

T3 BIBLE PROGRAMME

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COURSE 3:  
**The Fall of Man:  
The Doctrine of Man & Sin**





## **The Fall of Man: The Doctrine of Man & Sin**

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# COURSE OVERVIEW

## **Title**

The Fall of Man – The Doctrine of Man & Sin

## **Objective**

The objective of this course is to give an understanding of the nature of mankind and the nature of sin; to understand how sin entered into the world and its effects on mankind. When we realise why we were created, it causes us to live accordingly. When we understand sin and its effects, we understand the need for, and power of, salvation.

## **Synopsis**

In this course, we focus on how God has made Man in His image, with the purpose of glorifying God; taking a closer look at how Man fell into sin and the effects of sin on the human race, exploring the ongoing effect of “the fall” on the way Man thinks and acts, as well as at how Man’s reasoning and systems are in conflict with God’s ways. We look at different philosophical approaches to finding truth, and also take a broad look at church history up until the Reformation to show how any institution, even the church, becomes corrupted when Man’s systems replace God’s principles.

## **Duration**

The course content, if running this along with the filmed teachings, will be covered over 8-sessions, with each session split into approximately two 45-minute blocks of teaching time. If this course is being covered by a live presenter, the time frame may differ. Please confirm it with them.

## **Requirements**

Try not to miss a single one! No prior study of Scripture is necessarily needed, however, bear in mind that this is not a foundational course. We will be digging deeper into Theological truths. Should you not have some basic foundational truths in place, we encourage you to first attend a foundation or introductory type of course, to give you a better foundation to build on. \*Please note this is not an accredited programme/course.

## **Tools**

You will need your Bible, a pen and should you wish, a notebook for additional note taking.

## **Assessment**

The best way to learn is through application and interaction with the course content. For this reason, we have included a final optional assessment/activity. Depending on how your course is being run, this may be for self-study, a required part of your course or something you can complete at your leisure. Just check with your course coordinator. Don't fear, this is not an exam. It will merely be an opportunity for you to reflect on and apply what you have learnt during the course.

[If you do this as part of self-study, you may want to ask a pastor/elder if you can submit it to them for their input. No marking memo has been provided.]

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## T3 Bible Programme

The T3 Bible Programme consists of 8 Courses with each course made up of Modules. The course work can either be covered with live presentations from pastors/teachers, or filmed recordings of teachings are available. The pace at which the course work is covered is based on the organiser's preference. The course work is taught generally in the filmed teachings and does not necessarily unpack the course notes in a systematic manner. It is recommended students read the notes on their own, before or after sessions, and spend time reflecting and interacting with the notes.

Each course is a stand-alone course and it is not necessary to have attended prior courses or to complete the entire T3 Programme in order.

\*A reminder that the T3 Bible Programme is NOT an accredited or registered programme. It is for informal study only. Should you wish to work towards a formal certificate/ diploma/ degree you will need to sign up to a registered and accredited programme with a recognised institution.

## Programme Outline

- Course 1: Doctrine of Revelation: God Speaks
- Course 2: In the Beginning
- Course 3: The Fall of Man: The Doctrine of Man & Sin ... **YOU ARE HERE**
- Course 4: Understanding the Old Testament
- Course 5: Coming to Know God: The Doctrine of Salvation
- Course 6: Growing in God
- Course 7: Church and the Kingdom
- Course 8: Eschatology: The Doctrine of Last Things

## Interacting with the Notes

Keep an eye out for **REFLECTION** opportunities in the course notes, where you can pause, reflect and have some space to engage with some questions or additional thoughts. There are also **FOCUS POINTS** which provide additional information and summaries or expound on previous information etc. These are always interesting reads and worth going over outside of "class time".

We trust that as you study and pursue God, seeking His face, that you will encounter Him even more and dig foundations that will take you deeper, make you stronger and will impact on the church and the Kingdom of God, for many years to come.

Blessings,

T3 Teaching Team

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# ASSESSMENT TASK (OPTIONAL)

## The Fall of Man (Doctrine of Man & Sin)

### PART 1

**Write a letter:** to a friend (real or imaginary) explaining the gospel message in a manner that will be readily understood within their current world view.

### PART 2

**Write an introductory section:** to the assessor explaining who the letter is written to and what their current world view is (i.e. Atheist, Agnostic, Muslim, etc.). Ensure you cover the main points of the gospel message: Man created by God, for God; sin and its effect; Jesus' sacrifice; grace; repentance and forgiveness.

### NB Assessment Guidelines

- Use Scripture to back up your point of view, where applicable.
  - Don't just repeat course content but use the course content as a "springboard" for your own ideas and to show that you have a working understanding of the concepts covered.
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# INTRODUCTION TO THEOLOGY

## The Story of God

This teaching programme is about helping you immerse yourself into the story of God and the main characters that make up the story. The moment we came to Christ, we became part of the story of God, and our personal life stories find meaning within His grand meta-narrative. All the content in this programme is the telling of this story.

**God's story has four parts to it as revealed in the Bible. Here is a brief overview of each:**

1. **Creation.** The creation account in Genesis describes how God created all things as good. He created humans in His image, with the intent that we would live in fellowship with Him and serve as co-regents with God over the earth, being wise stewards over all He has made.
2. **Fall.** The Scriptures explain that man defies God and is cut off from the fellowship and intimacy he once had. The Holy Creator God simply cannot fellowship with sinful man. While Man is still in God's image, that image has been corrupted and twisted through sin and the desire for self-rule. Because of man's sinful choices, even the earth itself comes under a curse.
3. **Redemption.** God in His mercy promises to rescue and redeem man's sinful condition and restore creation back into right relationship with Him. This great rescue plan is promised and foreshadowed in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament through the ministry of Jesus. God's great plan of renewing all things begins in Jesus.
4. **Consummation.** The climax of the story when God finishes His project of redeeming the world through Jesus. He finally puts every enemy under His feet including death, sickness and Satan.

This is the greatest story ever told. God wins and gets the glory and He graciously allows us to share in His glory. This great overriding story or meta-narrative is what gives our life meaning and purpose. We are a part then of God's great story to renew all things and bring us into true life. We have one truth and one Lord and our individual stories find meaning within the 'big picture.'

## What is Theology?

Theology (from the Greek: *Theos* meaning "God", and *logos* meaning "study or discourse") is essentially the study of God – who is the 'main character' in the story we have looked at.

In our passion to "study" God and get to know Him, we will take a closer look at doctrine. Doctrine (from Greek: *Didache* meaning, "teaching or instruction") is simply the teaching on a specific subject or topic in the whole Bible. So to use the analogy of a builder - in order to build a house, you need to construct it section by section and brick by brick. Doctrine is like the bricks we use to build. Theology is like the house.

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## Purpose of Studying Doctrine

1. It is a requirement for leadership in the Church (1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Timothy 3:9; Titus 1:9).
2. It helps us understand, preserve and unify all of God's amazing truths.
3. It strengthens our faith:
  - o by providing grounds and reasons for our beliefs and experiences,
  - o because faith comes from hearing ... the Word of God (Romans 10:17).
4. It helps protect us from deception (Ephesians 4: 11-14).
5. It enables us to live in a manner pleasing to God (2 Timothy 3:16).
  - o Doctrine = right belief
  - o Correction = for instance, of a wrong belief
  - o Instruction in righteousness = right behaviour
  - o Reproof = for instance, of a wrong behaviour

### FOCUS POINT

It is interesting to note that Paul's letters nearly always address issues of doctrine before he addresses issues of behaviour.

6. It helps in the Great Commission (Matthew 28). If the church, as the only recipient and guardian of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15), departs from true doctrine and preaches a false gospel, how can men be saved?
7. It helps us reach maturity (Hebrew 5:12-6:3; Ephesians 4:11-14).
8. It is of invaluable practical use in every area of ministry. For example- preaching, teaching, pastoring, counselling, evangelism, apologetics, polemics, etc. Doctrinal studies are not a substitute for these things. However, they cannot be practised effectively without sound doctrine.

*"The often implied dichotomy between knowing God and knowing about God is a false one. One can know about God without knowing Him but the reverse is not true: one cannot know God without knowing about Him, and the more one knows about Him the better one will know Him, the more able one will be to trust Him and the more willing to obey Him." - Nigel Day- Lewis*

### NOTES:

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# MODULE 1: DOCTRINE OF MAN AND SIN

## Why is the Doctrine of Man Important?

When we realise why we were created, it causes us to live accordingly. When we understand sin and its effects, we understand the need for, and power of, salvation.

- We are encouraged in Scripture to preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).
- Whilst some may deny the existence of God, or of angels, few would deny the existence of Man (especially Rene Descartes).
- Man is part of (and the pinnacle of) God's creation.
- Man was made in the image of God, so to more fully understand Man is to gain a better picture of God.
- We need to understand the nature of Man, to more fully understand the nature of Christ.
- We need to understand the nature of Man, to more fully understand the nature of Salvation.
- Mankind longs to know the purpose of his existence. This question can only really be answered when one understands Man's origin.

## Man, A Definition

In this modern world, we meet two major obstacles before we can even study the Doctrine of Man; namely the gender issue and the evolution issue.

### REFLECTION

Is it acceptable to use the term "Man" to refer to humankind?

In these days of "gender equality" shouldn't we look at a more gender neutral term?

Perhaps humankind or personkind?

## Gender Issue

In Genesis 5:1-2 we see Scriptural precedent for the use of the term "Man" to cover both genders. The Hebrew word for Man is "adam" (the same as the name of the first man) and can be used, as with English, to refer to humankind or to a male. As this originated with God, we should have no problem with its continuation. It should be viewed neither as objectionable nor as insensitive (nor, indeed, as chauvinistic).

## Evolution Issue

If one holds to an evolutionary world view then one has a particular problem. At what stage of evolution could one define a creature as Man? *Homo erectus*? *Homo sapiens*? *Cro-Magnon* or *Neanderthal* man? Of course, holding to a literal view of the Genesis creation account avoids these problems.

# The Creation of Man

## Adam: Fact or Fiction?

A number of theologians have suggested that instead of a literal interpretation of Genesis, we should view it more as a story with a message (in essence, a parable); and that Adam and Eve were not real people but merely characters that teach us about the reason, for example, that man is in need of a Saviour.

Whilst we do need to recognise that Genesis is not a scientific book primarily, but a theological one, we can see from the words of both Jesus and Paul that they regarded Adam as a real, historical figure. Indeed, there is no Biblical reason to dispute this, and there is no compelling scientific reason to dispel a belief in a literal, created first couple.

## God Created Man in His Image

There are two parallel accounts of the creation of Man. Each tells us something significant about the origin, purpose and makeup of Man, and that Man was created in the image and likeness of God.

*"Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." - Genesis 1:26*

*"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." - Genesis 1:27*

*"And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day."  
- Genesis 1:28-31*



## The Purpose of Man

### REFLECTION

Why did God even create Man?

Some say God created Man because He needed a counterpart; that because God is love, He needed somebody to love. This goes against the Biblical evidence, however, for the following reasons:

- **God is Self-Sufficient**

He needs nobody and He needs nothing. Before creation, love existed within the Godhead. There was perfect fellowship between the Father, Son and Spirit. God was not lonely before Man arrived. Man in no way completes God (John 17:5, 24).

- **Scripture Clearly States the Reason for Man's Existence**

We were created to glorify God! (Isaiah 43:7 cf Ephesians 1:11-12). Therefore our chief end is to glorify God. At the root of sin is the thought of taking for oneself the glory that belongs to God.

As has been covered in a previous course, it is not arrogant of God to seek His own glory. For any created being to seek his own glory (as Satan did when he fell), is to fall into idolatry. For God to seek His own glory, literally means seeking to glorify perfection, absolute love and holiness etc. There simply is nothing higher to glorify. This is why Jesus, as a man, could accept worship and still teach with conviction the need for humility.

Only when we have understood the origin of mankind will we find the true meaning of life. Our purpose must be to fulfil the reason for our creation. John Piper elaborates on this with his concept of Christian hedonism, that to seek God is to seek happiness for surely we will be most satisfied when we are fulfilling the purpose of our existence.

He takes the Westminster catechism statement, *"What is man's chief end? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever"*, then changes it to *"glorify God by enjoying Him forever"*.

We see this idea outlined in Scripture:

*"I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly" – John 10:10*

*"In your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures for evermore."  
- Psalm 16:11*

Abundance, or fullness of joy, is found in knowing God, enjoying fellowship with Him and delighting in who He is. Therefore, to spend time in His presence is to experience greater joy and blessing than anything else. Because sin affects this intimacy, we begin to see that we do not ultimately derive pleasure from sinning, we are only denied the greater presence that intimacy affords. This is why as *hedonists* (pleasure seekers) we should be seekers after God.

In contrast, any view which removes God from Man's origins (such as evolution) denies the very purpose of existence and therefore, ultimately, removes all meaning from life.

# MODULE 2: THE MAKEUP OF MAN

## The Image of God

*"We are told that man is made in the image and likeness of God." – Genesis 1:26*

The Hebrew words *tselem* ("image") and *demut* ("likeness") both mean something similar but not identical. This is typical of Hebrew parallelism. The words speak of something that is similar but not identical to the thing it represents. The Greek word used in this context is *eikon* (from which we get the word "icon"). It can mean, for example, "like the sun reflected on the water".

### In What Way is Man Made in the Image of God?

**The following have been suggested, amongst others:**

- Man looks like God physically. This is no problem to some sects (e.g. the Mormons) who believe God has a physical body, but is not an acceptable viewpoint within orthodox theology, as we are told that God is Spirit.
- Man has an intellectual capacity to reason, to be self-aware and to make rational decisions.
- Man has the capacity to conceive abstract issues, such as philosophical and moral questions. He is also capable of artistic expression.
- Man is a moral being. He is driven, according to a Biblical world view, not by base instinct but by a sense of morality. Originally he was morally pure.
- Man is able to communicate with God.
- Man is a social and relational being. He is aware of the needs of others and is able to give and receive love in a manner different to the animal kingdom.
- Man has a spiritual as well as a physical life. For God did not choose any other creature for which to die.
- Man is made up (some say) of body, soul and spirit which reflects, to some degree, the triune nature of God.
- Man is given the role of exercising authority on behalf of God. As he does this, he represents God.

Some theologians have even tried to distinguish between image and likeness, suggesting that they represent two different things (for example, Man is in the image of God in who He is, but like God in what He does). Personally, I believe the two words are simply saying the same thing, as we often do even in English.

The intended meaning of the original words seem to have been clear to the original audience, so perhaps we shouldn't over analyse too much. By looking for too narrow a definition we are in danger of causing controversy when maybe it is safer to allow a wider interpretation that allows us to believe simply that Man is like God.



## Dichotomy, Trichotomy or Monism?

### REFLECTION

How many parts are there to Man? Is He made up of body, soul and spirit or of body and soul/spirit?

All Christians would agree (as covered in the "In the Beginning" course), that Man has both a material and immaterial aspect to his being. There is the body, which will die, and a "soul", which will live on after death.

### Trichotomy

Common in modern evangelical teaching is that, as well as a body and soul, there is also a spirit. There is talk of a "soul man" and a "spirit man", sometimes with a conflict between the two.

Trichotomists would most likely define soul as that part which includes intellect, emotions and will. Each person has a soul which can be yielded to either God or sin. The spirit, they say, is that which comes alive when one is born again (Romans 8:10), with this part of Man being that which directly communicates with and worships God (John 4:24; Philippians 3:3).

### Dichotomy

This teaches that spirit is not a separate part of Man but is any term for soul. The words are used interchangeably in Scripture which paints Man as being composed of only two parts: material and immaterial.

Dichotomists often concede that Scripture tends to prefer the word spirit when referring to communication with God but such usage is not uniform. The word soul is used in every way that the word spirit can be used.

### Monism

This view would lie outside of evangelical orthodoxy and argues that Man cannot exist at all without a physical body. There can be no separate existence for a soul after the body dies - but that doesn't mean that there is no future resurrection of the body and soul.

This view seems to directly contradict many Scriptures (Genesis 35:18; Psalm 31:5; Acts 7:59; Philippians 1:23-24; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Revelation 20:4 etc.)

## Unity of Man

Each of these views has certain strengths and weaknesses. Whilst we would reject Monism, what it does do well is to look at Man as a whole. One cannot simply divide various aspects of Man into constituent parts. For example, physical trauma to the brain (body) can have radical repercussions for personality (soul and/or spirit). Likewise, spiritual or emotional sickness can have profound effects on the body.

God created Adam as a whole person, therefore, our eschatological hope is not in a merely spiritual/immaterial resurrection but in a physical resurrection. Whilst there may be a (temporary) separation of the constituent parts of Man at death, upon the return of Christ each individual will receive a (glorified) body for eternity. We must never fall into thinking that somehow matter is evil and spirit is good (as the gnostics and others did). When Paul talks about the flesh, he is not implying that flesh is inherently evil. After all, when God created Man He said it was, "very good".

We can see that the terms for "soul" and "spirit" are used interchangeably (e.g. John 12:27 cf John 13:21; Luke 1:46-47). Even those who have gone to heaven are described either as spirits or as souls (Hebrews 12:23 cf Revelation 6:9).

In Matthew 10:28 Jesus, in using the term "body and soul" is clearly speaking of the whole person, whilst in 1 Corinthians 5:5 Paul uses the word spirit to speak of the whole immaterial aspect of Man.

### REFLECTION

Other Scriptures to look at include: James 2:26; 1 Corinthians 7:34; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Colossians 2:5.

Everything the spirit is said to do, the soul is also said to do (and vice versa). A trichotomous view leaves us with the difficulty of defining which aspect of soul and spirit fulfil which role.

Scripture tells us, for example, that our spirits are involved in thinking, feeling, and deciding things as are our souls (Acts 17:16; John 13:21; Proverbs 17:22; Mark 2:8; Romans 8:16; 1 Corinthians 2:11). That isn't to say that our spirits rather than our souls do such things, but that soul and spirit are both terms used for the immaterial part of Man.

Likewise, our soul and our spirit, worship God (Psalm 25:1; 62:1; 1 Samuel 1:15; Luke 1:46 etc.)

Most interesting perhaps, the constant refrain to love God mentions soul but never spirit, and even differentiates between soul and heart (the seat of emotions).

- Deuteronomy 6:5 ... heart, soul, might,
- Matthew 22:37... heart, soul, mind,
- Mark 12:30 ... heart, soul, mind, strength,
- Luke 10:27 ... heart, soul, strength, mind,

If we are to be consistent and believe that each mention of one aspect of Man is to indicate a separate part of Man then we are left not with a dichotomy or trichotomy but perhaps a "hexachotomy".

Furthermore, one cannot see in Scripture the idea that somehow the spirit is pure and the soul impure (some have suggested that our spirits have been saved, our souls are being saved and our bodies will be saved).



# The Fall

## How It Came About

Man was not created with a sinful nature. He was tempted by the Devil but it was his own desire that allowed him to fall into sin. After all, man can only be tempted by what we find desirable. Without a sinful nature, Adam did not have, in one sense, evil desires as we do. He did, however, have natural desires, i.e. to eat, to sleep, etc. When these desires are expressed in submission to God then they are not sinful but they lead to sin when expressed in an ungodly manner.

*“Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death”. – James 1:13-15*

Man’s fall was a direct parallel to that of Satan, who himself had fallen.

Satan’s fall is symbolically described in Isaiah 14:12-14 and Ezekiel 28:12-18. While these two passages are referring specifically to the kings of Babylon and Tyre, they also reference the spiritual power behind those kings, namely, Satan.

Satan became filled with pride, this led to him desiring more than he had. Not content with being a cherub close to the throne of God, he wished to be equal with God, to put himself in place of God. Of course, he failed and was cast out of heaven. He and those who followed him were punished for their pride and for failing to keep their proper place (Jude 1:6).

Satan then tempted Man with the same thing. Man essentially wanted what Satan wanted: to put himself in God’s place (and deciding for himself what is good and evil). In essence, this is the spirit of the antichrist (*anti* means “in place of” rather than “against”).

Interestingly ingratitude is often listed as a sin; a sin we see in Adam and Eve (and Satan). Though they had everything they needed and more, with an intimate relationship with God, they were dissatisfied and wanted more.

### FOCUS POINT

Pride breeds ingratitude: instead of saying, “I have more than I deserve”, we begin to say, “I deserve more than I have.”

God had required of Adam and Eve only one thing: faith (the kind of faith as described in James that leads to obedience - James 1:22-25; 2:14-26). This faith was expressed by not eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17). In this, God required an obedience that came from faith: trusting that God’s instructions were good and right and also trusting God in terms of knowing good and evil. Man did not need to know this, He only needed to know God.

In this, there has never been a change in God’s dealings with Man. The only thing that God has ever required is faith. The only way to salvation is faith - and faith in Jesus – this has always been the case!

*“What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” - Romans 4:1-12*



## The Effects of the Fall

God promised that if they disobeyed, Adam and Eve would *“Surely die”* (Genesis 2:17) a truth which Satan denied (Genesis 3:4-5). God, of course, had not lied, and His words came to pass.

In order to understand the depth of the tragedy, we need to understand what death is. Death always speaks of separation. From that day we clearly see the following:

- Man is separated from God. He died spiritually. He instantly became aware of his own failures, his shame, his nakedness.
- Man is separated from Man. We see the beginning of a breakdown in the trust between man and wife (Genesis 3:16) and in the next chapter the breakdown between brothers with jealousy, anger and murder.
- Man is separated from nature. From that day work was hard and often unpleasant (Genesis 3:17-19).
- Man is separated from the Tree of Life. Man was then removed from the garden and denied access to the Tree of Life. In other words, he would no longer be *“immortal”*. From that day he began to die physically.

The greatest tragedy, of course, is that these repercussions were felt not only by Adam and Eve but by every one of their descendants. It is for this reason that our Redeemer, Jesus, was born of a virgin - so that He would not be a descendant of Adam.

### FOCUS POINT

Jesus is foreshadowed in the killing of animals, by God, to cover their nakedness: see Genesis 3:21. For the contrast between Adam and Jesus, read: Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:20-22; 15:45-49.

## The Effect of the Fall on the Image of God in Man

Adam, we have seen, was originally made in the image and likeness of God. However, whilst he was created as morally pure he chose to sin, and through him, death came to all.

### Can Man Still Be Considered To Be Like God?

This is answered, in fact, very early in Scripture.

In Genesis 9:6, God tells Noah, *“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image”*.

James 3:9 gives a New Testament confirmation of this when he says that Man generally, and not just believers, *“are made in the likeness of God”*.

### NOTES:

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However, sin has entered into Man's existence and Man cannot be said to be as like God as he once was.

### *Why Is This The Case?*

- His moral compass has been skewed (his moral purity lost).
- He has been separated from a relationship with God, he is sinful and unable to reflect God's holiness.
- His reasoning has been darkened. (We shall be looking at this in some detail).
- He is relationally broken.
- He struggles to exercise or submit to Godly authority.

It has been said that "*power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely*". Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that since sin has corrupted all individuals, one is simply always giving power to corrupt men.

#### **FOCUS POINT**

We can easily see then, that man no longer carries the image of God as he once did. It is also probably fair to say that in some individuals this image is more distorted than in others. For whilst all have become slaves to sin, some are more willing to give themselves completely over to depravity than others. Man still has the ability to choose, even if he is unable, outside of Christ, to choose life. Even those who would seem to be "good people" are corrupted by sin. (See Romans 6:16-23).

This distortion means that Man still reflects something of the image of God, but it is distorted or broken. It is like walking through a hall of mirrors at a Fun Fair; one gets something of an impression of the original but it is distorted and grotesque. Sinful Man actually reflects a blasphemous image of His Creator.

There is good news! Jesus, the second Adam, showed us Man reflecting the image of God in a perfect way. He neither had a sinful nature nor sinned. He was in every way like Adam (fully human) but was also MORE than Adam. In living a life of perfect obedience, even to the point of death on a cross (Philippians 2), He became the means by which we can be reconciled to God and begin to be transformed into the image of God.

There is a progressive restoration of this image in those who believe; a transformation into the image of Christ. Redemption, therefore, includes a progressive recovering of more of God's image (being transformed from glory to glory as per 2 Corinthians 3:18), until eventually at His return this restoration will be complete.

We need to understand that this is a necessity for ALL believers. The principle we see in the New Testament is that we are to test to see if we are in the faith (2 Corinthians 2:9; 13:5-7; 1 Peter 1:7, etc.). Such a test is to see whether we are being obedient and being made more into the likeness of God.

As Christians, we are those who represent Christ to the world. We are the only Bible that most people will ever read.



## MODULE 3: THE DOCTRINE OF SIN

In our generation, this is possibly the most contentious of all the doctrines. Most people would not object to an individual believing in God, or even in Jesus. Problems arise, however, when there is a suggestion that a particular person is a "sinner".

We should emphasise that all of humanity falls into the category of "sinner" (Romans 3:23) and that the use of the term is not to attack a particular group of people. Neither can we ever use the term in an arrogant manner. No individual can claim moral superiority, in the sense that no one can be called "good" except God. A believer must be able to communicate that God is the sole arbiter of what defines sin and that pleasing Him is the purpose of every created being. Only by His grace can we ever be cleansed of sin, so we preach the gospel, not as those coming from a position of superiority but simply as *"beggars letting other beggars know where to find bread"*.

### FOCUS POINT

The world does not want to hear that it is sinful. Each person wants to choose for themselves what is right and wrong (as did Adam and Eve). The mantra of our generation is, *"do not judge"*. Everything is tolerated except intolerance and the gospel is seen as intolerant. There are even many in the church who have watered down the truth about sin in order not to offend, yet Jesus is the rock of offence; He is offensive precisely because He reveals the truth. To preach the truth of the gospel is increasingly being seen as being a "hater of humanity" which is the accusation used against the early church.

In preaching the truth we need to see clearly that we do not hate people but love them. We do not judge the world but we do have the answer to what is broken in the world. It is neither unloving nor bigoted to preach this truth, it is an act of love - even if it is one that many will hate us for.

## Definition of Sin

### REFLECTION

What is your definition and understanding of sin?

Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude or nature. There are sins of commission (when we do what we should not) and sins of omission (when we do not do what we should).

**FOCUS POINT**

Is it fair to say that Man is sinful in his nature? Yes! Ephesians 2:3, tells us quite clearly that we were sinful in our very natures, that not only have we sinned but that we were sinners (Romans 5:8). Our very natures were corrupt!

Sin must be defined in relation to God for without God there are no moral absolutes. Outside of God, there is no acceptable means of determining what is acceptable and what isn't - for example, do we hold to the following?

- Might makes right?
- Majority rules?
- Greatest good for the greatest number?
- Love is the highest law?
- Let each person decide for himself?

Each of these options is extremely unsatisfactory, yet without God, truth and morality become relative.

We also need to see that God has determined what sin is, not as some divine "party pooper" nor in some arbitrary fashion, but He has dictated to us what is best for mankind: He has done this as the Omniscient, Omnipresent, Loving, Righteous, Holy God that He is. He simply knows, as the Creator, what is best for us.

The most common Greek word used for sin is *hamartia*, which carries the meaning of, "falling short, of missing the mark". It was a term used in archery when an arrow fell short of its target. We must recognise that ALL have fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

We also need to realise, as John Piper says, sin is always the loss of pleasure.

Sin is opposite to God and His nature, therefore He must hate it and we must too. It has been said that because God is infinite/eternal, sin against Him must be punished eternally.

**NOTES:**

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## Where Does Sin Come From?

It is sometimes asked, "If God is good then where did evil come from?" One must realise that, in a sense, evil is not a created thing, just as darkness is simply the absence of light and cold is simply the absence of heat. Evil is the absence of God.

Satan was the first to fall, as we have seen, followed by the angels that sided with him. They, in turn, were followed by Man. Sin entered the world through Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:1-19 cf Romans 5:12 ; 16), and the root of all sin is pride (to be like God, to put oneself in the place of God, to satisfy self first etc.)

Sin inevitably brings death (Romans 6:23; James 1:15) which means:

- Physical Death. (Separation of soul/spirit from the body.)
- Spiritual Death. (Separation from God.)

## Doctrine of Original Sin

When we speak of original sin we are not speaking of Adam's original act of sinning but of the sin that is ours because of Adam's fall. For this reason, Wayne Grudem uses the term, "inherited sin". However, it is accurate to term it "original" sin in the sense that it comes from Adam and that we have had it from the beginning of our existence

### We "Inherit" Sin in Two Ways:

- Original/Inherited Guilt
- Original/Inherited Pollution

#### Original/Inherited Guilt

*"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned - To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.*

*But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!*

*Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." - Romans 5:12-21 (NIV)*

We are counted guilty because of Adam's sin (Romans 5:12-21). Paul, in the reference to Romans here, is clearly not speaking about the sins that people commit every day. He is actually saying that death spread to all men because of Adam, that in Adam all men sinned.

From Adam to Moses, there was no law, so their sins were not counted against them (as a legal infraction); but yet they still died: proof that God counted them guilty on the basis of Adam's sin.

Verses 18-19 of Romans 5 show us that *"by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous"*. God, knowing that we would exist, began to think of us as guilty just like Adam. Contrast this to Romans 5:8, *"while we were still sinners Christ died for us"*; of course, we did not exist when Christ died but God still considered us as sinners in need of salvation before we had committed a single sin.

Adam, our representative, sinned and God counted us guilty (we were represented by Adam: like us using "we" when our sporting team wins. Guilt was imputed i.e. God, *"thought of it as belonging to us and therefore caused it to belong to us"*).

### REFLECTION

So is this fair? Well, we have also voluntarily committed acts of sin, for which we will be judged (it is not just the principle of sin but the acts). We have done this even since receiving the Spirit of God who has broken the power of sin. If we were in Adam's place we would probably have sinned as well. Just as guilt was imputed to us, so was righteousness, by one man, Jesus (the second Adam). See Romans 5:19. Was this fair?

Remember, when it comes to sin, God has always looked at the heart. Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5) was not actually creating new teachings but was bringing through the eternal truths of God. The Law was not evil and did not fail - it served its purpose in revealing the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven to us - i.e. one of absolute moral perfection not simply outward obedience. The Law serves its purpose when we despair of our own efforts to keep it and instead throw ourselves at the mercy of God (Romans 6-8).

We also read the following which further illustrates this point:

*"But Samuel replied: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams." - 1 Samuel 15:22 (NIV)*

*"First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" - though they were offered in accordance with the law. Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all". - Hebrews 10:8-10 (NIV)*

It is also worth pointing out that not all theologians agree that Man carries original guilt. Yet, evangelicals of all persuasions would agree that we receive a sinful disposition or a tendency to sin.

### Original/Inherited Pollution (Original Sin/ Inherited Corruption)

We inherit a sinful nature. This is contrary to most religions and sects who would argue that Man is intrinsically good and is able to attain salvation by doing good. It is sometimes hard to believe when looking at an "innocent" baby that Man is born sinful, but we soon see that children do not need to be taught how to lie, to have bad manners, be selfish or disobey, etc. It comes "naturally" and easily.

*"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge." - Psalm 51:1-4 (NIV)*

David confesses his own personal sin. He realises he was sinful from the beginning. In fact, he was sinful from conception (v5). This idea is confirmed in Psalm 58:3 and confirms the statement of Ephesians 2:3,

*"All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath." - Ephesians 2:3 (NIV)*

#### FOCUS POINT

So we are, as theologians say, "depraved". But what does this mean? Does it mean we are completely incapable of doing good (before salvation)? Not at all. For an act of charity is possible by any Man. Such an act is good and does good (to the person receiving) but it does not do any good for the individual in terms of earning salvation. (See Romans 7:18; Titus 1:15 and Jeremiah 17:9).

These verses DO NOT mean that we can do no good in any sense of the word. Neither does it mean we cannot help doing the deeds we do (even though we are slaves to sin), nor that we are all as bad as we could be. This is an inherited TENDENCY to sin. As far as God is concerned we cannot do anything to attain righteousness.

### Can We, However, Do Things That Please Him?

What about Cornelius, in Acts 10:1-4? He did good deeds which God saw, but was still in need of salvation by accepting the work of Christ on his behalf.

Certainly, it means that our inclination is actually to please ourselves, and we cannot make right with God by our efforts and deeds. Neither can we bear the true, lasting fruit of the Kingdom (John 15:5).





## Our Ability And Responsibility

### Does Our Ability (or Lack Thereof) Limit Our Responsibility?

Two theologians, Pelagius and Augustine, at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century hotly debated the issue of whether our ability to do any good related to our ability to gain salvation (and therefore our ability to lose it).

This was taken up again after the Reformation by the followers of Calvin and Arminius.

Pelagius argued we cannot be held guilty if we cannot do otherwise. Likewise, if we are commanded to do good then we must have the ability to do it. He eventually argued that Man has within himself the ability to find salvation. Augustine disagreed, arguing for the total depravity of Man. In the end, Augustine prevailed.

The argument perhaps actually boils down often to faith (belief), repentance, whether these are “works” and whether we choose or are compelled (predestined) to accept God’s offer of salvation.

We do not have the time to delve into this issue here, but this will be covered in another course.

## Degrees of Sin

### Are There Degrees of Sin and are Some People More Sinful Than Others?

Are some sins worse than others? Yes and No!

- In terms of our legal standing before God, **NO**. Even the smallest sin will make us guilty. James 2:10-11, argues that breaking one small part of the law is to break it all. One act of disobedience brought death to Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:17) which Paul confirms in Romans 5:16.
- In terms of consequences in life and relationship with God, **YES**. Jesus spoke of a greater sin (John 19:11) and the least of the commandments (Matthew 5:19). A sin could be said to be greater if it carries greater harm to others or brings more dishonour to God (or even greater consequence for ourselves, for example, the difference between coveting a car and stealing that car). Moreover, those sins done knowingly, repeatedly and deliberately carry far greater consequences.

Therefore one can see:

- Some sins have greater consequences,
- Sin done willfully and rebelliously grieves God more,
- Sin done by those with greater influence have greater consequence (leaders are to be rebuked publically),
- We will be judged according to what we have done (degrees of punishment and reward).

### NOTES:

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## What Happens When a Christian Sins?

There is a dangerous and erroneous teaching at the moment that there is no consequence to sin if we are saved. However, we need to realise that whilst sin does not alter our position in Christ, it affects our fellowship with Christ, (see Ephesians 4:30; Revelation 3:19; 1 John 3:21) and it can affect our fruitfulness and ministry (John 15:4).

Paul says that if Christians yield to sin, they increasingly become slaves to sin (Romans 6:16).

We need to affirm that, at the very least, sin will disrupt our fellowship with God and damage our Christian life (and witness).

### Can a Christian Lose His Salvation?

This is a huge and hotly debated subject and too involved to go into much detail at this juncture.

My personal view is that expressed by Arminius: Whilst a believer can never lose his salvation; through sin and unbelief, he can become an unbeliever and thus lose his position in Christ. It is not a matter of how much sin causes a Man to fall away, but the state of his heart. (See John 15; Hebrews 6; 10; 2 Peter).

Biblical Calvinists would disagree with this and would argue that if there is no evidence of holiness then there is no evidence of salvation ever having taken place.

Either way, we need to see that holiness, or at least a progression toward becoming more like Jesus, is necessary for one to be considered a believer.

### What About The Unpardonable Sin?

Several passages speak of a sin that cannot be forgiven (See Matthew 12:31; Mark 3:29-30 cf. Luke 12:10; Hebrews 6:4-6 cf 10:26-27).

#### FOCUS POINT

Note that in the context of gospels this sin is spoken of as "*ascribing the work of Holy Spirit to Satan*"; whilst in Hebrews it is "*deliberate willful sin*". Both can be linked. By actively and stubbornly refusing to yield to the working of the Holy Spirit and recognising He is God, that He cannot draw one to Christ, convict of sin, etc.

It is interesting to note (in light of Hebrews) that in the Old Testament sacrificial system there was no sacrifice available for deliberate, willful, high-handed rebellion against God.

According to Hebrews 6, is it possible for a believer who has backslidden to be brought back to salvation? At the face of it, this is a very scary and sobering passage. It is, I believe, helpful to believe that having backslidden it is *at the very least* very difficult to be brought back.

However, my personal perspective is that this Scripture is speaking of actively rebelling against God - that whilst in this state it is impossible to be brought back because the one who brings back is the one being resisted, denied and rebelled against. If one was to come to the point of ceasing the fight, then it once again becomes possible to be restored (this view would line up with many descriptions of the character of God, for example in the parable of the prodigal son). The great danger, though, is that in rebelling against the conviction of the Holy Spirit, one's heart becomes calloused and one is given over to sin/deception, by God (Romans 1:24).



# MODULE 4: INTRODUCTION TO WORLD VIEWS

*"Questioning the ostensibly unquestionable premises of our way of life is arguably the most urgent of services we owe our fellow humans and ourselves." - Zygmunt Bauman, Sociologist and Author <sup>1</sup>*

*"There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."  
- Proverbs 16:25*

## What are World Views?

Our world view is simply the lens of unquestioned beliefs through which we view everything.

Everyone has a world view. In most people, our world view is passive, reactive and arrived at inadvertently. It is a product of our upbringing, culture and education. Over time and in many different ways, formative childhood and adult experiences shape our view of the world and our place in it; our understanding of what is good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable, perfect or imperfect. All these develop and change in response to our experience of the world.

However, as believers, the Bible teaches us not to be conformed to this world.

*"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." - Romans 12:2*

God wants to give us a new lens. He wants our world view to be practical, considered and arrived at intentionally, by the study of the Word of God.

### REFLECTION

List some of the unquestioned beliefs through which you view everything.

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<sup>1</sup> Bauman, Zygmunt. Globalization: The Human Consequences

## The Search for Truth

*“There is a flow to history and culture, this flow is rooted in what people think, and what they think will determine how they act.” - Francis A Schaeffer, Philosopher, Author <sup>2</sup>*

As we look across the landscape of human history, certain wave patterns start to emerge.

War and peace, famine and plenty, depression and prosperity. And along with these material and political highs and lows there come philosophical highs and lows; optimism and pessimism, confidence and scepticism.

This roller coaster ride of optimism and pessimism is naturally linked to the material and political waveform, but not always in a way that is obvious. Optimism is also intrinsically linked to the notion of truth. When Man is confident of what is true, he has something to believe in and therefore something to live and die for. When Man has no truth, he is uncertain and pessimistic.

### As An Example, Let Us Look At War

In the Second World War, the citizens of the allied nations felt they were part of a noble campaign. This wasn't just a war about who owns Poland or Belgium; it was a war over ideas. The caricatured evil of Hitler and his Nazi regime gave people a villain to rally against, and therefore a cause to believe in. Although the war came at a great price both on the battlefields and on the streets of home, the mood was generally one of optimism, with few dissenters. Europe's sons willingly signed up to be part of the war.

Move forward to America and the UK's involvement in the more recent Iraq War. Even before the conflict began, questions were being asked. Was it true that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction? Was it true that Iraq was harbouring and supporting Al-Qaeda? Was Osama Bin Laden really responsible for September 11? People no longer trusted the government, so when it emerged that we had been lied to, pessimism and scepticism reached an all-time high. The Center for Public Integrity alleges that President Bush's administration made a total of 935 false statements in a two-year period about Iraq's alleged threat to the United States. In the final analysis, there was no threat, there were no weapons, and there were no legal grounds for an invasion of Iraq.

For America it was like a repeat of the Vietnam War. Twelve years into that war, only a third of Americans believed that the U.S. had not made a huge and costly mistake by getting involved. Martin Luther King famously added his voice to the dissenters, saying, *“There comes a time when silence becomes betrayal”*.

Dr King confessed that to stand up for truth was not always easy, *“Even when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy, especially in a time of war. Nor does the human spirit move without great difficulty against all the apathy of conformist thought within one's own bosom and in the surrounding world.”* But speak up he did, perhaps conscious of the line often attributed to Edmund Burke, that, *“The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.”*

Why would one war be met with optimism while another war provokes scepticism? Undoubtedly there are many factors, but there is a clear indication that one factor was perceptions of truth and truthfulness.

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<sup>2</sup> Schaeffer, F, A. How Should We Then Live?



## What is Truth?

*"What is truth?" - Pontius Pilate, Roman Prefect of Judaea, AD 26–36*

To a non-believer, truth can seem like an elusive concept. Endless books and theses have been written on whether truth even exists, and if it does exist, what it is. What follows is a look at five of the most widely accepted concepts of truth. As we will see, none of these describes truth adequately when seen through a Biblical world view.

### Correspondence Theory

Correspondence Theory has been around since the Socratic era. Thirteenth Century philosopher and theologian, Thomas Aquinas, described it this way, *"A judgement is said to be true when it conforms to the external reality."*

This theory works on the principle that truth can only be assured by what can be seen to be true. This is a false notion from a Biblical standpoint. While Mark Twain famously defined faith as, *"believing what you know ain't true"*, the Bible says, *"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."*

*"NOW FAITH is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses]." – Hebrews 11:1 (AMP)*

Within a Biblical world view, faith has an essential relationship with truth. The Bible teaches us to trust and believe in a God whom we have never seen, to regard His words as true. If we only believe as true what conforms to external reality, that which is provable in the material realm, we will become Materialists who discount the supernatural and divine, trusting only in what we can see, taste, smell, hear and feel. Faith does not believe in what is not real but may believe in what is not seen. This doesn't mean that there is no evidence; faith is the evidence until material evidence appears.

*"Truth is defined as that which corresponds to reality as perceived by God, because God's perception of reality is never distorted." - R C Sproul, Theologian, Author & President Ligonier Ministries*

It is correct that truth will always correspond, but not to an external, material reality. Truth must correspond to the Word of God, through, and for whom, the whole material realm was created.

### Coherence Theory

Coherence Theory requires a truth to be proved through its proper fit, or coherence, within a (presumably true) system. Essentially, if it is true, it will fit with everything else that is true.

The problem with this theory is where do you start? Without an absolute beginning for truth, there is no foundation for the system in which the truth is to be tested. Where would such a system come from? The only system that can be tested and found true is something purely material or mathematical. But how will that help us with moral truth?

The Bible tells us, *"In the beginning God..."* Those who believe the Scriptures have a starting point for truth. We have a context in which to frame truth and a personal, knowable God against whom we can test truth for coherence.

## Constructivist Theory

Social constructivism views all our knowledge as "constructed". Italian political philosopher, Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) is considered an early adherent to this theory with his statement, "*vernum esse ipsum factum*" (the truth itself is made). German Philosopher, Georg Hegel (1770-1831) and father of communism, Karl Marx (1818-1883), were amongst others who embraced this concept of truth being socially constructed.

Marx, however, felt that not all men were equally involved in the construction of truth, just as he felt not all men were equally represented in the division of labour and reward. In his eyes, the upper classes had the monopoly on truth, as they did on material production, and used it to keep the lower classes subdued. To Marx, religion was the prime example of this, a constructed truth, used to keep down the masses.

*"Religion is the sign of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of the soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness." – Karl Marx*

But this theory of truth is too easily open to abuse. While it is not okay, according to Marx, for the rich minority to keep the poor down with a "*religion-truth*", it is okay for an even smaller minority, Marx alone, to set a new "*Marxist-truth*" in place for all men to follow. Thus confirming his belief, all men are created equal, but some are more "equal" than others.

Of course, the Scriptures show us that truth is not constructed by Man.

*"There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death" – Proverbs 16:25*

*"To the Jews who had believed in Him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." - John 8:31- 32 (NIV)*

### FOCUS POINT

Jesus, the Man, who is Truth, taught us the truth. He is the benchmark or plumb line against which we can measure all other knowledge.

### NOTES:

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## Consensus Theory

*"Truth has to be something that leads to harmony, that leads to peace, that settles you down ... Truth is not a thing, it's not a goal, it's a process." - Ajahn Brahm, Buddhist Society WA*

Perhaps in an attempt to regulate possible abuse, some philosophers have proposed the idea that truth can only be arrived at by consensus. Whatever the group agrees upon is "true".

But this theory is also clearly flawed. If the group agrees to lie, does that mean the lie is now true? Our modern democratic society is built on popular opinion. From politicians to TV producers, the priority is always what people want, not what people need. If something becomes unpopular it is soon discarded; if truth no longer conforms to the shifting moral framework in society, then society will change what truth is.

This is called Moral Relativism. However, while it is correct that no common ethical or moral framework is at play in every historical or cultural circumstance, it is not correct to, therefore, conclude that no universal moral law exists.

The Bible teaches that the truth is not flexible. There is a universal moral law against which all men will be judged. Truth is a sword, that will not only divide father from son and brother from brother (Luke 12:51-53) but within the individual it will even separate soul and spirit, slicing between the thoughts and intents of our hearts (Hebrews 4:12). Biblical truth is not arrived at by consensus, it is an absolute revealed by God. Where churchmen bow to popular opinion, they often stray from the Truth.

We must always remember,

*"Right is right, even if everyone is against it, and wrong is wrong, even if everyone is for it." - William Penn (1644-1718), Quaker, founder of Pennsylvania, USA*

### REFLECTION

Can you think of a situation you have faced, where the accepted view of how you should behave did not match the Word of God?

## Pragmatic Theory

Closely linked to Coherence Theory, and in some measure Consensus Theory, Pragmatism and its cousin Negative Pragmatism, ask the questions, "What works?" and "What doesn't work?" If the thing we believe works, it may be true, if it does not work, then it is not true, because, "truth always works".

But here too there is a problem. That "truth always works", is assumed, but how can we test if this statement is true if we rely on the truth of this statement for our test of truth? Have we not stumbled into circular reasoning?

Pragmatism makes rational sense, but in practice it is meaningless. Like the Coherence Theory, it can only operate faultlessly on a material or mathematical level. As soon as you try to apply this theory in the moral arena, it will lead to Situational Ethics, where the end justifies the means.

And there are occasions where truth appears not to work.

For example, God wants you to love your neighbour. So you try to show love by baking her cookies with your favourite recipe. You knock on the door with the cookies. She says, "No thank you, I bake my own cookies." End of conversation. (This actually happened!)

The lesson a Pragmatist will learn here is that loving your neighbour is an unsuccessful and impractical idea, and therefore not a true concept.

The lesson our Biblical world view teaches us is to let patience have its perfect work (James 1:4) because love suffers long (1 Corinthians 13:4). Loving our neighbour is not a once-off event, and even if the love is never received or reciprocated by our neighbour (Luke 6:35), it has been received and reciprocated by Jesus (Matthew 25:40).

### REFLECTION

Can you think of a truth that may appear on occasion not to work? Why is this the case, do you think?

This discrepancy between the truth according to Scripture and the truth according to history, society or our experience is a parallax of sorts.

In technical terms a parallax is the difference of the apparent position of an object viewed along two different lines of sight. A practical example is when the driver of a car, looking straight at the speedometer, sees accurately that they are travelling at exactly 120km/h, the nervous passenger in the seat next to them looks over and perceives them to be going 130km/h. But the needle of the speedometer is not designed to be viewed from the passenger seat.

**FOCUS POINT**

In the same way that the speedometer is only useful when viewed from the correct position, we will only see the truth accurately when we align ourselves with God, and see what He sees.

Explorers travelling into the Arctic need to understand the difference between magnetic north and true north. True north is a geographic location at the “top” of the world. Magnetic north moves according to the magnetic changes in the earth’s core. In 2001 it was 81.3°N 110.8°W; in 2005, 83.1°N 117.8°W; and in 2009, 84.9°N 131.0°W. Moving around 55km a year, in 2012 it was recorded as 85.9°N 147.0°W. The local angular difference between magnetic north and true north is called the magnetic declination and explorers need to know how much to compensate, otherwise, they could end up miles away from their desired destination.

Similarly, we all have built in biases and preferences that will skew our perception of truth. When we understand the difference between what we see and what God sees, it allows us to make the necessary adjustments, so that in spite of our natural built-in bias, we will still travel in the right direction.

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**Conclusion**

Our Biblical World View must start with the irrefutable belief that Truth exists, can be known, is found in the person of God, and is revealed through God’s Word (John 17:17). We must hold that God and God’s Word are unchanging (1 Peter 1:25). While the meaning of God’s Word must be made real for every generation, it must not be adapted to suit each generation.

When faced with a real-life situation, the rational argument may not always bring us to the same conclusion as the Word. On those occasions, the Word is right and we are wrong. As people of faith, it is important that we learn to think clearly, so that as well as experiencing God personally, we can, when asked, give a reasonable and coherent account for our faith.

*“... but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defence to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behaviour in Christ will be put to shame.” - Peter 3:15-16 (NASB)*

To this end, it is useful to understand a little about the development of thought and the effects that different ideas have had on society, especially in contrast to the teaching of the Bible.

# MODULE 5: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

*"Hear my words, you wise men; listen to me, you men of learning. For the ear tests words as the tongue tastes food. Let us discern for ourselves what is right; let us learn together what is good". - Job 34:2-4 (NIV)*

## Origin of Thought

May 28, 585 BC, is considered by many to mark the birth of Philosophy. On that day, a Solar eclipse took place. What made the event special was, for the first time, the eclipse had been predicted in advance by a Greek man called Thales.

Apple's had fallen from trees long before Newton described gravity. In the same way we would be foolish indeed to imagine that no-one had done serious thinking before Pythagoras called thinking, "philosophy". And while our western tradition is quick to write off any thinking done before the Greeks, the Bible contains much wisdom from before the time of Thales and Socrates.

The word philosophy comes from the Ancient Greek φιλοσοφία (*philosophia*), which literally means "love of wisdom". The terms philosopher and philosophy were introduced by Greek thinker Pythagoras, in deliberate contrast to the word *sophist*, which described the travelling, paid teachers of his day. His idea was that philosophers are "lovers of wisdom" and therefore are not in it primarily for the money.

If the "birth" of Philosophy marks anything, it marks the moment that Man began to think without God, seeking rational explanations in place of mythological ones. The traditions of thought in both east and west had long been attached to their religions. With the birth of Philosophy, Man began to think outside the confines of religion, even to question the existence of the gods.

**Philosophy is broadly understood to be the study of questions connected with reality. In ancient times these included questions such as:**

- From where does everything come, and from what is everything created?
- From where does movement come? If movement is the result of an object acting on another object, what moved first? (Is there an unmoved mover?)
- How do we explain the plurality of things found in nature? (Question of "The one and the many" - is there a unifying "one"?)

Ancient philosophy was a very broad discipline and included maths and science. Modern Philosophy is distinguished from other ways of addressing problems, such as maths or science, by its reliance on thought and rational argument.

## Currently, Philosophy is Divided Into Five General Areas

- Epistemology
- Logic
- Metaphysics
- Ethics
- Aesthetics

### Epistemology

The study concerned with the nature and scope of knowledge, such as the relationships between truth, belief, and justification (proving what you believe is true).

### Logic

Logic looks at the principles of correct reasoning.

#### FOCUS POINT

**Deductive Logic** uses general statements (called premises) to prove other specific statements (called conclusions) and is unavoidably implied. [Because A, then B]  
e.g. All dogs have four legs, therefore my dog and my neighbour's dog have four legs.

**Inductive Logic** uses specific statements, to prove other general statements are likely. [Because A then probably B]  
e.g. My dog and my neighbour's dog have four legs, therefore all dogs have four legs.

**Propositional Logic** uses propositions, which are either true or false. [If A then B]  
e.g. If all dogs have four legs, then my dog and my neighbour's dog will have four legs.

**Predicate Logic** uses more complex premises called formulae that contain variables. [If A then probably B]  
e.g. If dogs are found to have four legs, all or most of the time, then my dog and my neighbour's dog are likely to have four legs (at least most of the time).

### Metaphysics

The study of the most general features of reality (including but not limited to existence, time, the relationship between mind and body, objects and their properties, causation, etc). Metaphysics includes cosmology (the study of the world in its entirety), and ontology (the study of being).

### Ethics

Also called "moral philosophy", Ethics is concerned primarily with the question of the best way to live, and secondarily, the question of whether this question can be answered.



## 500-400 BC

**Heraclitus** of Ephesus (c. 535 – c. 475 BC), is famous for his insistence on an ever-present change in the Universe, saying, "No man ever steps in the same river twice". His contribution on the matter of one specific underlying reality was that "all entities come to be in accordance with this Logos" (literally, "word", "reason", or "account").

*"Heraclitus said that the logos is 'the reason why' ... John, realising that Jesus is the ultimate reason 'why' everything happened, took up his idea and called Jesus the logos, 'the Word'." - David Pawson, Theologian & Author*

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." - John 1:1-3*

**Socrates** of Athens' (c. 470 – 399 BC) biggest contribution was undoubtedly the "Socratic Method", in which a clever series of questions not only draw out answers, but provide insight into the issue being discussed.

One of his best-known sayings is "I only know that I know nothing". He believed that men who thought themselves wise were not, while those, like himself, who knew they were not wise, paradoxically, were the wiser ones since they were aware of their own ignorance. Such ideas did not ingratiate him with the statesmen, poets, and artisans he humiliated in debate. He was arrested, tried and sentenced to death for corrupting the youth of Athens and impiety.

Socrates idea of the wise fool is previously seen in Proverbs 26:12,

*"Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him." - King Solomon, c. 950 BC*

## 400-300 BC

**Plato** (c. 427 – 347 BC), Socrates' famous pupil and voice, founded the first institution of higher learning in the Western world and helped lay the foundations of Western philosophy and science. In formulating a solution to the problem of universals (whether properties exist), Plato married the apparent world of Heraclitus, which constantly changes, with an unchanging and unseen world of forms; archetypes or abstracts of the things and properties we feel and see around us.

Plato despised Athenian democracy, with its rhetoric and persuasion, believing reason and wisdom should govern:

*"Until philosophers rule as kings or those who are now called kings and leading men genuinely and adequately philosophise ... cities will have no rest from evils ... nor, I think, will the human race." - Plato, Republic 473c-d*

**Diogenes** of Sinope (c. 399 – 323BC) was a Cynic and is considered one of the founders of Cynicism. Diogenes disapproved of Plato and felt society had overcomplicated life. In response, he made a virtue of poverty, begging for a living and sleeping in a large ceramic jar. Once Alexander the Great asked if he might do him a favour, Diogenes answered, "Yes, stand out of my sunlight". Alexander replied, "If I were not Alexander, then I should wish to be Diogenes", to which Diogenes responded, "If I were not Diogenes, I should also wish to be Diogenes."

This Cynicism is foreshadowed in Ecclesiastes,

*"Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless." - Ecclesiastes 1:2 (NIV)*

But where Diogenes' answer was to be selfish and withdraw from society, Solomon's conclusion was,

*"Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." King Solomon, c. 931 BC (Ecclesiastes 12:13)*

Solomon's world view included God and allowed for purpose, even in the midst of apparent purposelessness.

**Aristotle** (c. 384 – 322 BC) like many philosophers, worked in ethics, logic, mathematics, metaphysics and science, but in science he made his biggest contribution. Aristotle did not believe the world was created, he believed all matter to be eternal and taught a primitive form of evolution. Aristotle's work in the physical sciences profoundly shaped medieval scholarship, and his influence extended well into the Renaissance until ultimately replaced by Newtonian physics.

As Pythagoras had done with mathematics, Aristotle paved the way for Science to become a separate discipline from Philosophy.

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## Hellenistic Philosophers

300-200 BC

**Epicurus** (c. 341 – 270 BCE) taught that pleasure and pain are the measures of what is good and evil; death is the end of both body and soul and should therefore not be feared. Epicurus is a key figure in the development of science and the scientific method because of his insistence that nothing should be believed, except that which was tested through direct observation and logical deduction, an early form of Materialism.

Curiously, Epicurus is also regarded hedonistic (though his views undoubtedly ran at odds with our modern understanding of the word). His work in that area lives on in the American constitution, where, Thomas Jefferson, a self-confessed Epicurean, enshrined as an "inalienable right", the pursuit of happiness.



**Paul of Tarsus** (c.6 – 64 AD) was to Jesus, as Plato was to Socrates; he wrote down and further developed much of Jesus work.

Among the many brand new concepts that emerged from the theology of the Christian church, was the truth of God as an absolute, singular, person; a personal God, who created everything. Aristotle had spoken of an "unmoved mover", a God who set events in motion, without being acted upon. But even Aristotle hadn't conceived that the God who moved all, had also made all. Aristotle's god merely moved what already existed. Creation, as a voluntary action of an Eternal Being, creating everything from nothing; that was new!

Also groundbreaking was the concept of the singular personal God being a Trinity – absolute oneness married with eternal diversity. In Christian theology the question of the one and the many was answered, the question of where everything came from, and how, was answered. And finally the biggest question of all was also answered, the question "Why?"

Christianity introduced the idea of history as a planned event with a beginning and an end. Greek and Roman gods didn't have far-reaching plans for the souls of men; their gods were as much at the mercy of other gods and the fates as Man was. Time for them was a cycle that went on and on without end. Christianity re-introduced to fallen Man, the concept of "the God with a plan", a God who had purposed creation for a specific reason and had in mind a definite outcome for men.

*"Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure." Paul of Tarsus, Ephesians 1:4-5 (NLT)*

In Christ, Paul found the answer to all the ancient world's questions.

*"The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for "In him we live and move and have our being\*"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring." Paul of Tarsus, Acts 17:24-28*

Here Paul quotes a passage from an ancient Greek poem:

*"For in thee we live and move and have our being." - Epimenides of Knossos (Crete), 6th Century BC philosopher and religious prophet*

However, the new Christian teachings were not received without opposition.

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**Plotinus** (c. 205 – 270), a fan of Plato, was offended by the impact of Christian doctrine on Philosophical thought. His reaction was a reintroduction of Plato's teaching, with some modifications, which became known as Neoplatonism; a system of ideas very close to the Gnosticism opposed by the early church fathers.

As the influence of the church grew, it was inevitable that these encounter between the new Christian faith and the Philosophies of Ancient Greece would occur. Until 311 AD, Christianity was relatively protected by the fact that it was persecuted and illegal. But, when it became legal, and later became the state religion, everyone wanted in. From this point onwards, the influence of Greek philosophy can begin to be seen, even in the mainstream teachings of the church.

**Augustine of Hippo** (c. 354 – 430) was influenced by Neoplatonism in his early life. Following his conversion to Christ, he became one of the leading theologians in church history and taught against Neoplatonism, but some critics feel he never quite rid himself of some of those basic principles.

Augustine opposed the sceptics of his day, challenging their notion of there being no truth. He demonstrated that to state that there is no truth is to accept the truth that there is no truth. This is an application of the law of contradiction.

His work against scepticism broke new ground in our understanding of perception, popularising the example of an oar in water. He demonstrated that though one's perception of the oar bending is not reliable as a fact, it is a reliable perception. In contrasting variable perception to the stability found in Mathematics, he showed that there are areas of knowledge we can know, without contradiction. He argued that these areas of absolute knowledge, or truth, must relate to an absolute truth giver.

It has been argued that the influence of Neoplatonism persisted in his work, resulting in dualism. Dualism of Man, as soul and spirit. Dualism in Scripture, with everything understood on two levels, with metaphorical or allegorical interpretation placed above literal interpretation of Scripture, leads to eisegesis rather than exegesis (ideas being put into, rather than drawn out of, the text).

Continued non-literal interpretation of Scripture removed the " absolutes " put in place by Christ and by Paul. This opened the door for science to separate natural from supernatural, creator from creation. Ultimately, this enabled science to reject the supernatural and pursue material explanations for all things.

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## Western Medieval Era Philosophers

**Anselm of Canterbury** (c. 1034–1109) was a Christian philosopher; he was also Archbishop of Canterbury from 1093 to 1109.

Anselm was the first to produce an ontological argument for the existence of God, in his 1078 *Proslogion*. In broad strokes, an ontological argument is one that presents a definition of God and then seeks to prove His necessary existence through reason.

Anselm defined God as "*that than which nothing greater can be conceived*". He argued that, if the greatest possible being exists in the mind, it must also exist in reality. For if it only exists in the mind, a greater being is possible – one which exists in the mind and in reality.

Anselm's contemporary, Gaunilo of Marmoutiers, disapproved of this argument, saying it could be used to "prove" the existence of anything. Aquinas rejected the argument because he believed, humans cannot know God's nature. Kant's observed that if a supreme being can be imagined to exist, it can as easily be imagined to not exist. Others have dismissed the argument because they believe a maximally great being cannot exist, in imagination or reality. They claim no one being, no matter how supreme, could be imbued with all the attributes of greatness, because, some attributes are incompatible with others.

### FOCUS POINT

Whether his argument is sound or not, Anselm was right about one thing,

*"No eye has seen, no ear has heard and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him"* - 1 Corinthians 2:9 (NLT)

God's works are inconceivable, how much more so God? It is true that whatever can be conceived is not God; our starting point, by faith, must be that God is inconceivable.

## Faith and Reason

Anselm's motto was "*faith seeking understanding*" (*fides quaerens intellectum*), which is possibly drawn from Augustine of Hippo's Ten Homilies on the First Epistle of John Tractate XXIX on John 7:14-18, "*Therefore do not seek to understand in order to believe, but believe that thou mayest understand.*" Both men held that faith precedes reason and that the role of reason is to expand upon what we have already arrived at by faith.

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**FOCUS POINT**

And yet, Anselm saw a need to prove God ontologically. Was this because the power of God was no longer evident in the church? Christ had promised signs would follow them that believed (Mark 16:17). There is no need to present an ontological argument to a man whose daughter has been raised from the dead, or a man crippled from birth who can suddenly walk.

But, can an experiential knowledge of God be intellectually satisfying? The Bible loves the wise, but not so much the proud or learned. Paul describes how in the last days,

*"People will be lovers of themselves ... always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth" - 1 Timothy 3:2; 7 (NIV)*

Learning is not the same as believing.

*"But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." - 1 Corinthians 1:27-31 (NIV)*

**FOCUS POINT**

We mustn't try to substitute the convicting power of the Holy Spirit for arguments and reason. Our best evidence for God will always be an experience of Him. When a sinner walks into the presence of God in worship, or experiences the love of God through the body of Christ, or encounters the power of God in healing or miraculous signs, the Holy Spirit will lead them to believe in God and our job is made so much easier.

**Thomas Aquinas** (c. 1221–1274) didn't agree with Anselm's ontological argument, but he did have faith in God and believed that God's being was an ontological necessity.

His argument, simply put, was that for any being to be, it must become. However, for every being to become there must be one being who never became, an Uncreated Creator. This argument has been called a "first cause" argument. It is the only solution to the contradiction found in Materialism.

The physical laws of conservation of mass and energy teach us, "*nothing from nothing comes*" (ex *nihilo nihil fit*), yet Materialism requires no creator or first cause. Therefore, Materialism will inevitably lead to infinite regression, where the "source" of the finite material, is something finite and material, which came from something finite and material, *ad infinitum*.

Aquinas argued that God is not derived, dependent or contingent. He is self-existing but did not make Himself, because He is not caused. He cannot, not be. This God, according to Aquinas, is a logical and ontological necessity. This continues to be a popular argument for the existence of God.

Aquinas was concerned with how we use language, particularly in describing God. There was a movement in his day that understood language to have lost meaning. He fought strongly against this idea, saying not only could we know God, but we could communicate the truth about Him.

He asserted there were three main ways language is used, and divided words and their meanings, into three groups: Univocal, Equivocal, Analogical.

- By **Univocal**, he meant a word that never alters meaning, regardless of how it is used. Until the release of Michael Jackson's 1987 album, whenever you used the word bad, it had one meaning. Aquinas showed not all language is this black and white. For example, "God is good" and, "my dog is good", but in different ways. Likewise, "God is awesome" and "that movie was awesome!" do not mean the same thing. We do not, in a finite and material world, have language sufficient to describe in univocal terms a God who is inconceivable.
- By **Equivocal**, Aquinas meant a word that varies in meaning, so severely, according to use, that it has no real meaning outside of context. Our communication on the character of God cannot be equivocal. When we call Him "Father", it is because He is, in fact, our Father. Though, He is not exactly like an earthly father because He is God. The word, father, still has meaning when used of God, and is helpful in some measure, to describe Him.
- Which is where we arrive at **Analogical**. He used the term "Analogical" to describe words that have meaning attached that are sufficient, but not restrictive, to aid our understanding of God. When we say "God is good", we know He is not good like our dog is good, or awesome like the movie was awesome. But when we say, "God is good", we also know we do not mean He is bad or evil. The language has sufficient meaning to be useful.

#### FOCUS POINT

Some people say, "God is called Father, so we are all children of God," but from Scripture we know this to be false. John says, to as many as received Jesus, He gave the right to be called children of God (John 1:12). We must not assume language to be Univocal, true in one absolute way. Not all people are children of God, but God is a good Father to His children. This is very important to understand.

In a sense, Aquinas created a false dichotomy with this three-way split in language. Theologians have more than three ways to explain the way language is used to describe God. For example, you may have heard a preacher say, "When it says God has an arm, we know he doesn't have an arm, but God has revealed himself in terms we can understand". This is what theologians call anthropomorphisms, God revealing Himself to us by attributing to Himself human characteristics.

But this does not discredit Aquinas main point. What Aquinas proved was that language is not useless, but is genuinely useful, and contains sufficient meaning for us to communicate deep truths concerning the nature and character of God.

Aquinas was also interested in how we arrived at knowledge. He believed that there were three types of knowledge:

- Things arrived at by faith,
- Through revelation,
- Things arrived at through logic and study of nature,
- Things that can be known through both faith and logic.



# MODULE 6: CHURCH HISTORY

## Introduction to Church History

*"History is written by the victor" - Braveheart Movie, 1995<sup>5</sup>*

*"Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it" - Sir Winston Churchill*

These quotes apply to church history as well.

In the pages that follow, we will not go into an in-depth and detailed look at 2000 years of history but will focus on certain key points. Hopefully, that will inspire you and excite you to explore further yourselves.

In order for any subject we study to have a lasting impact and be of benefit to our lives, it must be applicable to us. We will, therefore, look at the lessons that teach us how we can live our lives and co-labour with Christ in building His church; as well as at our understanding of our Sovereign God and how He has worked out His plans in human history.

## The Beginning

Church is not defined by a building or institution; the Bible refers to her as the *ekklesia*, the "gathering of the called out ones". In the Old Testament, Israel can be seen as a "type" or "shadow" of the church. In this sense, the Bible reveals much to us about God's dealings with His church.

In Genesis 3:15, Adam sinned by choosing self-reliance and his own good ideas rather than trusting in God. He, therefore, abdicated the authority delegated to him by God. Since then, Satan has continuously sought to fill this vacuum and to take authority for himself (1 John 5:19; Ephesians 2 and so forth). God did not give up on Man, however, but had already set in motion a plan to redeem Man and restore our covenant relationship with Him (1 Peter 1:20-21). This would lead to enmity between Man and Satan for the rest of human history, with victory promised by means of the offspring of woman (Genesis 3:15).

*"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves." - Genesis 3:7 (NIV)*

Adam first tried his own unsatisfactory means of covering his sin (fig leaves), which God later replaced with garments He Himself had made for them, "*garments of skin*" – Genesis 3:21. This act of provision was the first example in the Bible of blood being shed, and a foreshadowing of the ultimate sacrifice, Jesus Christ who shed His blood to cover over our sin, guilt and shame. This was also the first instance of Man trying his own methods and systems, as opposed to those revealed by God.



Jesus declares that He will build His church (Matthew 16:18) on the foundations of the apostles and prophets. He is the Chief Cornerstone, not any Man, system or programme (Ephesians 2:20). This church was birthed at Pentecost, with an outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2). The Holy Spirit remains to guide God's people and lead them into all truth; enabling Him to build His church through them (Acts 8; 16; Revelation 2; 3; 2 Peter 1; 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 2).

We shall see that the visible, dominant expression of the church at that time was not always (and still isn't) what God intended it to be, but as with Israel, it seems, God always kept a remnant who represented and taught the true gospel (cf 1 Kings 19:18).

With this in mind, let us look at what happened to the church after the events recorded in the book of Acts. We will see how this warfare continued and will continue until the return of Christ, and how the true gospel of promise, grace, faith and spirit have been attacked by religious systems teaching law, works and flesh (Galatians 4). Like with Adam and Eve, Satan will try to attack and deceive the church, tempting her to build according to his plan; and if she does not listen to his plans, he will persecute her openly! This is the spiritual warfare we are engaged in; we are not fighting people, but against, *"the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"* (Ephesians 6:12 - NIV).

## The Early Church

We read much in Acts about the patterns and principles laid out by God and how the early church functioned. History goes on to tell us about wave after wave of persecution at the hands of the authorities that tried to destroy this sect:

- AD64 - Nero began to persecute the Christians.
- AD66 - Before this died down, Zealots massacred the Roman garrison in Jerusalem.
- AD70 - Romans besieged and destroyed Jerusalem. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed and many more died of famine and disease. The Temple was totally destroyed (only the wailing wall is still standing) and the money and gold was taken and used to fund the Coliseum, where at a later stage Christians would be killed.

The Christians in Jerusalem remembered Christ's prophecies (Matthew 24:15) and fled; surviving and preventing a fatal blow being dealt to the church. As with Herod, this was an attempt to destroy what had been birthed by God in its infancy (as with Moses too, a type of Christ). Here, again, God prevails as a result of prophetic intervention.

There were several waves of persecution over the next few centuries, according to varying degrees of intensity and involving general slander and misinformation about the true nature of Christian beliefs and practices (i.e. that Christians were cannibals). With the death of the original apostles (the last being John in the early second century) came the issue of authority, as the apostles who had carried decisive authority were no longer around. The churches, although operating autonomously within their various regions, continued in unity and kept in contact with one another. But there arose a dispute around who could truly be called an "apostle".

During this time all kinds of writing began to be circulated, written by men of various calibre. Such men were Clement (possibly the 3<sup>rd</sup> bishop of Rome), Ignatius (Bishop of Antioch) and Polycarp (disciple of John). Whilst many of these men served the church well, some of their ideas were flawed; their ideas might have been the vehicle that opened the door to some un-Biblical belief systems we saw arising in the church later on.





## Compromise and Persecution

The year's AD 222 – 249 saw a period of peace from the authorities towards the church but also saw a creeping in of *syncretism* (a combination of different beliefs) as men looked to find a common faith, extracting the best from all religions. The church expanded in numbers and prestige until:

- **AD 250 – 260:** Terrible persecution occurred under Decius then Valerion (with some intervals of relaxation).
- **AD 284:** Diocletion succeeded as emperor in the East (the Roman empire was split into two at this point).
- **AD 303:** Diocletion started ruthless attempts to eradicate the church. Maximian in the West also persecuted the church. This period was perhaps the worst of all the persecutions.
- **AD 306:** Constantius (who had succeeded Maximian) died and was succeeded by Constantine.
- **AD 312:** Constantine defeated Maxentius after seeing the vision of a “Christian” symbol (the *chi-rho*) with the Greek inscription, “*with this sign conquer*” (this may simply be legend). Whilst his motives were often mixed and he retained some old superstitions, he proclaimed a fervent belief in the God of the Christians.
- **AD 324:** Constantine defeated Licinius and becomes master of the whole empire.
- **AD 313:** A decree was issued (Edict of Constantine) giving full tolerance to Christianity and freedom of religion to all in the West. The church became the state church. Officials of the emperor had to be Christian and the church became part of the state machinery. From this point on being a Christian no longer meant ostracism and persecution, it did, however, mean that a profession of Christianity was necessary for promotion and advancement.

As Constantine grew in power, so did his pride. He dressed in the finest robes, and when meeting the bishop in Jerusalem he presented him with robes that matched the splendour of those of any pagan priest. This was the first use of vestments in the church! Soon, in order to encourage people to leave paganism and adopt Christianity, various rituals and rites were introduced, many of these having been taken from heathen ceremonies. Sadly, the clergy was often more concerned with enforcing these rules, than in teaching the Word of God.

The church proved ineffective at preventing people from celebrating pagan holidays, and over time co-opted such holidays and made them into Christian festivals (i.e. Christmas and Easter). This explains why much of the symbolism of such celebrations has pagan origins.

The state also began to intervene in church affairs with the power to call councils, to ratify decisions, to appoint bishops and even influence decisions on doctrinal matters. In turn, the church was given certain secular power such as deciding legal cases with no right of recourse to civil courts. This all set a precedent that became even more problematic later on.

It was now prestigious to be a member of the clergy (rather than life threatening) and so it attracted people with wrong motives and flawed characters.

## The Church Was Then Modelled On The Roman Empire

- Four prefects governed the empire. This resulted in the Christian world being divided into four great dioceses, each under a patriarch.
- There was a chain of command through the ranks, down to the humble priest at the bottom. This led to much competition for positions of power and even between dioceses!

### FOCUS POINT

This acceptance and success resulted in more damage being done to the bride of Christ than was ever done through persecution. Where persecution seemed to only make the church stronger, institutionalising the church delivered a serious blow.

There were many things that crept into the church over the centuries, these things led not only to her being harmed but harmed the gospel she had been called to preach.

Constantine's successors were lesser men and his grandson (Julian the apostate) did his best to restore paganism, but by now this was a lost cause and Christianity (at least some form of it) held sway.

In 381 AD at the Council of Constantinople, the **Bishop of Constantinople** (the city emperor Constantine had built to be his new capital of the empire) was officially recognised as being second to the bishop of Rome. This started a competition between the two.

The **Bishop of Rome** assumed authority over the whole church and, for example, commanded that everyone celebrate Easter on the same date. The church in the east did not recognise his authority to do this and refused. The victor, the bishop of Rome, therefore excommunicated the entire Eastern Church!

Later **Emperor Valentin** made it an offence against the State to resist the dictates of the bishop of Rome. In 451 AD, at the Council of Chalcedon, the term "pope" was reserved exclusively for the bishop of Rome, but the bishop of Constantinople was declared head of the church in the East.

**Gregory the Great** (590 – 604) protested when the bishop of Constantinople assumed the title of "universal bishop" and called him a forerunner of the antichrist. He called himself "servant of servants" and "successor of Peter" and declared that there was no salvation outside of the Catholic Church, of which he was the head.

In 752 **Pepin** was crowned emperor and was asked by the Pope to help squash "rebellion" in Northern Italy (against the Lombards). The cities that he captured were "given" to the Pope who now became a secular ruler.

**Charles the Great** (Charlemagne) did the same thing and was himself crowned Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire of the West. The idea was, "one state, one church".

In 850 AD a collection of letters (now referred to as the False Decretals) were put into circulation. These were forgeries but were used to support the papal claim to have authority over secular rulers throughout the empire. Another forged document purported to show that Constantine had at the time of his baptism, given over authority for the empire to the pope. This "Donation of Constantine" meant that the authority given by Pepin and Charles was antedated by 500 years.



The sacraments do not symbolise grace but impart grace (*ex opera operato*) to everyone who does not resist. The more grace one takes in, the higher one climbs on the ladder to perfection. The patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, saints and Mary all had a surplus of grace which can be made available to those needing it. This paved the way for indulgences and the like.

In **431 AD Mary** was officially given the title *Theotokos* ("Mother of God") and it was believed that she could intervene on behalf of those who prayed to her. She was not "worshipped" as such but could be prayed to.

Relics also became a popular means of accessing grace. It was said that those visiting relics would be granted divine favour. This led to a massive proliferation in the existence of relics, such as pieces of the cross, bones of the saints, and so forth.

The doctrine of purgatory was made an article of faith in AD 1439. This teaches that Christ suffered for our eternal punishment but we need still to suffer temporal punishment. Purgatory is a place where the souls of men are purged, through suffering. Again this doctrine was used in the sale of indulgences over time.

The Catholic system claimed authority over every individual's conscience and belief. It could punish those of other beliefs with "spiritual" or "secular" punishments. At the time Muslims (Saracens) ruled Palestine. They were "banned" by the church that then sent millions to execute this judgement. Land and property taken from them were to be given to the Crusaders as well as indulgences to those who took part. There were a great many crusades (including crusades made up almost entirely of children). Most were badly led and few even made it to Palestine. Several simply attacked and looted cities on the way. Only one or two of the Crusades showed any degree of success at all.

#### **FOCUS POINT**

Whilst it may seem difficult to accept how the church fell so far, we must remember that this happened gradually over hundreds of years. One must try to look at our own recent history to realise how many generations, how many changes in culture, language and so forth, take place over such a time frame. We can then ask, what would become of what we are building even one hundred years from now (if Christ hasn't returned by then). How small an error need creep in, even now, for us to totally miss the boat!

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## Evangelical Movements

Throughout history, there have been men and women who have genuinely sought to live Biblical Christianity. The picture painted in previous sections can be quite depressing, showing the rise of systems invented by men in place of the Word of God. But both inside and outside the system there were people who wanted to do things God's way. Those who believe that Scripture is the ultimate authority are the evangelicals (from *euangellion* – “gospel”).

Northern Italy and Southern France were a breeding ground for good Scriptural teaching during the early centuries. The diocese of Milan was independent of the bishop of Rome until the 11<sup>th</sup> Century under Hildebrand the emperor (Gregory VII the pope).

- **In Ambrosius 4<sup>th</sup> Century the bishop of Milan:**
  - Taught that the Bible was the only standard for faith.
  - Taught that life, justification and forgiveness were dependent on Christ's work on the cross and not in the works of Man.
  - Believed in only two sacraments: baptism and the Lord's Supper.
  - Had a disciple called Augustine (who opposed Pelagius).
- **Rufinus in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century:**
  - Continued the teaching of Ambrosius.
- **Laurentius in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century:**
  - Preached that repentance alone is necessary for forgiveness, not absolution from a priest. In this same century, nine Italian bishops broke fellowship with the pope because they considered him a heretic.

### FOCUS POINT

These men tried to walk in the truth but also continued to walk in some degree of error. One such error was revering relics: Ambrosius.

- **Claudius, Archbishop of Turin in 9<sup>th</sup> Century:**
  - taught the truth in his area that covered the region in which the “Waldenses” later flourished.
  - He wrote commentaries on the gospels and epistles of Paul.
  - He taught that the church has one Lord, Jesus Christ.
  - He taught that Peter had no pre-eminence over the other apostles ( that he just taught Gentiles first).
  - He taught that Salvation is by faith, not merit.
  - He taught that the rejection of tradition, praying for the dead and the infallibility of the church, and of revering relics.

Bishops in his area agreed with him and urged him to continue. He then opposed the pope and said that he could only call himself apostolic, who kept the apostolic teaching. Agobard, bishop of Lyon was a supporter, and a synod in Paris upheld most of the principles he fought for.

However, whilst these men and many others fought for reform within the church, they were on the whole unsuccessful in spreading their beliefs outside their immediate sphere of influence.

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## Groups Outside The Church

### FOCUS POINT

Remember: any group outside the church was considered heretical and strongly opposed. After they were eliminated, the vast majority of surviving records were written by the Catholic Church making it difficult to discover the full truth about them. They were obviously much maligned by the church.

### The Waldenses

This began in Lyons AD 1170-1180. Peter Waldo (hence the name) a wealthy merchant underwent a religious experience and gave his wealth away. Touched by his example many followed him.

In AD 1184 Lucius III declared them heretics and called for their destruction. Thereafter, though they faced sporadic persecution, they spread further into France and Central and Eastern Europe. Ultimately, they declared themselves a counter-church, the "true church".

Waldo taught his followers to abandon all other activities and spend their time as evangelists; that the leaders had to give up their jobs and live by begging.

#### They taught:

- the divinity of Jesus and salvation through Him,
- all true believers can preach and evangelise and give sacraments,
- purgatory is a myth and so indulgences likewise cannot be right,
- it was a deception to believe the pope could forgive sins,
- relics were merely half decayed bones,
- pilgrimages only emptied purses,
- it is okay to eat meat every day,
- consecrated water has no more power than rainwater,
- prayer in a shed is as powerful as prayer in a church building,
- the taking of oaths is unnecessary (banned it) and despised lies,
- the Roman Catholic church was the "whore of Revelation".

**FOCUS POINT**

They had the gospel of John in their own language, which was the language minstrels used (many of whom spread the gospel in song) and published the whole New Testament in their language. Because books were so expensive, they did not all have one, so they learned whole epistles and gospels by heart. They went out as missionaries two by two, disguised as merchants. In order to become a Shepherd, one had to have been a missionary for three years.

Many went to study at universities in Italy and France and influenced others for the truth.

Often categorised as Cathari (Manichaeism) because they had some things in common and despised as such by the Catholic Church, Waldensianism survived and influenced the atmosphere in which the Reformation would begin; many of their beliefs entered mainstream Protestantism.

**Paulicians (circa AD 750)**

The **Paulicians** were called thus because they emphasised the teaching of Paul. They were also accused of Manicheism, while others say they were early Protestants, however, they were actually neither.

Whilst not necessarily holding to complete truth, they were very influential and taught many things that paved the way for other groups and ultimately the reformation.

They were opposed and eventually took up arms to defend themselves, but this defence soon turned to aggression. In the end, they were conquered, but their influence lived on. Many withdrew to the mountain regions and gained a measure of independence a century later.

**The Albigenses (12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Century)**

Also known as **Cathari**, the Albigenses probably held to Manichaeism (a dual belief system) and, therefore, were heretical, but held many of the views of more orthodox groups. They preached against the worldliness of the Roman Catholic Church and the worship of statues. They also called the pope the, "*antichrist*" and the Roman Catholic Church the, "*whore of Revelation*".

Through inquisition and crusades, the movement was crushed, but they had spread their influence into France, Italy, Belgium and England.

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## The Inquisition

Several councils from AD 1119 to 1179 pronounced curses over groups such as the Albigenses and monks travelled Europe mobilising people to fight them; the Lateran Council in AD 1215 completed the work. Dominique (who started the Dominicans) was given the task of examining and interrogating heretics and to hand them over to judges. This was the beginning of the **Inquisition**.

Council stated that all the secular rulers had to commit themselves to eradicating heretics in their territories. Reward would be the right to confiscate the possessions of the victims. Any who were negligent in this task would be given one year to mend their ways, then cursed. His subjects would be released from loyalty to him and his possessions could be given to the one who would cleanse the territory of heretics. Each bishop was to examine his own diocese to see this was done.

So it was that the Abbot of Citeaux led an army against the Duke of Toulouse who supported the Albigenses and the city of Beziers was besieged and attacked. There were many Catholics in the city and when asked how to discern friends from enemies the abbot said, *"The Lord knows who are His."* In other words, kill them all and let God judge who was innocent (60,000 people in Bezier). The city held out for 40 days: the length of time that many had committed themselves to participating in the crusade, and so they started to go home. Therefore, the pope promised the leader of the Albigenses that they could go in peace if they surrendered. He and 300 knights rode to the papal camp. But the pope believed that a promise to a heretic is not binding and arrested them all. The rest of the people saw this and fled during the night. The pope was incensed and so had 450 captives and 300 knights burned and hanged. Dominique played an important role in this episode.

### Council of Toulouse AD 1229

The Inquisition was now organised. Each town had a committee of one priest and three laymen to find heretics. Everyone over 14 had to renounce heresy by oath and promise cooperation in finding heretics.

The council stated,

*"We forbid laymen to possess the books of the Old Testament and New Testament. One is only allowed to have a psalm book out of piety, a prayer book for the holy services, and the Hours devoted to the holy Virgin Mary, but we forbid emphatically the possession of the above-mentioned books in the language of the country."*

### John Wycliffe (AD 1328-1384)

**John Wycliffe** - the *"morning star of the English Reformation"*, a Roman Catholic priest and ablest scholar at Oxford University. He became popular partly because the English were suspicious of the pope to whom money was sent. At this time he lived in Avignon (the Italians hated him because he was so influenced by the King of France) and England was at war with France. The nobles liked him because he taught that if the church failed to use its property for God's glory the civil authority has the right to take it away and give it to others who serve God acceptably.

He wrote against the infallibility of the pope, that Scripture is the highest authority, that the church should be remodelled according to New Testament patterns, against indulgences, purgatory, confession, worship of saints etc.

He translated the Bible into English from the Latin Vulgate and organised bands of lay preachers (Lollards) to spread the gospel throughout England after he was forced to retire in AD 1382.

As a reaction, the Roman Catholic Church had parliament make preaching the gospel a capital offence. The **Council of Konstanz** AD 1415 condemned him and orders his books burned. Then in 1428 his body (that which they could find) was exhumed, burned and scattered.

However, his message lived on and had spread as far as Bohemia (carried by students who had studied in England – ties were good after Richard II married Anne of Bohemia). There it was heard by a certain man named John Hus.

### John Hus (AD 1360-1415)

It is worth taking some time to look at the life and ministry of **John Hus**, a preacher from Bohemia, who lived from 1360 -1415.

The gospel arrived in Bohemia with the armies of Charles the Great (around 800AD). The Bible was soon translated into the local language and many came to faith. The liturgy they used, however, was that of the Greek Orthodox Church, which displeased the pope. In 1079 he issued a papal bull (decree) that the eastern liturgy and the indigenous language could not be used. He wrote to his "beloved son", the king, that after careful study of the Word of God he had come to the conclusion that it pleased God to be worshipped in an unknown language and that failure to do so had led to many heresies.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Waldenses travelled to Bohemia, due to persecution, bringing the gospel with them. They were zealous evangelists who preached wherever they went (but dared not do it publicly). Many people continued to worship in their own language and partake of both bread and wine at the Lord's Supper, despite the dictates of Rome. In the end, severe persecution broke out and all who deviated from the official ritual were threatened with being burned at the stake.

This was the spiritual atmosphere into which Hus was born. He was raised by a devout mother, his father having died while he was young. He went to study at university in Prague where he proved to be a brilliant scholar. He was faithful to the church and became the minister of the Bethlehem Church in Prague in 1402. His preaching was effective and he was a diligent student of the Bible. He became aware of the teachings of John Wycliffe, which impacted him greatly and began to see the errors of the system, basing all of his preaching on Scripture, whose authority he placed above that of the pope or the church council.

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Two English theologians had come to hold a debate about the papacy but were banned from doing so; whilst they were there they painted two pictures on the wall of the house in which they stayed. One showed the pope in his robes and crown, the other Jesus on a donkey: the message was clear and it too had an impact on Hus. He began to study Wycliffe's writings more closely but never came to the point of wanting to break from the Catholic Church.

Rome became concerned about the developments in Prague and ordered that the local Archbishop acted firmly against those who read Wycliffe or spread his teachings: over 200 books were publically burned (representing huge monetary value in those days). This stirred up Hus, who had become rector of the university, to preach even more against the errors and abuses of the Roman Catholic Church leading to a demand that he appear in Rome. The King and Queen and many other influential figures begged that he be released from such an order and instead be examined in Prague by a papal envoy.

The pope refused these requests and condemned Hus as a heretic. He also ordered an interdict against Prague: effectively the gates of heaven were closed to its inhabitants. This meant that churches were closed, people went into mourning and there was a belief that any who died would roam the earth as spirits until the pope opened heaven again.

Some inhabitants turned against Hus, so he decided to leave Prague and return to his birthplace where he continued to preach. He said,

*"I have withdrawn not because I deny the truth. I am willing to die for it. But because the wicked priests forbid me to preach the truth" - John Hus (AD 1360-1415)*

Those who heard him said such things as,

*"The church calls this man a heretic and a devil but his life is holy and his teaching is pure." - John Hus (AD 1360-1415)*

He later returned to Prague and continued to preach the same things. At that time there were great problems in the Catholic Church. At one stage there were two popes simultaneously: - Gregory XII (Rome) and Benedict XIII (France). They excommunicated each other and each demanded to be recognised as the true successor of Peter, and God's representative on earth. They fought each other with both spiritual and secular weapons: they hired armies paid for with indulgences and forgiveness of sin and so forth. Bishops and priests picked sides and joined in their own private battles.

#### **FOCUS POINT**

Hus was greatly saddened by all this and saw how different it was to the early church. He asked, *"If they are infallible then why do they disagree with each other? If one is the Holy Father why can't we distinguish him from the others?"*

He wrote a treatise, *"About the Church"* in which he developed an important principle: The true church of Jesus Christ does not need an external cohesive structure, but only her union with her invisible head, Jesus, is required. The true Catholic Church is the gathering of all the elect ones.

He also wrote another treatise, “*The Six Errors*” which he pinned to the door of the Bethlehem church.

**He wrote against the following:**

- That the priest had the power to change the bread and wine in Mass into the actual body and blood of Jesus.
- That confession demanded of each person that he believes in the pope and the saints.
- That the priest had the power to forgive sins.
- Unconditional obedience to all orders of the clergy.
- Simony (the buying and selling of church offices).

Soon these ideas were spread across Bohemia. The reaction to them was exacerbated by the actions of pope John XXIII who issued a ban over Ladislaus, the King of Naples, for helping Gregory. He also urged an army to be raised (promising money and forgiveness to those who took part) to fight Ladislaus. This caused uproar in Bohemia and Hus used it as an opportunity to show the contradiction between Christ and His “representative” on earth. He said that a secular authority has no right to interfere in spiritual things and that spiritual authority should be content to carry the spiritual sword without coveting the secular one. He further attacked indulgences and preached that if the pope abuses his authority by ordering what contradicts the Word of God, he should be opposed (just as one would oppose the Beast of Revelation).

Bohemia became divided, with the priests and King opposing Ladislaus but the nobles and the majority of the people supporting him. One more, an interdict was pronounced over Prague and Hus was forced to flee again to his birthplace. He said,

*“If the goose (Hus means goose) which is a shy bird and is not able to fly high, was able to break its bonds, later an eagle will appear, which will fly high in the sky and draw all birds to him”- John Hus (AD 1360-1415)*

Sigismund, a pious man, became emperor soon after and resolved to bring unity to the church. He called a general council to which many churchmen were invited (30 cardinals, some archbishops, 150 bishops, 1800 priests and a number of abbots, theologians, kings and dukes. Also invited were the (now three) competing popes. Whilst John XXIII appeared in person, the other two sent representatives. Hundreds of thousands of people from across Europe attended, as did John Hus.

John Hus had been given a guarantee of safety by his own king, and so he went, though he felt he would meet, “*more enemies than Jesus met with in Jerusalem*”. On the way, he was met with approval by the councils of several cities and by thousands of people. The feeling was that his case was not about him alone but about the entire church.

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**This council lasted five years. Some of the “highlight” were:**

- The council was declared to be higher in authority than the pope.
- John Wycliffe was posthumously summoned and condemned.
- It was decided that laymen could no longer drink from the cup at Communion.
- The pope was accused of more than 43 crimes (including murder of another pope, fraud, heresy, adultery, simony and so forth). He fled but was “fired” as were the other two popes. They were replaced by Martin V.

Next came the case of Hus, who, though he had a promise of safe passage from Sigismund, put his faith in Christ.

*“I trust in the almighty God and my Saviour; He will give me the Holy Spirit to strengthen me in the truth, so that I boldly can face temptations, prison, yes if needed, also a cruel death.” - Emperor Sigismund*

The pope received him in a friendly manner and also promised him protection, but after about a month of being there he was arrested and imprisoned. He got very sick but his enemies didn't want him to die this way and so sent him medical help. The Bohemians were outraged and a group of nobles were sent to ask for his release. They reminded the emperor of his promise. The emperor wanted to have Hus released, but he was told that he had no right to give such assurances and that the good of the church took precedence over the promise of an emperor. The church released the emperor from his oath (as with Innocent, and the Albigenses, it was said that a promise to a heretic is not binding).

His case was delayed a while due to John XXIII's escape. Ironically, John was later captured and placed in the same prison as Hus: both were in chains but whilst John was there in shame, the chains of Hus were an honour. At his trial, Hus was questioned but his answers were drowned out by the crowd. The council (including the emperor) tried to get him to renounce his teachings but he refused. A compromise was offered to him whereby he could recognise the council's right to judge in matters of doctrine, without mentioning specifically the errors he was accused of. He again refused, as that would have given the council authority above his own council.

In the next session, he was condemned to death. Though he still believed many things that today we would reject (adoration of Mary, purgatory, transubstantiation and so forth) he also knew that Man was saved by grace, by the death of Jesus on a cross, with no merit on our side.

He wrote to one of his friends,

*“I write this letter in my prison and with chains on my hands. I expect my death sentence tomorrow...When we see each other again by the help of Jesus Christ in the wonderful blessed peace of the next life, you will hear how gracious God has proved Himself towards me and how powerfully He has strengthened me, in the midst of my trials and needs.”*

He dreamed he was painting a picture of Jesus on the walls of the Bethlehem chapel. Jealous priests came and wiped the pictures off, but the next day others came who restored the pictures, making them clearer than ever. On 6<sup>th</sup> July 1415 (his birthday) he was executed. He was brought before the council where charges were read against him and he again refused to recant.

He answered,

*“How would I be able to lift up my eyes to heaven if I did? How would I be able to appear before the multitudes to whom I have preached the gospel? No, I consider the salvation of their soul of more importance than this poor body, which is deemed to be killed now.”*

He was called a “damned Judas” and stripped of his priestly robes. A paper hat with devils painted on it was placed on his head. He said, *“I carry this shameful crown with gladness for your sake O Jesus! You who carried the crown of thorns for me.”* As he was marched to the stake he was shown a place where many of his books were being burned. He smiled, knowing that this was a futile effort to put out the light.

**FOCUS POINT**

One observer wrote of his death: *“In thee, O Lord, I put my trust, bow down thine ear to me.”* With such Christian prayers, Hus arrived at the stake, looking at it without fear. He climbed upon it, after two assistants of the hangman had torn his clothes from him and had clad him in a shirt drenched with pitch. At that moment, one of the electors, Prince Ludwig of the Palatinate, rode up and pleaded with Hus to recant, so that he might be spared a death in the flames. But Hus replied: *“Today you will roast a lean goose (Hus means goose), but a hundred years from now you will hear a swan sing, whom you will leave unroasted and no trap or net will catch him for you.”* Full of pity and filled with much admiration, the Prince turned away.

It was on 31 October 1517 (102 years later) that Luther posted his 95 theses on the door of the chapel in Wittenberg.

The evening before October 31, 1517, the Elector Frederick of Saxony had a dream which was recorded by his brother, Duke John. The dream, in short, is about a monk who wrote on the church door of Wittenberg with a pen so large that it reached to Rome. The more those in authority tried to break the pen, the stronger it became. When asked how the pen got so strong, the monk replied, *“The pen belonged to an old goose of Bohemia, a hundred years old.”*

The Elector was unsure exactly what the dream meant, but believed he had an interpretation which he thought may be accurate. The very morning he shared his dream, Martin Luther was posting his theses.

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## Martin Luther and the German Reformation

Luther was born on 10 November 1483 to a poor man who later became more prosperous through mining. His father was not sympathetic to the Roman Church but his mother was very religious (and superstitious). At 14 he was sent off to school and in 1501 was enrolled at University of Erfurt to study law and classical literature. In 1505 he qualified and his father was very proud. He began to refer to his son using *Sie* instead of *du* as a sign of respect.

However, the death of a friend in a fight deeply affected him, as did an incident when he was on the way back from visiting his father. Lightning struck a tree where he had been hiding from the storm, knocking him to the ground. He screamed, "*St Anna, help me and I will become a monk!*" Saved, he duly entered the monastery despite resistance from his friends and his father who reverted to using *du*. Later, his father reluctantly accepted Luther's choice as Martin's two brothers died and a rumour reached his father that Martin had also died. When the rumour proved false his father "sacrificed" his son to God.

Martin's deepest motivation, however, was a desire for holiness. "*When will I be holy enough to get a gracious God?*" he cried. He believed Christ to be an angry Judge who could only be appeased by good works. He was plagued by attacks of fear and depression.

Luther joined the Augustinians but they held not to the views of Augustine but to semi-Pelagianism (that Man has a free will and can do good works which merit grace). Luther tried so hard that others resented him and his superiors warned him to be more moderate. Yet, nothing he did brought him peace; he had fits of fear that caused him to faint; some of his fellow monks thought he was possessed or an epileptic. In 1507 he was ordained as a priest. After the first Mass that he conducted, in great fear, (some taught at the time that even wearing the wrong vestments was a serious sin) his father told him that it was probably the devil that had called him in the lightning, not God.

Luther still battled. He saw no righteousness in himself, which deprived him of all hope. God, he thought, was a harsh judge who demanded what he could not do. He hated the Bible and cursed God. In the midst of this, his superior, Von Staupitz was like a father to him. He urged Luther to seek peace, not in his own good works but to trust in God's grace. He told Luther, "*Get used to the thought that you are a sinner; for such ones Christ has died, not for the righteous.*" This helped deliver him from his depression.

In 1508 he was transferred to the monastery in Wittenberg and in 1509 he visited Rome as a representative of his order. He was appalled by the depravity he saw in Rome, something that deeply affected him.

In 1512 he received a doctorate in theology and 1513 began to serve as professor in Wittenberg. As he taught from the Psalms he was again confronted by the righteousness of God, which led to him studying Romans. Here was when the light went on: the righteous shall live by faith; righteousness is by grace not works. As he studied Augustine he saw the same belief, from centuries before. He was still true to the Roman church and the break from Catholicism was not his intent.

In 1517 a man called Tetzel began to sell indulgences in Germany. These were papers that provided forgiveness of sin (or a shortening/release from purgatory for dead relatives) because it was taught that the pope had access to the excess grace earned by those who had gone before (martyrs, saints and so on). Indulgences were available for good works (such as for participating in a crusade) or for charitable donations. Indulgence salesmen were accompanied by a priest who would hear confession, but soon the confession aspect became redundant as the money was needed.

The real reason the money was required is as follows: The archbishop of Brandenburg was promised half the money (the rest going toward building St Peters in Rome). This archbishop had paid the pope for awarding him certain spiritual offices and had borrowed the money from bank of the rich Fugger family. The sale of indulgences was to repay these debts; in fact, a representative of the bank even travelled with Tetzel to check the books.

Germany was, at the time, made up of a number of states, each with a ruler (or Elector). Tetzel was denied permission to sell indulgences in Saxony, but set up business on the border, allowing many to cross over and buy these precious blessings. This infuriated Luther who saw it as an abuse, and who was convinced this must have been happening without the pope's knowledge.

On **All Saints Day**, 1 Nov 1517, the chapel of the castle of Wittenberg was to hold a debate. This was organised by the University and was an annual tradition. The professor would publish his theses by nailing them to the door of the chapel where they could be read by those participating in the debate. So, the day before, **Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door**. These contained arguments against indulgences and the nature of confession and repentance. This was intended for a local audience of student, professors and churchmen but within 14 days had spread throughout Germany, largely due to the popularity of his thought amongst the oppressed and over-taxed populace, and the recent invention of the printing press that allowed the mass distribution of ideas for the first time in history.

The archbishop felt the influence of Luther's teaching in his purse and immediately laid a charge against Luther with the pope. He was accused of heresy. A provisional hearing condemned his teachings; he was condemned as a heretic and summoned to Rome. The Elector protested against this, and Luther would not travel to Rome. So a papal delegate (Cardinal Cajetan) was sent to examine Luther at the Diet (General Assembly) of Augsburg in 1518. During this debate, Luther asserted that the pope is not infallible; that even Peter erred in a serious way. He was chased out.

In 1519 there was a discussion between Eck (representative of the pope) and Luther, in which Luther again asserted that the Bible does not teach the supremacy of the pope. The result of this was that in 1520 a papal bull was issued that excommunicated Luther: Luther burned it (along with the Canon Law and the false decrials).

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Luther was summoned in 1521 to the Diet of Worms, attended by the emperor Charles V. He went after being promised safe passage but was well aware of the fate of Hus 100 years before. He knew he was possibly going to his death. It was the culmination of an ongoing struggle between Martin Luther and the Catholic Church over reform, especially in practice of donations for indulgences. However, there were other deeper issues that revolved around both theological concerns:

- On a theological level, Luther had challenged the absolute authority of the Pope over the Church by maintaining that the doctrine of indulgences, as authorised and taught by the Pope, was wrong.
- Luther maintained that salvation was by faith alone (*sola fide*) without reference to good works, alms, penance, or the Church's sacraments. Luther maintained that the sacraments were a "*means of grace*," meaning that while grace was imparted through the Sacraments, the credit for the action belonged to God and not to the individual.
- He had also challenged the authority of the Church by maintaining that all doctrines and dogmata of the Church not found in Scripture should be discarded (*sola scriptura*).

Luther's books were placed on a table. He was then asked if they were his works and whether he wanted to recant any of the information. Luther requested time to think over his reply (he was overcome by fear and spent time that night asking God for wisdom and courage) and the next day he answered with the well-known speech:

*"Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason - I do not accept the authority of the popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other - my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen." - Martin Luther*

It is legend that Luther said the words, "*Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me, Amen!*" These words were possibly only added to make the story more interesting. Luther was condemned to death but was allowed to leave because of his guarantee of safe passage. However, on the way home, he was "kidnapped" by friends, as it was widely believed that he would either be arrested on the way home or meet with some "misfortune". He was held in secret at Wartburg, castle of the Elector, Frederick the Wise. During this time he translated the New Testament into German and wrote many booklets.

In 1522 chaos flared up in Wittenberg, as followers of Luther went further than he had done. They wanted to purify the church from all Roman influence and tried to do so by violence and force. Luther returned from his self-imposed exile to help stop the violence. The so-called "Peasants Revolt" of 1525 is an incident that has been used to undermine Luther's reputation and illustrates something of the flaws in his theology and character. He felt that rebellion was contrary to the Word of God and preached that it was acceptable for the nobles to kill such rebels. Thousands died and some laid the blame at Luther's door. The truth is that the nobles would likely have acted as they did, regardless of Luther.

Another incident that does not enhance Luther's reputation was his endorsement of anti-Semitic acts (including the murder of Jews). His rationale was that God's enemies must be his enemies, and after years of trying to reach them with the gospel became angry and hostile when they refused to respond.

#### **FOCUS POINT**

These things show us not that the Reformation was wrong, but that God's choice in bringing it about was a man who was deeply flawed.

In 1526 The Diet of Speier prescribed tolerance with each province allowed to keep the religion of his prince, but it was later held that it was forbidden to introduce the Reformation in provinces where Catholics were in the majority. In part, the decision to allow the Reformation to take hold rather than crush it with military action (as had been done in various areas over the centuries) was forced upon the church by the rise of the Turkish Empire, which in 1529 was besieging the city of Vienna and threatening Europe itself with a Moslem army.

**FOCUS POINT**

Here we see God’s hand in history: He raised up Luther at the perfect time: the population was ready, the printing press had just been invented, the Turks were attacking Europe and so on. All of these combined for the Reformation to take hold.

Reformation was taking place across Europe, in different ways, through different people, but Luther is undoubtedly the greatest and the most influential figure of his day. The tragedy was that the various reformers themselves (including the like of Calvin) were soon embroiled in conflict between themselves: even condoning the persecution of Protestant groups that differed from them (for example condoning the drowning of the Anabaptists for teaching adult baptism).

It did not take the Roman Church long, however, to launch the "Counter Reformation" aimed at preserving the Catholic Church and stamping out the heresies of the Reformation. Nowhere was this demonstrated more than in France. On St Bartholomew's night, thousands of Protestants were murdered at the order of the Queen (Catherine de Medici). Such persecution also happened in Holland. Protestantism was stamped out by the inquisition in Spain and Italy. Such persecution led to the spread of Protestantism around the world: for example, many French Protestants (the Huguenots) fled to South Africa.

It would be many, many years before most countries experienced true religious freedom.

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