

Theology of the New Testament Continued:

1. The Problem of Sin

- a. The concept of sin is basic to the Bible, and the problem of sin is foundational to the Fall and redemptive history. Why is it that it is not preached more effectively and regularly? The concept is not popular now days, and unfortunately preachers shy away from it.
- b. Contemporary preachers tend to ignore the magnitude of Sin – making it simply generic “wrong doing” instead of fundamental “wrong being” where we lose an understanding of its power over humanity.
- c. It is impossible to properly understand the power of Grace out of context to the power of Sin.
- d. Personal need, conviction, and surrender are necessary crisis events for the Gospel.
- e. Jesus’ preaching confronted each person with an understanding of the crisis point that was their particular deal point – where their particular need focuses the crisis of their point of conviction and surrender. This is a key understanding!
 - i. 2 thieves were placed on the crosses beside Jesus – one accepted his sin and failure, and confessed he deserved his fate while the other merely was looking for a way out – a way to get away from the consequences of his own sin. The first acknowledged Jesus undeserving nature for the punishment He received, and acknowledged His divine nature as Messiah coming with His Kingdom. The 1st was justified, the 2nd was not.
 - ii. The rich young ruler knew of his place in the blessings God promised Israel on earth, but he wanted more – he wanted the eternal Kingdom in heaven. Jesus discerned that he had placed his dependence upon his wealth. Most people are not asked to give up everything, though all must be willing to do so – the call to radical obedience means something different to each person, with the Spirit bringing crisis leading to conviction and surrender.
 - iii. The Samaritan woman wasn’t motivated by her sin or by wealth – her problem was her identity. Interestingly, Jesus recounted her relational life without recrimination or condemnation spoke to her point of crisis.. without a husband she had no standing in her society. Her faith brought her acceptance by Jesus, and acceptance by her community. There is a relational healing here that is often overlooked.
- f. What are the crisis points Scriptural faith calls for?
 - i. For the Christian who fundamentally accepts grace – their life looks like freedom in Christ.

- ii. For the Christian who fundamentally operates under law and necessary obedience – their life looks like bondage.
 - iii. For the Apostle John – the pressure to simply believe and have faith drives an individual through their crisis response from need, to conviction, from doubt to faith.
 - iv. For the synoptic Gospel writers – the command to ‘deny yourself, pick up your cross and follow’ drives an individual to a crisis response.
 - v. For the writers of the epistles – their message drives an individual to live like a believer lives... both as a law-abider and a grace-led disciple.
- g. Theological Differences in Different Groups – What then does your faith look like?
Does doctrine and theology contrast?
- i. Very conservative Presbyterians – especially the conservative high-holy variety would look more like law and obedience. They tend toward legalism and being law abiders. The problem for them is the reality that they live in and what was an abomination for the 1st century Jews hearing Jesus’ message [legalism] is still an abomination now.
 - ii. The more liberal believers would look more like grace abiders – the law tends to fall into the background... but often so does discipline and obedience to the Spirit. In their thought development they ignore that Christ does make demands of His followers... there are necessary threshold experiences that move us toward dependence on Christ... and obedience and perseverance being key points. Paul Zahl preaches 100% grace – because he demonstrates that the law kills rather than frees or redeems. The law cannot lead you into salvation, only to condemnation and death... but grace will lead you to life and freedom.
 - iii. Centrist believers tend to have a balance of both the freedom in Grace and the discipline of obedience. This is the more healthy approach – a balance where the ‘head’ – the cognitive aspect of knowledge and wisdom, is balanced by the ‘heart’ – the emotive and relational Spiritual side of discipleship.
 - iv. Jesus taught that unless your righteousness is greater than the Scribes & Pharisees whose righteousness based on legalism was fatally flawed because their actions were inconsistent, hypocritical, and disingenuous.
 - 1. They were motivated by being praised by men on earth rather than by God in heaven. They were further motivated on maintaining the status quo of their preferred position of respect from the masses, rather than serving God.
 - 2. Grace was out of their reach because conviction and surrender never occurred. Jesus condemned them because they should have known

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better, and yet they failed to respond to His Word – while the sinners who did respond were saved.

2. **Modalism – United Pentecostalism [‘Bishop’ T.D. Jakes]**
 - a. This is a brand of theology that holds to a One God that is “manifested differently” in three portrayals on earth. 3 manifestations of God are not involved at the same time – this is a perversion of Trinitarianism.
 - b. They hold that Jesus was not born as the God-man Messiah, that he became the God-man when the Spirit descended upon him at baptism. They claim that the 3 [Father-Son-Spirit] were not there together at the same time as that would be a violation of God being One.
 - c. They also hold that Jesus spoke at different occasions as a man and as God.
 - i. When demonstrating human weakness – as praying in the Garden before arrest and calling out from the cross – He was speaking as a man.
 - ii. When demonstrating His strength and power – as preaching on the Sermon on the Mount and confronting the Scribes & Pharisees – He was speaking as God.
 - iii. Thus... when Jesus says:
 1. Your sins are forgiven – it is the God-Jesus speaking.
 2. Into your hands I commit my spirit – it is the man-Jesus speaking.
 - d. They refer to the ‘incarnation’ as being when the Spirit came on Jesus at baptism, prior to this there was only the ‘Father’ in heaven and Jesus was only human. At the incarnation, God sends Himself – thus Jesus is now the Son and man – divine and mortal.
 - i. Jesus in heaven is figurative – it really is all the Father.
 - ii. Their understanding of Protestant Trinitarianism is of ‘3 Gods’ being proclaimed not ‘One God’... this is the same complaint lodged by Muslims and Jews. They accept Jesus as a prophet, but not as divine. This solves some problems about Jesus being human and divine, but is not true to the Scriptures that clearly teach Triune Unity of God in 3 Persons.
 - e. The United Pentecostal Church is ‘apostolic’ in nature – thus the leadership is seen as speaking with apostolic authority on God’s behalf.
 - i. Apostolic ‘authority’ holds that they are exercising the same authority as did the original apostles, including putting forward new revelation. This is in opposition to virtually all other protestant theologies that hold that Scripture is closed and no new authoritative revelation is possible.
 - ii. Apostolic ‘ministry’ is something else... this holds that the Spirit continues to empower evangelism where the Word has not been preached, and discipleship throughout the church. In apostolic ministry there is no new authoritative revelation.

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3. There are obviously many theological positions held by many different groups who consider themselves having the 'right and proper' form of theology.
 - a. Most people know little when they start their Spiritual journey and accept what they are taught by those they trust. At some point as disciples we need to read Scripture for ourselves with the expectant help of the Spirit to rethink what we hold as true.
 - b. For disciples... it is important to make your faith your own and take responsibility for what you believe.
 - c. For leaders... It is important to listen to what people are saying/teaching/preaching, and discern the implications. This takes an understanding of Scripture, doctrinal theology, wisdom, and Spiritual formation in maintaining unity in the faith.
 - d. Gerry Breashears "Learning to Distinguish between degrees of Certainty" is a brilliant way to understand what is central to our faith and what is peripheral [see introduction to theology page 4].
4. When evaluating these different theological positions, several questions come to mind and may need to be answered.
 - a. What is the nature of these groups? Are they mainstream, peripheral, or errant? Are they a cult? If you believe they are errant and heretical, are they merely deceived or are they going to hell? Remember Jesus warned of wolves in sheep's clothing – these are those who deliberately seek personal benefit from the gospel (Simon the Sorcerer) or those who are deliberately sabotaging the gospel (Paul before his conversion).
 - b. We know that every believer is saved by the grace of God... not by works and certainly not by words alone. It is better to accept another's belief at face value until it is clear who and what they are. We cannot see into a person's heart and know what is there... only Jesus could do that. Not even the apostles could do that either, and there were sharp disputes between them... Paul and Peter, and Paul and Barnabas are examples.
 - c. Errant theology while being a problem, we need to remember there are levels of acceptable differences. In the cases where these are not a crucial theological matter... I would allow them a position of authority in the church. There are some errant matters where I may accept them as a believer, but I wouldn't allow them a position of authority in the church.
5. In light of known theological differences – what is 'Saving Grace?'
 - a. How much theology do we need to know to be saved? How far away does their thinking have to go before they are considered lost?
 - i. Most of us who have made a decision to follow Christ and enter ministry knew very little at the beginning. We were trained by more mature believers as we went along. Depending upon the faith community we participated in we have different standards of faith conduct and belief.

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- ii. There is a point where a minimum standard of theological understanding is necessary to become more than a participant in church and ministry... how do you set such standards?
 - iii. For Jesus to be 'Savior' there is a simplistic faith and rudimentary theology that suffices.
 - iv. For Jesus to be 'Lord' there is a much more developed understanding of faith and practice.
- b. If someone is saved and they profess Christ and demonstrate commitment – what is necessary for persevering in the faith?
- i. If they start down theological questionable paths or worse... heretical paths, are they still saved?
 - ii. Is this questionable thinking considered 'backslidden' or what consequences are reserved for moral/ethical persistence in sin?
 1. If saved... does that necessarily mean they will return, or can they be lost? Or were they never saved to begin with?
 2. If they have committed a 'mortal sin', do they need to be 're-saved'?
 3. Are they once saved but now gone astray? In essence a prodigal who doesn't come back?
 4. Or perhaps they haven't denied their faith but are going through doubts and/or working out their theology?
 5. Perhaps they were truly saved but are now astray, but will they come back?
 6. One of the most difficult questions for church leaders is what are the acceptable differences, and where someone has crossed the line how do we deal with them to bring them back into the mainstream in the faith community.
- c. Faith, theology, and moral/ethical behavior are all aspects of saving faith – but not necessarily proof.
- i. Faith is more critical than theology or behavior.
 - ii. What evidence outside of faith is necessary to demonstrate faith?
 1. Proper thinking?
 2. Proper acting?
 3. Both?
6. What does God as Trinity mean to you? Consider writing a Paper... even a letter to God where you discuss what you know to be true about God as Trinity. It may be helpful for you to take one or more of these approaches:
- a. How do you describe God as Trinity to a non-believer without employing 'Christianese' [excessive Christian jargon]?

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- b. How do you explain Trinity to an adult friend who is seeking God?
 - c. How does the Trinity work in your personal faith journey with God?
 - d. What is the importance of Trinity for your personal growth?
 - e. Diachronic Trinity discussion – thought development over your own redemptive journey and if you are up to it... for the church as well.
7. Trinity Classic – knowing the ‘message of Scripture’ versus ‘Proof-Texting’ – knowing the message is seeing the text as a whole and understanding the overarching or overall message of the fall and redemption. Proof texting refers to the often annoying habit some people have of spouting off verses in support of what they are saying or deeming to be right and proper. Knowing the message of Scripture is far more useful as it allows a dialogue to emerge on a wide variety of issues. Proof texting has limited penetration except in the specific faith community you operate within. In any event, it is important to know what you believe and to be able to articulate it and defend it:
- a. Plurality – begin with Scriptural references that speak of God in the plural forms:
 - i. OT – includes Creation, Babel, Psalms & prophetic writings.
 - 1. Gen 1:1-2 – God and Spirit mentioned
 - 2. Gen 1:26 – let ‘Us’ make man...
 - 3. Gen 11:7 – let ‘Us’ go down and confuse their language...
 - 4. Gen 18:2 – the Lord... ‘3 men’ visiting
 - 5. Is 6:8-9 – who will go for ‘Us’
 - 6. Ps 45:6-7 – therefore God, your God...
 - 7. Ps 110:1 – the Lord says to my Lord...
 - ii. NT – includes baptism & crucifixion
 - 1. Mat 3:16-17 – Son, Spirit & Father all present at baptism
 - 2. Mat 26:64 – Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One
 - 3. Mat 28:19 – in the Name of the Father, Son & Spirit
 - 4. Eph 4:3-6 – One Spirit, One Lord, One Father...
 - 5. 2 Cor 13:14 – “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. “
 - iii. Theological Summation – how much do you need to know to be saved? How about to lead or teach?
 - 1. Jesus is deity – this is non-negotiable.
 - 2. Trinity is important – but secondary to the work of the Gospel in Jesus.
 - b. Distinction – in order to avoid Modalism [manifestations instead of Persons] we need evidence of the distinctions Scripture records of the Persons of the Trinity.
 - i. John 14:23-28 – Father will love those who love Me, Father will send Spirit, Father is greater...

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- ii. **John 15:26** - "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me."
 - iii. **John 16:5-7** – **I am returning to Him who sent Me... I will send Counselor...**
 - iv. **Acts 10:38** - how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.
 - v. **Acts 16:6-7** – **having been kept ... by the Spirit...**
 - vi. **Rom 8:26-27** – In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.
 - vii. **1 Cor 2:10** - but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.
 - viii. **1 Cor 2:11-16** - For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.
 - ix. **1 Cor 12:11** - All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.
- c. **Deity – each Person in the Trinity is God and One:**
- i. **Father – is a given**
 - ii. **Jesus –**
 - 1. **John 1:1-4** – the Word "was God" and "was a God" are both correct.
 - 2. **John 1:14** - The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.
 - 3. **John 1:18** - No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.
 - 4. **John 20:28** - Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"
 - 5. **Heb 1:3-10** - The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"? Or again, "I will be his Father,

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and he will be my Son”? And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.” In speaking of the angels he says, “He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire.” But about the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.” He also says, “In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.

6. “Begotten” doesn’t mean created... it means birthed.

a. It is Christian heresy to think of Jesus as something less than the Jewish Messiah – the long foretold God-man Emmanuel in Jewish prophesy... the 2nd Person of the Trinity.

b. Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons [Later Day Saints], Islam, and Judaism all hold to Jesus being in a prophetic role that is less than God incarnate. This is not what Scripture teaches.

7. Tit 2:13 – our great God and Savior...

8. 2 Pet 1:1 – our God and Savior – Jesus...

9. Col 2:9 – Christ – the fullness of Deity...

10. Disciples questions of “who are you” become exclamations of who He is.

iii. Spirit:

1. Acts 5:3-4 – you lied not Spirit, you lied to God

2. Ps 139:7-8 – where can I go from your Spirit?

3. 1 Cor 2:10-11 – Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God = Spirit is God.

d. Trinity = One God – Shema

i. Is 45:5-7

ii. 1 Tim 2:5

e. Additional thoughts on the Trinity:

i. Book of Ezekiel foreshadows NT.

1. God refers to Ezekiel as ‘son of man’

2. Daniel uses ‘son of man’ to describe a Supernatural being

3. Jesus in identifying Himself greatly uses ‘son of man’ but also ‘son of God’ – both identifying Himself as Man. The Messiah or ‘Anointed One’ is ‘Lord’ and ‘King’; ‘Man’ and ‘God’.

4. Temple imagery is found throughout Ezekiel.

5. Glory of God is found throughout Ezekiel.

6. Spirit is found throughout Ezekiel – moving like a whirlwind/wind storm.

7. Ez 8 – glowing man...

8. Ez 1 – Appearance of a man...
 9. Ez 8:9-18 – Sins of the priests was their practice of teaching and mediating for a price they had sold out taking bribes for their personal benefit for that which they should have done regardless was sin. That coupled with a lack of justice and idolatry were too much... the text says that Judah's sin was so great that the Glory of God leaves the Temple.
 10. Glory returns in 43:2
- ii. NT revelations built upon Ezekiel foreshadowing:
 1. John 14:13; 15:8 – Father is glorified in the redeemed faithful... the Glory of God was occasionally manifest in the OT, but it comes to earth in Jesus & Spirit in an ongoing manifestation... it comes in such close contact with humanity that we reflect its' glory.
 2. John 16: - interaction of Trinity... the God who was far away in Ezekiel is now in such close contact that it is within His people... not just the community at large but indwelling all believers. This is a huge development in redemptive history... we all now have the potential to understand and demonstrate God's glory and power individually and collectively.
 3. 1 Cor 6:19 – where God's Glory left the Temple in Ezekiel, He now indwells His faithful... the heart of believer's is the new Temple of God... Rev 21:3.
 4. When Jesus comes in Glory at His 2nd coming, all will see His Glory – the world will despair and the faithful will rejoice.
 - iii. Trinity – in light of the revelation of God's plan for humanity, how do you see God? What does He mean to you? How does the Trinity change how you see God?
8. Theological Diversions – Problem with the so-called 'Prosperity Gospel':
 - a. Basic elements include:
 - i. Jesus is God... He was crucified and raised and now reigns in authority.
 - ii. Humanity is reconciled... He now calls us His friends.
 - iii. Promise – of health, wealth, and relational blessings upon His faithful followers.
 - b. On major doctrines... they are pretty much orthodox, but they go off track with their focus on their teachings about the 'abundant life that is NOW our right,' all manner of temporal and material blessings are bestowed on the faithful... it is not just for the next world.
 - i. The Jews of Jesus era held that those who God loved He blessed materially.
 - ii. If you were poor or diseased it was evidence of sin-curse.

- iii. **Jesus repeatedly taught against this concept:**
 - 1. **The Sermon on the Mount is the most lengthy in a series of New-Covenant teachings. Where the OT was blessings and curses – Deut 27 chronicles the curses for disobedience on Mt Ebal, Deut 28 chronicles the blessings on Mt Gerizim... the NT is all blessings – the Beatitudes of Mat 5.**
 - 2. **Jesus taught that it was hard for a ‘rich man to enter the Kingdom of God’ – His disciples remarked ‘who then can be saved’... the disciples assumed material wealth meant blessing from God.**
- c. **Prosperity Gospel fails to deal with pain and suffering... David Watson wrote Fear No Evil, which takes a perspective reminiscent of Job.**
 - i. **Pain and suffering are part of life in a fallen and broken world.**
 - ii. **Pauline NT theology holds that we make up for what is lacking in the suffering of Jesus in our own lives.**
 - iii. **James NT theology clarifies OT theology in 5:10-11 “As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and *is* merciful.”**
- d. **Material world focus is supported by OT law, and is consistent with the OT expectations of God’s favored who were blessed in the land, but this is not what Jesus taught in NT principles.**
 - i. **OT prophets were shown doing wild things and exhibiting great power and devotion, but they were for the most part despised by the people and hated by the leadership.**
 - ii. **The prophets are shown as suffering along with God and being made an example for the suffering the people can expect unless they repent.**
 - iii. **The prophets suffering foreshadows Jesus’ suffering.**
 - iv. **The OT hope is that something new is coming – something way better... Messiah and the Spirit. The NT hope is that something better has come, and something even better awaits us... eternity with God.**
 - v. **Isaiah’s “Servant Songs” link the Davidic Messiah and the suffering servant –**
 - 1. **42:1-4**
 - 2. **49:1-6**
 - 3. **50:4-9**
 - 4. **52:13-53:12**
 - vi. **The twofold message of Jesus:**

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1. The NT Gospel proclamation is that “something better is here now” – Messiah’s victory over sin and death brings Spiritual life and freedom.
 2. The Gospel hope is that “something better is coming” – 2nd coming of Jesus, our physical resurrection to eternal life, and a new heaven & earth.
- vii. NT focus of the Spirit bringing contentment in all circumstances – God’s grace is more than sufficient.
- viii. Craig Blomberg – ‘give me neither poverty or wealth’
1. The righteous wealthy in the OT were in community and exercised a role helping those around them.
 2. The OT righteous wealthy did not hoard their wealth, and those that did were never referred to as righteous. This provides a glimpse into the life of the rich young ruler in NT.
 3. Suffering takes many forms... physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.
 4. Suffering often comes into our lives to help us grow – and promotes perseverance.
 5. When we see suffering in others, as followers of Christ we are to help alleviate it – mercy. However, even Jesus said the poor are with you always... there will always be an “underclass” in each society. How we deal with that says a lot to others about our faith... knowing we can’t solve everyone’s problems.
 6. Prosperity takes 2 channels in Scripture – whether it is hoarded, or shared.
- ix. What are the consequences for those who practice prosperity gospel and focus on their own personal wealth?
1. What is the responsibility for leaders who live extravagant lifestyles with mansions, jets, etc. paid for principally by the offering support of their constituents. Scripture repeatedly warns that leaders will be judged more harshly and held accountable for their actions.
 2. What is the responsibility for the followers who both enable these leaders and seek to emulate them? We are called to be stewards of what God has provided, and not to throw our pearls before swine.
 3. Scripture is clear... seek first His Kingdom, then these things [what you need materially] will be added. In healthy practice the ‘adding’ is an attendant blessing, not the primary focus.
 4. Warnings abound in NT of false prophets – and deceptions increase as we get closer to the 2nd coming.

5. **What are your motivations? It is important to ask this question of yourself and of those who you follow. How are your values being expressed in your actions? Are your faith and actions consistent with Jesus' example?**
 6. **I don't think I would want to be standing before Jesus and be unable to explain why I was intent on my prosperity at the expense of His Kingdom principle directives. I don't think such folks will hear the "well done good and faithful servant" we long to hear from Him.**
9. **Theological Issues evident in the church:**
- a. **Complementarian or Egalitarian leadership roles for women and the Ordination of women:**
 - i. **Complementarian – says men and women are created equal but differently... they have different roles within the society and the church.**
 1. **Catholic Church is strict Complementarian – all leadership is male all through their hierarchy from pope, bishop, cardinal, and priest. Women can be nuns at the bottom of the hierarchy. Mothers Superior who lead nuns are still subject to priests.**
 2. **Church of England [Anglican] is loose Complementarian – women can be ordained... arch-bishops are men, but women can be bishops & priests.**
 3. **Presbyterian Church – have a mixed bag... as each is ruled by an assembly or democratic organization. It is said that the Presbyterian Church was the model for democratic rule for the founding fathers of America.**
 - a. **PCA – Tim Keller – are Complementarian in their practice; men serve as elders, pastors, & ordained deacons, women can be pastors and deaconesses.**
 - b. **RCA – are egalitarian in their practice – any job or position a man or a woman may hold.**
 - ii. **Egalitarian – whatever role a man can have – a woman can also have. They have legal parity within the organization and in practice.**
 - iii. **The question of Complementarian and egalitarian also plays out in marriage in the question of "Headship":**
 1. **Conservative – Women are the 'weaker partner' and must be subservient to their husbands, and men are the ordained leaders of the households in particular and society in general. It is only permissible for a woman to lead if there are no capable men to lead – constructed from**

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- Eve's error at the Fall, and Deborah being one of the Judges of the ancient tribes of Judah before the monarchy.
2. **Centrist** – Husband and wife are equal partners with different roles assigned by God.
 3. **Liberal** – Husband and wife are fully equal and may assume whatever role or function they choose.
- iv. **Headship** also plays out in the question of the ordination of women:
1. **Conservative** – women are not allowed to teach men or have any position of authority over men.
 2. **Centrist** – women may be in a variety of positions including those that hold authority over men provided that they have a more senior pastor/elder who has authority over them.
 3. **Liberal** – women can hold any position and any level of authority based solely on their leadership skills and teaching ability.
- b. **Ordination of homosexuals** – different thoughts held by Episcopalians:
- i. **Conservative** – Homosexuality is egregious moral error, and none may participate in leadership.
 - ii. **Centrist** – Homosexuality is serious moral error, but homosexuals may participate as a leader provided they aren't practicing or encouraging homosexuality.
 - iii. **Liberal** – Homosexuality is just another form of expressing human sexuality and should be treated with indifference.
- c. There are three broad traditions represented in the Anglican Communion, the Evangelical, the Catholic and the Liberal. These distinctions are not unlike those in many other main-stream denominations and serve as a reminder of differences even in our own church community:
- i. The **Evangelical** tradition has emphasized the significance of the Protestant aspects of the Church of England's identity, stressing the importance of the authority of Scripture, preaching, justification by faith and personal conversion.
 - ii. The **Catholic** tradition, strengthened and reshaped from the 1830s by the Oxford movement, has emphasized the significance of the continuity between the Church of England and the Church of the Early and Medieval periods. It has stressed the importance of the visible Church and its sacraments and the belief that the ministry of bishops, priests and deacons is a sign and instrument of the Church of England's Catholic and apostolic identity.
 - iii. The **Liberal** tradition has emphasized the importance of the use of reason in theological exploration. It has stressed the need to develop Christian belief and

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practice in order to respond creatively to wider advances in human knowledge and understanding and the importance of social and political action in forwarding God's kingdom.

10. Theological Camps – just a sample of how different theologians see some issues:

- a. Fuller and Western Seminary – faith & practice is defined by the word of God. Evangelical theology with more conservative roots is combined with a missional objective for engaging society and the world.
- b. Spong – Liberal Episcopal Bishop holds that:
 - i. Bible is the word of God for “salvation” but is a myth in terms of everything else.
 - ii. Once you see how absurd the myths are, the core moral/ethics of faith is brotherhood of man and love.
 - iii. God is only love – His justice is not a factor.
 - iv. Spirit has little impact on Scripture – it is the remembrance of man, not the word of God.
 - v. Reality is to be seen in terms of trajectory – where is your faith taking you in the bigger picture? Revelation is to be seen in terms of its trajectory of thought development to an eternal goal.
 1. This involves OT Law, OT prophets, Jesus, Paul, & modern thought.
 2. View 1 – is a flat trajectory – Scripture ends with Jesus & apostles and there are no new developments.
 3. View 2 – is a 45° ascent – Spong would argue that responses should be based on the total trajectory, that past ideas no longer hold.
 4. View 3 – is a 90° ascent – William Webb would argue that some things continue toward its eternal goal, while other things cease:
 - a. Slavery & women have a continuing trajectory to emancipation.
 - b. Homosexuality has no trajectory – it has no hope, no place in eternity.
 - c. Eternal goal/destination is neither man nor woman, slave or free – it is the people of God apart from status, sexuality or gender.
- d. Conservative view on Homosexuality
 - i. Homosexual is taken from “Sodomy” = anal sex.
 - ii. Sin of Sodom was not merely sexual... it was perversion with base carnality that would make modern heathens blush.
 - iii. People seen were a means to personal gratification and pleasure without any restraint. The relational boundaries that God established were completely perverted.

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- iv. There was no social justice, no moral or ethical boundaries, it was human relational chaos.
- v. Relational standards are fixed in Scripture – homosexuality is a deviant practice contrary to God’s law... however, it is another form of moral error not unlike other forms of wrong doing.
- vi. Morality is fixed by God and enforced by both law and doctrine.
- e. Liberal view on homosexuality
 - i. Slavery/women’s rights/homosexual rights – are all civil rights issues.
 - ii. Love is expressed in different ways appropriate to the individual preferences and their community.
 - iii. Morality is always in flux depending on changing cultural mores. Thus, Biblical mandates transition in response to changes within the culture, and are not intended to be rigorous dogmatic truths fixed throughout history.
 - iv. Morality is open ended and revised over time through changes in legislation and doctrine.
- f. Jurgen Moltmann – Theology of Hope
 - i. What is really important for the Christian is where we’re going – it is about trajectory and eschatology.
 - ii. In Moltmann’s thought, eschatology was the center-piece of hope not justification... eschatology is what drives his theology.
 - iii. Hope of our future life inspires our present life.
 - iv. Faith is being hopeful.
 - v. Sin is being hopeless.
 - vi. Moltmann’s focus on hope is extreme – he equivocates 100 verses on the topic of hell by 3 obscure verses.
 - vii. He fails to realize that while all verses are in play, not all are equally relevant. You can’t cherry pick some out of context and then argue they prove your point.
 - viii. Moltmann’s hope is all about the here and now – he believes in a Universalist approach to eschatology where everyone is saved.
 - ix. Universalists [Unitarians, and others] hold that all faiths ultimately lead to the same place. Jesus died not just for the Jews or His followers, but for all people of all time to bring all to God.
- g. Brian Chappell – Fallen Condition
 - i. Focuses on the fallen condition of humanity – the fallen state means humanity is incapable of responding properly to God.
 - ii. Need to balance life before the cross with the transformed newness of life after the cross.

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- h. Rauschenbusch – hope + delivering suffering people employs the best of both.**
 - i. Repent and believe is a balance of recognizing need and accepting deliverance.**
 - ii. This leads to action to promote social justice now.**
- i. Fundamentalism**
 - i. Do not fool people with false hope by freeing them from temporal suffering.**
 - ii. The reality of the present burden is balanced only by eternity.**
 - iii. Life on earth is seen as transitory, and God has placed people in different circumstances according to His Sovereign will. Merely making things better for them doesn't help in the grand scheme of things.**
 - iv. Ignores that social justice IS important to God in the OT, and to Jesus in the NT.**
- j. Liberation Theology – [see Sawyer's book Survivor's Guide to Theology, page 454]**
 - i. God is seen as the giver and sustainer of life – the church is called to imitate our Father by helping the poor and the suffering.**
 - ii. These theologies of liberation focus on rectifying the concrete realities of oppression, rather than dealing with the underlying problems of human sin and the need for redemption.**
 - iii. They go too far by looking at the teaching of Christ through a narrow interpretive lens that only those who actively seek to aid suffering will see heaven.**
 - iv. Remembering the poor is a good example of Godly living and expressing hope.**
- k. Pinnock – Open Theist – God hasn't ordained anything.**
 - i. He combines a Wesleyan-Arminian view of foreknowledge [that God knows what will happen] but works through people in real time – it is a streaming real time process where God is actively working all things simultaneously according to His purpose.**
 - ii. Calvinists hold to a meticulous sovereignty that every act and action of every person has been decreed. This refutes the notion of 'free-will' held by Wesleyan and Arminian thinkers. Open theists would be in opposition to the thinking that God ordains all of humanities specific actions unilaterally.**
 - iii. Open theists hold that nothing affecting free will is decided, only things outside that – such as creation, Jesus 1st & 2nd coming... which were decreed.**
 - iv. Open theists believe that the future is waiting for human agents to play their role in determining the interplay for the future. Humanity is responsible for making things better, not just preaching Jesus.**
 - v. With regard to open thinking – there are 3 approaches:**
 - 1. Classic – God foreknows everything, but doesn't ordain everything.**
 - 2. Middle knowledge – God just knows what the person will do because He knows them so well... since He created them.**

- 3. **Simple foreknowledge – God knows the future, but we don't know how he knows.**
- vi. **Open understanding – everyone is free and all things are not settled. Each person has a part to play to make things better.**
- I. **Semi-open Theists – C.S. Lewis & others**
 - i. **Would hold that there are things that God has decreed – some things will happen to further His plan.**
 - ii. **There are things that are open to choice – some things that are up to humanity to choose.**
 - iii. **God's will combines:**
 - 1. **Prescriptive elements – things He has determined**
 - 2. **Permissive elements – things He allows**
 - iv. **God is outside of time and history and knows all things and how they work out. While the Spirit influences people to move toward God's plan, He doesn't compel them – thus they are accountable for their actions.**
 - v. **View Calvinist thought as a clockwork set in place where humanity are merely automatons.**
 - vi. **View open theists as allowing too much sway in terms of how redemptive history plays out. Scripture bears out that God foreknew because He ordained when Jesus would come into the world, when He left it and when He will return... which supports a semi-open position.**