Is hearing the gospel necessary for salvation?

An historical and biblical study with special reference to infants

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Submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MTh

In the subject of Systematic Theology

At the University of South Africa

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November 1999
Summary:

I have outlined some objections to soteriologies that presume that only some are given a chance of eternal life. Such soteriologies can include or exclude those mentally competent but lacking human evangelisation. Fundamental to evaluating soteriologies I have looked at both what sin is (being and doing) and what salvation consists in, as regards divine and human interaction. On the one side I have considered God’s goodness – would such a being act unethically regarding man’s eternity? On the other hand I have looked at whether, and if so in what way, man is required to respond – in what way or ways is chance (if at all) given. Finally I have considered views about those who die in infancy. Here I have tentatively suggested my own theory which seeks to presume that before death every human being may choose to accept or reject God, a choice integral (I suggest) to salvation.

Key Words:

Sin
Salvation
Free will
Infant death
God
Religions
Israel
Universalism
Annihilationism
Evangelism
Is hearing the gospel necessary for salvation?

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Areas of concentration:

- What is the gospel story?
- What of Israel: – salvation before Christ?, salvation based on race?
- What of unevangelised nations/individuals? – Rm.3, Mt.25, 1 Pt.3
- What of babies?
- What of Perseverance of the Saints
- What of Christ-rejecters (eg Judas, good people)?
- What of non-Christian theists?

Introduction

A Sunday School teacher asked the children what one must do in order to be saved, to which the answer came, ‘sin’! Pelagius would have agreed, but at least it shows that the need for salvation is as obvious as sin. Not so obvious is the wide biblical range of meaning to the term ‘salvation’. It covers physical & mental healing, prevention of physical death, deliverance from enemies, and release from sin’s domain (cf. Bromiley: Dictionary, 1132ff.). Above all, theologically, it has eternity in mind and means spiritual life with God and from God (cf. Jhn.17:3). The Bible presents a picture of creation
being muddied and lost by rebellion and having lost the warmth of a living & loving relationship with God, with all sorts of sociological & and inter-species losses flowing from this (cf. Gen.3ff.). It is generally taken to teach that those born of Adam & Eve’s line – ie the whole subsequent human race – are conceived within the matrix of sin. But while it is obvious that all who sin are sinners, is it obvious that all are born sinners? Are all in need of eternal salvation? Are those too young mentally (by impairment or age) to sin sinners, damned if they do not mentally welcome Christ? There is clear teaching that individual welcome of (ie faith in) Christ is salvific (eg Jhn.1:12; Ac.2:21,34; Rm.10:11f.). If this is the only key, then all without this key are unsaved. If it is not the only key, is it really important? Is it the only key?

This question of eternal salvation raises deep harmatialogical, soteriological, and ethical questions. And so they are theological questions, probing God’s nature, and so into the nature of God we must go to seek answers. If everyone conceived¹ needs salvation, do all have a chance to receive it? Do some have a sonderweg, ie a special way of salvation? Do some need salvation but receive it without their active assent? If so, is this a case of God giving eternal life to some who might, if they were able to be consulted, decline the gift, ie decline God? If so, is it moral to give them what they would refuse? Does the heavenly father force bread & fish on his children by creation who would otherwise insist on stones & snakes? Looked at in another way, are some given eternal blessing unasked simply because they cannot ask, while God permits some to become able to ask and thus be able to reject what is best for them? And if so, is it moral to allow some to reach a stage when they can become fools & choose damnation? According to C S Lewis ‘judgement consists of the very fact that [people] prefer darkness to light....Death removes [the] last contact. [They have their] wish — to live wholly in the self and to make of it what [they] find there. And what [they] find there is Hell....In the long run the answer to all those who object to the doctrine of hell is itself a question: ‘What are you asking God to do?’ To wipe out their past sins and, at all costs, to give them a fresh start, smoothing every difficulty and offering them every miraculous help? But He has done so, on Calvary. To forgive them? They will not be forgiven. To leave them alone? Alas, I am afraid that is what He does’ (Lewis: Pain, 111-115). We can perhaps allow that God is fair to exclude those who wish to be excused — their voice has been heard. But if growing up is growing into the gift to choose damnation, choice is a dangerous gift: why should human

¹ While it is good to consider the scenario of antenatal death, I shall for convenience assume that birth makes no apparent change to the individual life. It should be noted that some consider the individual to acquire human status in-uterus, and so could argue that death before birth is not of a fully human being. One could ponder whether the status of the preterm baby of say 24 weeks gestation is less than that of a fullterm baby. One could ask whether the human spirit is given at birth — insufflation. If the death of the unborn is not the death of a spiritual being then of course it follows that there is no theological question about whether that one is bound for heaven or hell, since “that one” has no spiritual existence. Some have suggested that antenatal or neonatal death results in a spirit leaving the body and later becoming incarnate through another conception: shades of Origen!
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beings of younger age escape it and have heaven unasked? Or if growing up is growing into the gift to accept salvation, choice is a glorious gift: why should human beings of young age miss out and have hell unasked? Most soteriologies assume only some choose.

This study is aimed at investigating various ideas about whether some are favoured or unfavoured by God (by geography or age) and the method/s by which people receive God’s gift of life. I shall consider whether we are conceived/born without the nature of sin and if not whether we are still accorded automatic right to eternal life until we arrive at an age where we willfully sin. The main alternatives are a chance after death (Wider Hope) or salvation certainly after death (Universalism) or mercy killing (Annihilationism) shall be examined.

The doctrine of sin

The question of salvation demands an understanding of sin if it is to be understood. Is it a legal technicality on which one person and every other is duly damned? Are each of Adam’s descendants born with his fallen disposition, or born with neither imputed guilt nor with sinfulness? If the latter, do they need salvation at birth? Many say not. What is sin?

The very preaching of the gospel is in part to offer a solution, but also in part to uncover & explicate the problem. This is one reason why preaching is imperative if the fuller aspects of salvation are to be achieved in this life.

Sin primarily as attitude

From a biblical perspective we can see from Genesis that at heart sin is turning away from right relationships 1# with God, 2# the basic human level of marriage (and by extension human relationships in general), and 3# with the animal kingdom (and by extension any interplanetary life above or below humanity). As some whit remarked, on turning away from God the husband blamed his wife, she blamed the snake, and it didn’t have a leg to stand on! Thus sin is at heart a wrong & evil attitude destructive to right relationship. It manifests itself in evil activity & sad alienation. It often has a compounding effect, in that wrong attitude leads to

2 It is interesting to speculate whether there be rational/spiritual creatures on other planets. If there be, whether they have come under sin should not be taken for granted. If sinners, presumably salvation would be open to them as it was for Adam’s children, perhaps through a redemptive act unique to their world/s. Possibly God has provided salvation for them through Christ’s death on our planet, even as, though it happened in Palestine, the cross impacted the whole human race.

3 I exclude the Inter-Testamental (IT) ideas of sin. It may be noted however that they centred around the Fall. Sirach blames Eve (Sir.25:24); 2 Esdras blames Adam (2 Esd.7:110); Wisdom blames the devil (Wis.2:24); 1 Enoch blames the fallen angels (1 Enoch 10:7f.), while 2 Baruch complained that we ought to blame ourselves (2 Bar.54:15,19). For atonement, there was the cultus, good works (eg Tob.12:9; Sir.3:3); the merits of saints (2 Esd.8:28f.) and the martyrdom of the faithful atones for sins (4 Macc.6:28f.).
wrong action (which shows wrong attitude), and wrong action reinforces wrong attitude, leading to wrong action and so on (cf. Mt.12:34//Lk.6:45; Jas.2:18; 2 Sam.13:15). This tendency of a viscous spiral makes it a deadly sickness. As Elmer Martens put it, "sin, while it involves acts, is at its base relational failure" (Martens: Plot and Purpose, 49). And in the Reformed tradition, Donald G Bloesch said that "for the great prophets of Israel, sin [was] much more than the violation of a taboo or a transgression of an external ordinance. It signified the rupture of a personal relationship with God, a betrayal of the trust he placed in them" (Bloesch: Elwell: Dictionary, 1012). We too usually find that we may more easily countenance crimes against property than against persons, and our interpersonal relationships are deemed part of the fabric of our lives. From this in common with God we can perhaps better appreciate the heinousness of sin and wonder how the damaged relationship can, if at all, be healed.

This is not to argue that we are as bad as bad may be. Indeed if we were would not our very sense of Right & Wrong not be so corrupt that we would draw opposite inferences as to what is morally right & what is morally wrong? And if we did so then to the unconverted God the absolutely righteous would be deemed the absolutely unrighteous, and the command to turn to him would seem a command to turn towards evil. It is surely the case that we may liken everyone’s moral sense & lifestyle to a contaminated stream, neither crystal clear stream nor solid mud (so Whale: Doctrine, 40). Some would argue that at the least every part of us is muddied by sin and that there is a bondage of the will to sin. Though some stress the sin of the unconverted, we should perhaps note that the converted may not always be more virtuous than the unconverted. Looking again at the illustration of muddy stream we may suggest that some unconverted are less muddy than others, and that while conversion should begin a purification process it is a process in which those starting from a more muddy basis than a neighbour might after conversion never become purer than a unconverted neighbour. That is, though Christians, the inroads of sin on our moral sense may be slow to heal. It is to Christians that the oft repeated injunction to put off the pre-conversion life and put on the conversion life was given (eg Eph.3:22-24): we are under construction and God hasn’t finished rebuilding us. This fact also shows that sin is a relational matter, not simply a case of disobedience against a law code, which could simply be forgiven. Salvation includes an ongoing healing element.

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4 This is the milder form of the doctrine of total depravity.
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Something needs to be said about certain laws of the Old Covenant, if defining sin as pre-eminently relational ill is to be upheld. Superficially it can seem to be hugely a matter of weird and wonderful rules & regulations. Why, for instance, did bearing a child, or having completed a voluntary period of quasi-priesthood, require a sin offering (Lv.12:6;: Nb.6:13f.)? Must we conclude that sin is more profound than horizontal/vertical relational attitudes? If we look with care at the two examples just mentioned, we can see that part of the answer is that translation is probably misleading. While the so-called 'sin' (hattat) offering related to sin, "other sacrifices also atoned for sin" (Wenham: Leviticus, 88) or normalised relationship. It has been suggested that this particular offering be translated according to how it related to the relationship. Accordingly, instead of "sin offering" some have suggested it read as "purification offering" (Wenham/Levine/Milgrom) or as "restoration offering" (W C Williams). Taken as "restoration offering" we can conclude that it was not that sexual acts (including childbirth) were sinful, but rather that there was a didactic system in place to underline symbolically the relationship Yahweh had with his chosen people. There was a foundational theology that Yahweh was holy, that Israel was clean (close to him), and that other peoples were unclean (distanced from him). This is well brought out by Wenham who marshalled this theology around Lv.10:10/Ezk.22:26. "Everything that is not holy is common. Common things divide into two groups, the clean and the unclean.... Cleanliness is the ground state; holiness and uncleanness are variations from the norm of cleanliness" (Wenham: Leviticus, 19,20). This can be seen in the idea of temple (holy) surrounded by the community (clean) surrounded by the gentiles (unclean). Thus Israel was perpetually reminded of her distinction from the rest of humanity. A millennia and more on, Peter the Jew was prepared to face Cornelius the Roman by a strong vision underlining the abolition of the Jew/Gentile divide. "What is striking from one point of view is the way Peter [linked] the vision abolishing the distinction between clean and unclean animals with the distinction between clean and unclean [people], i.e., between Jew and Gentile" (Wenham: Leviticus, 182). Thus Peter's vision about kosher laws (Ac.10) having been abolished impacted on him as a revelation that the Jew/Gentile Clean/Unclean divide had been abolished. Likewise under the old covenant the issue of blood was a part of this symbolism of holiness (above normality), cleaness (normality), uncleanness (abnormality). Thus after birth and their consequent flow of blood (blood loss symbolising death/abnormality, so Lv.19:11) women were to reinforce this truth by an offering symbolising their restoration to the norm. This I take to be confirmed by the like procedure after the Nazirite vow, which was obviously a matter of

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5 I use these terms to mean relationships between God (vertical) & man (horizontal), under the picture of heaven being spatially "up".
holiness, not sin. After a special Nazirite time with God ordinary people were to underline the supranormal/normal/abnormal distinction by a restoration-to-normal-status offering. Though some suggest that childbearing was deemed sinful, were they thoroughgoing they would have to conclude that the Nazirite vow was likewise sinful. Since the latter idea is absurd, likewise the former idea is equally absurd. I conclude that there are times we misunderstand or remain perplexed because insufficient care is given to the issues. Symbolism, both as regards the then & there relationships with God, & future prophetic reference, were part & parcel of much of the so-called ceremonial law (better, symbolic law). A study of the symbolism of cultus is illuminating and can be seen as not contradicting the picture of sin being at heart relational. I have constructed the following chart to highlight this view that for Israelites salvation operated on a functional, social level by mere compliance with rules & regulations, but operated also on an ontological spiritual level for those who sought God for himself.

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If care is taken in understanding a system more familiar to C20 BC than to the C20 AD, a rationale can be attempted for much of the ceremonial system of the OT. It is no great step to assume that remaining difficulties may have also fitted into such an overall rationale. As with cultus offerings, so other issues such as circumcision, Sabbath & kosher laws can be seen to have been symbolic to the then covenant people. It can be well argued that these matters too had a prophetic punch. For instance, while for them the idea of Sabbath enforced a weekly reflection on Yahweh, particularly in his rescue of them from Egypt, we can see it having also been a shadow – τοπος – of what was to be revealed (cf. Heb.3f.). Likewise in the tabernacle/temple of the OT were institutional prophecies fulfilled on a spiritual level (cf. Jhn.2:19-22). The point made by France as regards Matthew's Gospel extends far beyond the literature of Matthew and is deeply integral to the very core of the new covenant:

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6 Plato's idea of earthly things being shadows of a greater reality probed along these lines.
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Typology...may be defined as 'the recognition of a correspondence between Old and New Testament [NT] events, based on a conviction of the unchanging character of the principles of God's working, and a consequent understanding and description of the [NT] event in terms of the [OT] model' — except that 'events' is too narrow, since [OT] persons and institutions (such as the temple or the covenant) come in for the same treatment. Put simply, we are talking here about 'fulfilment' not only of [OT] predictions, but of [OT] history and religion, including events and institutions which in themselves carried no explicit reference to the future. In commenting on 5:17 we shall note the idea of the law pointing forward to Jesus, who can therefore be said to 'fulfil' it. In chapter 2 we shall see Jesus presented as a 'new Moses', among other varied typological themes, and in the same chapter he will be equated with God's 'son', Israel (see on 2:15). In 4:1-11 the whole story of the testing of Jesus is undergirded by the recognition of a correspondence between his experience and the testing of God's son Israel in the wilderness as recorded in Deuteronomy. Chapter 12 will offer a series of [OT] 'precedents' as justification for Jesus' assumption of authority over the sabbath (see on 12:3-8), focused on the explicit statement that 'something greater than the temple is here' (12:6), followed later in the chapter by the same formula applied to Jonah and Solomon (12:41-42) on the basis of an explicit prediction that Jesus was to undergo a parallel experience to that of Jonah (12:40).... These are some of the more striking examples of a conviction which runs throughout the Gospel, that as God worked in the [OT] times, so he has worked in the ministry of Jesus, and yet with a 'something greater' which makes Jesus the 'fulfilment' of the whole warp and woof of the [OT], not just of the explicit predictions of the prophets. This typology is not so much a hermeneutical technique as a theological conviction which expresses itself in Matthew's presentation of Jesus' life and teaching. Its effect is to show Jesus as the point at which all the rich diversity of God's revelations with his people in word and in deed converges; that is what 'fulfilment' means in Matthew” (France: Matthew, 10f).

It is good to recognise that intrinsically sin is not a matter of rules & regulations. Thinking otherwise leads easily to legalism or rebellion. Indeed if it were essentially a matter of legality then salvation could be deemed the province only of those who knew & obeyed — or at least sought forgiveness for disobeying — such rules. Sin has never varied, although God's will in relation to the OT has. Man's relationship to it might be diagrammed as such:

### Two Types of Law:

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<th>law (for everyone)</th>
<th>law (torah for Israel)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Christ</td>
<td>Universal moral law still valid</td>
<td>Israel-only stipulations invalid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before Christ</td>
<td>Universal moral law was valid</td>
<td>Israel-only stipulations valid</td>
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A practice of universal law would be 'if you drive, drive safely', while that of selective law would be 'if you drive in the UK, drive on the left hand side, and if you drive in the USA, drive on the right hand side'. To say that since different countries have different rules for driving there denied a universal rule would be foolish. To say that moving from the USA to
the UK should not involve changing driving patterns would be foolish. Ancient Israel had both types of law, some universal – relating to her people as to all human beings – and some covenantal – relating as lessons they needed to learn as carriers of the then ethnic covenant. The eschatological transition can be seen in the story of Peter & Cornelius referred to above (cf. also Eph.2:14ff.). Peter had presumably assumed that OT laws continued under the NT, and so needed a revelation from the one who continued to teach (Ac.1:1) that there were 1# man-specific laws and 2# Israel-specific redundant laws (Ac.10:13-16,19f.).

It might be objected that Jesus commanded obedience to the entire code of Israel: eg Mt.5:17ff.. In reply, it may be noted among other things that Paul & James opposed a Christian Circumcision party who perhaps argued the Mt.5:17ff. logion that way (Ac.15). However, it is reasonable to exegete this logion as saying that Jesus rejected the charge that he opposed Moses by claiming that he had come to fulfil (πληρώσας,πλήρεσαι: to bring to its destined end) what the OT had prophesied. This interpretation of fulfil has been brought out by such as Robert Banks. If on the contrary it is argued that Jesus’ talk of non-abolition meant the sanctity of OT law continued into the NT, then one must surely conclude that such as the abolition of kosher laws (eg Peter’s vision) was wrong.7 Taken in line with Banks, an interpretation in line with the wider NT position (eg kosher issues) is clearer. Accordingly we can say that Jesus used strong expressions of impending, not future, eschatology. For instance “until heaven and earth pass away” as an expression not of eschatology still to come but of asserting the utter strength (ie divinity) of the OT, which nothing could do away with until what it looked forward to arrived. That is, that Jesus was affirming that mere power could not destroy God’s covenant but implying his authority to conclude its authority as he under God took its baton. As for timing it may well have meant Jesus’ death rather than his arrival: ie that certain laws were prophecies about a new age instigated by Jesus’ death/resurrection, not as such his birth. Jesus’ own attitude and re-evaluation of OT commands in the light of the inbreaking kingdom removed, once the new covenant was in place, obedience from the arena of Jewish Religion (Mt.23:2f.).8 In its place he established obedience to God through himself as the key to understanding in true righteousness.

7 By this I dismiss the anachronistic distinctions of moral, civil & ceremonial law and the related idea that Jesus was asserting only a permanence of the moral law until heaven & earth pass away.
8 Israelite/Jewish religion has had many phases. It was not until some time later that ‘Judaism’ arose, built especially on the destruction of the Temple.
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I conclude that sin is defined by relational fallenness in Eden; that the OT has never shifted the emphasis to a rules based righteousness; and that neither Jesus nor the NT writers commanded a rules based righteousness. That universal moral rules are set out as right and that they can measure something of true righteousness I would not contest. Having defined sin primarily as relational fallenness rather than acts, let us consider the relationship of sin to the earlier stages of human development.

Babies & sin

Having looked at some depth at the question of whether sin is at heart relational, at birth, nay, arguably at conception, how do we initially relate to sin? Opinion has been divided. On the one hand...

Some have argued that at birth we are as untainted by sin as Jesus was at his birth and remain so unless unlike Jesus we commit sin. Adding to this, some would say that for a time we commit acts of sin before an age of accountability and so are not held accountable for them. Some have gone so far as to theoretically allow that some might mature without sinning.

On the other hand...

Some have argued that we inherit a sinful nature, serious enough for God to consign us to hell (unless we repent, are baptised, or such): a bias towards sin that inevitably leads to sins as we mature. Some have argued that whether or not we are born with a bias towards sin, we stand condemned for the sin of our original ancestor/s, even as serfs were sometimes condemned because of the sins of their federal heads or Achan's family because of Achan. Some have even suggested that we were alive at that time in seminal form, and as such actively participated in the original rebellion.

What of a neonate who dies? Should we say that it had no chance to repent of its sinfulness – even its sin in Adam – and so is damned? Or should we say that it never sinned – perhaps was never even inclined towards sin – and therefore needed not to repent of sin or sinfulness? Or perhaps follow the belief of William N Clarke that being

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9 In ethics various stages prior to birth should be looked at: eg pre-conception, stage before individuality (ie non-twinning) is assured, organ development, viability of life. Some suggest that essential human life begins at conception. Some (eg cf. Geisler: Ethics) have spoken of a gradient between potentiality to birth. Augustine suggested a point of ensoulment. Some suggest that life begins at birth. For convenience, having drawn attention to the twin issue of sin/salvation extending before birth, I shall refer to birth as the issue.

10 For convenience I subsume the individual of mature years but whose immature mentality should be rated along with the neonate/infant.
immortal but of pre-accountable age they mature in the spiritual world, conceivably able to sin "and be ruined there" (Clarke: Theology, 496)? Let us look at these ideas.

Original Sin
One generalisation: while the East reflected more on God & Christ, the West reflected more on sin and salvation (Berkhof: History, 127). Another generalisation: the East tended towards Pelagianism (before Pelagius) and the West towards Augustinianism (Berkhof: History, 128). Let us briefly consider something of this history. The East, against Gnosticism, argued that Adam was created unfallen and capable of perfection or fall. Further, that his sin consigned man to physical death but not to guilt: the body is not sinful. Man’s spirituality is always at birth like Adam’s before the fall. The vessel has become earthen but the treasure is as pure as ever. Origen argued a fallenness at birth, but postulated it as each individual having fallen prior to an ensoulment. Likewise Gregory of Nyssa. By and large the East expects each individual to play their part in seeking God’s grace to go on to perfection (divinization: theosis). More of an emphasis on help rather than rescue. The West moved a different way.

There are 4 main theories of the origin of our souls, namely...

- pre-existence (Origen)
- reincarnation (as strands of God becoming biological and channelling back to Godhead)
- creationism (each created de nova by God alone)
- traducianism.

In effect Traducianism considers the soul to be multiplied within humanity – do our personalities not reflect our human progenitors? If so, is it not that Adam’s sin has come down the human line, affecting our souls? Tertullian, representing the beginning of Latin theology, argued tradux animae, tradux peccati: ie the propagation of the soul involves the propagation of sin. A typically Western approach. Others in the West took it up and built on it. It was accepted by Augustine, with whom came a great controversy when his views and those of Pelagius’ clashed and in the clash were refined. They were both spiritual giants of different backgrounds and temperaments. And background and temperament impact on how we interact with truth. Augustine had come to faith in great agony of soul and sense of sinfulness. Pelagius seems to have had a much less traumatic entrance into faith, of good moral character from his youth. As said, Pelagius held that each individual soul was uncontaminated by Adam’s sin.
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Dismissing the ideas of pre-existence & reincarnation, let us consider the remaining two ideas as championed by Augustine & Pelegius. Together these hold in tension opinions as to sin, salvation, and the neonate.

According to Augustine, Adam

- was created \( \text{posse non peccare et mori} \) able not to sin or die;
- could become \( \text{non posse peccare et mori} \) not able to sin or die;
- did become \( \text{non posse non peccare et mori} \) not able not to sin or die.

Living before the microscope and science of genetics, Augustine (of Hippo) was able to imagine that we were biologically microcosmic people physically 'in Adam' (cf. Rm.5:12). That is, and that either 1# everyone of us historically inside Adam agreed with his choice to sin, or else 2# were simply condemned to death, even as when an individual is condemned to death every organ in their body is condemned. When asked whether this meant that infants who died had not had a chance to repent of original sin, he replied that, at least for those unbaptised (thus with original sin but without personal sins\(^{11}\)) there was an eternal destiny neither of heaven nor hell, but of mild unhappiness (Aquinas amended to full human happiness) – *limbus infantium*.

Many have commented on Rm.5:12, and a good summary has been made by Morris (cf. Morris: Romans, 228-232). It has been said that Augustine’s Latin translation was poor but his interpretation good (Bruce: Romans, 130). Indeed it has been said that his translation was good: “in whom all [people] sinned” (Turner: Morris: Romans, 230). We must beware of individualism ideology blinding us to the solidarity ethos of Paul’s day. However we need not follow Augustine slavishly. It is a difficult text, but I suggest that we take the aorist of ‘sin’, together with the emphasis on Adam (5:15,16,17,18,19), and the idea of solidarity, and put it that Paul’s point was that Adam’s was a sin so decisive (aorist) that man is locked into sin because of Adam’s sin. That is, Adam’s sin was the defining sin for mankind and has become our foundation of and for sin. "The apostle’s tremendous emphasis surely forces us to some variant of the...view, that all the race is somehow caught up in Adam’s sin" (Morris: Romans, 232). It is I think better to avoid a stronger form of Federalism, pace Grudem, namely that guilt (rather than inherited sinfulness, or sinful

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\(^{11}\) He held a sacerdotal view that certain priestly acts existed which gave benefits whatever the attitude of the person they were done towards. Some hold this division between blessed and unblessed children in a different way, for instance, that children of non-Christian parents haven’t eternal life, that those who have Christian parents have eternal life, while maybe those with a Christian and a non-Christian parent have and maybe they haven’t. This alternative view of privilege has been linked to a misunderstanding of 1 Cor.7:14. Neither children nor unbelieving spouse are granted eternal life because of the wife/mother or husband/father, but Paul meant that such a household is blessed (made holy = set aside) with an in-house evangelist, whose witness sometimes will and sometimes won’t convey salvation to their spouse/children (v16).
tendency) is imputed to man because the first man sinned as a Federal Head. As to biblical
grounds for Federalism, such as Achan's family, Saul's sons, and Israel paying for King
David's sin, I suggest that we cannot be sure – Scripture is silent – that they did not share
in the sinfulness of those indicted of the sins. Put another way, I hold it possible that...

- Achan represented a desire shared with his family (and perhaps felt by many in Israel) for
  self-enrichment in the new land at the expense of heart-obedience to Yahweh;
- that Saul's sons had with their father sought the death of the Gibeonites;
- that King David reflected a general apostatising of Israel when he calculated its
  fighting strength.

It may be questioned whether Federal Head theology is sufficiently secure to be adopted,
especially in light of texts bespeaking individualism (eg Ezk.33). Barth took it up with an
emphasis on the Second Adam supplanting the federality of the First Adam, and all being
elected in Christ.

Augustine suggested that our wills were incapable of spiritual good though capable of
social good. Though incongruously he argued that initial grace could be meted out by the
church via sacraments, arguably he was more committed to the idea that initially God had
to give to those he chose the gift of faith to receive eternal life. He took predestination to
mean God's choice not based on man's spiritual inclinations, not simply as God
foreknowing who would seek him. That is, that God sought all & only those who would
consequently seek him, not simply responding to those who would seek him. It was not so
much that God chose to save some & damn some, so much as God (positively) choosing to
save some and (negatively) choosing not to save the others. And that finally, all he chooses
are saved, even if for a while they backslide. Unregenerate man's will was in total spiritual
bondage. Escape from sin was a monergistic operation of God. Thus we are born guilty
of sinning in Adam. *Augustine has the distinction of being the first theologian to teach positively the damnation of all unbaptized infants* (Sanders: Name, 291).

Meanwhile the British theologian & possible monk Pelagius (and more radically by his disciple
Celestius) took the line that infants are born, as Adam was created, without any trace of sin.
They rejected traducianism. According they held that infants don't need to choose
salvation, for they don't need it. Thus, as Celestius argued, infant baptism – as remission
of sins - was an error. Rm.5:12ff. was taken as exclusive to those grown out of infancy.

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12 This can be called prevenient grace. However for clarity it should be said that one can hold the idea of eschatological
prevenient grace without holding the idea of existential prevenient grace. The former is God’s initiative is putting in place the
offer of salvation. The latter is that God starts the salvation process in all who can - or shall (= irresistible grace) - be saved.
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Sin had spoilt the world system and in reply God had clarified the moral requirements through the scriptures. In effect Pelagius argued that people became tainted by the sin tainted world: it was so seductive. But nevertheless that all had the moral law before them and God’s help to overcome sin and live righteously. But does this mean that everyone can grow up like Adam, without a bias to sin and without sin? If so, then is the cross required by everyone of, say, adult age? It would be remarkable, if having no sin bias, everyone did in fact take the path of sin. Such an absolute turning to sin from an absolute sin-free start (as Adam) would either indicate a problem in the creation of Adam or that God had to ensure that man takes the path of sin in order to be taken to greater heights than unfallen Adamhood could reach. It would also seem to put the Second Adam (born as Adam unfallen and never sinning) on a completely different playing field, with questionable entitlement to the designation of Second Adam. These were some of the problems with Pelegianism and were pondered. As such it "was finally condemned in 431 at the Council of Ephesus" (B L Shelley: Elwell: Dictionary, 834). 13

A via media position arose: semi-Pelegianism. 14 Accordingly, man’s nature was weakened, not totally overcome, by Adam’s sin. Man still had the ability to choose spiritual good and so can happily co-operate with God. Individuals were responsible for setting the ball of faith rolling, not God’s prevenient grace. Grace follows & supports human choice for God. After all, if Augustine was right about election and the perseverance of saints, why preach the gospel and why enter into the monastic life with its spiritual disciplines?

With a greater bias towards Augustine, a semi-Augustinianism (or Modified Augustiniansim) developed. The Second Council of Orange (529) rejected semi-Pelegianism and adopted semi-Augustinianism. In 531 confirmation by Pope Boniface 2nd upheld the Council’s position and it became the accepted position for the medieval church. It largely followed Augustine on sin (bondage of the will) and grace (existentially prevenient & irresistible) though downplayed his thoughts on God passing by the nonelect (preterition) and thus of God giving them over to reprobation (damnation/lostness): double predestinationism was rejected. 15 However it used the idea of irresistible grace in a sacramental way via baptism.

But "gradually the general decline in the Roman Catholic Church led to a drift in the direction of Semi-Pelegianism, which had long before

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13 As with all such councils, we should neither hold them faultless nor hastily dismiss them.
14 Some would rather call it semi-Augustinianism. As a position closer to Augustine’s was accepted I think it better to call the successful view semi-Augustinianism and the other semi-Pelegianism for clarity.
15 In the C16 John Calvin argued for reprobation but against preterition, arguing that God did not simply pass by but actively hardened the hearts of the nonelect, even as he had hardened the heart of Pharaoh and rejected Esau.
secured a rather sure footing in the East. In course of time the Latin Church adopted the anthropology of the Greek Church and adhered to it ever since" (Berkhof: History, 138f.).

Put in broad brushes, the two positions on those who die infants can be viewed thus...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Original sin?</th>
<th>Personal sins?</th>
<th>Destination at death?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Augustinianism</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>Heaven if baptised, else limbus infantium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelagianism</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Heaven</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It may be asked whether the biblical evidence favours the idea of being born sinful (original/inherited sin) or not. There is often a sense of it being unfair to say that because of one individual we are born sinful – we were not consulted. On the other hand biology teaches that we are what we are because of our lineage: genes are inherited. So there is a biological principle of being effected without consultation. Of course this does not prove that there is a corresponding spiritual principle, but we should perhaps simply face it that certain things happen to us because of others. If so spiritually, we can at least hold in balance that God has provided a way of rectification. A way, I shall argue, that we can chose the path Adam rejected and that babies are catered for redemptively.

The OT began in glory but soon touched on sin. Of 2 of the first sons, one was accounted righteous (Abel) & one unrighteous (Cain). There is not perhaps sufficient contextual data to say that Abel was born without a sin bias, or that he overcame (or was lifted from) it. However Genesis is full of the problem of sin, even to picturing a world completely purged of man in order that man might have afresh start (Noah, a preacher of righteousness). Even so his imperfection soon show up. Sin was not purged from mankind. The history of election from Abrami/Abraham shows sin still in the system, even though it is a history of salvation (heilsgeschichte). Israel was wayward, and if this can be said of Israel what could be said of those who were not God’s chosen people? History is replete with bloody massacres both before and after the birth of Christ. Within Israel a cultus was put into place which aimed to bring daily atonement. This evidences the pervasiveness of sin, but not its direct route, whether nature or nurture. In Psalms we read the concept that sinfulness is with us from birth, nay, from conception (Ps.51:5; 58:3). It may be argued that poetry is at work, with ‘conception’ & ‘birth’ being parallelism. It could then be argued that what the psalmist/s meant prosaically was that as far as he could recall he – and indeed the wicked – had know the ways of sin. But if we cannot be sure that the psalmist/s meant the former, neither can we be sure he/they meant the latter. Provisionally therefore the texts should
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be taken as possible witness to an OT view of sinfulness at birth. Some have taken Ps.51:5 as indicating a sinfulness of birth. However it has already been shown that the Nazirite Vow and the act of birth were on the same cultic setting. There is no evidence that Israel ever conceived of the act of birth as sinful. The very setting of Ps.51 majors on the psalmist's own sin, and it would not be out of character for the people to have held that they were born sinful. There seems to have been the belief that human life began at conception. Various texts could be looked at on this head: eg Ex.21:22 (of debated translation); Ps.139; Jr.1:5. However the OT is steeped in a poetic tradition, unlike the NT, and it is well to turn to the NT for a more assuredly prosaic approach. Biblically, are we born sinful? The OT seems to strongly imply it.

In line with the history of Israel & the nations, it may be said that many a NT passage speaks of man's sinfulness, but in such a way that it does not specify whether infancy is included. However, the very universality of the passages is conducive to the idea that there is a sinful bias at birth, else why is it that \textit{de facto} adult man is uniformly sinful? Further, Paul (or, some would say, one like unto Paul) taught that prior to conversion we were all children of wrath by the fact of our nature (Eph.2:3) – and nature begins at conception. Also from a Pauline position, in his attack on Abelard's subjective idea of redemption, Bernard of Clairvaux argued tongue in cheek that Christ's death no more makes us saints than Adam's sin makes us sinners! In other words, he argued, the fact that our identity with Adam makes us sinners and shows an objective fall of man, so our identity with the Second Adam makes us saints and shows an objective atonement. I think his point well made from Paul's \textit{Adam} teaching and conclude for now that the Bible strongly suggests that there is universality of sin because of birth being in Adam's line.

\textit{Temptation}^{16} \textit{and sin}

Punishment up to and including everlasting banishment from God (the latter denied by some and considered later) may or may not be based on born sinfulness. There is certainly individual temptation in life, which traditionally is deemed to begin around an age of accountability. I propose to argue that it begins much earlier. But for now let us look at the issue of personal temptation.

A working definition of temptation is something which requires a choice either 1\# to deviate from God or 2\# to pay the price and reinforce loyalty to him. It is one of the trials\textsuperscript{17} which,

\textsuperscript{16} The Greek word πειρασμός usually means 'test/trial' – context decides each intended meaning.

\textsuperscript{17} Eg 1 Ths.2:17-3:13 speaks of trials of persecutions which Satan (keeping Paul away) sought to use.
although God does not bring about (Jas.1:13f.), is to be accepted with joy (Jas.1:2f.) if it comes in spite of our desire (Mt.6:13 &/i). Temptation may also come to us because we wish it. Evil desire plus temptation leads to sin leads to death (Jas.1:13-15). God does not wish us to sin, for as pointed out, sin is at heart relational failure: those who sin wander away from the truth (Jas.5:19f.). Sin produces as it were a toxin that eventually kills, whereas God's "good and perfect gifts" produce life (Jas.1:12-18). Even as Genesis presented, so the NT shows a relationship between temptation and a supreme tempter (cf. 1 Ths.3:5; 1 Ths.2:18), to whom our 'worldly/cosmic' nature is inclined (cf. Jas.1:14). But temptation does not enforce compliance. Thus punishment of sins – as distinct from sinfulness – is a just response to the individual who has sinned. For the believer ways to overcome temptation include...

1. knowing that we can be tested and that God seeks to bless us through these tests (1 Pt.1:15f.);
2. avoiding foolishly seeking temptation or getting in its way: there is for example much on the media which erodes moral fibre, both pornographic scenes and ideas, and ungodly philosophies such as consumer materialism;
3. sometimes simply crying 'help' (1 Cor.10:13);
4. preparing well during the easier times (Eph.6:10-18) by living righteously with the Spirit and with others (Gal.5:16ff.).

**The punishment of sin**

There have been generations who have thought that forgiveness and God don't mix, because God is just. Our anthropocentric society has more the idea that punishment and God don't mix, because God is love. The trouble with anthropocentric (man orbiting) Christianity is that man is in a fallen state and of shoddy judgement. Sadly much Christianity today is anthropocentric, seeking to adapt Christian standards to society rather than seeking to adapt society to theocentric (God orbiting) standards. Thus for example sexual debates in general are often non-biblical, treating Scripture as if it were outdated. Sometimes man's view is for a while close to truth on any given topic, but our beliefs should never be grounded on the shifting sands of human ideas. Punishment & forgiveness do mix: God is love & he is just. God is graciousness but does not ignore sin. Rather he qualifies justice, redeeming where possible. Many a justly condemned house can be saved: with people it needs the acceptance of help, an acceptance not always given. God doesn't like punishing, but there are times when it needs to be done,
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especially for the sake of the one punished. Even as punishment comes as discipline within families, so there is discipline of family members in God’s family (eg Heb.12:7). Such can involve suffering, which may have a salvation (salvific) value (eg 1 Cor.5:5; 2 Tm.2:3,6). There is also the punishment of being excluded from God’s family (1 Cor.15:22). In this sense punishment is simply allowing the members of one family to remain members of that family, even when it is composed of members who are dying inwardly, collapsing into hellish selfishness & mutual hostility. The offer of adoption has been made, and not to accept is a form of self-inflicted punishment. Scripture makes clear that (put pictorially) these two family lines exist, and that they are not based on blood. For instance though obviously not denying the physical line from Abraham, Jesus insisted that in God’s sight what made people really related to Abraham – that paradigm of faith – was welcome of himself (Jhn.8:39-44). Paul likewise (Rm.4:11f.; 8:15). Peter took a similar line regarding wifely obedience (1 Pt.3:6) even of Christian wives to non-Christian husbands.

As said, according to C S Lewis “judgement consists of the very fact that [people] prefer darkness to light....Death removes [the] last contact. [They have their] wish — to live wholly in the self and to make of it what [they] find there. And what [they] find there is Hell....In the long run the answer to all those who object to the doctrine of hell is itself a question: “What are you asking God to do?” To wipe out their past sins and, at all costs, to give them a fresh start, smoothing every difficulty and offering them every miraculous help? But He has done so, on Calvary. To forgive them? They will not be forgiven. To leave them alone? Alas, I am afraid that is what He does....I believe that the damned are, in one sense, successful, rebels to the end; that the doors of hell are locked on the inside” (Lewis: Pain, 111-115; Jhn.3:19; 12:48).

The rewards of righteousness

On the reverse side of punishment is reward, a concept also abused by some: “why should he get a sweet for being good?”. Steve H Travis: “heaven is not the reward for being a Christian any more than marriage is a reward for being engaged” (Themelios, 11.2.55 (1986)). Scripture talks of God’s graciousness – or simply grace – and also talks of his rewarding right attitude (which is seen by actions). Christians are pictured in various ways, and a point to note is that in whatever picture used the relationship is that rewards match the activity: fishermen look for fish; athletes for wreaths – farmers seek the reward of crops, not wreaths (eg Mt.25:14ff.; 2 Tm.2:3-7). The point is that in the age-to-come our reward will be getting what we seek. As someone has said, the pure in heart shall see God, for only the pure in heart shall want to see him.

It is easy to live in the suggestion that righteous living is best lived because it pays us back, if not in this life in the next. I take issue with Grudem, who argued that a better

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18 Also simply as just deserts, one deserves to be punished even as at times one deserves to be rewarded. If it is unfair to exempt one from reward it is also unfair to exempt one from punishment. There is also punishment which society needs to impose for its own preservation from evil, at times an ‘an eye for an eye’ response (Ex.21:23-25/Lv.24:20/Dt.19:21; Mt.5:39). Society must punish to deter, correct & rebuke.
sense of reward leads to better spiritual & moral life because "our heartfelt seeking of future heavenly reward would motivate us to work wholeheartedly for the Lord" (Grudem: Theology, 1145). Admittedly, some scriptures also seem to say this, but the higher teaching is I think that our motivation ought to be seeking to please God, though he slay us. I think a better way of understanding heavenly reward is available, namely one of consonance. The connoisseur of, say, wine, becomes such through determination & commitment and as such can appreciate the tastes of wine. Similarly through determination & commitment to seeking first God's kingdom & to living aright, we may expect to have – with God's help – more Christlikeness, to better appreciate heaven & the relationship we shall have with God. In this sense the reward is becoming in the here & now better enjoyers of eternal life which has begun now, rather than some external prize given to us after we have died. Thus the reward is self-built as we put it to one side in seeking to please God rather than ourselves. We ought I think avoid the suggestion that heaven is merited or earned by ourselves, and consider the strong teaching of grace.

**Grace: its intentions and methodology**

As F F Bruce once commented, there is much grace in the OT and much law in the NT: both are relational matters. While grace didn't arrive with Jesus, it did come especially with him (Jhn.1:17). Indeed Carson translated as "grace instead of grace". If correct, this would be a contrast between the grace which established the Sinaitic Covenant mediated by Moses and its replacement, the Yeshuic Covenant mediated by Jesus (cf. Carson: John, 132). The replacement motif is strong in John's Gospel. Rather than picturing law to grace as dark opposed to light, we should rather picture it as preparatory dawn light awaiting the noon of Christ. The old Mosaic covenant with its regulations for a righteous, good & pleasant life, was a foreshadowing of the reality of individual covenant relationship established by Jesus, the superseder of Moses, God himself with us (Jhn.1:14; Heb.3:5f.).

With puny Israel Yahweh took a step of gracious election (Dt.7:7f. & the subsequent redemptive theme, eg Mic.5:2). Moving from grace into commitment, Yahweh developed the people into nationhood, even though sin (which brought punishment) often came into play. To play a sin/grace game is naive (Rm.6:1,15), for sin has a price tag and grace has a purpose: why, argued Paul, pay the one and fail to enjoy the other? Grace is not confined to becoming a Christian. Our fullness of salvation is inside God's house: grace says 'come in' and faith

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19 A very strong point in the OT.
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prompts us to go in. The environment which grace established for Israel — shalom/peace — is what grace still seeks to bring about: “we have been justified through faith, [and] we have peace with God through our lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand” (Rm.5:1f.,17).

There are two basic levels of grace: (Mt.5:44f.; 1 Tm.4:10). One is called Common Grace, and relates to God being kind to all. The other is Special Grace, which relates to those who enter his family. The main thought of special grace embraces errant & needy members of his family. All good gifts come from him, and include lifting up the fallen who look to him and enriching those who seek simply his generosity: spiritually man lives by every word which God speaks, and without such the spiritual person does not really live. God is good to all mankind and in a special way to those who have given welcome to him.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, hanged by the Gestapo in 1945, rightly ridiculed the idea of ‘cheap grace’. This is true both from the cost to God (1 Pt.1:18ff.) and the response required from man. Like Bonhoeffer we are to commit ourselves to God’s service as he seeks at whatever cost to himself to save those who are lost. We are to sink ourselves into God’s heart, and then with him love the world more than our own lives. Grace also demands that we undergo a thorough change of heart & mind, becoming evermore like Jesus (Rm.8:29), a change which involves working as he worked as well as worshipping as he worshipped. The cost to God it was beyond our full comprehension. One redemption picture was Jesus as God’s lamb (Jhn.1:29). This was said to people raised on the OT and was suggestive to them. A proper path of interpretation is to try and hear the speaker in their own terms, which here means hearing the Baptist speaking in OT terms. However following this path shows that no clear OT text adequately covers what God’s lamb was to be. Probably John himself didn’t fully understand what God was meaning (cf. Lk.7:20 with Mt.16:17 to 16:22; 1 Pt.1:10-12).21 Indeed there seems to me a definite indication that prophecy was often more profound than the prophets understood (cf. Jhn.11:49-52). Interpretations, often loosely related to lamb (a!lvoc;/amnos), include:

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20 "The theology of the NT revelation is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God....In every activity of each of these three "persons" of Deity it is always the one-and-the-same God who acts; the NT principle was subsequently formulated...by means of the formula: opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa [ie the works of the Trinity are entirely undivided.] That is to say, the personæ [ie persons] must not be rigidly separated from one another and identified with particular divine functions (eg creating, redeeming, sanctifying), for all the personæ act in every divine work" (Richardson: Theology, 123). While I do not argue the point here, I have studied the idea that each member has played a salvific & costly rôle in our redemption.

21 Similarly Peter spoke with prophetic insight but didn’t understand the implications (Mt.16:16,22f.).
Individually none of these interpretations fully cover the data. They do not cover the idea of removing sin nor cover the world-wide implications, and/or limit the idea of removing sins to lambs, though Is.53 might seem nearest if one text must be sought. However we can perhaps gain a clearer idea of the cost of grace if we pick up themes presented by these lamb passages. John used απολαλάθη, which usually meant ‘take away’ without reference to sin, and an apocalyptic idea was probably in mind. After all, contextually he was warning his people of being on the wrong side of God’s impending judgement (Mt.3:7//Lk.3:7) and in danger of a baptism of fire. Perhaps, similar to Jesus’ preferred self-designation (ie son of man), God’s lamb was meant to present a puzzle over its exact meaning (cf. Jhn.12:34) until clarified by events (cf. Jhn.2:22). If so hindsight has enabled us to understand John’s prophetic message better than he himself did. Looking further afield, Jesus linked his death to the Passover (Mk.14:22-25) and 1 Pt.2:24 linked it to the cultus offering of Leviticus. And probably there is also a strand from God’s ram to Abraham woven into the weave of Jesus God’s lamb (Jhn.3:16; Heb.11:17 – ‘special son’ – μονογενής) – certainly the idea of God’s choice is clear. The Baptist was perhaps limited in his interpretation as to what ‘God’s lamb’ meant, imaging more one who would

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22 These standard cultus offerings used lambs (or sheep/rams) as a lesser offering.
23 These standard cultus offerings used lambs (or sheep/rams) as a lesser offering.
24 These standard cultus offerings used lambs (or sheep/rams) as a lesser offering.
25 Such images were used by such as Dan.8 and were typical Jewish symbolism in the times leading up to Jesus.
26 The natural word meaning to take away sin was αναλαθή.
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purify Israel and perhaps focus evangelism to the nations around a purified cultus. Hence his later question as to whether Jesus himself was but a forerunner (Mt.11:2f.). In the fulfilment of Levitical soteriology the lamb has been slain, as Hebrews is a strong witness to. The cost to the Father as giver of the Son and to the Son as given has been great. This cost of grace must always be borne in mind when looking at the doctrines of sin & salvation.

But why did Jesus die? Abelard suggested it was a demonstration of love. Many have said that it was an unfortunate event Jesus had not intended. On a sociological level his challenge was too radical for Jewish leadership. He claimed that he ‘was the Messiah; and when Pilate heard him accused by the most highly respected men among us, he condemned him to be crucified’ (Josephus, Antiquities, 18.3.3: Drane: NT, 77). The NT also shows this (eg Jhn.11:50,54). But his death was pro-active, not re-active. It was planned by the Father (Ac.2:23) and, the Son being no forced agent, by the Son (Eph.2:15.B). Jesus understood the plan (Mt.16:21//s). Still, ‘why did Jesus die? Of all questions we can ask about Jesus, perhaps no other can be answered in so many different ways’ (Drane: NT, 77). Some pictures are given to help us begin to grasp the ‘why’, and ‘the theology of the New Testament is more like a landscape than a portrait. Just as a landscape is made up of any number of different items, so the New Testament’s explanation of Jesus’ death is made up of many different images’ (Drane: NT, 83), and these images are creative tools to convey vivid & life changing impressions to us. As with parables, they have a main point, and to pick up their differences and negative sides is to miss the truth that God wishes to get to us children. All the biblical pictures need to be prefixed with “the death of Jesus was like...” in order to see what was intended. The chart below shows a range of approaches...

| It was like... | Jesus loved us even more than his life & happiness. | Jhn.13:1 – this ‘subjective’ view is linked to Peter Abelard (1079-1142). It underplays the cross and vicarious atonement, yet makes a positive message. Sadly it presents salvation simply as us turning to God in response to such love, downplaying the ‘objective’ need of Christ as a sin offering (2 Cor.5:21) and ignoring OT patterns such as the Levitical atonement offerings. |
| It was like... | A fight between Jesus & Satan. The victor can free us. | Heb.2:14f.; Jhn.12:31 – but why do Satan & Death still have freedom to act? The French theologian Oscar Cullmann suggested that the cross was like the decisive day (D-Day), but though the outcome is now assured, there awaits a victory day (V-Day). 1 Cor.15:22-28 |

27 Although much suffering in itself is not seen as redemptive, redemption is often through suffering.
Jesus pioneered the way of salvation. Heb.2:14f.; 5:7-10 – C S Lewis (Lewis: Christianity, 1.4) said that man had enthroned selfishness in rebellion to God, and that the only way God could guide us back was to start afresh as man and humanly walk a way of selflessness, learning humanity from our point of view (though without sin/rebellion). Thus God was enabled to rescue those tied to the selfishness of the Adamic humanity.

Somehow offering up one that hadn't offended was sufficient for God to overlook our offences. Lv.17:11 – this was foreshadowed by Levitical practices, which taught the deadliness of sin and a method of being cleansed from it. Generally such used blood to symbolise cleansing from sin (atonement), though the poor might substitute cereal (Lv.5:11). Atonement in an anticipatory sense (Lv.5:12f.; 4:26), socially permitting the sincere and insincere offerers to remain in Israel, but only confirmed spiritually to the OT sincere by Christ's subsequent death (Heb.10:3).

A temple-paid ransom to free us (payment transfer). Mk.10:45 – this was seen in terms of slavery (Guthrie: Theology, 440f.). “In the Roman world, the slave and the person who was going to pay the ransom went into the shrine of their local god, and in a religious ceremony the price was paid to the slave's owner. Legally, this ceremony meant that the slave had been bought by the god, and so could no longer be owned by another person” (Drane: NT, 89). With Jesus it became a reality (1 Pt.1:18f.; 1 Cor.6:19f.).

Condemnation in our place. 1 Pt.3:18 – taking our rap. Eternal condemnation (sentence of doom) isn’t for Christians (κατακρίμα/katakrima).29 Drane rejected the law court punishment idea (though perhaps a part of the NT landscape) in favour of a family sufferer idea: of Christ “suffering in the way that a person suffers for the wrongdoing of a member of his family” (Drane: NT, 90). But even this does not blot out the sin of the offending member.

None of these pictures explain fully why Jesus died, but we can see that God...

- has suffered with us & for us: "The cross shows us that, even if God does not remove the suffering that followed human sin and is now so inherent in life, he certainly shares it with us. God was not a harsh judge passing an unreasonable sentence on the innocent Jesus. God himself was actually sharing in the cross the final and extreme consequence of our sinfulness" (Drane: NT, 90f.);

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28 Ransoms were paid to owners. Origen (c.185-c.254) taught that Jesus gave himself to Satan and then broke free by divine power (barter/battle). However the ransom metaphor was perhaps simply intended to say that deliverance from slavery (the primary idea) was worked out by Jesus at cost to himself (the secondary idea).

29 Thrice in Scripture: Rm.5:16.18 & 8.1. This point is the release in Christ Jesus from the eternal condemnatory sentence. The KJV includes a later addition ('who walk...after the Spirit'), thinking that otherwise Paul was teaching that Christians can sin without God's condemnation in this life.
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• that sin was insurmountable by human action and could not redemptively be overlooked by God: he had to deal with it. And the way to do it was the death of Jesus.

We can focus in on the question of the mechanics. Specifically, was redemption only possible by means of the cross? We can again underline the fact of grace: God was not forced to redeem, if by forced we mean **forced** by someone or something external to himself the answer must be no: because God is creator and all else is created, surely nothing created can force the creator. If we mean that which is internal – his own nature – forced him against some other aspect of his being then we suppose an inner conflict was/is within God. To talk as if his nature of love forces him can sound as if we picture love as a separate thing stronger than God and pictures love as the motivation to a reluctant god! There are not two powers – God & love, for God is love. We should also avoid speaking as if he were in two (or more) conflicting ‘minds’ (eg prudence vs love), as if he were in two minds about anything. Yet if we mean simply that God acts according to his nature (being true to himself) we are probably correct. He who is love loved fallen man enough to pay an eternal price. This price involved the cross but was unforced. There are two views appertaining to the mechanics of the cross, thus...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The hypothetical necessity view</th>
<th>According to this view God would have been able to provide other ways for salvation, but chose the cross.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The consequent necessity view</td>
<td>According to this view God could only provide the way of salvation by the cross.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30 Even as the word ‘Adam’ can mean either 1# the personal name of the male or 2# him & Eve together (Gen.5:2), so the term ‘God’ can mean either 1# the Father or 2# the trinity, and 3# very occasionally of Jesus being God. In this section God the trinity is meant.

31 Three explanations of why God saved us may be put as:
- **Compulsion:** That he is forced to suggests a stronger power than he.
- **Choice:** That he chose suggests that he weighed up fors and againsts. This is a nice idea and teaches us certain things, but I am no longer persuaded by it: I cannot hold that God ever has to ‘make his mind up’, and ‘what ifs’ strike me as alien to him.
- **Consonance** (fittingness): That simply he does what he is: God so loved that he gave: God is love. The one who is the noun is naturally the action, a ‘natural’ lover & saviour.

32 This was the view of Thomas Aquinas.

33 The second view (‘the cross or nothing’) seems to me to highlight the ingredients of the atonement. The cross showed 1# the universality of salvation, since both Jews & Gentiles (Romans) were involved; 2# the high cost to the innocent (ie death) on behalf of the guilty, and 3# the identification of the guilty with the substitute (eg Rm.6:11). (Presumably if crosses hadn’t been invented by man God would not have used that particular instrument.) These things are good to note yet tend to be overlooked by the first view, because the first view is so wide. One the other hand, precisely because it is so wide (‘by some way save some’), view 1 seems to me to direct our attention towards transcendent issues: eg God’s wisdom and goodness (ie in love he took the best of alternative ways). It highlights the idea of options (and even the fact that salvation itself was not compulsory).
There are some imaginary problems to the hypothetical necessity view which raise hackles. In itself it does not mean that 1# the cross was a random choice or event, nor 2# that if any other way were available he would have taken another way. If we take it that there were easier and harder options, we may place the way of the cross as being the easiest option to contain all the necessary ingredients for a full salvation, nothing skimped. That we too had a price to pay as recipients of the cross is underlined by the words for cross & death being used existentially. Consider the following chart....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref.</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1#</td>
<td>Gal.5:24</td>
<td>We have decisively crucified our former nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2#</td>
<td>Rm.6:6</td>
<td>Our former nature has been decisively crucified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3#</td>
<td>Gal.2:20/6:14</td>
<td>Living as having been crucified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4#</td>
<td>Col.3:5</td>
<td>To decisively part from the former nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5#</td>
<td>Rm.8:13</td>
<td>An ongoing putting to death.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Something like this may be constructed from this data: our acceptance of Christ was our initial decision which crucified the life we had lived (1#), and God for his part cut us off from it (2#). Subsequently the life we live in Christ is based on the result of this crucifixion (3#), yet the former life seeks to get back into dominance. We oughtn't give it an inch (4#), and this decision needs to be renewed daily (5#). Thus is underlined the fact the grace is not cheap for us. It is not bought but it carries obligations.

The symbolism of the cross is mediated through the rite of water baptism, but what part does water baptism play in the act of redemption? This has been a large area of dogmatism over the ages. However I shall shorten its coverage here.

Looking back it has been suggested that the early church, in attacking Gnosticism by developing the three-fold trident of creed, clergy & council, laid its own road of spiritual ignorance. The idea of clergy as distinct from the people (laos) of God, alone authorised to certain 'mysteries' (sacramentum) and sacramentum becoming spiritual grace via human priests to lay Christians, with clergy holding the keys of becoming a Christian, bestowing
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the gift even on babies of 'Christians' and the like. In short a case of superstition can be levelled at the idea of sacramentalism per se. I stand with Barth and conclude that biblically water baptism has no sacramental significance and that "its meaning is to be sought in its character as a true and genuine act human action which responds to the divine word and act" (cf. Barth: Fragments, 128-130).

As covenants had third party witnesses which either party could get back to – even a visual reminder could do (cf. Gen.31:51f.) – so, I suggest, baptism is to us a witness, a reminder, of the basic issues involved. It is certainly biblical that Christians ought to be baptised, and was so in the primitive church. Yet was it essential for salvation or simply important enough to be commanded by God. Peter preached it (Ac.2:38), yet Paul preached without baptising (1 Cor.1:17). Yet Peter's line was that those challenged turn to God through Christ and identify with Christ in baptism – this was on (ἐπί) the authority (name) of Jesus – and was with "with reference to" (a justifiable reading of the Gk. εἰς) the forgiveness of sins (Ac.2:38). It was not that one couldn't be forgiven without baptism (an alien yet early idea within the church) but that it wasn't imagined that any could turn to Jesus but turn away from being baptised. Paul's line was that the importance was being baptised (he baptised some), not who did the baptising (he didn't need to baptise all). From a minority Roman Catholic position Hans Küng argued that any Christian is authorised to baptise, each being a believer-priest.

There are texts which can seem to make baptism imperative for salvation, such as Mk.16:16.35 This link of baptism/belief/salvation is unusual & uncharacteristic and may or may not reflect Mark's writing & Jesus' teaching: its textual status is debated. But even taken as it stands, "Jesus then goes on to say that the basis for condemnation is unbelief, not lack of baptism, and hence baptism does not...have saving power" (White: Controvery, 257). There is also a certain linkage to the idea of the Sinaitic Covenant's rite of circumcision that signed boys36 as community members from infancy. I have not been persuaded that any account of NT household baptism has 1# been based on other than each individual's faith and 2# clearly identified infants as baptismal candidates. For example the jailer mentioned by Luke (Ac.16) was probably a retired soldier who worshipped Mithras. Retired soldiers were often given jail duties and Mithras was the patron god of soldiers. Why did Paul underline the message as including

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35 Mk.16:9-20 may have been written after the rest of Mark either by Mark or by another. Brevard Childs suggested that it wasn't by Mark but was still inspired by the Spirit for subsequent generations.

36 Girls were also deemed members of the covenant community but without circumcision. It seems to me reasonable to conclude that the rite was therefore an exact parallel for Christian baptism. There are indeed various distinctions between the two rites.
Steve H Hakes

women & children? Probably to contra-distinguish his message from Mithraism, it having been a men-only religion. This probable picture of the jailer's age & rationale of Paul's words would probably rule out infants. Be that as it may,

- no text explicitly rules in children;
- there is no exact parallel to OT circumcision exact;
- there is no text necessarily promising eternal life to children of believers.\(^37\)

**Relationship with God**

A number of approaches can be made to build up the picture of what God has provided in the salvation package. A no one picture does justice to the spiritual reality, I think it good to look at at least 2 biblical pictures, and have chosen a forensic one (*justification*) and a family one (*adoption*).

**Justification**

While some say that justification means *Just-as-if-I-had-never-sinned* this is misleading in that we have sinned and God's lamb stands as if slain because we have. A great penalty stands paid and we stand in great need of reorientation, fighting back from the brink of fallen nature, winning some battles, losing some.\(^38\) The word is also translated as *righteousness*. The NT\(^39\) teaching means to declare – rather than make – in right standing ('righteous'), and is a court type term (ie forensic): our legal standing is clear. It is supplemental to other aspects of the new creation act. We are declared what we have become by God's intervention,\(^40\) justified once & for all time.\(^41\) Thus there is no condemnation for us (Rm.8:1),\(^42\) although at times we may rightly be & feel condemned over sins – a guilt complex befits the guilty even if they are Christians. Thus justification/

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\(^37\) As for 1 Cor.7:14, it's about the environment of opportunity (holy surround) that children – and unbelieving spouses – have: it doesn't remove one's need to be born anew and doesn't give 'baptised' children a covenant sign unfairly lacking by unbaptised children. The early church preferred baptism at the very last minute of life before it preferred baptism at the very first minute of life: its premises are surely debatable. With such a volte-face should we put great reliance on it? Did it mature from an earlier error, drift from an earlier truth, or are simply both earlier & later positions based on a common error?

\(^38\) We have an itch to Sunday School words. In English the *just-as-if...* looks a little like *justification* but the similarity cannot be pressed back to the Bible - the Greek for it (*δικαιοσύνη*/*dikaiosune*) doesn't allow such word play, and word play is only justified where it has biblical justification. In contrast the English atonement as *at-one-ment* isn't wordplay and was constructed from the expression at-one-ment and does reflect the biblical idea.

\(^39\) The OT idea was more of faithful to a particular relationship, and "for Israel, the supremely important relationship was with Yahweh" (Martens: Plot and Purpose, 255), an meaning which comes at times into the NT.

\(^40\) "The justified sinner is one whose sin has been dealt with so that it no longer exists" (Morris: Romans, 147).

\(^41\) This may be challenged by the question of apostasy (cf. Heb.6 & 10).

\(^42\) In the NT *κομβόλογος/katakrima* is unique to Rm.5:16,18; & Rm.8:1. In the former its meaning is of eternal condemnation, and likewise this meaning is to be taken from its use in 8:1.
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righteousness may be contrasted to forgiveness, which seems very much ongoing in terms of *fellowship*, rather than eternal sonship which is not in dispute. It is a welcome judgement which follows our acceptance of Christ (Ac.13:39; Rm.1:11; 3:28; 10:4; Gal.2:16; 3:11), and opens one up to the benefits of right standing and to none of the disadvantages of wrong standing (Rm.8:31ff.).

It has been and still is a controversial term. In the Second Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC 2) it was accepted that Protestantism and Roman Catholicism had always agreed that salvation was graciously from God and not based on man's merit. Much confusion had arisen between these camps by using the term *justification* in different ways. Protestants had argued that justification was received purely by God's grace, by which they meant that justification (God's pronouncement of Not Guilty) wasn't earned by man's goodness. However Roman Catholics had argued that justification was co-dependent on man's efforts, by which they had meant that justification (the person becoming Guiltless) was based on God helping the Christian to purify themselves from sin. Protestants had misinterpreted Roman Catholics as meaning that merit bought eternal life. Roman Catholics had misinterpreted Protestants as meaning that Christians weren't obliged to bother with moral purity. This said it wasn't always a disagreement based on misunderstanding the other, and there was real disagreement based on rightly understanding the other! For instance Luther likened righteousness as legally covering us like a hen covers her chicks, and thus held it never to become a part of us, whereas the Council of Trent (1546-7) argued that God put his righteousness within us to an extent that we became perfect. Confusingly for some it also maintained the ideas of penance & purgatory, arguably redundant for people made perfect in God's righteousness. There was also a strong distinction of whether one could be assured of salvation (Luther) or simply have a reasonable hope (Trent), and the Franciscans argued that while good works didn't buy salvation, they obliged God to give it (congruous merit).\(^43\) Biblically, *justification* effectively can mean that a seat at heaven's table has one's name plate on it.

\(^{43}\) Incidentally the currently popular St. Francis "prayer for peace" can suggest giving based on selfish seeking of return/reward (volâ Prosperity Gospel) – "for...in giving...we receive; in pardoning...we are pardoned". Doubtless Francis' sacrificial life negates any charge of worldly selfishness in giving, and pardoning might be construed as proverbial wisdom vis-à-vis man, however his "giving/pardoning" linked to "in dying...we are born to eternal life" probably indicates his belief that a life of poverty, pardoning & submission to God were all based on the idea of salvation as response to congruous merit. "Some [Roman Catholic] theologians, especially Franciscans, argued that an individual could do certain things (such as performing good works) which made it 'appropriate' [congruous morally, not legally] for God to justify [people]" (Alister McGrath: Themelios, 13.2.46 (1988)). Of course in human interrelationships some things are moral obligations but not legal obligations.
Adoption

A much warmer teaching is that of adoption (γενεαισχεσια/hiuotheia), for while the verdict that we are Not Guilty is a blessed relief, adoption means that we are welcomed into family membership. A basic idea is that though once not members we have been given full status (eg Heb.11:24ff.). Adoption sometimes applied to rôle (eg 1 Chr.28:6), such as Israel’s part (Hos.11:1; Rm.9:4f.). It is a term confined to Pauline writings (Rm.8:15,23; 9:4; Gal.4:5; Eph.1:5). Each NT writer had his own pictorial insights into understandably presenting salvation. Eg John & Peter preferred the regeneration picture/parable (eg Jhn.1:12f.).

Looking to Paul we can see that in its Roman setting adoption of slaves was common & duties went hand in hand with adopted sonship. Though God became ‘abba, sons still had obligations as if slaves (δοματιον/duolos) (eg Rm.1:1): ie total devotion (eg Rm.12:1). Slavery to God is freer than the freedom of the world. Adoption is linked to the Spirit as the one who begins and develops our family likeness, starting with the very love of God (Rm.5:5; Rm.8:15/Gal.4:6/Mk.14:36). And it is linked to inheritance. Heirs of the Father & co-heirs with Jesus (Rm.8:17). Usually Paul used the term ‘son’ (μοιχους), not ‘children’ (παιδες or παιδια), unlike John who never used huios of any except Jesus (a point blurred by some translations). Paul saw Jesus as the son by nature, whereas we are sons by adoption, though given and developing Jesus’ nature. But whether by different words or by qualifying words, the NT always presents Jesus’ relationship to the Father as fundamentally different to – yet shared with – us.

A prerequisite to salvation is the cross of Christ. But as regards us accepting it it takes repentance and faith. To some extent repentance & faith may be taken as synonyms. Both terms impact on the issue of salvation and whether the message must be heard/seen with the human ear/eye. I shall look at faith, fundamental to the evangel.

The Greek is πιστις/pistis. In classical Greek it meant believing certain impersonal facts to be facts. Yet in NT Greek it was more personal – faith means welcoming, joining hands with the one believed and has initial, ongoing and future applications. Initial belief (πιστευω/pisteusin: a one-off acceptance) in Jesus leads to salvation (Ac.16:31). As indicated above, such as Ac.16:31’s “your household” doesn’t extend beyond either 1# predicting that the family would all believe unto salvation, or 2# assurance that the family could all
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believe unto salvation. Each must make up their own heart & mind regarding Jesus. There is a strong strand indicating that it is not mere mental assent but heart welcome of the one mentally acknowledged. Similarly, with our minds we acknowledge the existence of single men & women, but with our hearts we welcome one person into marriage. Satan acknowledges God with his mind but not with his heart. Jhn.1:12 reflects this parallel thought of belief = welcome:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>to all who received him</th>
<th>he gave the right to become children of God...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>= to those who believed in his name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the NT signs point to a power which speaks a message – they are attention catchers. But what must be believed is the message and thus the one behind the message. It is the message, not the incidental atmosphere of emotion, which is God’s power unto salvation (Rm.1:16). Emotion is good for it is a God-given part of God’s image, and without it we would not be human. Some, eg Pentecostals, have sometimes been accused of over-emotionalism, though it varies Pentecostal to Pentecostal. Eg commending the great missionary W F P Burton, but not many of his circle, “in Redemption Tidings (12 February, 1943), Burton argued for the human mind in the work of God. He pointed out that some of the attitudes generated by the Welsh revival in 1904 had been detrimental to any intellectual activity, ‘indeed the most foolish things were sometimes done under the supposed guidance of the Spirit, bringing reproach and ridicule on God’s work. Anyone who disapproved was told, “You need to cut off your head. Put your mind out of the way”‘...Burton [presented] the overwhelming biblical case for the use of the mind in Christian work...There [are]...pentecostals who [tend] to equate anything mental with a lack of spirituality” (Kay: Story, 182f.). This said, it should be noted that where the mind is involved in thought regarding Christ an age of thought is assumed. In other words, in itself faith might be possible along the lines of acceptance/welcome even if rational thought is beyond the believer.

Finally on the basic doctrine of salvation, I would like to consider the idea of disinheritance from eternal life through vice. There is a cluster of texts that have been taken to mean that those who practice particular sins cannot inherit God’s kingdom, or, if they have inherited it, shall be disinherit ed. Does vice dramatically effect our relationship with God? It is

45 Also touched on above is 1 Cor.7:14. We can look also at 1 Pt.3:1f. which teaches that a family atmosphere can be conducive to salvation. Jesus predicted that some families simply wouldn’t hold together because of him (Mt.10:35f.), which Paul picked up (1 Cor.7:15). This is not to teach that God, knowing the future, never promises that one’s family will unite in faith. It is simply to teach that Scripture doesn’t teach that he promises every believer that such will be.

46 There are some texts that in the historical context were statements about the generation prior to the cross. Eg Jhn.1:12 surely means that those before the cross who welcomed Jesus were then & there, given the right to become children of God, a right cashed-in when Jesus died & rose again. That is, many who went to listen to Jesus, after he had died & risen, became children of God. Similarly those who seriously listened to him before the cross were promised that continuance in Jesus’ ways would lead to knowing the truth: after he had died & risen the truth could instantly set them free (= make them Christians). We have been set free by the one who in fact is the truth (Jhn.14:6).
curious that while homosexuality is commonly taken as a sin a Christian cannot perform without ceasing instantly to be a Christian, the greedy are exempt (cf. 1 Cor.6:9-11), and 2# that some Christians become greedy! Disinheritance is linked to the sin of greed (an attitude), and if such overlapping lists are selective one shudders to imagine whether any other ‘petty’ sins warrant disinheritance. Other vv which suggest it include Gal.5:21, and Eph.5:5. By examining one passage (Eph.5) the underlying theology may become clear.

In Eph.5 there is a contrast between the idolater (pictured as a non-inheritor in the there & then) & the spiritual life of God’s kingdom (for those for whom heaven has become their natural home). Paul presented various vices to typify the contrast of the two ways of life. Christians were to note that imitating the idolater’s life was foolish, for the fate of the idolater – positioned outside God’s kingdom – was God’s wrath (v6). and Christians certainly didn’t belong to that way of life, and to them it was “out of place” (v4). It was not to teach that Christians would share the same fate as the idolater. God’s wrath can be outpoured in different ways, and it is not specified that for the sexually immoral and/or greedy Christian, wrath would equate to disinheritance. There are idolaters by nature and some simply by random practice: in God’s sight probably nature denotes the person, not practice. Let me concoct a kingdom parable to illustrate my interpretation.

The kingdom of God is like a king who beheld an island of evil perverse natives fittingly named by their practices (eg Sexual Immorality, Impurity, Drunkenness, Greed...). Some at his invitation came into his land and changed their names and became his subjects and lived well pleasing in his sight. But some of them returned now and then to the island and wastefully lived as aforetimes. At last the king arose and overthrew the natives, destroying them utterly. Gathering his own subjects who had returned to their sin, he said unto them, “I shall not treat you alike, for their sins are not your real nature, even as your names are not their names, nevertheless you shall taste of my displeasure”.

“What”, I think Paul was saying, “is the point of God’s subjects living like the natives?”

47 We are sometimes guilty of double standards, applying some texts to what we deem dastardly sins we avoid, but not to petty sins, as if any Christian who practices homosexuality will never inherit the kingdom, but one who cheats their tax forms needn’t worry. If these texts apply to Christians sinning through homosexuality they equally apply to the defrauder of tax.

48 One response is that such only apply to name-only ‘Christians’: Gal.5:21 “can hardly be taken as evidence of Paul’s belief that any true believer might fail to inherit the kingdom, in view of his further statement that all who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Gal.5:24). Those still committed to the flesh would know that they had no part in the kingdom” (Guthrie: Theology, 527).

49 As Jhn.3:18 teaches, ultimately non-inheritance is based on sin (= non-acceptance of God), not on the idea of sins.

50 Some say that 1 lie makes a liar, some say that only habitual lying makes a liar. It is likely that God says that identification with the Adamic nature makes a sinner, in the case of babies at least a potential sinner (1 Cor.15:22; Rm.8:1).
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Will all the natives who never enter the kingdom do so after the king arises? If destroyed, what will this mean? C S Lewis said that if a game is to be taken seriously, it must be possible to lose it, but still "of all the doctrines of Christianity, hell is probably the most difficult to defend, the most burdensome to believe and the first to be abandoned" (Kreeft/Tacelli: Apologetics, 282). On the one hand, if either after death God saves everyone (Universalism), or everyone who is unsaved ceases to be (Annihilationism), or there is a chance given (After-death Wider Hope), the question about equal opportunity in this life to be saved is a minor issue. On the other hand, if these positions are incorrect it may be that the issue of equal opportunity is cardinal to theology. Let us consider various positions.

**Universalism**

**Definition**

There are two basic ways in which this term is used, and though context will often show which is meant, some prefer to highlight their particular usage. *Unrestricted Universalism* assumes that immortality is the lot of all mankind (ie Unconditional Salvation), and that since God is sovereign and isn't willing that any perish (2 Pt.3:9), none will. I shall for simplicity call this *Universalism* and its proponents *Universalists*. This view – historically named ἀποκαταστάσις/Apokatastasis – has been held by such as John Hick and well before him by Clement of Alexandra, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa. It was rejected by Augustine of Hippo and possibly declared heretical at the 2nd Council of Constantinople that primarily looked at the 3 Chapters Controversy. In our record of its list of heretics, Origen's name (c.185-254) appears because of his Universalism, though his name may have been added into the records after the meeting.

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51 As Warfield pointed out, Christian Annihilationists reject materialist Annihilationism (the extinction of all life at death) and argue either for
- Conditional Immortality - the unsaved simply never gain immortality, or
- Unconditional Immortality – the unsaved lose their immortality.

52 From ἀπο/kathistēmi: "restitution or restoration of a thing to its former state" (Moulton: Lexicon, 42). The only biblical noun is in Ac.3:31 and its verb form 8 times, meaning establishment, restoration. "The idea that apokatastasis includes the salvation of all mankind...was advanced by Origen...Schleiermacher, F D Maurice and others" (B A Demarest: Elwell: Dictionary, 67.B).

53 Cf. his Death & Eternal Life (1976).

54 There can be movement between positions, of course. One notable move was from Calvinism to Universalism by John Murray (1741-1815), who founded a denomination with this teaching.

55 As a general comment it is hard for us to decide "in the absence of original texts...whether he held [this] as certain or simply stated [it] as [an hypothesis]" (Cross/Miss Livingstone: Dictionary, 1009.A). It may be that, though nearer the time, the council misunderstood Origen's position.
It is obvious that at present we do not see God's love winning everyone, "but we see Jesus" (Heb.2:9) the αρχή, who has laid the foundation for what must come – some Universalists would say – either in this age or the age to come. It shall be a total harvest. Eventually even Satan shall become captivated by God's love and shall be saved. Love that can ultimately be resisted is imperfect love, and to be perfect obviously God, who is love, must succeed in redeeming everyone. This then is the belief & rationale of Universalism.

There is a second kind of Universalism, sometimes called Qualified Universalism, sometimes (simplistically) called Wider Hope. This position is that God's universal offer is for all mankind but some will eternally be lost. It is not accepted by some (eg cf Calvinism's Limited Atonement view). Qualified Universalists may or may not accept the concept of Unconditional Immortality. Concerning God's love they will argue that the nature of love allows the other's free-will, even to eternal rejection, pursuing the line that "man's free will is what gives him royal dignity, and it constitutes the innermost secret of his having been made in the image of God" (Stauffer: Theology, 62). If God ignored man's free-will choice to live separately, would that not make meaningless free-will and thus denigrate man's humanity – the Imago Dei – to the level of an unwilling or witless captive? Though God does not wish any to perish does this mean none will? There is biblical evidence that not everything God wishes happens. For example he does not wish any to divorce but divorce happens (Mal.2:16). More generally, he does not wish any to sin, and yet even Christians sin. Thus the stress on sovereignty & love is affirmed

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56 While exceptions can be argued for, eg Ezr.10:5, his will is obviously clear and obviously capable of being breached, eg 1 Cor.7:10f.

57 Simply listing moral things we are to do or not do from Galatians & Ephesians – written necessarily to Christians – highlights this.
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but redefined by Qualified Universalists. The question they face is not particularly about whether people are given an extended chance after death. C S Lewis suggested (memory forgets where) the analogy between a person’s last chance and a student being dropped from a course because the teacher knows that no matter how long is given, they are incapable of mastering the subject: extension is futile and “people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgement” (Heb.9:27). The analogy is tentative and as all analogies imperfect, of course, but the theological position is that none die without having had a potentially salvific knowledge of God and rejecting it, and that the Omni-wise knows when no further chance given can be accepted. This of course raises the question of whether the time of death is always chosen, or even simply permitted, by God, and whether any extension of chance beyond the grave will be given in individual cases. The main issue for the Qualified Universalist is whether all – whatever side of death – get the chance to receive eternal life. Travis put the problem this way: "many millions of people do not or cannot respond to Christ because they belong to one of the non-Christian faiths, or because they have never heard the Christian message ... and similar concerns are expressed about the status of children and the mentally ill, who have no possibility of understanding or responding to the Christian message" (Travis: Second Coming, 200).

Later I shall question the link between understanding & responding,\(^{58}\) which Travis et al make but for now shall concentrate on the position simply called Universalism.

False objections

It should be pointed out that a few Red Herrings exist. Eg: –

• that Universalism denies the justice of punishment and so encourages sin. “Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him; for the rewards of his hands shall be given to him; – but say also...that there shall be ‘a restitution of all things,’ – that God willeth not that any should perish; – that Christ both died, and rose, and revived that He might be Lord both of the dead and the living; – that as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive; – and that day shall come when ‘all things shall be subdued unto Him, that God may be all in all’” (Farrar: Hope, 89). It is rather concerned with a time after punishment/purgation.

• that Universalism insists on hell\(^{59}\) beings merely a place of limited punishment in which one pays for their sins. A basic answer to this charge is to say that hell is limited because it is remedial (cf. William Barclay) and that once one learns their lesson.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>conceit</th>
<th>exasperating your children</th>
<th>humility</th>
<th>singing to each other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>provocation</td>
<td>threatening your servants</td>
<td>bearing with each other</td>
<td>giving thanks to God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sowing sin</td>
<td>sleeping on anger</td>
<td>aiming at keeping unity</td>
<td>submitting to each other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{58}\) Various schemes have been proposed, such as “four [purgatorial] abodes for the departed... for the saints...imperfectly sanctified Christians... unbaptised infants... the heathen” (Hammond: Understanding, 241).

\(^{59}\) I shall use the term hell as a general word for after-death separation from God. It could be more clearly analysed.
heaven awaits.\textsuperscript{60} The history of Israel shows that some curses/punishments (Dt.27) were ethnically remedial, though this does not disprove an ultimate & eternal punishment.

- that Universalism denies the necessity of the cross: would God send his son to die to save us from hell when there was never any danger of going there? Anselm (1033-1109) – followed in 1805 by the Universalist-cum-Unitarian Hosea Ballou – argued this verily suggested that the cross was a demonstration of love of no objective atonement. But it could still be taken that the cross alone made way for God to remove all sin and allow mankind to be totally redeemed, and so Wilkes’ \textit{prima facie case} falls.\textsuperscript{61}

- that Universalism removes the rationale to evangelise. Surely the answer to this charge would be that evangelism is the ultimately successful offer of love by Love himself, made both in this age but if not heeded now, in the age to come. If eternal life is worth something and can begin in this life (Jhn.17:3), evangelism in this age is worth while.

Of course if these Red Herrings were Real Herrings it would still be a question of whether the position was true or false. On the one hand we are not permitted to deny a biblical doctrine because it conflicts with a doctrine we hold. On the other hand we are obliged to deny a doctrine because it conflicts with a biblical doctrine.\textsuperscript{62}

\textbf{Scriptures used for Universalists}

It is one thing to state the basic rationale, it is another to examine the claimed scriptural evidence. Universalists can hold a high view of Scripture and yet interpret even seemingly incompatible scriptures as compatible. Hick for instance has grouped such as Rm.5:18; 11:32, & 1 Tm.2:3f. as universalist & theological and grouped those obviously about eternal exclusion as pastoral & existential. As said, to some extent the Universalist position should have a strong pull for all of us: if God is unhappy about eternally losing any, if his love is in our hearts how can we not share this unhappiness and ponder whether such a tragedy will really happen? Might it be that Scripture contains a toothless ‘existential threat’ (eternal exclusion: Hick) with the same ethical justification we sometimes use when we bluff either for

\textsuperscript{60} It may be noted that the Swiss neo-Orthodox teacher Karl Barth’s teaching on Christ identifying with & representing man, can be taken as implying an ultimate reconciliation of all mankind. \textit{“Mortal man may still be a sinner, but the election of Christ demands a final verdict of salvation”} (D B Eller: Elwell: Dictionary, 1129.B).

\textsuperscript{61} Indeed Universalists before Ballou (eg John Murray & James Reilly) tended to take the Objective view of the cross.

\textsuperscript{62} By biblical doctrine I mean one current – either specific to the NT or germane to the OT & NT.
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the benefit of the person we bluff or to protect another from them? This view takes the Scripture’s “do you really want to be damned forever?” not to mean that the prodigal might be damned forever but as said to bring him home hopefully before he knows the damnation of existing with the pigs. Certainly the Universalist idea of hell being purgative lacks biblical warrant. Since theology is about truth, not about theologians, whatever we may think of Hick the question is whether he is sincerely wrong on this subject and if so, what is right? Let us consider some key scriptures used by Universalists.

| Jn. 12:32 | Do this not mean that all will be lifted unto eternal salvation? Carson argued that ‘all people’ was used to “remind the reader of what triggered off these statements, viz. the arrival of the Greeks, and means ‘all people without distinction, Jews and Gentiles alike, not all individuals without exception, since the surrounding context has just established judgement as a major theme” (Carson: John, 444). Similarly Guthrie. Even taken as ‘everyone’ it could mean something along the lines of drawing their attention without assuming their acceptance. A Universalist interpretation is insecure. |
| Ac. 3:21 | Is this a restoration of all the fallen? Since “the word ‘fulfilment’...is from the same root as the word translated ‘restore’ in 1:6...we should take the phrase to signify God’s perfect realization of the things that he had promised through the prophets, the chief of which was the setting up of his rule or kingdom” (Marshall: Acts, 94). In the light of the excellent sense of this reading it is at least clear that a Universalist reading is unnecessary. |
| Rm. 5:18f. | Does this mean that all people shall receive life? This can be taken, in its context, as meaning “for all in Christ” (Morris: Romans, 239). “We must take the universalism of v18 in terms of the representative significance of each individual: the effects of Christ’s action extends to all who belong to him, just as the effects of Adam’s action extends to all who belong to him” (Douglas J. Moo: Carson: Commentary, 1134.B). To take it as all mankind – as Determinist Universalists do – must be rejected: as Bultmann picked up from Rm.5:17, the participle λαμβανόντες/λαμβανόντες – in και της διαφοράς δικαιοσύνης λαμβανόντες/καὶ τὲς διαφορὰς δικαιοσύνης λαμβανόντες – implies as a condition that they receive (cf. BTNT, 1.303). This then does not substantiate Universalism. |

63 An example is such as MAD – Mutually Assured Destruction (through nuclear weapons) – when a second strike might not be made but is threatened to keep the peace.

64 Roman Catholicism has held that 2 Macc.12:39-45 justifies this view, but the status of the apocrypha (in which 2 Macc. comes) is at best questionable and the view is not confirmed by the OT & NT, the which the Apocrypha and other IT (Inter-Testamental) writing lie between.

65 It is of course a matter of history that the position of Liberal Christianity – which favours Universalism – considers Scripture to be low grade in value. I see little value with interacting with it on an examination of Systematic Theology, since this approach is principally concerned with exegesis of Scripture. I shall assume that Scripture is the basic rule by which this dissertation is to be judged. It may be noted that some have taken the path of Liberalism rather than Orthodoxy in sincere reaction to an unsatisfying soteriology in Orthodoxy.

66 Universalists are deterministic – ie salvation persuades human choice (free-will) – ie salvation is for all because all shall choose it.
From the assumption that 'all Israel' means every individual Israeli at the return of Christ, Dodd argued that in fairness even if here Paul meant 'all Israel (11:26) + the full number of the Gentiles (11:25)' we must deduce Universalism 'from his premises' (Dodd: Romans, 193, emphasis deleted).

However his point on 11:26 need not stand and without it his conclusion falls. And so we may well fall back to the position he rejected, that in a setting of oscillation between Jews & Gentiles 'Paul is not teaching an individual universalism - that every human being will experience God's mercy, and so be saved... Rather he is teaching a national universalism: God's mercy comes to both he Gentiles and to Israel' (Moo: Carson: Commentary, 1149.B).

This text does not support Universalism.

In what way shall the Father be 'all in all' (παντα σε παντα en pasin) if some are eternally in hell?

However πας could mean 'all possible' (Bromiley: Dictionary, 795). If so the question of whether some have become eternally opposed to God is not addressed. What is probably being address is the ultimate theocentricity rather than christocentricity of Scripture: 'God now reigns not through Christ, but as 'immediate sovereign of the universe' (Hodge)

(Paul W Marsh: Bruce: Commentary, 1384.A). This would continue the theme that ultimately there shall be two families, Christ's and Adam's (v22), the former being destined for resurrection to life in him and ultimately to direct relationship with the Father (v28).

This text does not support Universalism.

'All things' is taken as meaning a redemption of all the fallen.

However "Paul clearly believed that it was possible for human beings to reject God's offer of salvation, and at the last judgment some, having done so, would thereby be themselves rejected" (Wright: Colossians, 77).

From this we may see what Paul did not mean.

While these texts show a universal scope, they do not force an idea wider than that all who are redeemed in Christ (επ Christo) shall be under the one lord.

Some take God's will to be absolute in sovereignty - a divine fiat. I have already argued that God has sovereignly given sovereignty to man, even the ability to deny him. Context must decide whether God's will means that what he decrees 1# shall be, 2# ought to be, or 3# would be good to be. 2:4 does not say that God's wish shall come to pass, and so could at best function on a secondary level if Universalism was proved on primary texts. The second text is emphatic in speaking of two groups apropos salvation: Paul "seems to be using the word Saviour in the sense of both preservation and spiritual salvation" (Donald Guthrie: Carson: Commentary, 1300.B).

Nor here do I see any convincing Universalist interpretation.

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67 On 11:26 it may well be that all Israel" was meant in its rabbinical sense: the Mishnah said that "all Israelites have a share in the world to come" (Sanh.10:1) and immediately lists classes & individuals who would not, limiting 'all Israel' to the righteous of Israel (cf. Morris: Romans, 421). See also 1 Kg.12:1; 2 Chr.12:1; Dan.9:11. At the end of the day all the righteous of ethnic Israel shall, in line with God redeeming the nations, be saved in the same sense of Gentiles being saved. Though some (eg Bruce: Sayings, 109) take Rm.11:26b to mean the parousia, "the wording εκ Σιων...does not seem to substantiate the notion that Paul [was] speaking of the parousia of Christ" (Reidar Hvalvik: Sheffield: NT, 95) and "for Paul the Deliverer [had] already come from Zion (cf. 9:33)" (ibid, 93), the quotation belongs to the area of inaugurated eschatology.
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Universalist references to the New Testament (NT) should be taken seriously but, as shown above, do not necessitate Universalism. Most occur in 'if' settings (eg 'if you continue in the faith' – Col.1:19-23) and are probably universal in desire but not in decree.

Scriptures used against Universalism

Let us consider some key verses to at least establish a *prima facie* biblical contradiction of Universalism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Does this pericope not predict everlasting alienation for some?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mt.25:31-46</td>
<td>Universalism may respond that it is unsound to base doctrine on parables and that it is a divine verdict of what sin deserves and sinners (but for God's universal salvation) get, perhaps taught in order to win sinners from sin in the here &amp; now, yet something of a bluff. The most it concedes is that the alienation is temporary pending reconciliation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rm.1:18:2-16</td>
<td>The concept of a bluff is neither obvious in this parable nor in NT theology. Moreover if a toothless bluff about what wouldn't, couldn't, be, would Jesus have pictured God as contrary to his own nature? I take it that <em>everlasting</em> is not (pace R V G Tasker, France: Matthew, 240) a misleading implication of <em>αἰώνιον</em>, and that balancing structure therefore demands that the punishment/fire also be <em>everlasting</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Cor.5:10</td>
<td>This verse presents a universal &amp; individual judgement and has interesting christological ramifications too. It also seems to have decisiveness consonant with finality. Universalism, even if equating this judgement with the Great White Throne, postulates a decisive yet temporary sentence. It is perhaps difficult to prove or disprove a Universal interpretation from immediate context, but unless a <em>prima facie</em> case for Universalism within the wider biblical eschatology exists a Universalist interpretation remains speculative.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

68 Obviously if it were a bluff it could not be presented as an 'obvious bluff', as that would defeat its purpose. Nor of course is it obviously a bluff because it isn't obvious, in the sense that one cannot prove that an invisible cat is in the room simply because no one can see one!

69 France has argued that while *eternal* is better translation it subsumes the idea of *everlasting*. 

37
Summary

The theory may seem simple and assumes that everyone must always have at least some desire for love and ultimately be satisfied in Love himself. However the assumptions might not be biblical. Biblically Universalist arguments from Scripture do not convince me, while Universalist arguments against scriptures that might deny Universalism do not convince me either. In other words I take Scripture to be against Universalism. Thus I conclude that Universalism, for all the good it does in highlighting God's love for all mankind, does not negate the need to ask about salvation and the unevangelised.

Annihilationism

Definition

"Another undeniable fact is that judgement is eternal. It is this latter fact that has led some, who consider unending punishment to be unethical, to propound a theory of annihilation" (Guthrie: Theology, 892). The position of this idea is that biblical talk about eternal separation means other than unending continuance and – if the idea of Conditional Immortality is included, as it usually is – that the idea of unending continuance is in fact a pagan, not a biblical, position. Thus Annihilationism usually dismisses that idea of immortal souls before death, speaking rather of conditional immortality. By this latter idea they assert that people have the option of accepting God and being made immortal, or not accepting him and after death ceasing (immediately or soon) to exist. Annihilationists who accept the idea of Unconditional Immortality argue that damnation is a positive ending of punishment by God. I shall refer either to Annihilationism or, where deemed appropriate,

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70 Annihilationism is sometimes called Conditional Immortality with which it has affinities. However one can accept Annihilationism without accepting Conditional Immortality, or even accept Conditional Immortality without accepting Annihilationism.

71 On the one hand some claim that judgement must have some positive play in discomfort after death. One the other hand some say that if we survive after death either at that stage we have immortality (in which case would God's punishment end in removing our immortality?) or else we do not have it and presumably can live without it. eg “the notion of a soul immortal enough to live through death, not immortal enough to live on for ever, is too childish to be entertained...” (Brown: Annihilation, 64).
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speak either of CI Annihilationism (Conditional Immortality Annihilationism) or UI Annihilationism (Unconditional Immortality Annihilationism). 72

Annihilationism has few historical links. One may consider African Arnobius (d.c.330) its sole known representative of the C4. It occasionally surfaced as a speculation and generally dismissed, and links to the Fathers (eg Clement of Rome, Justyn Martyr, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Athanasius) is unjustified (cf. Salmond: Immortality, 473-476). The 5th Lateran Council, in 1513, wrote it off as heresy. This was but the common position before and after. However in the C19 quite a few took up Annihilationism. "It was elaborated by Edward White, a Congregationalist minister, in his Life in Christ (184611875) ... and found some acceptance among English and American as well as Continental thinkers" (Cross/Miss Livingstone: Dictionary, 328,B). Some moderated the idea to simply loss of humanness (eg the Unitarian James Martineau: 1805-1900), tentatively acceptable in this form to some like Charles Gore. Traditionallly Annihilationism has been rejected on grounds of...

- souls being immortal;
- the requirements of justice; and
- Scriptural teaching (eg Mt.25:46).

Some have argued from a sense of liberal anthropology that immortality simply befits the high dignity of man. This is speculative to be sure. A surer foundation is Scripture. But let us consider what needs to be done. To show that souls (people) are immortal in this life undercuts CI Annihilationism but not undercut UI Annihilationism. If it is not shown, both forms of Annihilationism remain as before. Next, to argue against Annihilationism the requirements of justice one must argue 1# that the requirements either must ethically be everlasting or that 2# immortality is man's lot and impossible of abrogation, therefore per force damnation must be everlasting. Scripture teaching is marshalled against Annihilationism usually to argue that 1# man's lot is immortality and 2# that damnation is of a parallel timeline with heaven.

Some think the biblical position is clear & simple. For example, it is commonly argued against Annihilationism that the force of αἰώνιος in Mt.25:46 applies equally to life and to punishment. This is to say that if eternal punishment isn't for eternity, neither is eternal life, but since we know that life is for eternity, the Annihilationists must be wrong about eternal punishment. This argument would usually assume that God would not hand out the sentence and immortality at the same time and thus assume that immortality is

72 From the point of view of Annihilationism it doesn't matter whether after death God confers, or confirms, immortality to the righteous but not to the unrighteous. The unrighteous simply never receive, or lose, the benefits of immortality.
man’s lot from birth. However even if we can argue it to be clear, the biblical position is not quite so simple. Annihilationists could agree that the force of \( \alpha \iota \omega \nu \iota \omicron \varsigma \alpha i \iota \omicron \iota \varsigma \) in Mt.25:46 applies equally to life and to punishment. They would however argue that \( \alpha \iota \omega \nu \iota \omicron \varsigma \alpha i \iota \omicron \iota \varsigma \) in Mt.25:46 does not mean un-endingness for the damned or for the blessed. According to Annihilationism...

- The proffered gift of life might logically be withdrawn from those not taking up the offer;
- biblical symbols such as fire and destruction suggest annihilation;
- \( \alpha \iota \omega \nu \iota \omicron \varsigma \) might indicate the permanence – the irreversibility – of the verdict rather than duration of sentence, along the line of F D Maurice who argued that eternity has nothing to do with time or duration (cf. Theological Essays, 1853);
- everlasting punishment for temporary sins seems unethical & God is ethical;
- the knowledge of people suffering in hell/Gehenna problems would be intolerable to the saints in heaven, contradicting the notion of heaven being pure bliss;
- the idea of God being ‘all in all’ would be strange if hell/Gehenna exists \textit{ad infinitum} and therefore exists within him.

Annihilationism probably deserves a better respect than it has had. Simply considering the scholars who have accepted it as either probable or possible can shows this. *In the last hundred years considerable ground has been gained by [a] view know as ‘conditional immortality’* (Travis: Second Coming, 196). Sometimes the data about the fate of the unrighteous is ambiguous. This is perhaps because the NT writers were concerned rather about the great loss (or the great might have been) of those who would be separated from God, rather than with defining the loss. The ambiguity has been picked up by Annihilationists who argue not perhaps from specific evidence but from ideas of divine punishment and appropriateness. However the traditional view need not be abandoned.

**False objections**

*There is little doubt that a proper... zeal for reconciling [people] to God is easily quenched if one seriously believes that the worst that can happen to the non-Christian is that he or she simply ceases to exist* (Craig Blomberg, Them.23.3.5 (1998)). If it were true that Annihilationism lowers the urge to evangelise it would be wrong to dismiss it as untrue on this ground. Firstly the question is of truth, irrespective of consequences. Secondly, we have the command of God to evangelise and our main goal should be to please him, not to help save people from hell and into eternal life.
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Obedience is primary, acts of obedience (e.g., evangelism) secondary. Arguably a belief in Annihilationism could purify our motivations to evangelise, if we deemed it more of a theocentric activity than an anthropocentric one. This said, a disbelief in Annihilationism should not in itself make us anthropocentric in evangelism! Of course, the Annihilationist would fear the loss of what could have been and can therefore evangelise even from an anthropocentric basis. Evangelism, and our motives within it, can never be perfect until a time when we no longer need to evangelise.

- Perhaps the worst idea raised against Annihilationism is that punishment ought to be limitless. Such as C.H. Dodd have demonstrated that much Old Testament (OT) punishment was intended as redemptive punishment. This is to say that punishment has a purpose, namely that the sinner should learn the error of their ways through suffering and repent. Where repentance is impossible this function of punishment ends. The ethics of punishment is to save – 1# the individual, 2# others from the individual or 3# others from becoming like the individual – not to inflict pain. Thus Annihilationists are biblically proofed against the objection that divine punishment is everlasting. However, we may move from the idea of punishment imposed by God to self-inflicted punishment, or, arguably better, suffering. Thus we can postulate that if people have immortality by virtue of being in God's image, then unrelated to divine punishment some shall suffer because they everlastingly reject God. According to C.S. Lewis, "I believe that the damned are, in one sense, successful, rebels to the end; that the doors of hell are locked on the inside" (Lewis: Pain, 111-115; cf. Jhn. 3:19; 12:48). Indeed it may be that such suffering is horrible more from the point of view of the saint than that of the sinner: the loner tolerates aloneness, unlike the gregarious; a husband away from his beloved aches for her, unlike the man who knows her not. This should not be said to minimalise the horror of hell – a land of total lawlessness & total selfishness is a horror for all in the land – but it is to suggest that God does not heap on the suffering.

- That the CI position is linked to an infamous denomination, namely Jehovah's Witnessism. According to it...

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73 Some would argue the just penalty of incarceration lest heaven be plagued by hell. I cannot concur that strength is weakened by the feebleness of evil, but can agree that the feebleness of evil could be the more endangered by the purity of heaven.
1# ‘hell’ (Gk: ᾠδήδας) always means ‘the common grave of mankind’, 2# isn’t anguish, and 3# ‘Gehenna’ signifies “complete destruction with no resurrection to life as a soul being possible” (Facey: Doctrinal, 152). Souls sleep in death and enter sheol as a bed (Heb. seʾôl/sheol; Gk: ᾠδήδας). Souls are people, and people who sin are buried (whatever) and are no more. *Before God formed [Adam] from the dust and gave him life...he did not exist. At his death Adam returned to the same lifeless, unconsciousness state. He neither went to a fiery hell nor to a heavenly bliss...[Gen.2:17]...Not once does the Bible say that either human or animal souls are immortal, deathless, cannot be destroyed or cannot perish...the soul can die [and] can be killed* (Watchtower: Truth, 34,37). The Genesis terms ‘spirit’ & ‘breath of life’ mean respectively ‘impersonal life force’ (like electricity in a machine) and ‘oxygen’: ‘Adam’s lungs began to function and thereby sustain by breathing the life force in his body cell-Genesis 2:7’ (Watchtower: Truth, 38). Death ends souls’ links with the power of life & with oxygen, and only God can re-energise them to stand before the Judgement. Hell is a kind of unconscious suspended animation, not anguish. After all Job desired to wait there until better times (Job 14:13) and Jesus went there too (Ac.2:31; 1 Cor.15:3f.) – implying no pain. The Lazarus story (Lk.16:22-31) shouldn’t be taken too literally – the details but make a central point about judgment.

Many would wish to challenge the underlying hermeneutic of word equivalence used in the above construction: have not words a semantic range best considered in each context? As a denomination Jehovah’s Witnessism is unusual in siding with CI Annihilationism. More commonly denominations take rather the position of Murray J Harris that *immortality is conditional, but only in the sense that there is no eternal life except in Christ. This does not imply that existence beyond death is conditional and that unbelievers will be annihilated...In NT usage immortality has positive content, being more than mere survival after death, its opposite is not non-existence but the ‘second death’ (Rv.20:6,14) which involves exclusion from God’s presence (2 Ths.1:9). All human beings survive beyond death but not all will become immortal in the Pauline sense* (Themelios, 11.2.47 (1986)). But in spite of this position being strongly associated with this organisation, this should not cloud our judgement. To reject position X because X holds it is not logical, unless we know that X is incapable of ever holding a correct position.

CI Annihilationism argues that those who never receive immortality simply fall into a state of nothingness. This could be taken from Paul: the mortal in Christ shall put on immortality (1 Cor.15:53). Ul Annihilationism argues that everyone possesses immortality on loan or intrinsically, but that only the redeemed have it confirmed after death: all others fall into a state of nothingness, perhaps after a period of hell. Thus we should first examine whether people are only mortal, though the doctrine of Conditional Immortality does not force the
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Annihilationist position. If it seems not, we should then test whether immortality needs to be confirmed to continue after death. "Hesitantly... tentatively... I believe that the ultimate annihilation of the wicked should at least be accepted as a legitimate, biblically founded, alternative to their eternal conscious torment" (John Stott: Edwards/Stott: Essentials, 319f.).

Scriptures used for Annihilationism

| Romans 2:7f. | To seek immortality implies not having it. Does this not favour CI Annihilationism?  
But should αφθαρτος be translated as immortality? There are only 4 Pauline uses, viz Rm.1:23; 2:7; 1 Cor.15:42; 1 Tm.1:17. While Morris argued that "the word denotes 'the state of not being subject to corruption' and thus immortality" (Morris: Romans, 117), Vine argued that it "does not bear that significance, it means 'incorruptible'" (Vine: Dictionary, 246), and suggested that the idea of moral incorruptibility, as in 2 Tm.1:10 and "bad company corrupts good character" (1 Cor.15:33). This moral aspect can be seen clearly in the positive form, namely θεορω/phtheirai. θανατος/Thanatos perhaps suggests physical death (Mt.10:28/Lk.12:5), and θανατος spiritual degradation. They are conceptually tied — to φθαρτον touto ενυδασθαι αφθαρσιν και το θνησων touto ενυδασθαι θανασιν to phtharton touto endusasthai aphtharsian kai to thneton touto endusasthai athanasian (1 Cor.15:53) — but synonymity implies both shared and unique content.  
At the least this is not a secure text for Annihilationism. |
| --- | --- |
| 1 Corinthians 15:53 | Quoted above, this too is taken by CI Annihilationism as underlining that mortality is yet without immortality (αθανασα/athanasia): if God conferred immortality on the damned he would by tyrannical, which we know he isn't, therefore he shall not do so.  
It might assume immortality qua spiritual being, but mortality qua physical beings, in effect teaching that physical death shall never be repeated (cf. Barrett: 1 Corinthians, 382), as v54 favours.  
CI is not a compelling exegesis. |
| 1 Thessalonians 6:16 | Assuming canonicity, is it not teaching that at present only God is immortal?  
Alternatively it could mean that God is inherently immortal spiritually whereas humans only in a derivative sense, or could underline that God is immortal physically whereas humans are physically mortal. Moreover biblical teaching is surely that there are different ways in which ideas of immortality are used, for instance in believers having eternal life & yet looking forward to it.  
A CI interpretation is therefore uncertain. |

74 If Conditional Immortality were proved it would still be another question to ask whether any would after death not be granted immortality.
Scriptures used against Annihilationism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dan.12:2</strong></td>
<td>Is this not firm OT witness to everlasting contempt? Annihilationism suggests that the OT is poor textual ground for a doctrine of everlasting damnation. I would concur with Annihilationism on this point, suggesting that the OT be only taken as pointing to everlasting damnation if the teaching is sustainable from the NT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mt.10:15; 11:22</strong></td>
<td>Against Cl Annihilationism, why teach that some populations would suffer more in hell if all who perish cease to exist? Cl Annihilationism tends to suggest either that there is a limited life extension beyond death, or that the meaning is that the percentage of redeemed shall be far less from some communities than from cities (e.g., Sodom, Gomorrah, Tyre &amp; Sidon) not given a salvation message. Ul Annihilationism posits a time of punishment after death and then a withdrawal of immortality. I conclude that these texts do not categorically imply everlasting damnation but are in line with such teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mt.25:46</strong></td>
<td>Does not eternal damnation include the idea of continuance? Annihilation can share the position with Universalism that &quot;eternal&quot; may signify the permanence of the result of judgement rather than the continuation of the punishment itself (Travis: Second Coming, 199). But even &quot;if 'everlasting' is an 'unfortunate mistranslation' in relation to the fate of the wicked it is clearly an essential part of what eternal life must convey&quot; (France: Matthew, 358) and therefore the balance would favour the idea of everlasting loss as well as everlasting gain. Nor is κολασία/kolasis good evidence of a purgation: &quot;Greek philosophers distinguish[ed] κολασία from τιμωρία, understanding the former to... be disciplinary or corrective; the later... to be penal or retributive. But the distinction is not absolute even in non-Biblical Greek; and the usage of classical Greek is neither our only nor our surest guide to the usage of New Testament Greek... in Hellenistic Greek κολασία denoted punishment; and it has the same meaning in early Christian literature&quot; (Salmond: Immortality, 310). This teaching – not a parable – seems to me to demand a bodily resurrection to an everlasting &amp; conscious separation from God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jhn.5:24-30</strong></td>
<td>This has been taken to imply both equal immortality &amp; duration of sinners &amp; saints. Annihilationism would dispute the premise of unconditional immortality and again suggest either a limited suffering after death or simply the verdict immediately before extinction. It might well refer back to Dan.12:2, which seems to indicate at least a period of shame following condemnation. However it is difficult to prove unconditional immortality from this passage, though equal continuance is a natural interpretation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 Ths.1:9</strong></td>
<td>This teaches a strong destructive banishment. While it is used against Annihilationism, it is sometimes used by Annihilationism. On balance the text surely implies an indeterminate banishment from God.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

75 A similar point can be made about the terms ολέθρος & ἀπώλεια (Craig Blomberg: Themelios, 23.3.4 (1998)).
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Summary

Thus I conclude that Annihilationism has made an effort to vindicate the goodness of God, based on the idea that those who either are not given the chance, or who are but refuse it, ought not be kept alive in a permanent state of suffering. If we would put a suffering animal out of its misery, how much more God end all suffering one way or the other?

It highlights the question of grace & justice and does not negate the need to seek an eternality of good for the unevangelised. However, I do not deem its case regarding the fate of the unconverted as proven. Indeed it may be argued that God cannot take back an immortality intrinsic to man and that alienation – parabolic metaphors aside – is tolerable for the damned.

Wider Hope

Definition

There are a number of Wider Hope positions, united in their dismissal of Universalism and of Restrictivism\(^\text{76}\) – that only those explicitly evangelised in this life have the chance of eternal life. They are not united about whether "people must be aware that their salvation is in Jesus Christ and whether the opportunity for salvation is given only before death" (Sanders: Name, 131). I shall refer either to Wider Hope or, where deemed appropriate, speak either of AD Wider Hope (After Death Wider Hope) or BD Wider Hope (Before Death Wider Hope).

False objections

• that Wider Hope blunts human evangelism. Wider Hope highlights grace as universal and evangelism as a corollary to grace. (Wider Hope positions which limit evangelism to church evangelism usually posit evangelism after-death as well as before-death.) It accepts evangelism is commanded by God for the here and now, whatever may follow through grace towards all, widely accepting the principle of the sooner the better. Moreover the issue is ultimately whether it is correct, not whether it seems to us to impact adversely against another doctrine – such as Evangelism.

• that Wider Hope is an inevitable a slippery slope to Universalism. However there is a logical distinction between Universal Grace and Irresistible Universal Grace. All may be offered without all accepting the offer. Of course some may move from one position to one similar, even as some Lutherans might convert to Roman Catholicism,

\(^{76}\) Which subsumes Annihilationism.
from Consubstantiation to Transubstantiation. One can only move from Universal Grace and Irresistible Universal Grace if their former position was of Universal Resistible Grace, and by rejecting the idea of Resistibility for that of Unresistibility. Such a conversion is not as such an issue of Wider Hope and therefore Wider Hope is not per se a slippery slope into Universalism.

- that Wider Hope is not explicit in Scripture. However many positions in Systematic Theology are based on a systematising of themes rather than of scriptures. We can accept the doctrine of Hypostatic Union even though it has no explicit scriptural text. To accept one doctrine without an explicit scriptural text but to exclude another because it has no explicit scriptural text, is a double standard. The question is not whether Wider Hope has an explicit scriptural text but whether or not scriptural texts point in its direction.

- that Wider Hope has been rejected by former leaders of the church. John Sanders has made a useful study on this objection, pointing to failures in the methodology employed in decontextualising apparent statements by the likes of the Athanasian Creed, Martin Luther, and the Second Helvetic Confession. He concluded that these sayings were considering the positions of groups who were rejecting the orthodox church as being a channel of God's salvation, rather than reflecting on whether God offered channels of salvation to those outside the range of the church. Citing Evangelical Affirmations (ed. Kenneth Kantzer & Carl Henry), he concluded the broad Evangelical stance that while only through Christ's cross is salvation possible to any and salvation to all is unbiblical, the issue of Wider Hope is biblically feasible but unproved (cf. Sanders: Name, 145). In his dialogue with David Edwards, John Stott noted that the Lausanne Covenant, in which he played a leading part, ruled in Wider Hope, and he hoped that the majority of mankind throughout the millennia would be found in God's family (cf. Edwards/Stott: Essentials, 327). While wisdom dictates that we heed the council of the great biblical scholars, ultimately any creed (whether by individual or council) stands as secondary in nature to Scripture and the issue is whether it is biblical, not whether biblical scholars have held it.

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77 John Calvin expected the majority of humanity to be eternally saved. Cf. Bruce: Romans, on Rm.5:15. However his views on eternal salvation apart from hearing/reading the gospel is not clear to me and one could imagine a burgeoning population radically evangelised and repentant towards God bringing salvation to most of earth's population since Adam.
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- that Wider Hope has been rejected by Roman Catholicism: eg its extra ecclesiam nulla salus – no salvation outside the church – first expressed by Origen.\(^78\) Augustine was another who held that 'no one has God for a Father, who does not have the Church, that is the one visible catholic Church, for a mother' (Berkhof: History, 231). Again the setting should be considered. Origen’s meaning – and that of many proponents of this maxim – was restricted to church schismatics rather than un-churched. Sadly it came to be employed against Protestants, deemed outside the one & only church (ark of salvation). What Origen would have made of this God only knows. Extra ecclesiam nulla salus has been taken as excluding anyone outside the sacramental system the church produced, such as ‘unbaptised’ infants, but a wider hope within Roman Catholicism is that among those formally unevangelised have been some who have accepted God and become part of the invisible mother church. That is, informally in (intra) the church, while formally outside (extra) it. ‘Those also can attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience’ (Vatican 2: Ecclesia, 16).\(^79\) Some Roman Catholics take 1 Pt.3 as offering such wider hope. Yet as above, whether any denomination claiming scriptural authority accepts it, the issue still goes back to whether it is true. Of course, any rejection by those worth listening to should be considered.

**Scriptural basis for Wider Hope**

Wider Hope considers the apparent universal promise of salvation as given in such as Genesis, where Adam & Eve are seen as the ancestors of the entire human race, and so mankind per se was, even after the Fall, seen as still in God’s image (9:6). Further the Noachic Covenant is/was universal and Abraham & his descendant/s were chosen as being a way for blessing to extend to all mankind. It is difficult to imagine that until Abraham eternal life was not offered people, and that thereafter until the incarnation it was only offered to Israel plus the few who identified with her. Besides, the OT speaks of Yahweh showing himself in power to Egypt partly to give redemptive knowledge of himself.

\(^78\) Its roots in fact go back at least to Ignatius of Antioch (Philadelph 3:2), Irenaeus & some others.

\(^79\) Roman Catholic Hans Kung said that ‘the non-Catholic Christian, who in fact belongs to the Church of Christ, but who has no ‘votum’ or ‘desire’, either explicit or implicit, either conscious or unconscious, to belong to the ‘Catholic Church’, who has if anything the rather the opposite votum or desire, can not simply be transferred to the secret list of members of the ‘Catholic Church’’. Similarly, the non-Christian who has no desire either explicit or implicit, either conscious or unconscious, to belong to Christ’s Church, who has if anything quite the opposite desire, cannot be silently adopted by Christianity’ (Kung: Church, 317). He argued thus against Roman Catholics who were maintaining that everyone who is saved is in fact part of Roman Catholicism, and many Protestants would agree with him to a point. However, if the Church is defined as God’s family, only entered by accepting the Son, then we can argue that some are in the Church who through lack of knowledge or misconception reject Christianity.
"At the beginning of Israel’s national history, account is taken of a nation other than Israel....the plagues are sent for Egypt’s benefit more than for Israel’s [though] the evidence comes in conjunction with God’s covenant people....The missionary intent is hardly veiled" (Martens: Plot and Purpose, 89). Ezekiel repeated this message that knowledge of Yahweh would come through his dealings with Israel (Ezk.36:23) and we see that other nations were punished because of their sin (eg Amos). Surely punishment implies a falling away from a known standard (which must be some knowledge of God), and even if it did not implies God’s attempt to teach the standard? Salvation history scatters light around Israel and sees some who respond positively to it. While evangelism beyond Israel is not a major theme it has been suggested that in the OT evangelism was centripetal and became centrifugal with the NT as God’s universal desire for salvation was unveiled. That is, that the fortunes of Israel attracted other nations to see Yahweh, while the NT position is rather to actively go into the nations. Of course, it may be asked why, if evangelism was not considered essential to the eternal life Yahweh desired for all before the New Covenant, evangelism is exalted so under the New Covenant. Is it that it is in fact essential now as always it was for eternal life? If so then Yahweh’s care for the world was less before the New Covenant than after it. Or is it that now the good given to the Gentiles & the good given to Israel has become united in Christ and that the best is now offered in him? If so this best must be something along the lines of an experiential & cognitive knowledge of God for our good in the here & now. Simplified, was the ‘pie in the sky’ always available, and is it that the New Covenant has now made ‘steak on the plate’ available as well, at least to all who hear the preaching?

The NT makes the heart of God clear: he loved the world so much that he gave his unique & precious son (Jhn.3:16). While Κόσμος/kosmos probably means ‘enemies’ in this context an emphasises the depth of his love, a secondary sense is can be of every human being, emphasising the expanse of his love. All in fact in the kosmos being in rebellion towards God. Likewise as Paul said, “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rm.5:8). This said, some argue that God has elected some for salvation & some for damnation. A doctrine sometimes called Dual Predestinationism. When coupled with the idea that God decided without recourse to any human merit or demerit (one form of the doctrine of Total Depravity) it sounds awfully like picking names out of a hat: a lucky dip. This position shall
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be treated under the heading of Extreme Calvinism. For now it shall be taken that God
seeks the eternal salvation of every member of the human race.\(^\text{80}\)

1 Tm.2:4 is often used as a proof-text of encapsulation of Wider Hope. It is perhaps well
to ask though whether salvation in 1 Tm.2:4 means eternal life. In the Pastorals\(^\text{81}\) it can
mean rebirth to eternal life (eg 2 Tm.1:9f.; Tts.1:3; 2:13f., 3:4-6) and 1 Tm.1:15 probably makes
this point. 1 Tm.2:15 is difficult, but can be taken as an aside, following 1 Tm.2:11ff., that
whatever gender roles are appropriate, salvation is equally for woman through the
promised child (Gen.3:15) if they (as men must) abide in “faith, love & holiness with propriety”.

Other interpretations are possible, though, in line with the semantic range of \(σωζω/σαζω\).\(^\text{82}\)
This however could still mean salvation as spiritual development to Christian girls/women,
even as having eternal life boys/men are to abide in the virtues and thus to mature. Thus
within the Pastorals may be the idea of an ongoing sense of salvation, consequent to the
one-off reception of life (cf. 1 Tm.4:10), and this should be borne in mind.

AD Wider Hope

According to this position conversion is a possibility after death. It is generally held that at
some point it becomes impossible to repent and that alienation becomes permanent. As
already shown, AD Wider Hope can be linked to Annihilationism, in which case the sinner
having refused redemption after death cease to exist, or subsumed under Universalism, in
which case the hope is given to all who have not accepted God before death and
eventually taken up by all. However I shall not again raise the issues of Universalism or
Annihilationism. One main text for AD Wider Hope is 1 Pt.3:18-22, which I feel deserves
fulsome treatment.

Does 1 Pt.3:18-22 support conversion after death?

“I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

“I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the
Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified,

\(^{80}\) It seems well established that the fallen angels are irredeemable and so do not figure in God’s plan of redemption. This said
some Universalist positions have argued that if God is Love and Love is ultimately victorious, then even Satan must bow to
Love and be saved.

Incidentally I consider Pauline authorship most likely.

\(^{82}\) Yet any interpretation must note that the salvation is conditional. To limit salvation here to safe childbearing also limits it to
presumably Christian mothers, manifestly not borne out by statistics. Likewise the idea of salvation (eternal life) because of
motherhood would exclude salvation from single girls/women and imply a different basis to eternal life coming to boys/men.

There is also the thought that ‘saved’ means ‘fulfilled’ through motherhood. The Greek is the singular (ie she) though
generally taken as woman/women, and is future \(σαθῆσεται\).
died and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

"I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen." (Apostles' Creed: Alternative Service Book, 57). Here put as "descended to the dead", in an earlier form "descended to Hell", a primary reference for this credo is 1 Pt.3:18-22. The title Apostles' Creed (based on the earlier Old Roman Creed) is somewhat misleading and while the thoughts are Patristic do they fully & truly reflected the Apostles? In particular the expression "descended to the dead" is one of a number of accretions added centuries after the original apostles. That it is Dogmatic (ie Church) Theology does not mean that it is Systematic Theology, and we are at liberty to examine its credentials, according to Scripture.

Historically 1 Pt.3:18-22, quite unique in the NT, has had much weight placed on it – eg credal above – weight that has influenced many, so it is worth spending time examining it. There are numerous readings of this section. What does it all mean? Is it, as say Plumptre held, that there was a special way of salvation (a Sonderweg) for a generation (or more) by Christ's Hades' Mission? If so, should we hope that at a future date, perhaps at his return, he will directly evangelise the remainder of Adam who have missed news of him this in this life? Did Jesus ever go to Hades? Certainly Ac.2:31 has been taken to say so. And if he did, and he was active, what did he do there? In fact Ac.2:31 simply affirms that Jesus shared real death like as a rule all humanity does, but that uniquely he was not abandoned to Hades. It does not explicitly say he went there, since it could be true whether he had been there but not left there or whether he was never there in the first place: one cannot be abandoned in a place one has never entered. However, it is clear that Jesus was 3 days & 3 nights in the belly of the whale, a term surely symbolic only of Hades, and covering the time between his death & resurrection. Therefore (unless simply poetic of death) it seems justified to take it that he was in Hades but uniquely was not left there. Some look to 1 Pt.3:18ff. for fuller details, both about him having been active, and as to one way in which he had been active. But is this a true function of this passage?

*There is nothing in the paragraph itself, obscure as it is, to suggest that it is only a digression* (Salmond: Immortality, 367). If Salmond was correct, then a correct interpretation must consider its meaning within the

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83 Legend has it that each of the Twelve Apostles added clauses to make up this creed.
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immediate context and possibly within Petrine theology. According to Salmond, the best view is roughly this:

We must keep the generation of Noah as central to exegesis here, and appreciate the antitheses in this section. Building on the antithesis between earthly “in flesh” life contrasted to his heavenly “in spirit” life he argued that it was not a mission in his disembodied state, but pre-quickened vs quickened life (or mortal vs immortal, perishable vs imperishable). Further, that εκπροσέλεξε/εκερυσε usually means preaching of grace and so does here, rather than a concio damnatoria. The audience was Noah’s generation, now in prison (φυλακή/φυλάκιον), evil prisoners (not the OT saints) as in 2 Pt.2:4 & Jude 6. They are called spirits, but are human spirits as the word πνευματικός/pneumatin means (likewise in Heb.12:23). It is not definite that after his death Christ preached to them. It is simply that Christ – who was put to death but quickened – preached to them at some point, possibly (favoured by Salmond, cf. p379) at the time of their disobedience.

Salmond rejected various ideas, including the idea of a triumphal proclamation by Christ, whether in his disembodied or resurrection mode, to the underworld. For this he emphasised the limitation of εκπροσέλεξε of grace-preaching, and the context, namely that of recommending Christ-like endurance of wrong, not of triumphing over fallen humanity.

Did Peter bespeak a wider hope concerning humanity in general – a sermon to the OT people that might re-echo to new generations in Hades’ dark chasms as a second chamber of opportunity? Salmond allowed weight to terms such as ‘went’ (1 Pt.3:19) and the ethical argument for a universally accessible salvation, but rejected – on such grounds as ignoring the specificity of Noah’s Generation and ignoring such details as the ark in this framework – this idea too. And after all, how can such a wider hope idea tie in with the contextual message to Christians to stand their ground even in adversity (Salmond: Immortality, 376)?

To Salmond the least objectionable view, argued by such as Augustine, Aquinas, Bede, Beza, Schweitzer, was that it meant: “be content to suffer. There is blessing in doing so, provided you suffer for well-doing and not for ill-doing. Look at your Lord’s example – how He did good to the most unworthy and died for the unjust. Think what the thought of

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84 By this I do not imply that theologies multiplied at variance with one another, but do imply that different leaders had difference perspectives of God & his works, so sometimes highlighting different aspects.

85 Rm.1:3f.; 1 Tm.3:16 — ‘in spirit’ = his spiritual & new life.

86 Comparison can be made to 1 Cor.15:42ff., where ψυχικός/pshikhikos & πνευματικός/pneumatikos may be put as perishable/imperishable, alongside connected contrasts such as dishonour/glory, weakness/power, natural/spiritual.

87 In an additional note he noted that those holding Peter’s illustration to have been influenced by Enoch can link a proclamation to fallen angels as either after Christ’s death (Baur) or before Christ’s incarnation (Friedrich Spitta); (Salmond: Immortality, 551f.).
injurious suffering was to Him; if He suffered even unto death as regards the mortal side of His being, He was raised as regards the spiritual to a new life with new powers. Look back on the remote past, ere He had appeared in the flesh. Reflect how then, too, He acted in this gracious way, how He went and preached to the guilty generation of the Flood, making known to those grossest of wrong-doers, by the spectacle of the ark a-building, the word of His servant Noah, and the varied warnings of the time, His will to save them. And consider that He has still the same graciousness of will - of which baptism is the figure; that He can still save oppressed righteous ones as He saved the believing souls of Noah's house; that all the more can He now save such, seeing that in His exalted life He has all the powers of heaven subject to Him” (Salmond: Immortality, 377).

The basic position of Salmond has been taken up by both Grudem & Clowney. The latter interacted with France’s position but favoured Grudem’s idea that by Noah, the preacher of righteousness (2:5), Christ preached to those who are now in spiritual prison before they were in prison (eg Clowney: 1 Peter, 154ff.). We may move on from Salmond, giving him credit for insisting on noting the specificity of Noah’s Generation, the antithesis of pre-quickened vs quickened, and contextuality. The position of R T France is clear: “to try to understand 1 Peter 3:19f. without a copy of the Book of Enoch at your elbow is to condemn yourself to failure” (Marshall: Interpretation, 265). This indeed was a suggestion from Salmond. With Salmond, France argued

- the relevance of the immediate context, namely that of persecutions against the church, probably involving death (1 Pt.3:13-17; 4:1-6);
- the antithesis between pre-quickened & quickened states.

However he laid more emphasis on current Intertestamental (IT) studies than did Salmond, exegeted the meaning & chronology of εκπομπηκερυκε differently, and reinterpreted the specificity of Noah’s Generation.

As for IT studies, while the OT was the main mental ground of the Jewish people, the IT was also a strong force. Certainly some aspects have come into the NT corpus, notably in Jude, while Pagan sources also were cited (eg Tts.1:12). So there is no prima facie reason to rule out an IT common referent having been used between Peter & his audience.

France has linked vv18f. as “πνευματι εν αυτῳ” instead of the usual translation that assumes a conjunction - εν φ - without an antecedent. True, it functions without an antecedent in places like 1 Pt.1:6; 2:12; 3:16; & 4:4, but noticeably unlike 1 Pt.3:18, such places have no obvious masculine or neuter noun to suggest an antecedent. So dogmatic assumptions aside, grammatically this appears to be “a straightforward relative” meaning “in his spirit”, ie his quickened life, as in v18 (Marshall: Interpretation, 269; cf. NIV ft.). This goes against Salmond’s preference of a preincarnate preaching.

Pursuing this chronology, Salmond’s use of Heb.12:23 noted the only clear NT use of πνευματιν referring to human beings, and along with IT references there is
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always – excluding 1 Pt.3:19 – some qualifying description, such as “of the dead” or “of the righteous”. A case for assuming it means human beings is therefore but weakly based on such sources: incidentally it is not used in 1 Pt.4:6. On the other hand “Πνευμα in the sense of a supernatural being, usually evil, is common in the New Testament and contemporary literature” (Marshall: Interpretation, 269). NT uses of the absolute use include Mt.8:16; 12:45; Lk.10:20; Ac.23:8f. In 1 Enoch God is called “lord of spirits”. This is the primary NT source which France has suggested was Peter’s audience’s common frame of reference, and if so the source from which they would naturally have been expected to interpret an absolute (ie unqualified) use of τὸ Πνευμάτων. In both IT & NT sources, there is the idea of fallen angels linked to Noah’s Generation and shackled awaiting final punishment (cf. Naph.3:5; Jub:10:5; 1 Enoch 6-16; 18:12-19:2; 21:1-10; 54:3-6; 64:69; 86:88; 106:13-17; 2 Pt.2:4 & Jude 6). Enochic literature covers: fallen angels as τὸ Πνευμάτων (15:4,6,8); imprisonment (18:14; 21:10; 10 passim); their disobedience connected to the Flood (6-10; 21:6; 65-67; 106:13-17); a commission to proclaim their punishment (12-16). The similarities to 1 Pt.3 are obvious.88

Since πορευθεὶς is a neutral ‘went’ (not descended), the Apostles’ Creed should be amended to “went into Hell” or “went to the dead”. Since “Sheol or Hades...is never called ψυχάκη in biblical literature” (Marshall: Interpretation, 270f.) “into Hell” should be dropped. Since the governing idea is better taken as fallen angels anyway, the paraphrase “to the dead” should be dropped too. In short, this accretion to the Apostles’ Creed is misleading at worst, debatable at best.89 Salmond drew the connection between ψυχάκη here and in 2 Pt.2:4 & Jude 6. While in 2 Pt.2:4 & Jude 6 it bespeaks fallen angels, in 1 Pt.3:19 he insisted that it was of fallen human beings, not seeing how preaching or proclamation to fallen angels would fit the hortatory context of 1 Peter. Indeed he insisted that εἰκονίζωμενεκερήσατε must mean grace-preaching, a concept he rejected (as indeed he rejected Universalism) as irrelevant to fallen angels. In itself it is neutral – proclamation, heralding, whether good or bad or simply news. This said, the vast majority of NT references use it as grace-preaching.90 However, 1# the LXX used it about equally for proclaiming good or bad news; 2# the apparent parallel is of Enoch proclaiming judgement to the fallen angels; 3# 1 Pt.3:22

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88 It should never be assumed that a canonical use of a non-canonical source affirms the non-canonical source. I might use Wind in the Willows without affirming its delightful fantasy.

89 Lest this be felt an attack on orthodoxy, it can be said that the Apostles’ Creed does not have ecumenical support, since the East does not accept it. It originated in the West as a baptismal creed, and in time received additions, such as “descended into hell”. In fact the only ecumenical creed is C minus the filioque clause (cf. Graham Keith: Them.24.1.29 (1998)).

90 Hear my fingers slipped and I typed in grave-preaching: an unintentionally literal interpretation!
seems more in line with an emphasis on victory gained rather than salvation offered; a morale boost based on Christ’s victory aligns well with the context.

To recap & conclude, though with less exegetical discussion, France’s picture. It is briefly: that the believers undergoing serious persecution were being exhorted to stand firmly & righteously with Christ. This exhortation pointed out that the very spirits who had led man’s rebellion in that catastrophic time of Noah – the spirits that common religious writing made much of – knew they had been defeated by Christ’s redemptive sufferings. Resurrection followed death. Taking up the theme of the Flood, though it seemed that believers were in the minority (as Noah had been) still God would save “through (in locative and/or dative) water” those who were his. Somehow, typologically (ἐν τῷ ἀντίτυπῳ), water baptism is to Christians what the Flood was to Noah, not a matter of externals ceremonies (as Jewish baptisms ceremonially purified hands, etc) but an expression of an internal pledge/commitment to be loyal to God. This is linked, perhaps like Rm.6, to Christ’s resurrection, symbolised in baptism by coming out of the water into new life with Christ. In this sense water baptism is vitally linked to standing amid persecution, sharing Christ’s rejection but ultimate vindication. And indeed he who died, was buried, and rose again has gone to God’s right hand with all spiritual powers subject to him (e.g Ps.110:1), including those stirring up the persecution.

Enough has now been said to show that this section is at best unsafe ground for the AD Wider Hope view. While any uncertain foundation is best avoided, the AD Wider Hope position is not hopeless with the removal of 1 Pt.3. It must be said however that 1 Pt.3 has traditionally been taken as its most secure textual foundation. Without it it does seem inclined to survive more on the proposition that not all in this life receive a fair chance of eternal life and God grants all a fair chance.

The question has been raised as to whether or not from an ethical position it is important whether people hear the gospel in this life. While it is fine that God offers his joy to some, should he be condemned for not offering it to all: God of the limited offer? Very few would adjudge God just if he sentenced many to permanently ongoing loss simply because unfortunately they did not hear the offer. Of course this charge would be significantly removed if:

1. by ceasing to exist (Annihilationism) the unredeemed experienced no permanent ongoing loss, or
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2. for a limited time the unredeemed experienced redemptive anguish before experiencing permanent ongoing bliss (Universalism), or

3. before or after death all the unredeemed are given a full chance to experience permanent ongoing bliss (Wider Hope).

The position of Wider Hope shall be looked at more, especially appertaining to those who hear only the voice of other religions.²

**Extreme Calvinism**

Before continuing the position of Wider Hope, let us review a position that dismisses the charge against God by denying that man is suitably placed to judge God's sovereignty. Rather than seeking solutions to the problem of fairness it rules out of court human perceptions of fairness as flawed and rightly insists that God is unflawed. This view is sometimes called Calvinism, based in measure on John Calvin. It argues that there is no option for mankind, one way or the other. It postulates that depending entirely upon himself and without any consideration to human traits, God chooses some to save & some to damn. Another name for this is *Double Predestinationism*. While most holding this view would subscribe to the view that hearing the gospel is a *sine qua non*, some would hold that God, who commands we preach, is nevertheless sovereignly able to save even those who have not heard the preaching. There are problems for Calvinism either way. Its idea of Limited Selection, like the idea of Limited Offer it rejects, raises the same doubts about God's integrity. To this can be added the charge of capriciousness. If, as Calvinism states, all people are totally fallen as fallen can be, having no goodness, then by what criteria does God decide who to save & who to damn, since there is no moral distinction between people? If no moral criteria (traits & inclinations) exist then is it not a case of salvation being a case of randomness – a lucky dip? Calvinists might reply that these accusations against God are based on man's totally fallen ideas about fairness & divine wisdom & love and so are totally absurd. Moreover, they might add, justice alone would damn us all so let us rather marvel at God's goodness in choosing to save at least some. These replies still leave questions, such as whether only the damned are able to think these totally fallen thoughts and whether, if it is not extended to all equals in degradation, God's mercy is capricious or limited in power to save. Calvinism would argue that it rests on the biblical theme of divine election and so is unassailable. However there are other

² Though not treated here, the Final Option idea of BD Wider Hope may be noted: It is a minority opinion, largely confined to Roman Catholicism. Cardinal Henry Newman held it. It holds that final option is given at the point of death to all whether humanly evangelised or no, children given the grace to understand and decide.
ways to acknowledge that the theme of divine election is a biblical theme without subscribing to Double Predestinationism.

Some election passages can seem to support the idea that God alone (not God with man) chooses who shall be saved: "John Calvin, who became a major defender [of this view], saw the whole doctrine summarized in Eph.1" (F K Klooster: Elwell: Dictionary, 348). But even central passages to Calvinistic Electionism are not beyond dispute. Election texts in general can be marshalled under headings of Eternal Life (Ultimate), Instrumental, & Character election. The chart below clearly shows that biblically election does not simply mean, if it means at all, election to eternal life. While Calvinism & Calvin have much to offer the church, on this subject it might be better to maintain that God has chosen/elected both 1# to give man the ability to sin and repent, and 2# to put in place a way & invitation of salvation available to all mankind.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of divine election</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ultimate basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arguably in the limited sense of only choosing some, this is not a biblical position. It argues that God doesn't choose according to any merit of the individuals chosen for life or damnation (indeed arguing that all are as totally depraved as can be). Is it not picturing God as deciding like a lucky dip?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental basis</td>
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<tr>
<td>This is a biblical position. Some were (perhaps some are) chosen to do a job, whether with or without 'salvation' – eg Abraham (Gen.12:3); Cyrus (Is.45:4); Jacob/Esau⁹¹ (Rm.9:13, &amp; 11); Jesus (Lk.23:35); the Twelve.⁹³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those God knew beforehand, he planned to become like Jesus (Rm.8:29; Eph.1:4). His adoption plans were laid before we were adopted (Eph.1:5). This area of election is about what election aims at, and challenges our lifestyles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁹² There are areas of difficulty within this chapter (and elsewhere), but one can alternatively suggest such as the following. V4 = how God chose Christians to become, not who to become Christians. V5f. = becoming family by adoption had been God's will before it became possible through his son. This point would with v4 challenge Christians to live righteously as graciously invited members of God's family.

⁹³ The explanation to Lk.14:26: 'hate' = lesser commitment (or lesser love)?

⁹⁴ Jhn.15:16 – surely not 'chosen to sonship'. 1# it actually gives a different main reason: service; 2# 6:70f. – Judas son of perdition was chosen; 3# it seems rather a reminder of the specialness of their discipleship – it was the custom for people to choose their rabbi (cf. Mt.8:19); 4# not all chosen accepted – Mt.19:21f.
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Calvinism as a system has strengths & weaknesses. Although it is not historically allied to Annihilationism, Universalism or AD Wider Hope, it could to some extent accommodate any of these views. That is, it could accept

- that those God chooses not the redeem he utterly destroys; or
- that those God chooses not to redeem in this life he chooses ultimately to redeem; or
- that there are some whom he chooses to redeem after their deaths, specifically from among those who have never heard the gospel.

To this extent it is only in dismissing the fitness of fallen man to question God's fairness that it that it is distinctive. However it is not the central area of this dissertation and shall now be left until we consider the issue of infant redemption.

Options for those who do not hear

Background preaching

There is scope to argue that the saving knowledge of God has always been available without human agency. In Is.59:16 & Is.63:5 (called by some DI & TI sections) the prophet spoke of Yahweh rescuing his oppressed & repentant people from their enemies: nobody was about to help him. Is the greater work of eternal rescue impossible to him apart from human agency?

Are there not indications of such universalism of proclamation/preaching written into the very fabric of nature? For instance, in the OT witness of Ps.19:1 that the heavens bespeak his glory? Here it needs to be said that like many terms, 'heaven' has a range of meanings. We cannot always be sure what meaning was meant in what context. But while "praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the skies [heavens]" (Ps.148:4) seems not to mean outer space (or 'deep heaven' to devotees of C S Lewis), let alone the eternal 'home' or 'environment' of God, it is obvious that sun, moon & stars were taken as wonders declaring God.\(^{95}\) Even taken as 'sky', Ps.19:1 seems to mean that which is visible in the skies (eg sun & moon and presumably stars): the picture within the frame. And it surely implies that the glory of God is manifest this way to all mankind, even as the sky is common property, so to speak, to man. To say as some that this witness is enough to eternally damn but not enough to eternally save seems to me to throw doubt on God's

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\(^{95}\) While a few EVV, for example that NIV & GNB, seem to contrast highest heavens & skies, most (eg KJV, RV, RSV, NEB, NKJV, Amp) are more literal. It is unclear whether a real contrast or Hebrew parallelism is behind the distinction highest heavens and simply heavens.
goodness. If he can show enough to justly damn those who refuse the knowledge surely they at least saw enough to escape the damnation?

Scholars are divided over whether the OT – at least at early stages – witnessed to eternal salvation. The position of Desmond Alexander (cf. Them.11.2.41ff. (1986)) is an interesting though minority position. He contended that a richer after-death view was held among the patriarchs than we usually acknowledge. In short, that Sheol did not house the righteous in one compartment & the unrighteous in another, but was a place (not simply death) that housed only the unrighteous. The main biblical argument that might suggest otherwise he pinpointed as being Jacob’s Lament (Gen.37:35; 42:38; 44:29ff.) & Hezekiah’s Escape (Is.38). Both these he dismissed as misinterpreting the data. He agreed with such as R L Harris & A Heidel at least in their distinctions between Good Death & Bad Death, the way of dying (such as violently or prematurely) at one time in Israel being taken to indicate God’s verdict on the individual. This seemed to him to imply....

- that Jacob wrongly believed that he & his sons must have been evil, and so assumed that Joseph (dying young & violently) had gone to Sheol and that he himself would have to follow.
- that Hezekiah had believed that he would permanently escape Sheol, Yahweh having forgiven his sins (Is.28:1,17).

He also pointed out instances of individual bypassing death (eg Enoch and Elijah) and belief in a future moral redress of individuals (eg Nb.23:10; Pss.49 & 73; Dan.12:2). His position is difficult to assess, though there is perhaps a trend among scholars to interpret the OT pictures of life after death is more positive ways than aforetime. It is likely that from the earliest times there was some dim sense of things to come after death, before even the Patriarchs. This can be seen too from a study of comparative anthropology. On this Dr. Salmond has put much material together, showing the beliefs of the Egyptians, Babylonians, and such like (cf. SCDI).

I shall however look at 3 movements, the most ancient going back before the OT, the next eldest a branch at variance from it, and the third arguably a deviation from Christianity. How do these positions teach man’s relationship with God?

Salvation sought in other religions

I think back to a book by Fritz Riddenor (How to be a Christian without being religious). If as he put it religion is used to mean man’s naïve idea of finding & pleasing God through self-effort, then Christianity it is not a religion. However, “the word religion captures well the meaning of the Greek thράσκεια.... The word is not specifically Christian and [was] used widely in Greek religion to denote the
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reverencing of a god (or gods)" (Moo: James, 86). Thus from what James said about thrēskeia we can take it that religion can be worthy or worthless, judged by whether it is a real link with God's heart (Jas.1:26f.). Examples in James included caring about others in talk & actions, and living in God's company. Religion is an acceptable term from a Christian perspective and in this way I happily use it.

From a perspective of traditional Christianity its own position is from God, while there also exists the domain of humanity & the demonic. From a perspective of liberal Christianity, Christianity is essentially from the domain of man, howbeit perhaps man in touch with God. If so the playing field is level and the other religions should be admired as of equal inspiration with Christianity, even if the latter is primus inter pares. I have argued elsewhere against the position of liberal Christianity, but interesting though it be it would be too large an exercise to undergo here. For the purposes of this paper I shall argue from, not for, the traditional position, and shall take it that it has the rightful claim to speak in the name of Christ.

Granted there exists domains of God, of man, and the demonic, Christianity attempts to discern the domain of the other religions. Various positions have been taken. Some would dismiss the other religions as simply human constructs, some as simply demonic. The latter answer the appeal to truth in these religions as demonic cunning: a half-truth is worse than a lie! However this is surely to throw into doubt the biblical position that God desires all to turn to him, at least preferably in this life. Is it not consonant that he has shown enough of himself for those who have not had human preachers? And is it not at least a possibility that something of this revelation has been incorporated – perhaps strongly influenced the foundations of – these religions? As J N D Anderson put it, he had "never met a Muslim convert who regards...God [whom] he previously sought to worship, as a wholly false [g]od; instead, he is filled with wonder and gratitude that he has now been brought to know...God as he really is, in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Anderson: Christianity, 110). It is my contention that the desire for God is within every human being this side of the grave, and has always been the case. I shall argue from earlier studies I have done into other religions that this desire for God tends to have at least one vital ingredient, namely warmth for God, a devotion of the heart. It is arguable that this ingredient fully matures unless God is approached through recognition of Christ.

Let us look at the basic construction of these main religions, highlighting aspects which, however unrefined, arguably are from God. "The non-Christian religions seem to me to resemble patchwork quilt, with brighter and darker components in differing proportions. There are elements of truth which must come from God himself, whether through memory of an original revelation or that measure of self-disclosure which, I
cannot doubt, God still vouchsafes to those who truly seek him. But there are elements which are definitely false, and which I, for one, cannot doubt comes from the ‘father of lies’ – whose primary purpose is not so much to entice [people] into sexual sin as to keep them back, by any means in his power, from the only Saviour” (Anderson: Christianity, 109).

Hinduism

Its origins are obscure. Some suggest (cf. Chapman: Case for Christianity, 143) that at the early Aryan stage, Hindu worship was similar to that of Abraham’s background, with a sense of a Most High who was worshipped in simplicity under various descriptions, descriptions which by c.1,000 BC had become names of individual gods. The pre-Aryan position is under debate, it having been clouded by Western colonialism over the last couple of centuries. Some suggest that a pre-Vedic Hinduism that concentrated on the matriarchal concepts of goddesses, but possibly highlighted Shiva, the god “most enmeshed in family relationships” (Smith: Religion, 976). Hinduism is then an umbrella term covering much diversity of faith and where much must be covered in short space, generalisations are a must.

A number of sacred writings appeared over time. The most significant were the Vedas, teachings between c.1400 & c.900 BC and linked to what was taken to be divine revelation mediated through the priests. The Veda has four main parts: Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda & (lastly) Atharva Veda. These original teachings (unwritten until recently) were followed by

- teaching explaining them (Brahmanas, c.1100-700 BC),
- esoteric teaching mainly on meditation instead of sacrifice (Aranyakas, c.800-600 BC) &
- mystical teaching on ultimate reality and experiencing this through self-knowledge (Upanishads, c.700-400 BC).

Its 400-700 million adherents (by birth if not by belief) can be analysed into two main categories of belief. One main form we may perhaps call pure Hinduism, which is pantheistic, believing that the whole universe is God (personal or impersonal). We may call the other form popular Hinduism, which is polytheistic, believing that there are many gods. Many would say that gods are personal manifestations of the one reality – Brahman, the impersonal & morally neutral reality of which all else are aspects. In this sense Hinduism

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96 The Aryan stage was that when Aryans (Europeans) had gained a mastery over India. They produced the Veda. They excluded the original Indians from their European system of Hinduism until they themselves had become well & truly Indian. Then they taught a 4th caste – for the original Indian – that of Shudras. It appears that Hinduism has often changed from tripartite to quadripartite patterns. Even as an original 3 caste system extended to 4, likewise the original 3 hopes of pleasure, power & principle extended to include a 4th, moksha (liberation).
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relegates polytheism as secondary, believing that ultimately gods do not exist in their own right. Things are made up of reality (Brahman) and mere appearance – illusion. Real life is reincarnating upward from the illusion of individuality into the oneness of Brahman: back to Godhead. This surely indicates the perception among the Hindu people of something beyond this life, a belief Christians highlight.

The idea is that against this desire man is locked into a pattern of reincarnation, but that salvation – moksha, "liberation from space and time" (Anderson: Christianity, 58), breaking out of this pattern and thus going back to Godhead – is possible. Thus Hindus stress soteriology. This idea of getting beyond to God is highlighted by Christianity. This said, admittedly the ideas of what salvation is and how it is possible differ strongly between the two religions.

According to Hinduism there are 3 main ways in which a person can be liberated.

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<tr>
<th>Ways to Moksha</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>meditation</td>
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<tr>
<td>jnana marga = 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>jnana yoga = by knowledge head?</td>
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<tr>
<td>religious rites</td>
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<tr>
<td>karma marga = karma yoga = by works hands?</td>
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<tr>
<td>devotion to a deity</td>
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<tr>
<td>bhakti marga = bhakti yoga = by grace heart?</td>
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Knowledge is sought through yoga, which involves control over the body to open the door of contact with the Ultimate (Brahman). Salvation can also be sought through (ritual) works: "the Bhagavad Gita indicates that it is 'not by refraining from action' that 'we attain freedom from action'" (Lion: Religions, 192). However the most popular path is salvation though devotion/love, in a sense of plunging into the divine through desire for it, and thus becoming one with it. This picks up the idea of the impersonal reality manifesting itself through personal forms and thus allowing a personal response. "The Bhagavad Gita speaks of Arjuna seeing in Krishna countless visions of wonder, as Krishna asserts that 'only by bhakti can you see me and know me and come to me'... salvation is...a gift from God" (Lion: Religions, 192). Such devotion involves ritualism and worship through idols that represent some aspects of God. Some believe that lover & beloved continue united as two, rather than the worshipper losing their individual status. All three paths are enjoined: in the C1 Bhagavad Gita, "Krishna...teaches a path that combines...karma marga...jnana marga...and bhakti marga. Devotion is the culmination, for even after one has mastered well duty and wisdom, one 'attains the highest devotion to me,' says Krishna to his disciple Arjuna, because 'I love you well' (18.54,64)" (Smith:

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97 Other religious writings include the Bhagavad-Gita (dated about the time when Jesus was born). It expressed Hinduism in terms of faith and devotion.

98 One branch, Jainism, begun by Mahavira in the C6 bc, is contrary to the somewhat European influenced Upanishads and affirms individuality positively. Still Mahavira taught escape from matter for each soul (jiva).

99 Earlier Veda forms of Hinduism ignored the idea of moksha in favour of the ideas of pleasure, power & principle. Perhaps over centuries its this-world belief was seen to be lacking and thought was given to escaping the cycle of rebirth (samsara).

100 Marga = path; yoga = discipline.
Religion, 831). One might pick up a threefold ethics of internal soundness, community soundness and Godward soundness. Above all perhaps one should consider a perception that love is meant to extend beyond humanity, a point in contact with Christian belief that God is love and that salvation is through personal welcome of him.

**Buddhism**

Sometime between the C6 & C5 BC Siddhartha Gautama developed what was then a more compassionate alternative to traditional Hinduism. It may even be that the spiritual concerns he had, which were shared with many at that time, were sparked off by the prophet Isaiah. Today there are between 200-600 million Buddhists or semi-Buddhists, all of whom go back to essentials taught by The Buddha. He rejected either theism or at least the traditional priestly theism of his day and has been called an atheist, a term once used of Christians because they rejected the idea of many gods! His view (the Four Noble Truths) was that man’s suffering (dukkha) was caused by intense desire (tanha) – eg gold, glory, & girls – arising out of the will to live and to possess. Therefore the way out of suffering was the way out of our strong desire to live and to own. It does not mean to be without them but it does mean to be without a passion for them: avoiding self-denial & self-indulgence was the Middle Path. It resulted in a passionless peace called Nirvana. One achieving this state became a Buddha, an enlightened one. Nirvana was achieved through working yourself out of the cycle of reincarnations. The ‘way out’ (exodus) is often called the Eightfold Path:

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101 He was not popular in Hindu eyes, and the 9th descent of Vishnu was “disguised as Buddha…[to lead] immoral people astray with a ‘false doctrine’” (Smith: Religion, 96).

102 The C6 saw revolts against priestcraft and gave rise to Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism, Vedanta Monism & Taoism, plus teachings by Socrates & Pythagoras. “One obvious possible source [of this great sea-change] is the preaching of Isaiah (about 740 BCE onwards) and the other eighth-century prophets of Israel, with the refrain of Jeremiah and Ezekiel a century or so later. Certainly we can find most of the ethical emphases of Zoroaster, Buddha…Mahavira…and Confucius…in the great prophets” (Lion: Religions, 42).

103 Siddhartha Gautama is sometimes called The Buddha, however ‘buddha’ means ‘enlightened one’ and thus a goal which many have been said to attain. Statues of buddhas can be used as aids for meditation but are sometimes worshipped.
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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Right views</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Right resolve</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Right speech</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Right behaviour</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Right occupation</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Right effort</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Right contemplation</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Right meditation</td>
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Common people were to concentrate on being good, to improve their next incarnation. Those on the next level up, monks & nuns, were to renounce family ties & material goods and live a simply contemplative life. This could vary from living alone in a forest to living in a monastery and each morning begging food from the locals, an act which benefited the monk/nun with food, and the giver with good works leading towards a better incarnation. Mahayana Buddhism holds that the Buddha was one of several Buddha manifestations of an eternal being devoted to teaching & helping people. In this pattern it emphasises teaching & helping others, rather than generally ignoring them on one’s quest for Buddhahood. Indeed compassion is taken as essential for Buddhahood, although human reality is taken to be less real than Theravada Buddhism suggests. It takes in ideas of temples, gods & prayers, and argues that although the documentary audit trail goes dead some centuries before the Buddha, nevertheless he orally propounded these ideas. Whatever the position of the founder of Buddhism, one can at least say that many who identify with him seek salvation beyond the confines of mere humanity, seek an otherness. Its soteriology is more on devotion to one’s neighbours than to the otherness beyond the world. Again, Christianity takes issue as regards defining the otherness and of means to approach this otherness, but agrees the importance of such.

Islam

This was probably started by Christian motivated reaction to a selfish polytheistic society. Its originator was the Arab Muhammad (c.570-632). He was a personable working class man – orphaned by death soon after his birth – who came to reject his culture of idol

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104 There are different types of Buddha and they have personal assistants (Bodhisattvas) advancing to Buddhahood. They can function as patron saints and may be honoured above Buddhas.
worship. He married his boss, a well to do woman named Khadija, who was related to the Christian scholar Waraqah ibn Nawfal. To him the co-ordinating meaning of life was one who was God (Allah). He sought for a personal revelation, and claimed to receive it, and today there are about 700 million Muslims who stress that Allah sees what is going on and that man is to submit to him.

The Islamic calendar dates from the faith's move from Mecca to Medina: by our calendar AD 622 and by their calendar Year 0. Islam's welcome in Medina may also be linked to the Jews there, for their faith was monotheistic and they expected a coming messiah. Muhammad was happy with them but they did not stay in his good books for long. Although he admired their conviction that God was one and had inspired written revelation, they failed to be won over and would not accept him as the 'seal of the prophets'. Some were expelled from Medina, while others were put to death. Relationships would later become relatively easy between Christianity, Islam, & Judaism, with Islamic aggression based on territorial gain rather than proselytising. Communities that worshipped God as God (Christians, Jews and in a sense Zoroastrians) and had holy writings were treated kindly, becoming protected taxpayers to the empire of Islam. The initial power base of Islam was the Arab people and thus Islam became integrated into Arab society, becoming a community & family issue. But as the new coalition of Islam became an empire, many non-Arabs within that new empire pretended to convert to Islam in order to be treated as 1st class citizens. There was a tendency for future generations, brought up doing & saying the things that a Muslim must do & say, to believe the things that Muslims must believe, even though their nominal 'Muslim' parents hadn't.

There is a strong soteriological teaching, composed of individual choice to live a more righteous than otherwise life, the prophet's intercession, and Allah's mercy. Its idea of "appropriate eternal reward" for virtue is called Congruous Merit and is taught in some church circles too. Salvation is only for those who are true Muslims, ie those who keep the 5 Pillars of Islam (cf. infra). The ultimate glory Allah offers costs Allah no suffering. No cross. Allah knows not death, according to Islam: "God is beyond death and is the essence of life. God does not know what the death of man is. Though we be as naked as birds, in the knowledge of death we are better than God" (Muhammad Iqbal: Themelios 14.3.113.A (1989)). The idea that God the trinity

105 And the Islamic calendar is based on Lunar years, about 11 days shorter than Solar years. So, eg, our AD 722 is not the same as their 100 AH (ie 100 lunar years After Hijra).

106 Christians sometimes speak of an incorporated knowledge, in that through incarnation & death God has incorporated death into himself without dying per se.
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experienced death in the death of God the Son sounds blasphemous to Muslims — partly because the idea of a son being the result of God having sex is rightly rejected.

### The 5 Pillars of Islam

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<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Pillar</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shahada</td>
<td>Belief that “there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet”</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Salat</td>
<td>Communal prayer 5 times a day</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sawm</td>
<td>Fasting during the daylight hours of the month of Ramadan</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Hajj</td>
<td>A pilgrimage to Mecca, the holy city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Zakat</td>
<td>Giving to the needy (min. 2½%)</td>
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</table>

It has been taught that a strict obedience to these Pillars is vital to salvation. Yet "I think it would be fair to say that the great majority of Sunni (or 'orthodox') Muslims, at least, today take the attitude that if they say the Muslim creed from their hearts, and if they make some attempt to fulfill their obligations in fast and prayer, they may have to face the fire of judgment for a time but will eventually be 'saved' and admitted to Paradise by the timely intervention of their Prophet" (Anderson: Christianity, 68). The more relaxed position might show a lesser concern about divine purging and a greater hope in Allah's mercy.

Mainline Islam considers man as worshipper & servant, not family, and that Allah does not wish fellowship with creatures (they are at best created to serve). Paradise itself is not about fellowship with Allah. The *Hadith* (a book of what Muhammad might have said and done) says: “O my servants, you can neither do me any harm nor can you do me any good”, and the Koran says: “I created the jinn [spirits] and humankind only that they might worship me. I seek no livelihood from them, nor do I ask that they should feed me” (Koran 51; cf. Ps.50:12-15). Yet Muslim mystics (sufis), seek to meditate themselves into such fellowship, believing that Allah has a heart to fellowship with man. In this way they transcend without rejecting the Koran, seeking to wean themselves off the things of the world. Some claim to have broken through to Allah. In Islam, as with Hinduism & Buddhism, this desire for going beyond the world and a sense of lacking the means to do so, exists. And mysticism may well be one way in which those who have not heard had human preachers might nevertheless share in the sense of communion with God. Thus wrote William James at the turn of the C20: "this overcoming of all the usual barriers between the individual and the Absolute is the great mystic achievement. In mystic states we both become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our oneness. This is the everlasting and triumphant mystical tradition, hardly altered by differences of clime or creed. In Hinduism, in Neoplatonism, in Sufism, in Christian mysticism, in Whitmanism, we find the same recurring note, so that there is about mystical utterances an eternal unanimity which ought to make a critic stop and think.... Perpetually telling of the unity of man with God, and their speech antedates languages, and they do not grow old" (James: Varieties, 404). That James was not in traditional Christianity does not mean that his analysis was substantially incorrect. As the Christian philosopher Paul Helm said,
“James’s brilliance as a descriptive psychologist is apparent in his accounts of religious experience” (Douglas: Dictionary, 524). One can refer also to the work of Rudolf Otto who traced in many religions a perception of what he called the numinous. “Every religion which, so far from being a mere faith in traditional authority, springs from personal assurance and inward conviction... as Christianity does in a unique degree - must presuppose principles in the mind enabling it to be independently recognised as true” (Otto: The Holy, 175). Objections have been raised that both men were over-influenced by a wish to find a united front among the religions and undervalued differences. I think they probably did, but still do not consider that they were fundamentally incorrect. Another approach was made by C S Lewis, in tracing the documented commonality in man’s perception of Moral Right (eg cf. Lewis: Abolition). It would be strange if all except those who have heard & accepted the gospel preached by mortal man have sensed the reality of God, since man is created in his likeness. It would be strange if none who sensed his reality did not seek to respond positively. And it would be strange if none who sought to know him succeeded in any measure. But granting all such, this in no wise removes the command and the importance to preach.

Is desire enough for redemption?

A sense of God seems to exist within the main religions. Indeed, there are those who seem to desire him. But can desire without explicit knowledge ensure redemption? Let us look back again to before the cross as a paradigm of how things might be this side of the cross for those in the same epistemological situation. What is clear is that from the Patriarchs to the IT period there was an unfolding awareness of living beyond our mortality and thus a perception of the after-life need of salvation. Sadducees seemed to have believed that earlier OT strands (up to and including Moses) denied resurrection as such (Mt.22:23; Ac.23:8). Disagreement as to the specific levels of understanding at different periods and with different people during this history is likely to remain. However we can see glimpses of truth in the OT, whether or not it was clear to the people of those days (cf. 1Pt.1:10-12). There is evidence that two strands of eternal salvation are accommodated in the OT, the more excellent way being limited to those within hearing range of the Mosaic law. Paul covered this issue of epistemology and redemption. Going wider than his nation, he claimed that none were/are without excuse because of his wonders (Rm.1:19f.). What he meant by salvation only through hearing (eg Rm.10:14) should be judged by this.

107 This does not in itself say that they dismissed the idea of life beyond death. Incidentally there might have been a play on the words anastasis (resurrection) and anastasei (raise up) in Mt.22:23 & 24 respectively, indicating a Sadducean belief of progeny as the only acceptable meaning of resurrection.
Is hearing the gospel necessary for salvation?

Literalism is too narrow a hermeneutic to apply to those words, unless we attribute an inner contradiction in Romans. Thus Rm.1:19f. acts as a check & balance to Rm.10:14: seeing could also lead to believing (Rm.1:19f.). In Rm.10:14 he meant human witness and it need not be laboured that he would surely have agreed that salvation could come to the deaf through seeing God through his human witnesses. In Rm.1:19f. a hitherto path to salvation seems to have been accepted by Paul. It seems inconceivable that at the point of Pentecost this path was universally closed when universally the gospel had not preached.

Let us consider Romans in more depth. While Paul accepted that the gentiles had a sense of right & wrong (ch.2) and could be rightly condemned, "[he] does [not] deny the possibility that there are among the unevangelized Gentile 'doers of the law' who shall be acquitted (v13); he does not ask the question and [left] the question open....No doubt he would direct the good-worker seeker for glory and honor and immortality (v7) to the gospel...[and] any Gentile who by nature 'showed the work of the law written in his heart' (v15) into the fuller experience of the Spirit which provides the effective motivating power from the heart (2:29; 7:6; 8:4; 2 Cor.3:3,6)" (Dunn: Romans, 107). With E. P. Sanders Dunn argued that 3:20 does not deny salvation to the unevangelised since "works of the law are something more superficial, at the level of 'the letter' (2:27,29), an outward mark indicative of ethnic solidarity (2:28)...an identity factor" (Dunn: Romans, 158). It denied salvation on the basis of mere Torah observance to both Jew & gentile but doing the law was in contrast unsuperficial & spiritual (Dunn: Romans, 159). Only some Jews (& in measure some Gentiles (2:14f., 26f.)) felt the law's work of showing "their continuing need of God's grace" (Dunn: Romans, 160). I think it important to portray God's impartiality between Jew & gentile, as in all else. On the other hand I think it unlikely that doing the law is salvific. If a Jew can stand before God at the judgement and be accepted, so can a Gentile, despite lack of Jewish privileges (Rm.2:12-16).

Paul went on to apply the principle of impartiality in a different way. Whereas Rm.2:7-16 seem to offer the possibility that Gentiles, like Jews, may do God's will and find salvation, Rm.3:9 declares that "Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin" (cf. v19f.). Yet just as there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile with regard to sin, so justification is available "to all who believe" (v22-24). This familiar Pauline emphasis, that Jews and Gentiles are under judgement and may be justified through faith, is surely fundamental to our understanding of the gospel.

Yet that is not the whole story, since Paul's use of the impartiality motif in Rm.3 should not obscure his use of it in Rm.2. Admittedly, in Rm.2:12-16 he does not say (as he is sometimes imagined to say) that those who have not heard the gospel will be saved if they live a good
life according to their own lights. But he does insist that Jews, who have received special revelation from God, have no special advantage over Gentiles, who do not have that special revelation, when the day of judgement comes. God's impartiality will ensure that. Now of course Paul believed that Jews could be saved on the basis of the work of Christ, but without necessarily having heard the Christian gospel. Abraham for him was the supreme example of one who was justified through faith (Rm.4) and like the rest of the NT (cf. Mt.8:11; Heb.11) Paul's letters reflect the assumption that Israel's men and women of faith will share in God's final kingdom.

It seems to follow from the principle of God's impartiality that there is a door open similarly – if only slightly or tentatively – for people whose lives are lived outside the range of Christian influence and gospel preaching. If so, then if some find acceptance at the judgement, it will not be because they have been 'good Hindus' or 'good Muslims' any more than Christians are saved because they are 'good Christians'. It will be because, like Abraham, they have been people of faith, looking (as Heb.11 has it) for that that is not yet seen. They are not satisfied with what they have but hunger to know the God whose character and will is not entirely unknown to them (Rm.1:18ff.; 2:14). They have been open to the grace of God and to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, even though they have not necessarily named the name of Christ. Doing the law (as Dunn highlighted) will have been an indication that they have believed in God. It may be charted like this.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Have the written law?</th>
<th>Saved by written law?</th>
<th>Saved by good lives?</th>
<th>Saved by (perhaps unknown) Christ?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentiles</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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</table>

We should keep in mind that Paul concentrated on the assumption of the cross for those who came after it, beginning in Romans by saying that salvation had come from the Jews (Rm.1:3; Jhn.4:22). This shows that he had in mind the cross as the pivotal point in time. He then pictured the whole world up to this time & onwards as under God’s wrath for its wilful rejection of him (Rm.1:24,18). But while most of his writings concentrated on a new covenant dimension, he did not deny that people knew eternal salvation before the chronology of the cross, on which more later. What he generally said about salvation this side of the cross should not be taken to exclude a salvation experience to people before the cross, and arguably outside of its message since then. What then of preaching? I suggest that for Paul...
Is hearing the gospel necessary for salvation?

- *doing the law* without explicit hearing of it was evidence of saving faith, yet having also the explicit law was even better;
- *doing the law* without explicit hearing the gospel was evidence of saving faith, yet having also the explicit gospel was even better.

This would align with dominical teaching that such as Abraham, Isaac & Jacob had salvation in this sense (Mt.8:11). On Mt.8:11 it may be tentatively suggested that the OT period in the frame for the likes of the Patriarchs also applied to the Gentiles would too would sit at the messianic banquet. That it was Gentiles in Jesus' mind is seen by the fact that the 'many' were in contradistinction to the Jews. (This is a strong verse in which he used "words which in the [OT] relate to the world-wide gathering of Israel", namely 'from the east and west' (France: Matthew, 156), which has bearing on the issue of Replacement Theology.) It can thus be confidently said that eternal salvation applied to those in Israel before the cross who believed in Yahweh, incidental to the cultus but possible because of the cross.

I conclude that there is good evidence of a distinction between "the ontological and epistemological necessity of Jesus Christ for the salvation of individuals. Orthodox Christianity affirms the ontological necessity,... But the matter of epistemological necessity – the question of whether a person must know about Jesus in order to benefit from the salvation provided – is something else altogether" (Sanders: Name, 30). And along these lines I conclude that the Wider Hope position offers the best soteriology. While it may be argued that doers of the law evidence saving faith, what of those incapable of doing the law, specifically infants?

Salvation and infants

Sanders summarised 4 main positions as

1. Only some are saved – only those who are baptized (according to some Roman Catholics, some Lutherans, and Anglicans) – or elect (according to some Calvinists).
2. No answer can be given concerning whether those dying unbaptised are saved or lost (a traditional Lutheran position).
3. Infants mature after death and are evangelized after a certain period of maturation. No guarantees are given, however, that all infants will grow up and accept Christ.
4. All who die in infancy or are incompetent are saved.

Position 4

Since G W Leibnitz (1646-1716) the main position held in our culture has been the 4th position. Various texts are used to substantiate it, for instance...
Grudem said that "this can only imply that he would be with his son in the presence of the Lord forever" (Grudem: Theology, 501). As Sanders has said, this exegesis perhaps reads NT theology into the OT and David might well have meant little more than his turn to die would come. But if David believed that his son was with Yahweh we must still ask whether he had had any biblical or prophetical grounds for such belief, whether he was prophetically adding biblical doctrine, or whether he was simply being wishful.

Probably here Jesus compared children to young believers and talked in terms of "young believers." Jesus countered the disciple's picture of importance by picturing children, unimportant in worldly society. To move away from the world's faulty ideas of self-reliance was to be open to God's salvation (also Mt.8:12f.). The children weren't characterised as humble at heart, but the disciples had to humbly become, like children in status, perceptive of their neediness/weakness and face worldly contempt. Asking for God's help, people become Christians, "young believers" (v6). Woe to those who incite them to wander away from their father even though he would still seek them out (v14), and older Christians are not to belittle younger ones (v10). Note that 18:6 relates the term "little ones" to belief in Jesus: it is of such believers that Jesus spoke.

The surface meaning is that children could, like adults, accept God, so why turn them away? The term "such" (τοιούτως, also 18:5) also reminded the disciples of the status question: what the world deemed unimportant could be what God deemed important - Christ died for children, women & men, without favouritism. Again there is no indication that Jesus taught that babies were born with a ticket to eternal life or that God had a bias for babies more than for adults.

This has already been exegeted along the lines that children of a Christian parent or parents were 'holy' as set aside in a godly atmosphere - privileged to witness living evangelism. It does not guarantee salvation.

| 2 Sam.12:23 |
| Grudem said that "this can only imply that he would be with his son in the presence of the Lord forever" (Grudem: Theology, 501). As Sanders has said, this exegesis perhaps reads NT theology into the OT and David might well have meant little more than his turn to die would come. But if David believed that his son was with Yahweh we must still ask whether he had any biblical or prophetical grounds for such belief, whether he was prophetically adding biblical doctrine, or whether he was simply being wishful. |

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Arminius and John Wesley believed that all who died in infancy were redeemed - they who do not sin need no forgiveness. In other words original sin didn't damn to eternity. But it is asked, what of the idea that there is no salvation without personal faith? Also, without personal choice is one forced into heaven? Some of these objections have been raised in the introduction of this study. B B Warfield argued that it was more consistent to postulate an AD Wider Hope theory of maturation & evangelism. As a Reformed

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108 The line taken here follows such as R T France's Tyndale/IVP Commentary on Matthew.
109 He used many similes, such as comparing followers to salt & light.
110 Gk. Βροφος - "babies" in the NIV (Lk.18:15). It basically means very young.
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Theologian he held that any who die before an age of accountability were elected by God for salvation, and some add that all are elect except those who manifest rejection of God. In his turn Sanders argued that it was inconsistent to posit that God conveniently elected all who died in infancy and hold Reformed teaching of original sin. "No convincing arguments have emerged from the Reformed community to account for why God would deal differently with the two age groups" (Sanders: Name, 303).

Position 3

This is the AD Wider Hope position, and was held by Gregory of Nyssa. It is built on four premises: 1# wilful sin alone damns; 2# the cross was for all humanity; 3# all humanity shall have access to salvation; 4# faith alone receives salvation. On the one hand unless babies commit wilful sins then, they would not be damned and so would not need faith to be un-damned. On the other hand if they are capable of wilful sin are they not capable of wilful faith?

Position 2

Luther argued that infant baptism was redemptive, as well as parental desire of it even if it was somehow foregone. His position where neither baptism nor desire for baptism was expressed in unknown. By and large Lutherans believe in baptismal regeneration, but many hope for salvation if baptism isn't administered. To this extent their hopes exceed their theology, and calls into question the issue of baptismal regeneration as salvific.

Position 1

This is traditionally linked to the ideas of salvation only within the church & baptismal regeneration. Ambrose postulated the idea of a limbo, later developed by Pelagius in opposition to Augustine's hard heaven or hell position: "Augustine has the distinction of being the first theologian to teach positively the damnation of all unbaptized infants" (Sanders: Name, 291). However this conflicts with a control belief in Roman Catholicism that each person has sufficient grace to chose their destiny.

Predilectionism

Sanders concludes that "no position we have surveyed is free from serious difficulties.... Serious theological reflection is yet needed on this topic" (Sanders: Name, 305).

I would tentatively suggest a different reflection to those surveyed. It may be called Predilectionism. While he has not explored further in his Systematic Theology, Grudem
states that "we all know that infants almost from the moment of birth show an instinctive trust in their mothers and awareness of themselves as persons distinct from their mothers. Thus we should not insist that it is impossible that they would also have an intuitive awareness of God, and if God gives it, an intuitive ability to trust in God as well" (Grudem: Theology, 500). Grudem appears to me to limit such intuitive awareness of God as occasional/elective. I would suggest that perhaps there is an awareness of God common to all babies, even before birth, and so also to the mentally incompetent. Around this thought I would postulate Predilectionism. I have already argued that saving faith has a basic meaning of desire for God (eg Jhn.1:12).

Contra Augustine & Pelagius, Predilectionism assumes that babies make choices – by being able to choose good or bad atmospheres, sensing God and self-centredness even before being able to think in such terms. If true, some babies will deep down prefer God or self-centredness, and should they die in infancy enter God's company or enter into their own self-enslavement according to their own predilection. This position bypasses the doctrine of baptismal regeneration (whether of infants or adults). It also bypasses the doctrine of partial election of adults to salvation but plenary election of infants (whether to salvation, of damnation). It also removes the rationale of limbo. However it questions the basic evangelical rationale of evangelism: if an infant has a saving desire for God in childhood, why evangelise it when it is older; if it has a rejection of God in infancy, why try to evangelise it when it is older? I would suggest a two-fold answer...

- there is biblical ground for believing that desires can change (eg Ezek.33:12-20). So to both the one who as an infant was inclined towards God and as an infant was disinclined towards God are offered a positive step of commitment and allegiance – a salvific epistemology;
- that discipleship through an intellectual knowledge & commitment is salvific in personal development (2 Pt.1:2ff. – "grace be yours... through the knowledge of God...").

On the second point I would refer back to looking at meanings to the word σωτηρία and its cognates (eg salvation, deliverance, healing). That is, initial receiving of salvation is a cardinal element but there are other elements to receive.

Predilectionism would also cover at least something of the area of how before & after the cross those never having had the atonement humanly preached (the OT greats like David and unknown pagans) can be saved. As a comparative & summary chart I have constructed the following:

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111 A position going back to Hincmar of Rheims, AD 860.
Is hearing the gospel necessary for salvation?

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<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>Heaven if baptised, else <em>limbus infantium</em></td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Human rebirth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Universalism</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Eventually all saved</td>
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<tr>
<td>AD Wider Hope</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Heaven or Hell</td>
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**Closing thoughts**

I have examined what sin is, what salvation is, and thus laid a foundation for considering various suggestions as to who needs salvation, why, and how if at all it is open to them. I have looked at restrictivist views that assume that human messengers are a *sine qua non* for salvation, and hence that at death there is hell, extinction, or some in-between state for those who have never heard through human agency. I have looked at views that assume that divine evangelism after death befits all who have not had human messengers in this life, or shall prevail where human agency has been rejected.

I have argued that evangelism is commanded and is a life-offering focus, but that it is not a *sine qua non* for salvation. However this focus will clarify, even germinate inner inclination, and so for some is the *sine qua non*. This has included both the idea that saving faith can operate within world faiths (perhaps through truth in them), and finally that at a precognitive level, response to intuition can evoke saving faith, dividing between believing & nonbelieving individuals even in the womb (*Predilectionism*).

<sup>112</sup> Many rightly teach that it's one level being saved but complacent, and a higher level to really know it as a deep revelation and to firmly grasp that it opens up a way to overcome the old life and cultivate the life of Christ.

<sup>113</sup> *Limited Reincarnationism* suggests that God places the spirits of those who die in infancy into other conceptions and, if needs be, repeatedly until they have a chance to grow sufficiently to decide for or against him. This would definitely rule out David’s belief of his son not being able to return, for his son’s spirit would be reincarnated as (probably) another man’s son.
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Is hearing the gospel necessary for salvation?

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