of Adam	Will of God
Slave of Sin	Son of God
Not able Not to Sin	Able not to Sin
Condemnation	Salvation
Hell Destiny	Heaven Destiny

Knowing God

J. I. Packer wrote that knowing God is the basis for great peace, a peace that surpasses human understanding and provides great contentment in God.

*"There is no peace like the peace of those whose minds are possessed with full assurance that they have known God, and God has known them, and that this relationship guarantees God's favor to them in life, through death, and on forever. This is the peace of which Paul speaks in Romans 5:1 – 'being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ' – and whose substance he analyses in full in Romans 8. 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus ... the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs ... we know that all things work together for good to them that love God ... who be justified, them be also glorified ... if God be for us, who can be against us? ... Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ... I am persuaded that neither death, nor life ... no things present, nor things to come ... shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord' (verses 1.16 f., 28, 30, 33, 35 ff.)."* (Packer, Reference 2, p. 26; ellipses in original.)

Knowing God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the task and privilege of every creature born from above. There is a life-long struggle consisting of a war between ways of knowing, one of which assumes that man is the measure of all things. The other way of knowing is exemplified by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Regenerated man enjoys the promise of being transformed to the image of his redeemer Jesus Christ: free at last, in Christ, by Christ and for Christ.

*"1 Corinthians 15:45. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Romans 6:22. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. 23. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*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."*

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17 Author Books

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Pathway to Apostasy?

Every Thought Captive

Buck Calhoun novellas by Tweedy Flynch:

One Murder One

One Murder Two

One Murder Three

Murder by Template

Murder in Therapy

Murder Trilogy

## 18 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elihu Carranza, Ph.D. 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 (EOP); 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.





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