

Year 3 (2012): Week 5

GUILD SEMINAR

Week 5: "Christ"

Overview: "Christ"

1. Prayer
2. Vocabulary of Salvation
3. Three Theories of Salvation
4. Three Offices of Christ
5. Scope of Reconciliation (Barth)

Vocabulary of Salvation

Christology is “the doctrine of the person of Jesus Christ.” It answers the question: “Who is Jesus?” (DM, 163)

Soteriology is “the doctrine of his saving work.” It answers the question: “How does he help us?” (DM, 163)

V.A. Harvey has said that the Christian world holds two distinct approaches to its understanding of salvation: *Incarnation* and *Atonement*.

“*Incarnation*” is the approach that understands salvation as the participation of humanity in the divine life. Harvey says that it is the approach more characteristic of Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox.

“*Atonement*” is the approach that understands salvation as the restoration of a broken personal relationship between humanity and God. Harvey says that this is the characteristically Protestant view.

“At-one-ment.” James McClendon has said that the conception of atonement” has itself evolved from:

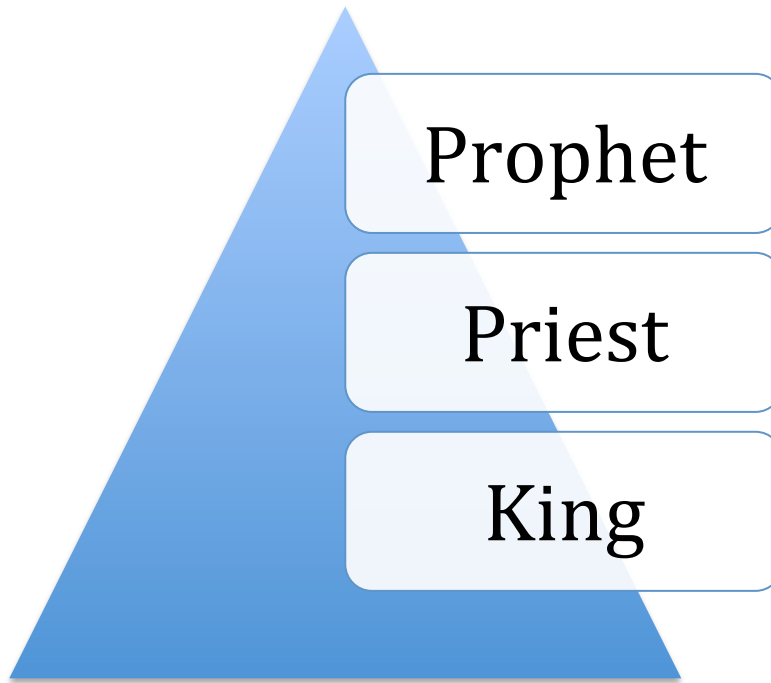
- A Result (joining God and humanity into one)
- A Theory (about how to obtain the result)
- An Estimate (of the cost involved in obtaining the result)

Titles and Trajectories of Atonement Theory¹

Christus Victor	Satisfaction	Moral Influence
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Toward Evil• Irenaeus• Objective• "A Mighty Fortress is Our God"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Toward God• Anselm• Objective• "O Sacred Head Sore Wounded"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Toward Humanity• Abelard• Subjective• "God of Grace and God of Glory"

¹ Combined from DM, 182–87 and James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Doctrine: Systematic Theology, Volume 2* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 209–213.

Calvin's *Munus Triplex*: the Three Offices of Christ²



Prophet: The truth of Christ's doctrine is the end (perfection) of prophecy. (Moral Influence)

Priest: Christ intercedes for sinners and offers his life as a sacrifice for sins. (Satisfaction)

King: Christ holds spiritual dominion and triumphs over sin, death and the evil powers of the world. (Christus Victor)

² See McClendon

The Scope of Reconciliation (Barth)³

	God's movement in Christ	Sin in this light	Christ's work in this light	Spirit in Community	Spirit in each one
God in humility	Priestly sacrifice of Son of God	Pride (in face of God's humility)	Justification (God's no to our no)	Gathering a community in time	Faith overcomes fallenness and pride
Humanity exalted	Kingly home-coming of Son of Man	Sloth (inaction, misery, alienation)	Sanctification (our yes to God's yes)	Upbuilding representative humanity	Love overcomes misery and sloth
Truth made known	Prophetic witness to at-one-ment	Falsehood (of self-rejection)	Vocation (witness in sunlight and storm)	Sending into ministry and mission	Hope overcomes self-rejection

³ This chart is adapted from one developed by Professor Christopher Morse of Union Seminary. It is for use in class only, not for publication.

Comments on segments of the Morse Chart

(Reading from left to right, top row)

1. On the **priestly sacrifice**. The touchstone here is Paul's question: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:28-31)
2. On the **sin of pride**. Aquinas defines pride as 'unbalanced love of one's own importance.' (McDermott, *Concise Translation*), 268.
3. On Christ's work of **justification**. Justification directs our attention to the *objective* aspect of salvation. Christ has taken the question of our worthiness off the table. Justification means that there is no situation we can find or in which we may put ourselves that places us outside the pale of grace. William Temple's answer to the question "Brother are you saved?" was "Yes, 2000 years ago on Calvary."
4. Now we have to do with the *awakening* power of the Holy Spirit. The church is **gathered** in the time between the direct vision of the resurrection and the direct vision of the parousia (CD IV.1,725.) It lives in "the strength of the resurrection," the "light of Easter day." The church "already has behind it the end which it awaits." The church is strong "because it knows what time it is." Its weakness is that it lives in this strength by faith, not sight." (727-8.) The church exists when and because it recognizes its poverty apart from justification, and its richness in it.
5. The Spirit awakens to **faith**. Faith is not synonymous with belief. Augustine said faith is "the power by which we believe." Barth says faith is the mystery of grace come to light in the movement from understanding, to feeling, to willing. This is what we've been calling the "Trinitarian form" of faith.

Comments on segments of the Morse Chart

(Reading from left to right, second row)

1. Christ's **kingly office**. Barth understands reconciliation to mean "exchange." In Christ, the exchange is "God is humbled, humanity is exalted."
2. In light of human exaltation, sin is exposed as **sloth** and **misery**. Barth breaks sloth down into *stupidity, inhumanity, dissipation, anxiety*. Inhumanity is what is exposed when the veneer of civilization rubs thin. Dissipation is lack of discipline. Barth understands cynicism as a form of sloth as well.
3. In light of human exaltation, we realize a "new form of existence as a covenant partner." 499. The word traditionally given for this is **Sanctification**. For Barth, sloth is not eliminated. We live in recovery from stupidity, inhumanity, dissipation, anxiety. Sanctification is what a life begins to look like when lived in grateful awareness and responsiveness to the new form of existence.
4. Here Barth speaks of the *quicken*ing power of the Holy Spirit, **building** up the church a "provisional representative" of humanity -- the society on earth that is aware of its own condition and that of all the earth.
5. The quickening power of the spirit in the individual, is called **love**. Barth works this out in contrast between agape and eros. C.S. Lewis between 4 loves (agape, eros, storge, philia). Love is also mysterious, a shape our thinking, willing and feeling may and sometime does take. There is no situation in which we may find ourselves in which love is not a possibility. If we can talk about being "divinized" this is what we mean.

Comments on segments of the Morse Chart

(Reading from left to right, third row)

1. The **Prophetic** office of Christ is to bring these truths to light, so that we may begin to live in them in hope. We learn to live by light of Christmas, which assures us of the goodness of creation, and by the shadow of Good Friday, which warns us of its peril, and by the light of Easter, which is God's guarantee and Jesus' vindication. (IV.3.First Part,123.)
2. Sin is here exposed as **falsehood**. Darwin's famous comment concerning the book "a Devil's chaplain might write on the clumsy, wasteful, blundering low and horridly cruel works of nature" speaks now for a "common sense" understanding of the natural world. (Keynes, 269-70) By light of the gospel, that comment suggests too incomplete an understanding. Barth would likely contrast Darwin's view with the insight of Mozart who, according to Barth, "heard the harmony of creation to which the shadow also belongs but in which the shadow is not darkness, deficiency is not defeat, sadness cannot become despair, trouble cannot degenerate into tragedy and infinite melancholy is not ultimately forced to claim undisputed sway. Thus the cheerfulness of this harmony is not without its limits. But the light shines all the more brightly because it breaks forth from the shadow. The sweetness is also bitter and cannot therefore cloy. Life does not fear death but knows it well." III.3, 298.
3. The work of Christ in this light is to give the church a share in his **vocation**, to witness to this truth in affliction and in liberation.
4. The power of the Holy Spirit to **send** the church into ministry and mission.
5. The power of the Holy Spirit in the form of **hope** even in the face of affliction and death. Hope is a quality that faith and love have of being expectant both in the near and in the ultimate sense.

Some additional comments

"We have been trying to see the Son of God as the One who has such was also the Son of Man; the Humiliated as the One who as such was also exalted; the Servant who as such was and is also the Lord of all men and the divinely created cosmos, the royal man Jesus of Nazareth." (CD IV.2, 247).

In Christ, God descends and humanity is lifted up. The truth -- about God, about ourselves -- at last is known. Christ's work is **priestly, royal, and prophetic** -- "prophetic" no more, no less than priestly, royal.

Pride is an exaggerated sense of our own importance. When pride is indignant, it talks like this: "Don't you know *who I am?*" When it threatens, it talks like this: "You have *no idea* who you are dealing with." Pride is not satisfied until its got the best table in the hottest restaurant on the busiest night in the most fabulous city of the world -- and of course its not happy even then.

Sloth is a failure to reckon with our importance, and with our destiny. When sloth parties, it sings "eat, drink, be merry, for tomorrow we die." When sloth quotes scripture, it likes Matthew 26:11: "the poor, you always have with you." Sloth may or may not know much biology, but it likes the phrase "survival of the fittest." Stupidity is sloth, and inhumanity, cynicism, despair.

Falsehood is refusal to accept that there is more to life than meets the eye, and that in this "more" our lives are of infinite value, our decisions of infinite importance. C.S. Lewis's image of dwarves who live in a dark hut in paradise and who won't go outside or even believe the outside exists, comes to mind.

In Jesus Christ, we are **justified, sanctified, and called**. *Justified* means that our pride, sloth and falsehood, which of course are ever with us, are disqualified as impediments to our salvation, our belonging, in Christ, to God. *Sanctified* means that we can laugh at our own pride, bind it, gag it, throw it out into the rainy night, until it finds a way back through the kitchen window. It means we can eat, drink be merry -- rejoicing with those who rejoice -- and we can lift up those who weep. *Called* means chosen to show the world that this is how to live.

That is to say, in the **faith** that undermines fallenness and pride, in the **love** that dispels misery and sloth, in the **hope** that protects us from self-rejection and despair. "We are afflicted... but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed..." (2 Cor: 4:8-9) "... in all ... things... more than conquerors through him who loved us." Romans 8:37.

We do not live this way alone.

Week in, week out, the Spirit **gathers** us from the world as the uncrushed afflicted, the confident perplexed, the unforsaken; **builds** us in the strength of deeper faith

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and higher hope and broader love; and **sends** us out among the forces that afflict, perplex, persecute and strike, where we bear witness to their doom.

