

THE APOSTLES CREED

Session I

I. THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF THE GOSPEL

- A. What is the Gospel? The Gospel comes to us from God and so it reveals God's wisdom in such a way that our perspective is called into question. God gives us the Gospel not so that we can evaluate it but so that it can evaluate us.
- B. Christians did not invent the term "gospel" and before Christians used this term to designate a written account of Jesus' life they used it to designate the announcement of the good news about Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension (note Acts 2:14-36). It is absolutely essential to note that gospel designated the announcement of a fact, a fact that had huge implications for life.
- C. The ACNA catechism To Be A Christian (TBC) defines the Gospel as follows: "The Gospel is the good news of God loving and saving lost mankind through the ministry in word and deed of his Son, Jesus Christ" (TBC, 1). This good news calls for a response on the part of human beings and this response involves effort which is not possible apart from God's grace.
- D. In Romans 1:1-3 Paul says three absolutely fundamental things about the Gospel.
1. "the gospel of God" (1:1): The good news of the Gospel is news which both comes from God and is about God. The Gospel does not offer us hints about how we can find our way to God but, rather, it announces that God has come among us.
 2. the Gospel was "promised beforehand...in the holy Scriptures" (1:2): This means that the good news is not about a new religion but the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel.
 3. While the Gospel is "the gospel of God," it is also the Gospel "concerning his Son" (1:3): Jesus Christ is himself the Gospel (see Ephesians 1:3-14). Belief in the Gospel does not simply involve accepting doctrines or ideas but becoming conformed to Christ and sharing in his life (Romans 8:29).
- E. We should think of the Gospel as having three dimensions. The Gospel is the good news about something that (1) has happened, something that (2) is happening now and something that (3) will happen in the future.
1. **Acts 2:22-24, 32-36:** The Gospel is good news about something that has happened. The Gospel announces the good news that Jesus Christ is the world's true King and that the redemption which he has brought about on our behalf cannot be reversed or negated.
 2. **Romans 8:1-11:** The Gospel is good news about something that is happening now. Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension have resulted in the sending of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is working to free us from sin and enables us to live in a way pleasing to God.
 3. **1 Corinthians 15:1-4, 21-28:** The Gospel is good news about something that will happen in the future. Jesus' current rule of the world will be fully manifested in the future in the abolition of sin and evil. The reign of King Jesus over creation means that sin and evil will come to an end.
- F. The Gospel announces that the world will be freed from sin, death and evil and the Christian life is life lived in anticipation of that new world. There is no Gospel and no Christian life apart from God's action as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

II. THE HUMAN CONDITION: SIN

- A. Sin is “the universal human condition” (Romans 3:23). Sin does not simply refer to the fact that some people do wicked things nor does it simply refer to the fact that all of us occasionally make some moral or spiritual error. Sin is the universal human condition affecting the life of every human being. Sin prevents us from having a true perception of ourselves and our world.
- B. We were “made for fellowship with our Creator” (Genesis 1:26-27). Apart from God we cannot be truly human. Sin refers to our “self-centered rebellion” against God, our turning away from God. By turning away from God we harm and distort our own humanity and become something less than human.
- C. Sin has implications for every dimension of our lives (spiritual, moral, intellectual, social, etc.) and this is why it leads to “guilt, shame, fear of death and judgment”. Scripture fundamentally sees sin as alienation: “Sin alienates me from God, my neighbor, God’s good creation, and myself” (TBC, 3).
- D. One of the dangerous things about sin is that it blinds us to its effects. The most tragic aspect of sin is that under it we find ourselves controlled by things that cannot bring eternal joy and lead to darkness and misery (TBC, 4).

III. THE WAY OF LIFE

- A. The effects of sin are so all pervasive that we cannot simply decide to “stop sinning” and restore our relationship with God. Sin blinds us to the fact that we need to have a relationship with God. Under sin, we simply love other things more than God.
- B. The way of life is only possible for us because God acts to reconcile us to himself, to free us from our captivity to sin, to fill us with knowledge of himself, to make us citizens of his Kingdom and to enable us to worship and serve him (TBC, 7). God does this through his unmerited grace which is his undeserved love given to us in Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit (TBC, 8). In Christian understanding, true freedom consists not in the ability to make choices but in the freedom to choose God.
- C. God’s gift of grace manifests itself in our lives in three essential ways:
1. **Repentance:** By grace, God enables us to turn away from sin and back toward himself. Repentance is a fundamental change of heart in which we turn from serving ourselves to serving God and our neighbor and can only be brought about by God (TBC, 12).
 2. **Faith:** Through the grace of faith God enables us to believe the truth of the Gospel, to entrust ourselves to Jesus as our Savior and to obey him as our Lord (TBC, 13). Faith is a gift from God and an act of the whole person.
 3. **Sanctification:** Through the grace of sanctification God frees us from the power of sin so that we are more and more free for him. Through the grace of sanctification we come to desire to live a holy life, to love our neighbor and to love God (TBC, 18).
- D. A mature response to the Gospel involves faith, baptism into Christ’s Body the Church and active service to Christ in the world. In receiving the gift of faith from God we also receive a vocation from God.
- E. God’s plan for our transformation involves other people “through corporate and private worship, prayer and Bible reading; fellowship with God’s people; pursuit of holiness; witness toward those who do not know Christ; and acts of love toward all” (TBC, 18).

Notes:

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION/DISCUSSION:

- To Be A Christian defines the Gospel like this: “The Gospel is the good news of God loving and saving lost mankind through the ministry in word and deed of his Son, Jesus Christ” (TBC, 1). What does this statement mean?
- If someone who is not a Christian, say a friend or co-worker, asked you what the Gospel was about, what would you say?
- Each of the following passages of Scripture deals with one of the three dimensions of the Gospel. In each case, identify the dimension which the passage points to and consider why this dimension is important:
 - Acts 2:22-36
 - I Corinthians 15:1-4, 21-28
 - Romans 8:1-11
- To Be A Christian defines sin like this: “The universal human condition is that, though made for fellowship with our Creator, we have been cut off from him by self-centered rebellion against him, leading to guilt, shame, and fear of death and judgment. This is the state of sin” (TBC, 2). As you understand it, what does sin involve? In what ways do you see sin present in your own life and in the world around you?
- Why is it that we can not free ourselves from the power of sin?
- To Be A Christian defines God’s purpose for us like this: “God wants to reconcile me to himself, to free me from captivity to sin, to fill me with knowledge of him, to make me a citizen of his Kingdom, and to enable me to worship, serve and glorify him now and forever” (TBC, 7). Try to define what each of the things in this list means.
- Repentance, faith and sanctification define the “Way of Life”. What does each of these terms mean? How might thinking about life in these categories change the way you live?
- Why is the Gospel “Good News”?
- Read Colossians 3:1-17. What does this say about the Christian life?

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Session 2

I. FAITH AND THE NORMS OF FAITH

- A. Faith is the grace-enabled act by which we place our trust in Christ and obey him as our Lord (TBC, 13). Faith is an act of the whole person (heart and mind) which brings about our union with Christ. Faith accepts what God reveals about himself to be true because God himself is the source of all Truth.
- B. The New Testament speaks of both the act of faith and the content of faith. Paul speaks about some people being “sound in the faith” and teaching “sound doctrine” (Titus 1:13; 2:1). To speak about “sound doctrine” implies that there are norms for faith; Christians are not free to decide what they believe for themselves. While the act of faith is truly personal, the norms which govern it are not
- C. The first and most important norm of faith is Scripture. Scripture consists of two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The writings of both were inspired, meaning that they were written by people under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (TBC, 31). Together, the Old Testament and the New Testament constitute the canon of Scripture. Because Scripture was inspired by God as a witness to his self-revelation in history and is a means by which God continually speaks the Church, it is “the Church’s final authority in matters of faith and practice” (TBC, 26).
- D. The Old and the New Testaments are to be read and interpreted together. Christians read the Old Testament as pointing to Christ and we read the New Testament in the light of what God revealed to Israel in the Old Testament (TBC, 30). Together, the Old and New Testaments constitute a unified witness to God, who inspired both for the benefit of his people.
- E. In interpreting Scripture, we need to remember three fundamental principles:
1. All Scripture must be interpreted in the light of Christ who is himself the Word of God (TBC, 33).
 2. Scripture should be interpreted in its canonical sense. We should not simply read random or isolated passages to support what we already think but we should read all Scripture texts within the context of the whole of Scripture (TBC, 34).
 3. When reading Scripture we must subject our interpretation of it to the Church’s “historical and consensual reading of it” (TBC, 34). No individual interpretation of Scripture is self-authenticating and the Church’s “historical and consensual” reading of it can check those interpretations which are idiosyncratic.
- F. Creeds also serve as norms of faith. A Creed is simply a statement of faith that is intended to be normative. Creeds serve an important purpose since they “declare and safeguard God’s truth about himself, ourselves, and creation, as God has revealed it in Holy Scripture” (TBC, 20).
- G. Some people think that creeds somehow stifle thought. The opposite is actually the case. Creeds are the products of thought and historically they have provoked further thought. The development of creeds throughout the history of the Church reflects the value that Christians have placed on reflecting upon their faith and stating it in as clear a way as possible.
- H. One of the most important of all Christian creeds is the Apostles’ Creed. This creed had its origin in an early baptismal liturgy used in the church in Rome and professes faith in the Triune God. The fundamental revelation of God in Scripture concerns God’s character and identity as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All Christian teaching finally rests on this revelation. Belief in “God, the Father almighty,” “Jesus Christ his only Son” and “the Holy Spirit” involves three ways of believing in one God. The first article of Christian belief is

that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all equally and fully God and that there is only one God who reveals himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All affirmations of Christian faith stem from believing in the one God who has revealed himself to us in this way. Scripture and creeds guide us into the true knowledge of this God.

II. “GOD, THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH”

A. Thinking and talking about God is not easy. There are two fundamental reasons why this is so.

1. The first reason is what we might call the natural reason. God is the Creator and we are his creatures. This means that because God is the Creator of the universe of space, time, matter, physical laws, etc., God is literally beyond them. It is difficult to speak about God because God is beyond our frame of reference.
2. The second reason is what we might call the unnatural reason. We find it difficult to speak about God not only because God is the Creator and we are creatures but also because sin clouds our knowledge of God. Knowing God is not like knowing anything else in the universe; true knowledge of God only comes to those who are holy and, thus, fitted to know God. When we speak of God as Father, as almighty or as Creator we have to remember that we are using terms drawn from our own frame of reference and applying them to God who is beyond our frame of reference.

B. The idea of God being “Father” is certainly not unique to Christianity; however, the Gospel reveals God to be Father in a way that is unparalleled. The revelation of God as Father begins in the Old Testament and reaches its culmination in Christ.

C. It is important to note that when we speak of God as Father we are not implying that God has a gender. Since God is the Creator, all the categories of creation (space, time, gender, etc.) simply do not apply to him. In order to understand what it means to speak of God as Father we must pay attention to how he reveals himself through the narrative of Scripture.

D. God first reveals himself as Father in relation to his people Israel, speaking of Israel as his “firstborn son” (Exodus 4:22). To speak of God as Father is to say something about God’s essential character: “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love” (Psalm 103:8).

E. The principal reason Christians refer to God as Father is because this is the way that Jesus Christ addressed God. When we refer to Jesus as the Father’s Son, we are not speaking biologically but relationally. We refer to Jesus as the Son because he shares the same divine being as the Father and has a perfect knowledge of the Father.

F. We address God as Father only because Christ, through the Holy Spirit, enables us to share in his relationship with the Father. When we speak of God as Father we are speaking about the deep and intimate relationship which God creates with us through the Son and the Holy Spirit.

G. When we speak of God as Father we are giving voice to an important truth: that we were created for a relationship with God, that we were created in God’s image, that through Christ and the Holy Spirit we have become God’s adopted children, and that God intended all of this “before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4).

H. God does not simply reveal himself as Father but also as the Father who is “almighty”. This means God “has power over everything and accomplishes everything he wills” (TBC, 43). It is precisely because God is our almighty Father that we can trust him completely. God’s power is exercised in wisdom and motivated by love; a perfect power exercised under perfect wisdom for the sake of a perfect love. The Gospel proclaims that God’s relationship to us is not simply a function of how we respond to God. God’s relationship to us is completely gratuitous: “In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us” (1 John 4:10).

I. The affirmation that God is the “creator of heaven and earth” is the foundation of the Gospel. To say that God is the Creator is to say that whole of reality falls within the scope of God’s creative and providential purposes. Through Jesus’ resurrection, God has begun the renewal of his whole creation such that “the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption” (Romans 8:21).

J. God’s relationship with creation involves all three persons of the Trinity. God the Father creates through his Son (Colossians 1:16) and in the power of his Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:2). As a result, God is the “sole originator of everything that exists,” the source of the universe’s rational order and the cause of its continued existence and development. The order and rationality of the universe, upon which the natural sciences depend, have their origin in the design and purpose of God.

K. Because God created the whole universe, it reveals something about its Creator (Psalm 19:1-6) and his glory. When we say that God is the “creator of heaven and earth” we are saying that God is the source of the whole of reality in both its physical and spiritual aspects. We do not separate creation into the physical and the spiritual as if these two categories were unrelated. Creation is a fundamentally physical and spiritual order. This is why the truth of theology and the truth of the natural sciences must finally be complimentary. Both theology and the natural sciences provide us with knowledge about creation but do so in different ways. Theology is based upon God’s revelation and communicates to us what we could not learn on our own. The natural sciences are based upon what we can discover about creation but they presuppose the order which God has implanted in creation and the human mind which God has enabled to be an organ of truth.

L. Creation is fundamentally a gift from God and it is to be received as such. Life is not our possession or something that we give to ourselves but a gift which is to be received with gratitude, humility and joy. Sin involves the human attempt to deny the gift character of life and to live as if life were our possession.

M. Many people today only think about creation in terms of the supposed conflict between “creation” and “evolution” or between “science” and “religion”. It is important to say at least two things about this supposed conflict.

- 1.** First, it needs to be said that Genesis 1-2 cannot be read as a scientific account of the origin of the universe simply because this was not the purpose for which it was written. Genesis 1-2 makes a fundamental statement about the nature of the universe: Creation exists as the God-willed and God-created arena in which God and his creatures interact. Creation is fundamentally about the relationship between the Creator God and his creation.
- 2.** Second, it needs to be said that while evolutionary theory has proved to be scientifically fruitful, some have misused it to claim that the universe was the cause of its own origin and order. Evolutionary theory presupposes the existence of life and presupposes the conditions necessary for its fruitfulness. Evolution is only possible within a very specified context. While we need to acknowledge that Genesis 1-2 does not provide us with a scientific account of the origin of the universe, we also need to acknowledge that evolutionary theory has become for some a secular creation story.

N. It is unfortunate that some Christians have come to understand the doctrine of creation only in opposition to the natural sciences and that some scientists have come to see the doctrine of creation as inherently opposed to the natural sciences. When we speak of God as Creator, we are not claiming to have an alternative scientific theory about the origin of the universe. Instead, we are speaking of the meaning of creation and our place in it. He created human beings as creation’s stewards, managers and caretakers. He entrusts his good creation to us as a gift to enjoy and a responsibility to fulfill (TBC, 45). From a Christian standpoint, both the acquisition of scientific knowledge about creation and our stewardship of creation must joint responsibilities given us by God.

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Session 3

I. “JESUS CHRIST HIS ONLY SON, OUR LORD”

A. Jesus Christ is the center of the Gospel because in him the one true God is revealed (John 17:1-5) and in him God the Creator personally enters the world which he made to redeem it (John 3:16-19). The Church confesses that “Jesus Christ is the eternal Word and Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity. He took on human flesh to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world, the only Mediator between God and fallen mankind” (TBC, 49).

B. In speaking of Jesus Christ we are speaking simultaneously about the eternal Son of God and about a human historical figure whom we confess to be united in the same Person (John 1:14). The humanity of Jesus, through the Incarnation, is quite literally the humanity of God. For Christians, speaking of the humanity of God is not a contradiction or impossibility for two fundamental reasons.

1. First, because God created human beings in his image (Genesis 1:27) and this means that there is a correspondence between Creator and creature.
2. Second, because God is the Creator, all of creation is fundamentally open to him and to his purposes. In Christian thinking, God and creation are not considered to be opposites but covenant partners.

C. Jesus’ name points to his identity and reveals his very nature. Jesus is confessed to be “Christ” or “Anointed One”. This title reflects the fact that Israel’s kings, prophets and priests were anointed as a sign of their office. When we say that Jesus is the Christ we are saying that Jesus is the Messiah/King (“Anointed One”) promised to Israel and that in him Israel’s offices of prophet, priest and king find their fulfillment (TBC, 51). The name Jesus Christ indicates that the man Jesus does not simply fulfill a God-given role in the plan of salvation but that he himself is God’s salvation in person.

D. We confess Jesus to be the Father’s “only Son” because this designates Jesus’ unique relationship to the Father. In Jesus, we encounter God’s eternal Son incarnate, through whom we are reborn and enabled to become children of God (John 1:12). Jesus is God’s eternal Son by nature while we are God’s children by adoption (Ephesians 1:5). We can become God’s children through rebirth and adoption because Jesus is God’s Son by nature.

E. In confessing Jesus to be Lord, the first Christians were confessing the fact that Jesus shares fully in the Father’s sovereignty over all creation. To say that Jesus is Lord is to say that “God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name” which is, of course, God’s Name (Philippians 2:9; cf. Isaiah 45:23). All of Christian thinking about Jesus begins with a fundamental fact: the Name of God can be applied to him.

II. “HE WAS CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT AND BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY”

A. This affirmation concerns the Incarnation, the action by which the eternal Son joined himself to a human nature. While it is common to speak of the “virgin birth” it is more precise and correct to speak of Jesus’ virginal conception. This means that “through the creative power of the Holy Spirit, the eternal Son assumed a fully human nature from his mother, the Virgin Mary, into personal union with his fully divine nature at the moment of conception in Mary’s womb” (TBC, 54). This means that the child to whom Mary gave birth was God incarnate.

B. The Virgin Mary is told that her son will be conceived in a way that is unparalleled: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you” (Luke 1:35). It is important to realize that the unique manner of Jesus’ conception signifies that his humanity is a work of new creation. In Jesus, God brings old, sinful human nature to an end and begins a new, redeemed human nature (note Luke 1:35.) It is for this reason that Paul says that whoever is “in Christ” is a “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

C. Jesus’ status as fully divine and fully human is essential to the Gospel since “all that he does as a human being, he also does as God” (TBC, 56). Because he acts as both a human being (on our behalf) and as God, Jesus’s actions are both redemptive and have a “once for all character” (Hebrews 9:11-28).

III. “HE SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE”

A. Jesus’ suffering on the Cross was not simply a matter of experiencing the pain or humiliation of crucifixion (great as both were). His suffering was both vicarious and redemptive. To say that Jesus’ suffering was vicarious is to say that it was on our behalf and to say that it was redemptive is to say that it resulted in our reconciliation with God.

B. While Jesus died a violent, unjust and degrading death, his death was interpreted within the context of Old Testament promises and expectations. Among the most important of these was Isaiah 52:13-53:12. This text speaks of a mysterious “servant” whose rejection, suffering and death will bring purification to Israel. The consequences of Israel’s sin will be taken on by this “servant” and so removed from Israel. The Servant has both a vicarious and a redemptive ministry.

C. The vicarious and redemptive nature of Christ’s suffering is affirmed in 1 Peter 3:18: “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God”. In Romans 3:25, Paul likens Christ to the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant which was the place (literally) where God and Israel met and were, thus, reconciled (Exodus 25:21-22). Jesus’ suffering is significant because he is the incarnate Son of God and this means that his suffering and death are events in the life of God: “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

D. When we say that Jesus “suffered under Pontius Pilate” we are saying two things of importance.

- 1.** First, we are saying that Jesus’ death took place during the period in which Pontius Pilate was procurator of the Roman province of Judea and is, thus, a datable, historical event.
- 2.** Second, we are saying that Pilate was responsible for Jesus’ crucifixion. Here, (sinful) human intentionality and (righteous) divine purpose converge perfectly. God allows evil only because he can bring good from it.

IV. “WAS CRUCIFIED, DIED, AND WAS BURIED. HE DESCENDED TO THE DEAD”

A. Jesus was put to death in the most violent, degrading and painful way the Roman state had at its disposal. The primary purpose of crucifixion was not merely to kill but to shame and degrade publically. The first Christians declared that God had brought about the salvation of humankind through this shameful death.

B. The shameful and humiliating nature of Jesus’ death was prefigured in the Old Testament, especially in such texts as Psalm 22:6-8 (cf. Matthew 27:38-43) and Isaiah 53:3. Jesus came to take the shame and condemnation of sin upon himself so that we might be freed from it (TBC, 60).

C. In addition to bearing the shame and suffering of the Cross, Jesus also experienced the full reality of death. Jesus really died on the Cross and was buried. The affirmation that Jesus “descended to the dead” means that for our sake Jesus endured death as the ultimate consequence of sin. Through Jesus’ death, death itself has been redeemed (Romans 6:5). The redemption of death opens the door to the resurrection of the dead.

D. While the affirmation that Jesus “descended to the dead” is a metaphorical expression (note I Peter 3:19), it states an essential truth. Namely, Jesus’ suffering and death were part of God’s work to free us from sin and death. “That Jesus descended to the dead means that he truly died; his spirit did not remain with his body, but entered the realm of death” (TBC, 63). While there is a great deal of controversy about the implications of this statement, we may confidently affirm that because of his resurrection Jesus is Lord of both life and death (Revelation 1:18) and, thus, our future is securely in his hands.

V. “ON THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN”

A. It is important to recognize that the resurrection of the dead is fundamentally different than the resuscitation of a corpse. To say that Jesus was raised from the dead is not to say that he was simply restored to his former mode of life. There is an important difference between the resurrection of Jesus and the raising of Lazarus in John 11:38-44. Lazarus was restored to his former mode of life and, therefore, eventually died again. Resurrection life is life beyond sin and beyond death. Resurrection life is life freed completely from sin and death (note I Corinthians 15:50-57).

B. When we say that Jesus was raised from the dead we are saying that he was raised out of death into a life beyond death. We are saying that in the resurrection of Jesus, God overcame death itself (I Corinthians 15:20-28). Jesus’ resurrection makes our resurrection possible in that the resurrection of the dead involves our sharing in Jesus’ victory over death (Romans 6:9-10).

C. Because Jesus’ body was raised from death, we are given the hope that “the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Romans 8:21). The resurrection of Jesus is a promise from God that no part of creation will simply be left to sin and death.

D. Belief in the resurrection is a consequence of belief in God as the Creator, the One from whom all life comes and the One through whom it is continually sustained. The resurrection of Jesus inaugurates God’s new creation and is the foundation of Christian hope. Creation comes into being through God and is sustained in existence by God. But creation also exists to God, meaning that its true purpose is the purpose that God has given it.

VI. “HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN”

A. Jesus’ complete triumph over sin and death is sealed and made permanently effective through his Ascension. The Ascension of Jesus means that he “was taken up out of human sight, and returned in his humanity to the glory he had shared with the Father before his incarnation” (TBC, 66; John 17:7). Jesus has taken his glorified body and his perfect humanity into the very Presence of God where he is our Representative (Hebrews 9:24). In doing this, he has opened up a way for us into the Presence of God (Hebrews 10:19-22).

B. The Ascension means that while he is not physically present, Jesus is present to all times and places by sharing in the Father’s sovereignty over creation.

C. The doctrine of Jesus’ Ascension is organically connected with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. “Jesus ascended into heaven so that, through him, his Father might send us the gift of the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, Christians are united as Christ’s Body on earth to Jesus, our ascended and living Head, and in him to one another” (TBC, 67). Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus the King exercises his royal authority over his dominion—creation.

VII. “AND IS SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE FATHER”

A. The Resurrection not only means that Jesus has overcome death, it also means that he is “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in one

to come” (Ephesians 1:21).

B. Jesus’ Resurrection and Ascension are the foundations of Christian hope. In affirming that Jesus is seated at the Father’s right hand, we are affirming that “Jesus is Lord over the Church and all creation, with authority to equip his Church, advance his Kingdom, bring sinners into saving fellowship with God the Father, and finally to establish justice and peace upon the earth” (TBC, 68; Philippians 2:5-11).

C. By virtue of his Ascension, Christ serves as our High Priest, both interceding for us and receiving our intercessions. Through Christ, our High Priest who is in the Presence of God, we have access to God (TBC, 69; Hebrews 7:23-25; 8:1-2). Christian worship is not simply a human activity. It is ultimately made possible by Christ, who is the Head of the Body, and by the Holy Spirit who animates that Body.

D. Jesus’ Ascension is the foundation of our hope as Christians. He is the Head of his Body the Church and in him the fullness of human salvation already exists. The grace of Christ enables the members of his Body to participate more and more in the salvation that already exist in him (Ephesians 4:1-16).

VIII. “HE WILL COME AGAIN TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD”

A. The affirmation that Jesus will “come again” makes use of a visual metaphor to designate the full manifestation of Christ’s present rule as Lord. The language of Christ “coming again” or “returning” does not imply that he has been absent. It proclaims that what we know by faith now will become completely manifest in the future.

B. Jesus made it clear that the public manifestation of his glory would both reveal his victory to the world and bring the current phase of history to its completion (Luke 21:27-28). This event will involve the final passing away of the present order of the world, marred by sin and evil, and by the coming of a new creation, a creation completely free from sin and evil and fully restored to God (2 Peter 3:12-13; Revelation 21:1-4). With this event, creation will finally fully reflect the reign of its King.

C. This event cannot be known or calculated in advance for it is known only to God (Matthew 24:36). Jesus makes it clear that in the time between now and the consummation of history the mission of Christians should be that of faithfully bearing witness.

D. Living in anticipation of Christ’s return is cause for joy. “I should anticipate with joy the return of Jesus as the completion of my salvation. The promise of his return encourages me to seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to live a holy life, and to share the hope of new life in Christ with others (TBC, 73).

E. It is more than unfortunate that many regard Judgment as something to be avoided, dreaded or dismissed. This perspective misses the fact that the prospect of God judging the world is the foundation of biblical hope (See Psalm 98).

F. God’s judgment is part of the Gospel. God will judge his creation with perfect justice and with perfect mercy. God’s righteousness indicates his complete opposition to sin and evil; these are excluded from the New Creation (Revelation 21:4). God’s mercy indicates his generous action of doing good for his creatures; all of God’s merciful actions are based on his own goodness and not upon the merit of his creatures.

G. God’s judgment holds no peril for those who have turned to God in faith and who desire that their lives be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). Those who are in Christ can genuinely look forward to the final Judgment. “I have no reason to fear the coming judgment, for my Judge is my Savior Jesus Christ, who loves me, died for me, and intercedes for me” (TBC, 76; Romans 8:1).

THE APOSTLES CREED

Session 4

I. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND GOD'S SELF-REVELATION

A. Any discussion of the Holy Spirit needs to begin with the reminder that in speaking of the Spirit we are still speaking of God, the God who is Triune (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). One of the best ways in which to think of the Holy Spirit is to think of him within the context of God's self-revelation. This helps us to remember that the work of the Spirit is intimately related to the work of the Son and the work of both fulfills the purposes of the Father.

B. In 1 John, John makes the point that we know God in two different but mutually supplementary ways.

1. God has revealed himself to us visibly in his Son Jesus Christ. Christ is a revelation "which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and have touched with our hands" (1 John 1:1).
2. God has also revealed himself to us through the Holy Spirit. Through the Spirit, God actually dwells among us. God reveals himself to us in the Son not so that we will merely acquire accurate information about him but so that he may dwell within us through the Holy Spirit.

C. In Christ, God has revealed himself to us visibly within history (Romans 5:6-11). Through the Spirit, God is present with us now confirming that we are indeed his adopted children (Romans 8:15-16) and opening us to what he has revealed in Christ (John 14:25-26). There is no Christian life apart from the work of both Christ and the Holy Spirit.

D. The Gospel of John makes it clear that the work of the Son and the Spirit are distinguishable but not separable. In preparing the disciples for his departure, Jesus tells them that the Father will send the Holy Spirit to them in Jesus' name and that the Spirit "will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26). Through the Holy Spirit sent from the Father, the disciples will remain connected to Jesus in a living way.

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PENTECOST

A. Acts 2 provides an account of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples at the Jewish feast of Pentecost. The festival celebrated the giving of Torah on Mt. Sinai and Jews from all over the world gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate it.

B. Being Jews, all of Jesus' disciples were present for the festival and were "all together" in the Upper Room (Acts 1:13). Suddenly "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (2:4). A crowd gathers and all the assembled hear the disciples speaking about what God has done in Jesus in their own language. This is clearly a reversal of the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9. The Holy Spirit reverses the confusion and division brought about by sin. The Holy Spirit comes not to provide isolated doses of inspiration to people but to bring about among people the reconciliation accomplished by the Son.

C. In Acts 2:17-21 Peter cites Joel 2:28-32 in order to provide an interpretation of what has just happened and to make the point that the gift of the Spirit had been promised in the Old Testament and that his being poured out "on all flesh" (2:17) is a sign that God's plan to redeem the human race had reached its culmination. Peter also makes it clear that the coming of the Holy Spirit is the direct result of Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension (2:33-35).

D. There are two essential points to be made about Pentecost and the Holy Spirit. First, the coming of the Spirit upon “all flesh” fulfills God’s promise in the Old Testament. Second, the coming of the Spirit is the consequence of the change in the relationship brought about in Jesus’ death and resurrection. The Holy Spirit is the gift which God gives to those who are reconciled to him through Jesus Christ. Pentecost also tells us something significant about the Church. The Church is not a newly created religious organization but Israel brought to her fulfillment. The gift of the Spirit is not something odd or strange but part of God’s plan to restore the human race.

III. “I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT”

A. Who is the Holy Spirit? “God the Holy Spirit is the third Person in the one Being of the Holy Trinity, co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father and God the Son, and equally worthy of our honor and worship” (TBC, 81). The divine attributes possessed by the Father and the Son are also possessed by the Holy Spirit who is sent from the Father and who enables us share in the salvation brought about by the Son.

B. Through the Holy Spirit the redeeming work of Christ remains for all time a contemporary event. The Holy Spirit can be referred to as Comforter, Guide, Counselor, Advocate or Helper (TBC, 82). The Spirit is God’s intimate and powerful Presence with us. The Holy Spirit is sent by the Father in the name of the Son (John 14:26). In the Holy Spirit God is both the Giver and the Gift since what he gives us in the Spirit is Himself. Whenever we speak of the Holy Spirit doing something we are speaking about the personal action of God.

IV. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. In Scripture, the work of the Holy Spirit is manifold and diverse. In saying this, however, we have to remember a basic principle of Christian theology: All three Persons of the Trinity always act together. When we speak of the work of the Holy Spirit, we are speaking of that work in which the Spirit is identified as the primary agent but not the only agent. This can be seen in the gospel accounts of Jesus’ baptism. In Matthew’s account (Matthew 3:13-17), for example, the Father anoints his Son with the Holy Spirit and serves as the Son’s ultimate witness: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased”. The work of salvation is a work of the whole Trinity. The work of the Spirit can be summarized under seven headings.

1. **Through the Holy Spirit, God creates and sustains all life.** All creatures simply by virtue of being creatures have a relationship to God through the Spirit. When we speak of the Holy Spirit we are speaking fundamentally about God’s presence in creation and about God’s unlimited capacity to create, sustain and renew life. The life of all creation (human and non-human) is sustained by God through the Holy Spirit. In this sense, all of creation has a “spiritual life”
2. **Through the Holy Spirit, God makes us to be specifically human creatures.** Our humanity, our personhood, is a gift from God. There is a very real sense in which we have received ourselves from God. When we speak of the work of the Spirit we should not think in terms of “religion” but, rather, in terms of God restoring our true humanity to us.
3. **Through the Holy Spirit, God brings about faith in us.** Faith in its true sense is a supernatural act and cannot come about without God. Because genuine faith is not simply a set of ideas about God but a relationship with God, it must be initiated by the Spirit (Romans 8:15-17). Another way to think about this is to say that the Spirit purifies our hearts and minds so that we can come to faith and that without this purification faith is impossible (Romans 8:6-9). This means that faith is a supernatural gift, something that we cannot produce ourselves.
4. **Through the Holy Spirit, God communicates to us the resurrection life of Jesus.** To be a Christian is to share in the resurrection life of Jesus. We share in Jesus’ resurrection life through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9-11). This means that the Christian life is not simply about believing in Jesus or living by the teachings

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION/DISCUSSION:

- Read John 14:15-17, 25-26. What does this text say about the Holy Spirit?
- The work of Jesus the Son and the work of the Holy Spirit are distinguishable but not separable. Read Item I. D. and explain in your own word what this statement means.
- Read Acts 2:1-36. What does this text say about the Holy Spirit? (In answering this question you might want to review Item II. D.)
- TBC, 8I makes this statement: “God the Holy Spirit is the third Person in the one Being of the Holy Trinity, co-equal with God the Father and God the Son, and equally worthy of our honor and worship”. What does this statement mean?
- Take some time to review the work of the Holy Spirit as presented in Item IV. A. 1-7. Give some examples of how you have seen the Holy Spirit work in your life.

THE APOSTLES CREED

Session 5

I. “THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH”

A. People sometimes talk about “organized religion” as if there was another kind of “religion” that is simply private (“unorganized religion”). This way of speaking is a product of modernity and completely foreign to the New Testament (and to the ancient world). The New Testament does not understand itself to be talking about a “religion” (of either the “organized” or “unorganized” variety). The New Testament understands itself to be talking about God’s covenant people Israel brought to fulfillment in Jesus Christ. To be a Jew or a Christian is not merely to have a “religion” but to enter into a covenant with God.

B. The Holy Spirit comes upon the Church at Pentecost, in fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32, not to enable individuals to “get religion” but to constitute the Church as the New Israel and to empower her to be a witness in the world. As Paul makes clear, the Holy Spirit is given to the Church to build up the Church as the Body of Christ. The Spirit gives his gifts to people not for their own benefit but for the “common good” (1 Corinthians 12:4-11).

C. The whole concept of the Church only becomes comprehensible if we grasp two premises:

1. God created human beings as essentially social creatures. Human society begins with the society of man and woman in marriage in Genesis 2:18-25, a society fractured by sin. This means that sin is never simply a matter of our individual sin but always involves the sin of the community and culture in which we live. Because we are essentially social creatures, our salvation must involve our social relationships. The Church is both a sign of the salvation that God will bring to humankind and part of God’s plan of salvation.
2. The purpose of becoming a Christian is not to find “spiritual fulfillment” or to “become a better person” but to bear witness to God’s saving work. It is important to recognize that knowing and loving God are not a means to something else but are the very purpose for which we were created.

D. We will fail to understand what the Church is if we simply attempt to understand it sociologically (as “organized religion”). In order to truly understand the Church, we have to understand it theologically because ultimately the Church is a creation of God. The Church is not primarily a building, an institution or even the sum total of all Christians now alive. “The Church is the whole community of faithful Christians in heaven and on earth. The Church on earth gathers in local congregations to worship in Word and Sacrament, to serve God according to the Scriptures, and to proclaim the Gospel, under the leadership of those whom God appoints for this purpose” (TBC, 89).

E. The Church is a multi-dimensional reality and this is reflected in the images that the New Testament uses to designate it, each of which tells us something about the reality of the Church:

1. The “household of faith” (Galatians 6:10): This image suggests that the Church is God’s extended family. We are to think of the Church not primarily as an organization or an institution but as a family. The Church is God’s newly created family, a family not based on blood relations but based on faith.
2. The “body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12): This image suggests that the Church is like a body. While it is composed of many parts, these are organically related. This body is made an organic whole and is animated and enlivened by Christ who is the Head (Ephesians 4:15). The Church has no other source of life than

Christ.

3. A “holy temple in the Lord” (Ephesians 2:21): In the Old Testament, the temple in Jerusalem was God’s visible dwelling place on earth. By speaking of the Church as God’s temple we are saying that the Church is fundamentally constituted by God’s dwelling with us and by his binding the Church to himself in covenant. To think of the Church as temple is to begin to realize why holiness is such an important dimension of the Christian life. The temple in Jerusalem was consecrated as a holy space because God dwelt there. Because the Church is a living temple, her life should be characterized by holiness.
 4. The “Bride of Christ” (Revelation 19:6-10): In Isaiah 62:1-5 God promises to transform Israel from an unfaithful wife into a beautiful and faithful wife. This transformation will involve the complete fulfillment of Israel. In Revelation 19:6-10 the Church appears as a bride clothed in “fine linen, bright and pure”. In other words, the Church is Israel fulfilled and united to Christ. As Christ’s Bride, we recognize that only Christ can bring the Church to fulfillment. Until this takes place, the Church will be incomplete and “under construction”.
- F. The New Testament uses many other images for the Church beside these four. Taken together, all these images remind us that the Church is fundamentally a creation of God, that the Church is sustained by God and that the Church exists for God’s purposes.

II. “THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS”

- A. Referring to the Church as the “communion of saints” may strike some as pretentious and others as simply absurd. What does this phrase mean? Paul refers to the Christians at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2) as “saints” not because he thinks that all of them have attained perfect sanctity, but because they have been “sanctified in Christ Jesus” and so “called to be saints”. Because God in Christ has freed us from the bondage of sin and now sanctifies us through the work of the Holy Spirit, it is possible for us to become saints.
- B. The Church is a community of people but it is also communion with the Triune God. The closeness of our communion with God mirrors the communion of the Father and the Son (John 17:20-22). By being united to the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, we are also drawn into communion with one another.
- C. In speaking of the communion of saints we are reminded that we are not simply saved as individuals but we are saved as part of a community and that part of salvation is the reconstitution of the human community. Through Christ, the sinful divisions among people are overcome and we are reconciled to God “in one body through the cross” (Ephesians 2:16).

III. SIGNS WHEREBY WE RECEIVE GOD’S GRACE: THE SACRAMENTS

- A. The sacraments are visible signs of Christ’s presence and activity in the Church. As such they attest to the fact that the Church is sustained only by Christ who continues to work within her (through the Holy Spirit and by virtue of his ascension). All the sacraments come from Christ and they are means by which he builds up the Church as his Body.
- B. A sacrament is not simply a ritual or symbolic action. A sacrament may be defined as “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace”. The sacraments come with God’s assurance that through them we receive his grace.
- C. Holy Baptism: Baptism is the most basic of all the sacraments in that this sacrament initiates us into the Christian life and so is the doorway to all the other sacraments. Baptism both initiates a person into the Body of Christ and portrays the fundamental nature of the Christian life. Baptism makes possible a whole new pattern of life involving our gradual death to sin and our gradual rebirth in righteousness. When a person is baptized, they

are not “saved” but, rather, initiated into a life of repentance and growth in holiness that will, if followed, lead to salvation.

D. Holy Eucharist: In the Eucharist, the Church’s central act of worship, we simultaneously proclaim the atoning death of Jesus Christ (I Corinthians II:26) and enter into communion with him so as to receive the benefits of his sacrifice (I Corinthians IO:I6-2I). The Eucharist is simultaneously the sacrament of Christ’s death and resurrection and the means by which we receive the fruits of Christ’s death and resurrection. In receiving the Eucharist we are more firmly united to Christ, strengthened in the gifts of faith, hope and love and cleansed from sin.

E. Baptism and the Eucharist are considered the “sacraments of the Gospel” (TBC, IO4). In addition to these two sacraments there are five others. The phrase “sacraments of the Gospel” is applied to Baptism and Eucharist because these two were “ordained by Christ” and are “generally necessary for salvation” (TBC, IO4).

F. Confirmation: Confirmation is a sacrament related to Baptism. In this sacrament, a person makes a “mature commitment” to the baptismal covenant (the faith set forth by the Apostles’ Creed) that was made on their behalf when they were baptized (if baptized as an infant or child) and receives the laying of hands by a bishop (Acts 8:I4-I7) and prayer that they might be strengthened in their baptism. Confirmation involves a public and mature commitment to the Faith as well as the grace to persist in this commitment.

G. Absolution (Reconciliation): In this sacrament a person makes a confession of sin to God in the presence of a priest and the priest both offers counsel and pronounces forgiveness in the name of Christ (John 20:22-23). In this sacrament, we live out our baptismal promise to resist evil and to continuously repent of our sin and turn to the Lord.

H. Ordination: Through the sacrament of ordination a person is consecrated, authorized and empowered to serve Christ in the Church through the ministry of Word and Sacrament (TBC, I22). By definition, this sacrament, like Confirmation, involves the laying on of hands by a bishop. Through this action, the ordained person receives grace from the Holy Spirit to carry out ministry in the Church on behalf of Christ.

I. Marriage: Marriage is the sacrament which involves “a life-long covenant between a man and a woman, binding both to self-giving love and exclusive fidelity” (TBC, I28). Marriage is the sacrament of the graced relationship of husband and wife and is a sign of Christ’s self-sacrificial love for the Church (Ephesians 5:25-27). Marriage has been ordered by God to three ends or goods: the procreation of children, mutual joy, and the help and comfort given in times of prosperity and adversity.

J. Anointing of the Sick (Unction): In this sacrament a person is anointed with consecrated oil in the Name of the Triune God. The purpose of this sacrament is to bring God’s blessing of healing on those suffering in body, mind or spirit (James 5:I4-I6; TBC, I32).

K. It is important to remember two things about the sacraments. First, all of the sacraments have their origin in Jesus’ Passion and communicate to us some fruit of his Passion. Second, all of the sacraments prefigure some dimension of our salvation. Salvation involves our perfect cleansing (Baptism, Absolution), our perfect healing (unction), our perfect union with Christ (Eucharist), our perfect union with Christ and his people (Marriage) and our perfect faithfulness (Confirmation).

THE APOSTLES CREED

Session 6

I. "THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS"

A. At the heart of the Christian faith there is the conviction that while we were made for a relationship with God we have broken off this relationship to follow our own path through life. Our broken relationship with God is what we call sin. The problem with sin is that it makes it impossible for us to be fully human for we can only be fully human in relationship to God. The reason why the Gospel is Good News is that it announces the fact that God has made it possible for us to be reconciled to him and, thus, restored to our full humanity.

B. Genesis 3 gives us some insight into the nature of sin. The decision of the Man the Woman to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:3-6) reflects their desire to have wisdom apart from God which is, of course, impossible. The essence of sin is our desire to posit ourselves as an alternative center of creation. While we sometimes speak of "sins," it is better to speak first about sin as a condition from which sins.

C. Our broken relationship with God (sin) gives rise to patterns of living and thinking which go against the grain of creation and the grain of our genuine humanity (sins). Sin may lead to momentary satisfaction but it leads us away from God and ultimately robs us of final fulfillment. God intended that human beings should reflect something of his own goodness and beauty into the world but due to sin we only do this in a diminished and incomplete way.

D. Broken relationships are only restored through forgiveness and the Gospel announces that in Christ God has acted to both extend forgiveness to us and to reconcile us to himself. God does not forgive us because we repent and confess our sins; we are able to repent and confess our sins because God has already acted to reconcile us to himself through Christ and moves us to repentance through the Holy Spirit. Christianity only emphasizes the depth of sin because it helps us to see the depth of God's mercy and grace. It is important to have a radical notion of grace: "Grace is the gift of the triune God's love, mercy and help which he freely gives to us who, because of our sin, deserve only condemnation" (TBC, 137).

E. Christ's death and resurrection bring about an objective reconciliation between us and God (TBC, 135) while the Holy Spirit works within us so that we can accept what God has done. Through Christ and the Holy Spirit, God reconciles us to himself, forgives our sin and adopts us as his children.

F. In a very real sense, the whole of the Christian life is simply a response to what God has done for us in Christ and continues to do within us through the Holy Spirit (TBC, 136). Christ practiced forgiveness and offered himself completely to God and his pattern of life should become our pattern and can become our pattern through grace (John 13:34).

G. It is important to note that when we speak about the forgiveness of sin we are not speaking simply about pardon but also about our being freed from the effects of sin and being renewed after the image of God (Colossians 3:9-10). This helps us to see that grace is essential for the whole of the Christian life. Grace awakens us to the presence of sin in our lives. Grace imparts to us the desire to be freed from sin. Grace grants us the will to turn from our sin and turn toward Christ. Grace gives us the strength to persist in turning from sin and to grow in holiness (TBC, 139). Self-examination is an essential Christian practice in that we need to aware of our persistent serious sins, to confess them and to resist them.

H. In accepting God's forgiveness of our sin, we also receive both the power and the obligation to practice forgiveness. We practice forgiveness not in order to be "nice" but as a witness to God's grace. In his teaching on forgiveness, Jesus makes it clear that disciples should practice forgiveness because in doing so they come to resemble God (Matthew 5:43-48).

I. For Christians, the confession of sin should be a daily discipline. One of the ways that we come to knowledge of the depths of God's love is by realizing just how much we have been forgiven. We are unlikely to appreciate God's grace if we are unaware of how deeply we need it. To the extent that we attempt to evade our own sinfulness or to downplay its significance, we diminish our sense of God's forgiveness. Daily confession is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

J. The reality of God's forgiveness is the foundation of our hope. Because God's forgiveness is real and because grace does have the power to free us from sin, even in the midst of broken lives we may have hope and be confident in the fact that sin does not simply define who we are.

K. One of the things which makes the Gospel good news is the fact that it announces that sin need not determine our future. The Gospel announces the reign of grace in our lives, a reign which supplants the reign of sin.

II. "THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY"

A. The last two affirmations of the Apostles' Creed deal with the ultimate hope of the Christian faith. The Good News of the Gospel applies to both this life and the next. To be a Christian is to live a life of confident trust in God. This confident trust (itself made possible by grace) is the source of our hope that God's good purposes for us and for creation will finally triumph. The Christian hope does not offer us a series of predictions about the future but an assurance of the ultimate outcome of history: the assurance that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:39).

B. The resurrection of the dead expresses one aspect of the Christian hope. As Paul makes clear, the resurrection of the dead is an essential part of the Gospel. He says that "Christ has been raised, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (I Corinthians 15:20). In saying this he means that Christ's resurrection from the dead makes our resurrection from the dead possible.

C. In thinking about what resurrection means, we need to keep at least two things in mind. First, we need to remember that when we speak of the resurrection of the body we are speaking about the whole person. Human beings are a composite of a body and a soul and the Christian hope is not that the soul will be freed from the body but that God will restore us to eternal life as whole persons. Second, we need to remember that for creatures eternal life can only come as a gift. Eternal life is a gift which only God can give. Without the resurrection of Jesus, eternal life would not be a possibility for us.

D. While we do not have a comprehensive understanding of what the resurrection of the body will mean, we do know that God will transform our present bodies, subject to infirmity, sin and death, so that they resemble Christ's "glorious body" (Philippians 3:21). Without going into speculation, we may say that the resurrection of the body will involve the restoration of our humanity, the restoration of our relationship with God, the restoration of our relationship with other people and the restoration of our relationship with creation.

E. The resurrection of the body has significant implications for the way that we live now. Since human life is fundamentally embodied and since God intends to raise our bodies from death, we arrive at a fundamental principle of Christian life: "So glorify God in your body" (I Corinthians 6:20). We are to treat ourselves, other people and creation as both gifts from God and as having an eternal meaning because they play a part in the purposes of God.

III. "AND LIFE EVERLASTING"

A. "Resurrection of the body" and "life everlasting" are intended to make the same affirmation but to do so in slightly different ways. God will raise us to new embodied life and this life will be eternal, that is beyond sin and beyond death. Eternal life is not life that simply "lasts forever" but is life completely fulfilled in the Presence of

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION/DISCUSSION:

- What is sin and how does it affect us?
- How does God forgive us and how do we receive this forgiveness? (Note Item I. C.-F.)
- Why should the confession of sin be a daily discipline for Christians?
- Why is Jesus' resurrection significant? What does resurrection mean?
- How should faith in the resurrection influence the way in which we live now?
- What does "life everlasting" mean? Why must it be understood to have a "social" character?