

# DAILY MEDITATIONS ON THE BELGIC CONFESSION

by pastors of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America

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**JUN**  
Articles 17-20

### **Article 17: The Recovery of Fallen Man.**

*We believe that our most gracious God, in His admirable wisdom and goodness, seeing that man had thus thrown himself into temporal and spiritual death, and made himself wholly miserable, was pleased to seek and comfort him when he trembling fled from His presence, promising him that He would give His Son, who should be made of a woman, to bruise the head of the serpent, and would make him happy.*

**June 4 – Our Admirably Wise and Good God**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

Psalm 136:1 “O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.”

In Art. 17 we begin to look at what our gracious God has done for our salvation. Scripture teaches that we do not save ourselves. Salvation is the purpose and work of God alone. We have already seen in the previous article that God planned salvation before the foundation of the world. In this article we see what God has done in time for our salvation.

It is important to notice that the *Belgic Confession* addresses the whole subject of salvation from the perspective of its revelation in time. This was the case in Art. 16 also. There we read, “We believe that, all the posterity of Adam being thus fallen... *God then did manifest Himself...*” God, of course, planned salvation before the creation and fall of man. Indeed, God’s decree to save some and reprobate others is eternal. When Adam fell, our Creator did not begin scrambling for a solution to an unforeseen problem, as if salvation in Christ were a “Plan B” after “Plan A” went awry. It never was God’s purpose that Adam and Eve should remain forever in the Garden of Eden in a state of innocence. God had something much better, much richer and much more glorious in mind. God’s plan was, and is, to reveal His “admirable wisdom and goodness”—as well as His just severity—in saving some from the fallen race of men, and condemning others to everlasting punishment. In short, God’s plan always was Christ (I Pet 1:20).

But to make way for Christ, Adam had to fall. Adam fell in such a way that God was sovereign over his fall, but Adam was guilty for his sin. Art. 17 emphasizes the latter: man’s responsibility and guilt. In this God displayed His incomparable wisdom. God ordained all things so that He would be glorified to the highest possible degree.

The Bible teaches us very clearly, then, that salvation is the *seeking* God coming to save the *sinning* man. What a display of God’s “admirable wisdom and goodness”! Salvation must be by the seeking and saving God because man cannot save himself. In fact, so far is man from saving himself, that he does not even desire salvation.

And behold, how quickly God came to seek His fallen friend, Adam. Adam had rebelled against God, and had made himself miserable. Of himself there was no hope or desire of reconciliation with God, no possibility of restoring that friendship which Adam had violated by his disobedience, no hope of annulling the relationship he now had with the devil, God’s archenemy. But no sooner do we read of Adam’s shameful fall than we hear God’s call to Adam, “Where art thou?” (Gen 3:9).

What could Adam hope to receive from God now? Had God not threatened Adam with death? Had not Adam’s eyes been opened to the horror of what sin really is? Would Adam and Eve not now be swallowed into everlasting hell?

Surely, all Adam could expect from God was the swift sentence of death. But our admirably wise and good God had something very different in mind.

**June 5 – The Misery of Temporal and Eternal Death**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

Romans 6:23 “...the wages of sin is death...”

Art. 17 magnifies the grace of God by describing the awful effects of the fall, through which Adam—and in him all men—plunged himself into misery. The more we understand our misery, the more thankful we are to hear about deliverance. An incomplete or wrong diagnosis of our condition leads to an incomplete or wrong understanding of the work of salvation from sin.

God had threatened Adam with dire consequences in the event of his disobedience. One word sums up God’s threat: death! This was no empty threat: God did indeed judge Adam—and all of us in him—with death.

The *Confession* speaks of two kinds of death: “temporal and spiritual death.” Temporal death is the death of the body. This might at first appear puzzling. Had God not said, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17)? But Adam did not drop dead at the foot of the tree in the Garden on that very day. In fact, Adam lived for 930 years. Had God reprieved Adam and not inflicted the judgment of death? The truth is that Adam began to die physically as soon as he transgressed God’s commandment. In the very day of his transgression, Adam did indeed die. Death began to gnaw away at his very existence; death began to be active in his members; and his body began to decay. This is true with our bodies also. The judgment of God is the cause in the world of all sicknesses, infirmities and pains in the body of man long before his body and soul are violently torn apart at the moment of death. Literally, God had said in Gen 2:17, “Dying, thou shalt die.” And Adam did die, as do all men that descended from Adam. The second sense in which Adam died was to suffer eternal death. Eternal death, in the original French of the *Belgic Confession*, is “spiritual death.” Eternal death is everlasting death under the wrath of God in hell, something Rev 20:14 calls the “second death.” But before a lost sinner perishes in hell, he or she is spiritually dead. Adam would have died eternally in hell, if God had not saved him by His grace. About all sinners born into the world we can say that they are already born spiritually dead because of the guilt of Adam’s sin (Rom 5:12; Eph 2:1-3; Col 1:21-22). Spiritual death, then, is the death of the spirit or soul. Spiritual death is alienation from God, the source of all life. Spiritual death is the corruption of the whole nature of man, making him unfit to be the friend of God, no longer in the state of original righteousness in which he was created.

One in such a state of death is miserable, wholly miserable. Adam was miserable, and all mankind in him are miserable too. Do not let the outward façade of happy-go-lucky sinners fool you. Sinners without God are miserable. They know that they are guilty before God, and yet they hate the God who made them. They know that without God they can never be happy, but they do not want to know God. They seek in vain to find satisfaction, meaning, and fulfillment in the creation, while they suppress the knowledge of God the Creator, and seek to drown out their accusing conscience; and they know when their miserable life is over—in which they have desperately sought to eat, drink and be merry—that they will fall into the hands of an angry God.

**June 6 – Our Fatal Plunge into Misery**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

Jeremiah 2:19 “...know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee...”

Art. 17 is transitional. It comes between the article on election—what God decreed to do in eternity—and the article on the Incarnation of Jesus Christ—what God has actually done in Jesus Christ to save His people. In Art. 17 we read of God’s promise to do what He actually does in the sending of His Son.

This promise is all the more admirable when we remember Adam’s guilt, which, as we learned in a previous article, is also our guilt. Art. 17 underlines the deliberate and willful nature of Adam’s transgression. Sometimes the word “fall” gives us the wrong impression. A fall is something tragic, a dreadful accident. A man might fall down the stairs, out of a tree or even off a tall building. Some falls can be very serious; others less so. But a fall is usually not deliberate. We tend to pity a man who falls as we see him with a broken leg or other injury. But Adam did not merely fall. He jumped! Art. 17 explains it this way: “man had thus thrown himself into temporal and spiritual death.” The idea is of fatal plunge. When a man deliberately destroys himself, he is no longer to be pitied. He is to be condemned. Adam was not a victim of the deception of the serpent. Adam walked wide-eyed into death. God had warned him in unmistakable words: “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17). Adam *chose* death therefore. Not even the devil could have forced Adam to sin against his own will.

The result of Adam’s deliberate plunge into evil was his—and our—misery. The serpent had lied. He had promised Eve a much better result: “...Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:4-5). In a way, the serpent was right: Adam’s eyes *were* opened, but not as he might have hoped. He experienced evil for himself, and the experience was bitter. Much later, Jeremiah would exclaim, “Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee” (Jer 2:19). Adam was miserable. He had cut himself off from God, the only source of life and joy. And yet Adam did not want to return to God. He loved sin, although it made him miserable; he hated God; and he was allied to the devil, although Satan was a wicked tyrant who held him in cruel bondage.

That is the folly of sin. The sinner knows that sin will destroy him, but he will not give it up. He knows that the wages of sin is death, but he would rather receive those wages than repent. But God did not abandon Adam to his doom. Adam deserved to die, both temporally and eternally. Adam deserved to remain miserable forever. But, although God was justly offended by man’s sin, and although God had every just cause to destroy mankind, He came with the promise of salvation to trembling, fleeing Adam—and to us who are in Jesus Christ!

**June 7 – Adam Fleeing, God Seeking**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

Genesis 3:8-9 “...and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?”

Adam had known the sweetness of the friendship of God. Made in God’s image, Adam had been righteous and holy, “that he might rightly know God his Creator, heartily love Him and live with Him in eternal happiness to glorify and praise Him” (*Heidelberg Catechism* LD 3, Q&A 6). But all that changed the moment he ate the forbidden fruit. The knowledge of God was changed into horrible blindness of heart; the righteousness and holiness of nature were stripped from him and he became corrupt and vile. In such a condition, Adam could no longer fellowship with God, for the holy God will not fellowship with sinners.

Adam knew his own nakedness and hurried to cover himself with fig leaves and to hide among the trees (Gen 3:7-8). Art. 17 reminds us that Adam “trembling fled from [God’s] presence.” Before Adam’s rebellion, Adam had gladly communed with God in the cool of the evening. But not now! Now he was afraid. Now he *trembled*! That’s his own confession: “I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself” (Gen 3:10). The voice in which he had delighted before the fall now was a fearful voice summoning him to give account of himself. How could a naked sinner stand before a holy God? And yet how foolish of Adam to *hide* from God. Shall any sinner hide from the omniscient, everywhere present God who searches the hearts and who lays bare the motives of all men? Adam was not the first sinner to attempt to hide from God, and he will not be the last. Sinners on the Last Day will cry out in terror, “...fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Rev 6:16-17).

Adam hid in vain, but God sought Adam out. God did not wait for Adam to seek Him—that would never have happened; Adam would have fled forever if he could have done so—but God, as had been His custom before the Fall, came to walk in the garden in the cool of the day (Gen 3:8). Adam, his erstwhile friend, was not there. God knew why Adam was not there. He had seen what Adam had done. But Adam had to be taught a lesson, brought to repentance and restored to fellowship. Therefore, God called, “Where art thou?” (v9). Then, on hearing Adam’s response, He asked Adam, “Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?” (v11).

Thus God seeks out all His children. He does not wait for us, for “there is none that seeketh after God” (Rom 3:11). He calls after us, and shows Himself to be the admirably good God in promising to us salvation.

**June 8 – God Pleased To Seek His People**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

Titus 1:2 “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;”

Salvation is rooted in the good pleasure of God. Art. 17 says, “We believe that our most gracious God...was *pleased* to seek and comfort [man].” God’s good pleasure in Scripture is not a whim, but His eternal good purpose, what He is pleased to decree in eternity and therefore pleased to do in time. Long before Adam was created, and certainly long before Adam sinned, God was pleased to promise salvation.

Titus 1:2 speaks about God promising eternal life before the world began. This begs the question: “To whom did God make such a promise?” To the angels? No! They had not yet been created! To man? No! Man did not yet exist. The answer is that God made that promise to Christ. Christ, remember, is the Eternal Son of God, the second Person of the blessed Trinity. In eternity, then, the Father promised eternal life to the Son in the Holy Spirit. This eternal life He promised to give to the elect whom He chose eternally in Christ (Eph 1:4). The Father promised to give unto the Son a people, who would be His body and bride, a people chosen in Him before the world began. The Son promised to become a man to save His people, who, in the decree of God would fall into sin and misery. The Son promised to bear the sins of His people, to take the place of condemnation and punishment into which His people would plunge themselves. The Spirit promised to apply the work of the Son to the people of God so that they would possess the salvation decreed for and merited for them. And the Father promised to exalt the Son in the human nature to the highest possible glory in heaven, and in so doing to glorify His people.

We teach this in distinction from some Reformed and Presbyterian theologians who speak of an *agreement* within the Godhead, as if the Father and the Son entered into an agreement: “I will do this, if you do this; and you will do this, if I do this.” The relationship between the Persons of the Trinity is not an agreement, but close, blessed covenant fellowship in love.

Of course, Adam and Eve knew nothing of this glorious promise. As they hid trembling among Eden’s trees, the last thing on their mind was a promise from a merciful God. God had threatened death and they already knew death was at work in them. They knew that there was no way back into God’s favour and blessing. The only thing they could do was flee further and further away from God. Therefore Adam must have been terrified when he heard the voice of God that fateful evening: “Where art thou?” (Gen 3:9).

But God had not come to destroy, but to save. God would not let them go. They had been God’s friends in the covenant and God never breaks His covenant. Now was time to reveal His promise. Tit 1:3 goes on to teach, concerning this promise made in eternity, “But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching”. And the first preacher of the first promise was God Himself, by which He was pleased to seek and comfort us in our misery.

What admirable goodness!

**June 9 – The Mother of All Promises**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

Acts 26:7 “Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come...”

Gen 3:15 is the protevangel or the mother promise. It is the first promise which God made to His people, and out of it all the other promises in Scripture flow. Every promise of salvation really is a development and further unfolding of this one mother promise.

A promise is a sure or certain word. Even children know the difference between an ordinary word and a promise. Often when a parent indicates to a child that he intends to give the child something, the child asks, “Do you promise?” A promise is a solemn declaration that a person will do something. Therefore a promise may never be taken lightly. Men might lie when they promise; men might have no intention of keeping their promises; or men might promise in good faith but later be unable to fulfill the promise. The mother promise of Gen 3:15 is *God’s* promise. God cannot lie (Tit 1:2), and nothing in heaven, earth or hell can prevent the fulfillment of God’s promise.

God came to Adam and Eve just after the fall and promised to them salvation. That was His sure and certain word. They had ruined themselves. God would save them from their self-inflicted misery and make them happy. Happiness for miserable sinners is to be delivered from sin and reconciled to God. It is to be again in a covenant relationship with God, where we know God as our God, and we experience the blessedness of being His people. Happiness is to have life in the presence of God without sin forever. That happiness God promised Adam and Eve, and He makes that same promise to all His children.

What would Adam and Eve have to do to procure this happiness, to make this promise happen? Nothing! God did not come to Adam with a salvation plan which Adam and Eve would have to ratify, for which Adam and Eve would have to work, which Adam and Eve would be able to merit. He came with a promise: “I will...” He did not come with a command, “Thou shalt...” The mother promise, then, teaches us that salvation in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament will be by the free grace of God, based on the work of Christ, whom God promised to send in the protevangel, the first gospel or the mother promise.

Gen 3:15 is pivotal to understanding the Old Testament. God promised the seed of the woman. This seed, who is Christ, was the hope of every believing child of God in the Old Testament. In the early years after the fall, this was the only gospel to which the saints could cling. What did Abel, Enoch and the generations before Noah know about the gospel except what they learned in this one promise? But this promise was enough to sustain their faith. Over the centuries, God gradually revealed more about this promise. He would be the seed of the woman; He would be the seed of Abraham; He would be the seed of Isaac, Jacob, Judah and David. He would be a real man—the seed of the woman—and He would be more powerful than any creature—He would bruise the head of the serpent, the devil himself. He is Christ. Look for Him in the Old Testament, and see Him fulfilled in the New Testament.

And marvel at the wonder of God’s promise!



**June 10 – The Promise of Two Seeds in Enmity**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

Genesis 3:15 “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

It is a striking thing that the first promise, while spoken in the presence of Adam and Eve, was spoken to the serpent, or the devil, as part of God’s curse upon him. This is because God’s promise to save His people was at the same time a pronouncement of doom upon the devil and his seed.

The promise of the protevangel is enmity. Enmity means hostility or hatred. It is the opposite of friendship and is related to the word “enemy.” God promises a twofold enmity. First, there will be enmity between the serpent and the woman (and also between the serpent and the man). This does not mean that people will hate snakes and flee from them, although many people are repulsed by snakes. The serpent is the devil or Satan. God will put enmity between the devil and the woman (and the man). This means that God will destroy the friendship which the devil has made between himself and the woman (and the man). Adam’s and Eve’s sinful alliance with the devil will be overturned and God’s friendship with Adam and Eve will be restored. Second, there will be enmity between “thy seed and her seed,” that is, between the seed of the devil (ultimately the devil himself and all those who belong to him, the reprobate wicked) and the seed of the woman (ultimately Christ and all those who belong to Him in eternal election). The promise of salvation, then, is not made to all men without exception, but by virtue of the promise, two lines of people develop in fallen mankind—the line of God’s elect friends in covenant with Him in Christ; and the line of God’s reprobate enemies, allied with the devil in opposition to God.

This enmity would manifest itself very clearly in Old Testament history. Eve had a son, whom she called Cain, because she mistakenly believed that he would be the promised seed. In fact, Cain was the first manifestation of the seed of the serpent, the first of the devil’s brood. John explains this enmity: “Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous” (I John 3:12). Later Adam and Eve had more children and two lines, of Cain on the one hand and Seth on the other, developed in the earth. The devil was behind every attempt of the seed of the serpent to destroy the seed of the woman. The ultimate purpose of the devil was to use his seed to prevent the coming of the great Seed of the woman, who is Christ.

That was the ultimate enmity. Christ was the enemy of Satan, and came to destroy Satan. He did this in a way Satan did not expect. He crushed Satan’s head on the cross while Satan was bruising His heel. Christ had to suffer in order to destroy the devil and to reconcile us to God.

That was God’s promise. He would send His Son. The devil would be crushed, but only in the way of terrible suffering for the Son of God. And for that, the Incarnation was necessary.

## Article 18: The Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

*We confess, therefore, that God did fulfill the promise which He made to the fathers, by the mouth of His holy prophets, when He sent into the world, at the time appointed by Him, His own, only-begotten and eternal Son, who took upon Him the form of a servant, and became like unto man, really assuming the true human nature, with all its infirmities, sin excepted, being conceived in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Ghost, without the means of man; and did not only assume human nature as to the body, but also a true human soul, that He might be a real man. For since the soul was lost as well as the body, it was necessary that He should take both upon Him, to save both.*

*Therefore we confess (in opposition to the heresy of the Anabaptists, who deny that Christ assumed human flesh of His mother) that Christ is become a partaker of the flesh and blood of the children; that He is a fruit of the loins of David after the flesh; made of the seed of David according to the flesh; a fruit of the womb of the Virgin Mary, made of a woman; a branch of David; a shoot of the root of Jesse; sprung from the tribe of Judah; descended from the Jews according to the flesh: of the seed of Abraham, since He took on Him the seed of Abraham, and became like unto His brethren in all things, sin excepted; so that in truth He is our **Immanuel**, that is to say, God with us.*

**June 11 – Christ Coming According to Promise**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

Acts 3:24 “Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.”

All Christians believe in the Incarnation. All Christians believe that the Son of God entered this world as a tiny baby. This is the greatest and most astounding of all miracles. But Art. 18 gives an important perspective on this truth. The Incarnation did not happen “out of the blue” but was something promised by God.

In Art. 17, we took note of the fact that immediately after the fall of man, God promised a Saviour “to bruise the head of the serpent [Satan]” and to “make him [man] happy.” This was only the beginning of many precious promises made by God to His people. The promise—a sure and certain word which depended only on God for its fulfillment—must be understood. Many Christians today—like the Jews before them—totally misunderstand the promise which God made, and therefore misunderstand the reason for Christ’s coming into the world. The mother promise of Gen 3:15 promised salvation in the way of two things—destruction for the devil, and suffering for the Saviour. Therefore the rest of the promises in the Old Testament, which unfolded or developed the one promise, contained one or both of these aspects of the promise.

On the one hand, the promised Saviour would be victorious. He would destroy the enemies of God and establish a kingdom of righteousness. Gen 49:10 promises this, “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.” Isa 9:6 promises this, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder...” Thus the Old Testament saints were taught to expect a king who would crush Satan and all God’s enemies. On the other hand, however, the promised Saviour would *suffer*. He would be despised, rejected, bruised, and He would even die. All the sacrifices—from the daily offerings to the Passover feasts—foreshadowed this, and there were many prophecies about the sufferings of Christ. Isa 53:5 promises this, “...he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” Zech 13:7 prophesies concerning the Messiah, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered...”

When Christ was born, Israel groaned under Rome’s oppressive yoke. Many Israelites who looked for the Messiah—and remember no prophecy of the Lord had been given for four hundred years after Malachi—longed for the wrong kind of deliverance. Since a suffering Messiah made no sense to them, they ignored the passages about a suffering Saviour and clung to a wrong interpretation of passages about a conquering king. This was true not only of the unbelieving multitudes, but even of the disciples themselves. Not until *after* the death and resurrection of Christ did they understand how the twofold promise of a conquering and suffering Saviour made sense, and how Christ was victorious *in* His sufferings.

Thus Christ rebuked them, “...O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” (Luke 24:25-26). All the promises of God in the Old Testament are fulfilled in Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Thus we see that our God is faithful and we have good hope to trust in Him!

**June 12 – Christ Coming At the Appointed Time**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

Galatians 4:4 *“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law,”*

God, unlike us, is never in a hurry. Sometimes, in our foolishness and impatience, we think that God is unnecessarily slow in the fulfillment of His promises. About the Incarnation—the great miracle by which God, sending His own Son into the world, was made flesh and dwelt among us—Art. 18 says that it occurred “at the time appointed by Him [God].”

The time of the Incarnation—as the time of every event in history—is eternally determined by God. Paul explained this to the Athenians: “and hath determined the times before appointed” (Acts 17:26). God determined the time of your birth, and He has determined the point of your death. If that is true of us, how much more did God not appoint the time of the birth, death, resurrection and Second Coming of His Son, upon whom our salvation depends?

Eve did not understand this. When she exclaimed in joy, “I have gotten a man from the LORD” (Gen 4:1), she believed that *Cain* was the seed of the woman. This was understandable in the circumstances, and it was a testimony to the fact that hope lived in her heart. But Eve and all God’s people had to learn by bitter experience that God’s promise is not fulfilled according to our timetable. God exercised the patience of His people for many centuries before Christ came. God promised Abraham a son, but He made Abraham wait for a long time before Abraham saw the promised Isaac, and Isaac himself was not the promised Christ. Much later, God promised David that the Messiah would be of the fruit of his loins, but Solomon was not the promised Christ either.

Why did God—from our perspective—delay His promise?

First, He would teach His people to long for the coming of the promised Christ. The closer we come to the end of the Old Testament, the greater is the longing of God’s elect. The heyday of David and Solomon lasted less than a century; the kingdom was divided and the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom perished; the Southern Kingdom of Judah was decimated in Babylon and only a miserable remnant returned. Never again did a Davidic king sit on Jerusalem’s throne. Between the return under Zerubbabel and the coming of Christ, the royal line was preserved, but it never became prominent again. Even the rebuilt temple paled in significance before Solomon’s temple, and the ark of the covenant was never restored. God would take the eyes of the people away from the types and shadows of the Old Testament and have them long more earnestly for Christ (see Heb 8:13).

Second, God would teach His people that they could not produce the promised Saviour. God brought the line of David almost to extinction to prove that only He had the power to fulfill the promise. David’s line ended with a virgin, living when a cruel Edomite ruled over Israel by the authority of Caesar. Surely she could not bring forth the promised Saviour!

When the condition of God’s people was at its darkest, when hope was all but extinguished, God sent forth His Son. God delights to do this so that His glory, power, wisdom and grace shine all the brighter. Are you able to trust Him even now as you wait for the Second Coming?

**June 13 – Christ Coming in the Wonder of the Incarnation**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

John 1:14 “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us...”

Having seen that the Incarnation was promised and that the entire Old Testament was preparation for it—although many of the Jews did not understand what God had actually promised and expected a Christ according to their own carnal desires—we examine the Incarnation itself.

The word *incarnation* comes from the Latin word for *flesh*, and means that God took upon Him human flesh. John 1:14 tells us, “And the Word was made flesh.” The Word is the eternal Son of God, one who was (and is) in the very bosom of the Father with God, and who was (and is) God (v1-2, 18). We must understand that the Incarnation is not the birth of a mere man, nor is it even the birth of an extraordinary, supernatural man. The Incarnation is nothing less than the birth of one into our world as a real human being *who is God*.

God, without ever ceasing to be God, became man. The Incarnation presupposes the doctrines which the *Belgic Confession* has already taught us. It presupposes the doctrine of the Trinity, for the Son, and not the Father or the Holy Spirit, became flesh. One of the three persons of the Godhead, who are coequal, coeternal and coessential with one another, and yet distinct from one another, *became a man*. It presupposes the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, that the one who became incarnate was not a mighty angel or even the greatest of all creatures, but the eternal, only begotten Son of God. It presupposes, too, the depravity of man, because so great is our sin and so deep is our misery, that only the extreme measure of the Son becoming flesh in order to suffer for our sins is sufficient to deliver us from sin, death and the curse.

The Incarnation was the Son coming into the world, and the Father’s sending Him into the world through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Triune God purposed the Incarnation in His eternal counsel. The Father would send the Son; the Son would go and suffer; and the Spirit would perform the work necessary for the Son to become incarnate.

We must understand this for our salvation and comfort. The little baby born in Bethlehem was the Son of God. The little boy who played with the other boys in the streets of Nazareth and who submitted to his mother and Joseph was the Son of God. The young man, the carpenter’s son, was the Son of God. The man who was baptized, tempted and who preached for some three and a half years was the Son of God. The man who struggled in prayer in Gethsemane, was arrested, tried, beaten, spat upon, mocked and finally crucified, was the Son of God. The man who died on the cross after crying out, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,” was the Son of God. The man who rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, sits at God’s right hand, and will come again to judge the living and the dead, is the Son of God. He was (and is) the Son of God in our human nature, but He was (and is) the Son of God in heavenly glory.

Art. 18 sums it up in these words, “[God] sent into the world, at the time appointed by Him, *His own, only begotten and eternal Son.*”

This means that the Son, who is eternally in the bosom of the Father, and without losing or laying aside His divinity, took to Himself a human nature, thus becoming what He was not before, a man. And He did this for our salvation!

**June 14 – The Son of God Really Assuming the Human Nature**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

I John 4:2-3 “...Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God...”

How could God become man? Around this question swirled controversy in the early church. First, it seemed to be impossible. There is an infinite gulf between the essence of God and the nature of man. The Son of God *as God* is eternal, unchangeable and infinite. The nature of man is limited by time and space, dependent and weak. How could God become man? Second, it seemed to be unfitting. This was especially true because of false notions about spirit and matter among the pagans. Many held the notion—and brought that false idea into the church—that matter (such as flesh and blood) is evil. How could God become flesh and blood? To the first objection, Scripture responds in Luke 1:37, “...with God nothing shall be impossible.” We cannot understand it, but we believe it. To the second objection Scripture responds in I Tim 4:4, “...every creature of God is good...” Flesh and physical matter are not evil.

The Incarnation of the Son of God was attacked and denied, and it still is today. One popular heresy was to say that Christ did not have a real human nature. He just *seemed* to be a man. He was a phantom, a spirit, an apparition but not a real man. John refutes that heresy in his first epistle: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life” (I John 1:1). Notice how Scripture insists that Jesus Christ had a real human nature.

How important this is for our salvation! When Jesus wept, He wept real, human tears. When Jesus sweated, He sweated real human sweat. When Jesus bled, He bled real human blood. When Jesus was scourged, His real human flesh was torn. When Jesus suffered, real human pain receptors from real human nerves sent messages to a real human brain. Yet the one who wept, sweated, bled, was wounded, suffered and felt pain was the Son of God! Jesus had to be a man in every sense in which we are humans because He came to satisfy the justice of God for the sins of His people which we have committed in the human nature.

Another error concerning the Incarnation was to deny the *completeness* of Christ’s humanity. Various heresies existed in the early church. One man denied that Jesus had a human soul; another denied that He had a human will. Art. 18 answers all these objections in these words, “[the Son of God] did not only assume human nature as to the body, but also a true human soul, that He might be a real man. For since the soul was lost as well as the body, it was necessary that He should take both upon Him, to save both.”

This, too, was important for our salvation. Jesus had a real, human soul. This means that Jesus thought the thoughts of a real human mind. When Jesus experienced emotions, such as sorrow (Matt 26:38) and joy (Luke 10:21), He experienced real human emotions. When Jesus wrestled in prayer with strong crying and tears in the Garden of Gethsemane (Heb 5:7), He was consciously submitting His real human will to the divine will (Matt 26:39,42). In none of this was Jesus playacting. We should also notice, for this will help us understand the gospel accounts of our Saviour, that Jesus did not have an omniscient soul, for that would not be a human soul. Therefore the man Jesus, although He is God, did not know everything in His human mind: He learned, He increased in wisdom and He was ignorant (Heb 5:8; Luke 2:52; Mark 13:32).

No wonder Paul exclaims: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness!” (1 Tim 3:16)

**June 15 – The Son of God Taking Upon Him the Form of a Servant**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

Philippians 2:7 “But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:”

What kind of human nature did the Son of God take to Himself in the Incarnation? We have seen it was a real human nature. Jesus Christ was as really human as you or I. We have seen that it was a complete human nature. Since we are flesh and blood, Jesus took upon Himself our flesh and blood. Since we are body and soul, Jesus took upon Himself body and soul, so that He could both sympathize with us as our High Priest (Heb 2:17-18, 4:15-16), and so that He could save us body and soul.

There are two other adjectives commonly used to describe Christ’s human nature. First, it was a weakened human nature; and second, it was a sinless human nature. A weakened human nature is one which is subject to the effects of man’s fall. We must not think by the word “weakened”, that the human nature which Christ assumed *was fallen or sinful*, but it was weakened by the fall. This means that Christ could feel pain, that He could suffer and that He could die. Adam, although human, had not felt pain, suffered or been subjected to death before the fall, and Jesus, although still human, cannot feel pain, suffer or die in heaven. Therefore we confess with Art. 18 that Christ assumed “the true human nature, *with all its infirmities*.” Although Christ’s human nature was weakened by the effects of the fall, it was not sinful. To Christ was not imputed the original guilt of Adam. Christ’s human nature was not ruined by original corruption, pollution or total depravity. Thus Art. 18 adds “sin excepted.” Rom 8:3 expresses it succinctly in this phrase, “in the likeness of sinful flesh.” It was real human flesh, but it was in the likeness of *sinful* flesh.

This weakened human nature was part of Christ’s humiliation. In the doctrine of Christ, we distinguish two *states* of Christ. For a time, from His conception to His death and burial, the Son of God was in a state of humiliation. This means that He was in a legal position before God, guilty of the sins of His people. God reckoned or imputed the sins of all the elect to Christ. That was the only legal basis for Christ’s suffering. Only as one guilty of our sin could Christ, the Son of God, suffer. From His resurrection and forever into eternity, the Son of God is in a state of exaltation. This means that He has removed from Himself—and from us whom He represents—all guilt, so that He is beyond all possibility of suffering or shame.

The humiliation of the Son of God in our human nature is astounding. We might imagine that when the Son of God became a man, He chose for Himself the human nature and the earthly splendour of a king or of an emperor. Jesus chose—because we must remember that as the eternal Son of God He orchestrated all the events surrounding His birth—to be born of an obscure virgin in a backward village called Nazareth. Furthermore, He chose to be born into abject poverty, and even to be born in a stable and laid in a manger, a feeding trough for animals! Moreover, He chose to be a servant—the lowliest slave—and to suffer the most shameful and painful death, the death of crucifixion!

And He did that for us and for our salvation. Truly a wonder worth celebrating!

**June 16 – Christ Descended From the Jews According to the Flesh**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

Hebrews 2:16 “For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.”

If you had seen Jesus as He walked on the earth and taught in the villages and synagogues of Israel, you would have seen a Jew. The man Jesus Christ worshipped the God Jehovah or Yahweh. The man Jesus Christ grew up in the home of a Jewish mother and his adopted Jewish father. The man Jesus Christ had Jewish siblings (Matt 13:55-56). Jesus also attended the obligatory feasts of the Jews in Jerusalem and attended the public worship of the Jews in His local synagogue (Luke 4:16).

The Son of God—as a real, complete, weakened and sinless human being—worshipped God and called God His God and His Father (Matt 26:39; John 20:17). The Son of God does not worship, pray to or prostrate Himself before the Father in the Godhead—the three Persons of God are coequal—but the Son of God in our flesh, our Mediator, does.

But there is more to Christ’s Jewishness than His worship. Jesus Christ was *biologically* a Jew. If you had seen Him, He would not have looked as many misleading artworks depict Him. He had a typical Semitic appearance, and Isa 53:2 indicates that He was not particularly attractive in His physical appearance: “...when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.”

In God’s remarkable providence, the biological line of God’s people was preserved. The man Jesus can trace His genealogy all the way back to Abraham (Matt 1:1) and even to Adam (Luke 3:38). This, too, is the fruit of God’s promise. Why had God preserved the biological line of His people through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David and all the way to Mary, if not to fulfill His promise that the Christ would be organically related to His people? Thus Art. 18 lists a number of phrases taken from the Scriptures to prove that Jesus Christ was not a nondescript man, but a man who came from the covenant line. According to the flesh, the man Jesus Christ is “a fruit of the loins of David.” The human nature of Jesus can be traced back to David, so that biologically Jesus Christ is related to David and can be called David’s son. Since Jesus was David’s biological father, Jesus Christ, the son of David, is called “a shoot of the root of Jesse.” Since Abraham is a distant biological ancestor of David, or David is a distant biological descendant of Abraham, Jesus Christ is called “of the seed of Abraham, since He took on Him the seed of Abraham.”

Even more distantly, Jesus Christ is biologically related to us, because we (like Him) can trace our biological line all the way back to Adam, our first organic father. For this reason—but especially because we are adopted by grace as the children of the Father, for remember it is of no benefit to be biologically related to Christ if we remain unbelieving—we can call Jesus Christ, the Son of God in our flesh, our Elder Brother.

Astounding are the words of Heb 2:11, “...he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” Do you believe—whether as an ethnic Jew or Gentile—in this Saviour? He, by virtue of His Incarnation and His death on the cross for your sins, is not ashamed to call you His brother or sister.



**June 17 – Of the Flesh and Blood of the Virgin Mary**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

Luke 1:35 “...The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

We have partially answered the question already concerning the origin of the human nature of Jesus Christ. The human nature, we have seen, was real, complete, weakened and sinless, and biologically of the line of God’s covenant people through Adam, Abraham and David. This emphasis was necessary because of the heresy of the Anabaptists who “deny that Christ assumed human flesh of His mother.” One of the purposes of Art. 18, which we have seen, was to repudiate the Anabaptist position. At that time, the Roman Catholic authorities used the Anabaptist error as a pretext to persecute the Reformed. The Anabaptists were a radical sect, who not only denied infant baptism, but claimed direct revelation from the Spirit and had revolutionary tendencies. One Anabaptist notion concerned the human nature of Christ.

The Anabaptists believed that it was impossible for the human nature of Jesus Christ to be holy if it was the human nature derived from Mary’s flesh. Therefore some of them taught that the Holy Spirit brought heavenly flesh and deposited it in the womb of Mary. The Anabaptists said that Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born *in* the virgin Mary; but they did not want to confess that Christ was born *of* the virgin Mary. Do you see the difference between *in* and *of* here? Mary was therefore simply a basket in which the Spirit deposited Christ; or Mary was a pipe through which Christ flowed. But Christ had no biological relation to Mary, and certainly did not derive His flesh from Mary. This is a serious error. It really is a denial of the true humanity of Jesus, for “heavenly flesh”—whatever that is—is not real human flesh and blood.

We confess that Mary was the true biological mother of Jesus, according to the flesh. We must not, however, err on the other side by elevating Mary. Mary was not sinless as the Roman Catholic Church teaches. She did not even need to be sinless to give birth to the sinless Christ. How is it possible that the Son of God, in uniting Himself to the human nature of Mary, a sinner, remained sinless? The angel answered thus to Mary: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). The Holy Spirit shielded the human nature, which He formed in the womb of the virgin Mary, from any pollution of Mary’s flesh.

What a great mystery is this! How did God knit you together in your mother’s womb? How does God form the soul and unite it to the body? The greatest minds among men have not been able to understand that fully. How much greater is the conception *of the Son of God!* The Holy Spirit formed a human embryo from the flesh and blood of Mary “without the means of man;” and He united the human nature (body and soul) which He formed to the Person of the Son of God, overshadowing the miracle and producing a real, complete, weakened and sinless human nature.

Thus the holy Son of God was conceived and born in our human nature. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, to be our Saviour, our Immanuel, that is to say, God with us!

## Article 19: The Union and Distinction of the Two Natures in the Person of Christ

*We believe that by this conception the person of the Son is inseparably united and connected with the human nature, so that there are not two Sons of God, nor two persons, but two natures united in one single person; yet that each nature retains its own distinct properties. As then the divine nature hath always remained uncreated, without beginning of days or end of life, filling heaven and earth, so also hath the human nature not lost its properties, but remained a creature, having beginning of days, being a finite nature, and retaining all the properties of a real body. And though He hath by His resurrection given immortality to the same, nevertheless He hath not changed the reality of His human nature, forasmuch as our salvation and resurrection also depend on the reality of His body.*

*But these two natures are so closely united in one person, that they were not separated even by His death. Therefore that which He, when dying, commended into the hands of His Father, was a real human spirit, departing from His body. But in the meantime the divine nature always remained united with the human, even when He lay in the grave; and the Godhead did not cease to be in Him, any more than it did when He was an infant, though it did not so clearly manifest itself for a while. Wherefore we confess that He is **very God**, and **very Man**: very God by His power to conquer death; and very man that He might die for us according to the infirmity of His flesh.*

**June 18 – Understanding Christological Terms**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

John 8:58 “...Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”

Jesus Christ is both God and man. That is the simple, but profound, confession of Christianity. He, who is and remains the eternal Son of God, became and remains a real, complete man forever. The subject of Art. 19 is the relationship between Christ as God and Christ as man.

To understand this great truth, we must be clear about religious terminology. First, the *person* of Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. We encountered the term “person” in Art. 8-11 when we studied the doctrine of the Trinity. There we noted that God, although one in His divine essence (there is but one God), is three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God is three persons. We are one person. Christ is one person. But your pet cat is not a person; a tree is not a person; a rock is not a person. A person is a conscious and self-conscious individual, distinct from other individuals, who says “I.” The Greek word *person* (*hypostasis*) means that which stands under. Your person, therefore, is that which “stands under” all your activity. In the Godhead, there are three Persons, each one distinct and individual from—but not independent of—one another. The Father says “I,” but He is neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit. The Son says “I,” but He is neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit. As a human person, you say “I”, and you can know yourself, and you can know and interact with other persons, but you are distinct from other persons.

Now, who is the person of Jesus Christ? Is Jesus Christ a human person or does He have a human person? Is the one who says “I” in Jesus Christ a man? Or is the one who says “I” in Jesus Christ God? Is Jesus Christ, therefore, a divine person? Or is Jesus Christ two persons, each saying “I,” a kind of dual personality or schizophrenia? The Reformed position is that “the person of the Son is...united...with the human nature, so that there are...two natures united in one single person.”

The second technical, theological term we must understand is “nature.” Jesus Christ, who as to His person is the eternal, only begotten Son of God, has two natures. The nature of something is what it *is*, it is the sum total of the qualities or attributes of a thing. So, the human nature of Christ is His being *man*, His body, flesh, blood, soul, will and everything else that makes someone human. Christ is as human as you or I—He is, as our creeds put it, “very man.” Everything that man is (except sin, of course, which is not essential to the being of man), Jesus Christ is. The divine nature of Christ is His being *God*, His infinite divine essence or being. Christ is as divine as the Father or the Holy Spirit—He is, as our creeds put it, “very God.” Everything that God is, Jesus Christ is. Thus Jesus Christ possesses the essence, the names and the attributes and receives the worship of God.

This was the confession of the Christian church from the beginning. The difficulty the church had was to understand the *relationship* between the divine and the human in Jesus Christ. The church came to an understanding of this truth only through great struggle.

And we must understand this for our salvation and comfort, because only one who is both God and man, in two distinct natures, in one divine person, can be our Saviour.

**June 19 – The Errors of Nestorianism and Eutychianism**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

Matthew 16:15 “He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?”

There are two main errors, which the early church rejected, with respect to the relationship between the two natures of Christ. We must remember that the Bible does not provide for us the theological terms “person” and “nature.” Therefore, as the Holy Spirit led the church into all truth, she coined her own terms so that she could give a coherent confession of her faith. But before the church officially defined the doctrine of Christ, men arose with wrong ideas, whose ideas had to be rejected.

The first error was Nestorianism. Nestorius (c. 386-451 AD) concluded that since Christ has two natures, Christ must be (or have) two persons. Thus Nestorianism teaches *two Christs*, one a divine Christ, and the other a human Christ, and a dual personality. Nestorius tried to explain the union between the two natures in Christ as that of a marriage—just as a man and a woman become “one flesh” in marriage, so the human and divine are one in Christ. Another illustration helpful in explaining Nestorianism is two peas in a pod, or two eggs sitting side by side in a basket. The problem, of course, is this—in Nestorianism, there is no connection between the human and divine in Christ. They are separate, even independent of one another. Nestorianism is condemned in Art. 19: “the person of the Son is inseparably united and connected with the human nature, so that there are not two Sons of God, nor two persons, but two natures united in one single person.”

Nestorianism is a dangerous heresy because it separates what God has united in the Incarnation of the Son of God. If Jesus Christ is (or has) two persons, what He does in one nature has no relationship with what He does in the other nature. And this has serious implications for the cross. If the sufferings of Jesus Christ are the sufferings of a mere man—in whom somehow a separate person called the Son of God lived—how can they have any value for our salvation? If the human nature and divine nature are not personally united, how could the man Jesus Christ bear up under the infinite weight of the wrath of God? The *Heidelberg Catechism* has this in mind in LD 6, “Why must He in one person be also very God? That He might by the power of His Godhead sustain in His human nature the burden of God’s wrath” (Q&A 17).

The other error was Eutychianism. Eutyches (c. 380-456 AD) concluded that since Christ is one person, Christ must have one nature. Notice how the truth lies between the middle of two extreme errors. Nestorius taught two natures, two persons. Eutyches taught one person, one nature. The truth is one person, two natures. The nature of Christ, concluded Eutyches, is neither human nor divine, but a humanized divinity or a divinized humanity. If Nestorius imagined two eggs lying side by side in a basket with no real connection to one another, Eutyches imagined two substances blended to form a third substance. Thus, the Christ of Eutychianism is neither human nor divine. Art. 19 answers Eutychianism in these words: “each nature retains its own distinct properties”. Eutychianism also endangers our salvation because a Christ who is neither God nor man cannot suffer in the human nature—He does not *have* a real human nature distinct from the divine nature—on the cross.

How important is our confession of Christ: one Christ, in two distinct natures, in one person forever! And how thankful we are for the Spirit’s work in leading the church into the truth!

**June 20 – The Distinct Properties of the Divine Nature**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

Colossians 2:9 “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”

Jesus Christ, by virtue of the Incarnation, has two natures. The Son of God is, was and always has been God. The Son of God became, was and remains forever man. These two natures are united in the one Christ in the person of the Son of God, and therefore they cannot be separated from one another. However, they can and must be distinguished from one another.

The divine nature of Christ is everything which a divine nature must be. Art. 19 lists some of its qualities. First, it is eternal because it “hath always remained uncreated, without beginning of days or end of life.” Therefore, Christ, according to His divine nature, has no beginning. He always is. He is unchangeable: He is not born, He does not grow and He can never die. Jesus declared to the Jews who scoffed at His claim to have seen Abraham, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). Not only does Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, have preexistence, He eternally *is*, as eternal as the Father and the Holy Spirit. Second, it is omnipresent, “filling heaven and earth.” Christ, according to His divine nature, is not limited by time or space, and He is simultaneously on earth and heaven, and indeed His divine essence (which is the same divine essence of the Father and the Son in the Holy Trinity) is present everywhere. Therefore, Christ, according to His divine nature, does not move from one location to another. He did not descend and He did not ascend. Jesus puts it very strikingly in John 3:13, “And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man *which is in heaven.*” As Jesus Christ spoke to Nicodemus in Jerusalem He could claim, as the Son of man, that He was dwelling in the very presence of God! Later Jesus says to the Jews, “Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come” (John 7:34). Jesus does not say, “Where I shall be,” but “Where I *am.*” And He is speaking about heaven. Jesus is, as to His divine nature, both in heaven and on earth. Third, we can mention other divine attributes not mentioned by Art. 19. Jesus Christ, as to His divine nature, was and is omniscient, knowing all things with perfect knowledge. He was also omnipotent, possessing the power not only to do mighty miracles—raise the dead, heal the sick, calm the sea, cast out demons—but also to sustain the heavy burden of God’s wrath on the cross, to conquer death, to crush Satan’s head and to raise Himself from the dead on the third day.

This divine nature never changed. Never did the Son lose any of the attributes of His divine nature. Art. 19 gives two striking instances of this: in His birth and childhood, and in His death and burial. “The Godhead did not cease to be in Him [when He lay in the grave], any more than it did when He was an infant, though it did not so clearly manifest itself for a while.”

But at the same time, the one who was eternal, unchangeable, omnipresent, omniscient and almighty, the one who never laid aside or lost any of His divine attributes, was a true and complete man. About this Jesus Christ the Apostle Paul writes, “God was manifest in the flesh...” (1 Tim 3:16) and “in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col 2:9).

Thus the man Jesus Christ is God.

And His human nature we will consider next time.

**June 21 – The Distinct Properties of the Human Nature**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

John 19:28: "...I thirst."

Yesterday we saw that Jesus Christ has two natures, and we looked at the properties of His divine nature. As the Son of God, Jesus Christ is eternal, unchangeable, omnipresent, omniscient and almighty in His divine nature. The man who lived on earth for some thirty-three years is God in human flesh.

But we are not finished. The divine nature must be distinguished from His human nature.

Just as the divine nature must possess divine attributes to be divine, so the human nature of Christ must possess human qualities to be human. Quite simply, when Jesus Christ lived on earth, His human nature possessed essentially the same human qualities which your human nature does. Art. 19 explains: "so also hath the human nature not lost its properties, but remained a creature, having beginning of days, being a finite nature, and retaining all the properties of a real body." We must not think, because the human nature was (and is) united to the divine nature, that some of the divine attributes were passed on to it. For example, with respect to Christ's human nature, He changed. He began as a tiny baby, and He grew physically until He reached a certain height and weight. This was not true of His unchangeable divine nature. With respect to His human nature, He was limited by both time and space. Christ could not exist in His human nature in two places at once. He had to travel from Jerusalem to Nazareth, and this took Him time, just as when you walk from one place to another, it is a real change of time and place. Christ's human nature had a beginning—unlike His divine nature—so that the body and soul of the man Jesus Christ did not exist before the Incarnation. In fact, Art. 19 calls the humanity of Christ "a creature." As the eternal Son of God, Christ is the Creator. As the man Christ Jesus with respect to His humanity, Christ is a creature!

This explains what we read in the Gospel accounts. Jesus Christ was born as a human being, but as the Son of God He is eternally begotten (Luke 2:11; John 1:18). Jesus Christ hungered, thirsted, sweated, grew tired, slept and experienced pain as a human being, but as the Son of God, He is impassible, unable to suffer, the God who is never weary and is utterly independent of the creation (Matt 21:18; John 19:28; Luke 22:44; John 4:6; Mark 4:38; I Pet 2:23; Isa 40:28; Psa 50:12-13). Jesus Christ was ignorant of things, because as a man, He did not have an omniscient soul, but as the Son of God He is omniscient (Mark 13:32; John 1:48, 4:29, 21:17). Jesus Christ prostrated Himself before the Father, worshipping Him as His God, and submitting Himself to the divine will, because as a man, He was the servant of God, but as the eternal Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, He is subordinate to none, and is Himself worshipped (Matt 26:39-44; Matt 8:2; John 9:38). Finally, Jesus Christ died, which can only be true of Him with respect to His human nature. The divine nature neither sheds blood—there is no such thing as divine blood—nor dies, but the man Christ Jesus died. "Therefore," explains Art. 19, "that which He, when dying, commended into the hands of His Father, was a real human spirit, departing from His body."

Behold our Saviour! God in the flesh, possessing all the powers, attributes and glory of God. A real man, with flesh and blood as real as ours. A real man with a real human soul, mind and will. Who can fully comprehend the mystery? Ours is to worship and adore Him.

**June 22 – The Hypostatic Union**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

I Corinthians 2:8 “...had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

We have seen that the doctrine of Christ is complicated. First, the terminology we use—person and nature—is not found in Scripture but was developed by the church from Scriptural principles. Second, we must avoid falling into the error of Nestorianism—two natures, two persons—on the one hand, and Eutychianism—one person, one nature—on the other hand. The orthodox view is one person, two natures. Third, a careful distinction must be maintained between the human and divine in Jesus Christ. He is both omniscient and ignorant; both infinite and limited; both omnipotent and weak; both without a beginning and with a beginning. The only way in which this makes sense is to confess that Christ is omniscient as God, with respect to His divine nature; and that He is ignorant as man, with respect to His human nature.

These two natures are united, joined or connected. We must consider this next. The union of the two natures is unique. It is not the “one flesh” union of a man and a woman in marriage, because that is the union of two persons. It is not the union of two chemical substances, which, when they react together, form a third substance, such as the union of hydrogen and oxygen to form water. The theological explanation for this union is the *hypostatic union*. The word hypostatic comes from the Greek word *hypostasis* which means person. Hypostatic union, therefore, means personal union.

Remember what (or who) the person of Christ is: Christ’s person is the conscious and self conscious subject of all of Christ’s activity. That sounds complicated, but remember that the “subject” is the one performing the action. Therefore, the subject is the one who says “I.” When Jesus Christ said “I,” or when He did or experienced anything, the person of Christ—the eternal Son of God, the second divine person of the Trinity—was the one doing the action or experiencing the thing. At the same time, the one person of the Son of God acted in and through the two distinct natures, human and divine. We must remember this because, strictly speaking, the nature of Christ does not perform the activity. Only the person does. This is true with us too, although our person is not divine. For example, when you feel hungry you do not say, “My stomach feels hungry,” but “I feel hungry.” When you sleep, you do not say, “My body slept,” but “I slept.” When you cry, you do not say, “My eyes are crying,” but “I am crying.” Think similarly of Christ: *the person of the Son of God* was hungry, tired, slept, wept and died! Be very careful not to misunderstand. We did not write, “God was hungry, tired, wept and died.” But notice also that we did not write, “The human nature of Christ was hungry, tired, wept and died.” Christ did these things, and He did them as the Son of God! On the other hand, when we say that Christ created, we do not mean that the divine nature of Christ created; we mean that the person of the Son of God created (which is only true of His divine nature, not His human nature).

So close therefore is the union of the divine and human in the one Christ that what can be said of either nature—He wept, He thirsted, or He created the universe—can be said of the one person. Thus it was proper of Paul to write, “they...crucified the Lord of glory” (I Cor 2:8) or to speak of the church of God which “he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

When we speak, therefore, of Christ, we say, “The Son of God acted according to His [human or divine] nature.” Always the one Son of God acts according to, in and through, His natures. Never are these natures confused, and never are they separated.

**June 23 – The Glorified Human Nature Really Human**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

Philippians 3:21 “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

Art. 19 has its eye on the Lutherans. At the time of the Reformation there were three main groups in Christendom. The Roman Catholics were the persecuting majority. Guido de Brès, who wrote the *Confession*, died a martyr's death at the hand of Romish authorities. The Anabaptists, as we have seen, were a radical group, some of whom espoused various heresies, such as Christ's heavenly flesh, direct revelations of the Spirit, a denial of infant baptism and rebellion against the state. They are condemned in several articles of the *Belgic Confession*. The third group, with whom the Reformers had very much in common, were the Lutherans. The tragic error of Luther and the Lutheran churches concerned Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper, an error which spawned a Christological error.

The question which exercised the minds of the Lutherans was this: How can Christ be bodily present in the Lord's Supper? The Reformed denied such a bodily presence, for good reason as we shall see in Art. 35. The Lutherans concluded that the human nature of Christ became ubiquitous or immense at His Ascension. Ubiquitous means present in many places at once and is akin to the word omnipresent. But how is it possible for a real human nature to be ubiquitous? The answer of Lutheranism was that by virtue of the hypostatic union the divine nature communicated (or shared) some of its properties with the human nature. Lutheranism illustrated it thus: just as iron, when placed into a fire, becomes red hot and glows with the properties of fire, although the fire does not receive any of the properties of the iron, so the human nature, when united with the divine nature, glows with the divine attributes and thus becomes ubiquitous. Most Lutherans say that this communication of properties happened at the Ascension. Lutheranism also caricatured the Reformed view: the Reformed, said the Lutherans, view the two natures as two boards glued together, where neither board confers anything upon the other board (see the *Formula of Concord*, Art. 8, para. 5). You can probably see that the Lutheran view is a form of Eutychianism—a blending of the two natures—and that the Lutherans accuse the Reformed of a form of Nestorianism—a separation of the two natures.

The divine nature does not share its attributes with the human nature. An ubiquitous or omnipresent human nature is impossible because a human nature, by definition, must be finite and limited by space. There was (and is), however, a close personal union between the two natures, such that the one person of the Son could sustain His human nature on the cross by the power of His divine nature. Similarly, the weight of glory and the fullness of the Spirit, with which the Son of God is glorified in His human nature, are only possible because the Son of God is both human and divine.

Nevertheless, the human nature of Christ remains human even after it is glorified and after it becomes immortal in the resurrection. “The human nature [hath] not lost its properties.” “He hath not changed the reality of His human nature, forasmuch as our salvation and resurrection also depend on the reality of His body.” If our human nature—not a divinized, immense, or ubiquitous nature—is not in heaven, we have no hope of going there. But because Christ took our human nature, not to lay it aside at His resurrection but to glorify it, we have confidence that He will take us body and soul to heaven to be with Him.



**June 24 – The Two Natures Never Separated**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

Revelation 1:17-18 “...Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore...”

The hypostatic union, the personal union of the two natures in Jesus Christ, shall never end. That union began at Christ’s conception by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary. At that time, the Son of God became a man. The Son of God remained a man throughout His thirty-three years on earth, in His death on the cross, in His resurrection and ascension, and He remains a man today and shall be a man forever. The orthodox teach this about the Son of God: “remaining what He was, He became what He was not.” The Son of God became and remains forever man, without ever ceasing to be God.

Art. 19 contains some of the most striking language concerning this inseparable union found in any creed. “These two natures are so closely united in one person, that they were not separated even by His death.” “The divine nature always remained united with the human, even when He lay in the grave; and the Godhead did not cease to be in Him, any more than it did when He was an infant, though it did not so clearly manifest itself for a while.”

In death, the human nature of Christ was divided, which means that His real human soul or spirit separated from His real human body. The same thing happens to us when we die. For three days His spirit or soul—which, being a real human soul, and therefore not an omnipresent soul—was in heaven (Luke 23:43,46) and His real human body, lifeless and dead, remained under the power of death in the grave. But what about His divine nature? What about the person of the Son of God? The divine nature of Christ is omnipresent, so He is everywhere present with respect to His divine nature. But Art. 19 is not speaking about mere omnipresence: it is speaking about the *union* of the human and divine natures. The divine nature of Christ remained united to the whole human nature of Christ—to His real human body and soul—and therefore it was united to both His soul in heaven and to His body in the grave. Not even death could sever the hypostatic union between the divinity and humanity in the one Christ!

Where the human nature of Christ is—even when that human nature is divided in death—there the divine nature is inseparably united to it. But the opposite is not true. We cannot say, where the divine nature is, there the human nature is. Why not? Because that would make the human nature omnipresent. Is the human nature of Christ now in heaven and also on earth; does the human nature of Christ fill heaven and earth? Of course not, but the divine nature does! Can the human nature appear in many different locations on earth and in heaven at the same time? No, because then it would not be a human nature!

The *Heidelberg Catechism* explains: “But if His human nature is not present, wherever His Godhead is, are not then these two natures in Christ separated from one another? Not at all, for since the Godhead is illimitable and omnipresent, it must necessarily follow that the same is beyond the limits of the human nature He assumed, and yet is nevertheless in this human nature, and remains personally united to it” (Q&A 48).

Perhaps you wonder about the necessity of such deep, complicated theology. Why must we believe *this* about Christ? Art. 19 explains: “Wherefore we confess that He is *very God*, and *very man*: very God by His power to conquer death; and very man that He might die for us according to the infirmity of His flesh.”

Only this Christ can save sinners such as we are!

**Article 20: God Hath Manifested His Justice and Mercy in Christ.**

*We believe that God, who is perfectly merciful and just, sent His Son to assume that nature in which the disobedience was committed, to make satisfaction in the same, and to bear the punishment of sin by His most bitter passion and death. God therefore manifested His justice against His Son when He laid our iniquities upon Him, and poured forth His mercy and goodness on us, who were guilty and worthy of damnation, out of mere and perfect love, giving His Son unto death for us and raising him for our justification, that through Him we might obtain immortality and life eternal.*

**June 25 – God Perfectly Merciful and Just**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

Psalm 85:10 “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”

Christians believe—rightly—that God is love. But for many Christians, God is *only* love. The other attributes of God, which are equally important, are often neglected, or only begrudgingly confessed. Many in the church do not like to think about God’s justice, righteousness, holiness or wrath. Some even imagine that the God of justice was the Old Testament God, and the God of mercy is the New Testament God. Others believe that God is an angry, vindictive deity, but that Jesus came to persuade God to be merciful to us.

The *Belgic Confession* already taught us in Art. 1 that God is simple. God’s simplicity means that He is one in being and one in His attributes. The simple God cannot be a confusion of characteristics so that His love, mercy and grace are in conflict with His justice, righteousness and holiness. God does not overcome His justice by His mercy. God’s mercy does not swallow up His justice. God’s mercy is just, righteous, holy mercy. God is both justice and mercy at the same time. We have difficulty understanding that, perhaps, because we are a confusion of complicated emotions. We often find ourselves conflicted. Our hearts are in turmoil at times. But God is the ever blessed one. He is not like us. He is perfectly at harmony within Himself.

God’s mercy is not well understood. Many have defined it as the delay in punishment, not giving a man the punishment he deserves. But not all delay in punishment is mercy. When God delays the punishment of the wicked it is so that they might fill the cup of iniquity and receive the heavier punishment in the end. That is not mercy! Mercy is a positive attitude of pity or compassion upon one who is miserable. God’s mercy in the Bible is often called His tender mercy or His lovingkindness. When God has mercy on a sinner, He not only desires to relieve misery—and remember that our misery is our sin—but He actually powerfully delivers from misery and makes blessed. Scripture tells us that God is “rich in mercy” (Eph 2:4). We sing of God’s mercy: “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.” (Psa 103:8)

God is perfectly—eternally, unchangeably, infinitely—merciful!

And God is just. God’s justice is His unswerving commitment to Himself as the ultimate standard of perfection. When we say that a person or an action is just we have in mind a standard. A judge is called just when he legislates in such a way that he upholds the law. A law might be said to be just when it is in harmony with existing legislation. There is no standard or measurement outside of God Himself to which God must conform. God is the standard. God’s justice is His harmony with Himself. Because God is just, He must punish sin. He must be against everything that does not harmonize with Himself. “For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness...” (Psa 11:7). “He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he” (Deut 32:4).

That is our God—the only true God. He is perfectly merciful, overflowing in goodness and compassion for miserable sinners; and He is perfectly just, committed to righteousness and truth, incapable of the slightest deviation from perfection. This God will save sinners—for He is merciful—and He will do so in such a way that sin is punished—for He is just.

Merciful and just *in Jesus Christ*. Do you know this God by faith in His Son?

**June 26 – God’s Son Making Satisfaction**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

Matthew 20:28 “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

God is perfectly merciful *and* just. God has compassion on miserable sinners, and does not punish us. And God punishes sin, so that salvation never contradicts His justice. This happens through satisfaction. Satisfaction means to do or pay enough. When God is satisfied—and He must be if sinners are to be saved—all the righteous demands of His Law are met. God’s demands are twofold. First, God demands that the creature—man—render full, perfect, lifelong obedience. This means that we must love the Lord our God with our whole heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbor as ourselves. That was the demand which Adam was able to fulfill by virtue of His creation in the image of God—until he fell. That demand was never revoked, and it can never be revoked. If God were to revoke that demand, He would be saying that it no longer matters to Him that He be loved by His creatures. He would then be saying that He is something less than the ever blessed God, worthy of all glory, honour and praise. In short, God would be denying Himself. The creature—whether in a state of innocence or fallen—is eternally obligated to adore God with everything that is in him. Anything less is sin. Second, now that man has fallen into sin, God demands full payment for all sins committed against Him. This means that God can never ignore the fact that we have committed sin. He can never let us get away with sin, as if sin—which is a crime against the infinite God—were nothing serious.

If God’s demands are to be met there are several possibilities. First, it might be possible that we pay what we owe to God, that we satisfy God for our own sins. But we have nothing with which to pay such a debt, and that debt increases every moment we fail to render obedience and with every transgression of God’s Law, not to mention that we are corrupt in our very nature! Second, it might be possible to find among men, angels or the animals a being which could pay for our sins. God’s Word tells us “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Heb 10:4). Animals are not a substitute for sinful men. Angels cannot bear the punishment we deserve either because it would be unjust for God to punish an angel for the sins committed by man. Another man cannot pay our debt and bear God’s punishment for our sins for two reasons. First, no man is powerful enough to endure the infinite weight of the wrath of God so that he could deliver himself—or others—from it. Second, all men are sinners, so that they could not even begin to satisfy for their own sins, never mind attempt to satisfy for our sins.

There is, therefore, only one other possibility. God satisfies His own justice in the human nature. That is exactly what God has done in Jesus Christ. God “sent His Son to assume that nature, in which the disobedience was committed, to make satisfaction in the same.”

That is why the Son of God became a man in the incarnation. He came in our human nature to bear the punishment which we deserve to suffer forever in hell. We could never bear that punishment. God would not leave our sin unpunished.

Salvation in a substitute! What admirable goodness and mercy!

**June 27 – The Father Sending the Son**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Sometimes it is said that the Son came to save us from the Father’s wrath, as if God was angry with us, and Jesus by His sacrifice persuaded God to love us. It is true that the Father was angry with us, justly wrathful because we have sinned against Him. But we must remember that the Triune God—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—is a God of mercy and justice. We cannot pit the one person—the Father—against the Son, any more than we can pit one attribute—mercy—against another attribute—wrath.

Jesus did not have to do something to persuade the Father to love us. Jesus did not by His satisfaction persuade God not to destroy us. The Father loved us eternally, and that is the reason for His sending the Son! Here is the relationship—the Father sent the Son in love, and the Son willingly came in love. That is the teaching of Art. 20. “We believe that God...sent His Son...” God was the one “giving His Son unto death for us.” The Word of God speaks of the gift of God in sending His Son, and in the love of Christ in coming. God’s love is the cause of the coming of the Son. The coming of the Son is not the cause of God’s love. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...” (John 3:16); “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

We must understand that the sending of Christ into the world was the promise, purpose and plan of God from the very beginning. The *Belgic Confession* has taught us that already: God promised to give His Son in eternity (Tit 1:2-3); God revealed that promise to send His Son just after our first parents sinned (Gen 3:15); God repeated that promise throughout history in various ways (through the shadows of the Old Testament Law and by clear prophecies), and in the fullness of time Jesus Christ came according to that promise. God promised His Son because this is the only way in which sinners can be saved. Only in this way can God’s admirable mercy be put on display, and God’s strict justice be satisfied.

We must also understand that the Son of God who was sent in the incarnation came most willingly. Although the Son knew, of course, how much it would cost Him to come—humiliation, shame, suffering and death—He came willingly because of His love for the Father. This, too, is clearly revealed in Scripture: “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire... Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psa 40:6-8) Heb 10:5-10. Jesus said to His disciples, “...My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work” (John 4:34).

And the wonder is this: Jesus was willing to perform the will of the Father, knowing all along that the will of the Father was that He satisfy God’s justice with respect to the sins of all His people! Paul sums it up: “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:7-8).

**June 28 – The Son Assuming the Nature in Which the Disobedience Was Committed  
by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

Hebrews 2:14 “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;”

We have seen thus far that our God is both perfectly merciful and perfectly just. We have seen that in His admirable mercy, He sent His own only begotten Son into the world. We have insisted that this was a free sending by the Father and a willing coming of the Son. Now we ask the question—why? What was exactly the purpose of the Son becoming a real human being, of the Son adopting or assuming our human nature of flesh, blood and soul? And why could the Son not have assumed the nature of the angels? Why did He have to assume our nature and none other? Art. 18-19 already began to answer these questions: “since the soul was lost as well as the body, it was necessary that He should take both upon Him, to save both” (Art. 18); “that He might die for us according to the infirmity of His flesh” (Art. 19). Therefore, we know from previous Articles of the *Belgic Confession* that the Incarnation was necessary for our salvation, that He might die. Art. 20 elaborates: the Son assumed a human nature—as opposed to, let’s say, an angelic nature—because it was in the human nature that man’s disobedience was committed.

All of our sins are committed in the human nature. That should be obvious since we are only human nature. Unlike Christ we are not both human and divine; only human. Our sins are committed in our bodies and souls. Paul reminds the Roman Christians that they had employed the members of their bodies for sin: “ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity” (Rom 6:19). Paul warns the Corinthians not to disobey God with their bodies: “...he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body” (I Cor 6:18); “...glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (v20). The calling of Christians is to mortify (put to death) the sinful deeds of the flesh: “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth...” (Col 3:5). Even when our bodies are resting, our human souls (our mind, heart and will) are defiled by sin.

Jesus Christ assumed a human body of flesh and blood with all the human members which we have—hands, feet, etc.—with which we sin. In that human body and with that human body, Jesus Christ avoided sin and followed after righteousness. Never did His hands perform a sinful deed. Never did His feet walk the path of unrighteousness. Moreover, Jesus Christ assumed a human soul of heart, mind and will. With that human soul Jesus Christ loved God with all of His being. Never did His human heart lust after sin. Never did He set His human will on evil. Never did one impure thought defile His human mind. What perfection there was in the Son of God!

But there is more to the Son’s assuming our human nature than His rendering in that human nature the perfect obedience we have failed—indeed *refused*—to give God. Jesus Christ assumed that human nature of body and soul, so that He might make satisfaction by suffering what we deserved to suffer.

Satisfaction through suffering. That is the salvation which Christ has wrought for us!

**June 29 – The Son Making Satisfaction in the Human Nature**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

Isaiah 53:11 “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied...”

Last time we began to see that the Son of God assumed the human nature because that was the nature in which the disobedience of man was committed. We also saw that the Son came to make satisfaction in that nature. We looked yesterday at the “positive” aspect of that satisfaction, that in the human nature (of body and soul) the Son rendered to the Father the perfect obedience which we could not—and would not—render of ourselves.

But there is also the matter of our transgressions and sins against God’s Law. We have employed, as we saw from Rom 6, the members of our body (our hands, feet, etc.) to sin against God. Therefore, all the members of our body must suffer the punishment of God. We have sinned willfully, deliberately and even greedily with our souls (our mind, will, heart, emotions, etc). Therefore, we must experience in our souls the anguish of God’s wrath. That is the fearful punishment of hell—in the lake of fire the damned are punished body and soul for all the evil done in the body and soul in this life. That punishment is awful, but it is also just. No one who suffers such eternal punishment, does not deserve it. We deserve it also, and we shall suffer it, unless a way be found to satisfy God’s justice.

Suffering and punishment in body and soul came upon Christ in His human nature as He dwelled upon the earth, and especially as He died upon the cross. That is why our Saviour had to have a human nature. The Son of God could not suffer in the divine nature. The Son of God as He dwells in heaven in the bosom of the Father knows no suffering. He cannot know suffering. The Son of God in heaven is adored by myriads of angels. He cannot know shame or sorrow of any kind. It was only in humbling Himself, in taking upon Himself the form of a servant, in being in the likeness of sinful flesh, that the Son of God could suffer. Christ suffered in His body of flesh and blood. Christ suffered those things which are common to man—hunger, thirst, fatigue, physical pain—but He knew them with great intensity than other men. This was especially true at the end of His life. In Christ’s final hours He suffered dreadful torments in His body. He flesh was torn to pieces with the Roman scourge; nails were pounded into His hands and feet; and He was hanged on a cross for six hours suffering excruciating pain. Add to that the awful sufferings of soul—sorrow, grief, anguish. Who can fathom the depth of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ? “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death...” He said (Matt 26:38). Heb 5:7 says that Christ “offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears...” and then He submitted His own human will (which shrank from suffering) to the divine will.

But we have not yet described the worst sufferings of Christ. The agonies of body and soul of a victim of crucifixion were truly dreadful. But Christ, in addition to those sufferings and through those sufferings, bore the wrath of God in order to make full satisfaction for all our sins.

What incomparable suffering! What incomparable obedience! What incomparable mercy!

**June 30 – The Father Laying Our Iniquities Upon Him**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

Isaiah 53:5 “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities...”

There is one subject about which we must be clear before we proceed—the justice in God’s punishing of His Son for our sins. How could the sinless, innocent Son of God be made to suffer? How is it right that the Son of God experience pain and anguish in body and soul? How is it possible that the Son of God should know the wrath of the Father? Could it be true that the Father was angry with His own Son?

The answer is given in Art. 20: “God therefore manifested His justice against His Son when He laid our iniquities upon Him.” It was because God laid our iniquities upon Christ, that He could be just in punishing Christ. To lay our iniquities upon Christ means to impute the guilt of our iniquities to Christ. Legally, the guilt of all our sins became Christ’s. Imputation is an extremely important word in theology. We believe in a threefold imputation. First, we believe—as we already saw in Art. 15—that God imputed the guilt of Adam’s sin to the entire human race. Adam’s sin rendered us all guilty, because Adam represented us. Second, we believe—as we learn in Art. 20-21—that God imputed the guilt of all our sins to Jesus Christ. Our sins rendered Christ guilty—not personally guilty, but legally guilty—before God, and God treated Christ accordingly as a guilty man, guilty of all the sins of all those whom He represents. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (II Cor 5:21). Third, we believe—as we learn in Art. 22-23—that God imputes the righteousness of Jesus Christ to us by faith. Christ righteousness renders us, whom He represents and who believe in Him, righteous before God. “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Rom 5:19).

This explains how it was possible for Christ to suffer. He had the capacity to suffer because He had a human nature. He had the right to suffer—or God had the right to inflict suffering upon Him—because our sins were imputed to Him. Otherwise, to speak reverently, God had no legal right even to have Christ stub His toe; and it would be a moral outrage for Christ to experience the slightest pang of anguish. Anguish, pain and suffering are the experience only of sinners. As a person, Christ is the sinless Son of God, the righteous one. If He is not, He cannot be our Mediator and Saviour. But, legally—with respect to the Law, with respect to His position before God’s Law—Christ became guilty when the sins of all His people whom He represented, were made His by imputation.

And since Christ was loaded down with the guilt of our sins, He became the object of God’s just wrath. He lived under the shadow of that wrath His whole life and that wrath came upon Him—justly—when He died on the cross.

But we must never forget that Christ willingly adopted that position of guilt before the Law for us. Christ made Himself of no reputation; Christ humbled Himself for our salvation.



**July 1 – God Pouring Forth His Mercy and Goodness On Us**  
**by Rev. Martyn McGeown**

II Corinthians 8:9 “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

In our place Christ stood as guilty with the guilt of our sins. The sufferings which He bore were “the punishment of sin by His most bitter passion and death.” When Christ died on the cross, God “manifested His justice against His Son.” The blessed result of this was that God “poured forth His mercy and goodness on us, who were guilty and worthy of damnation, out of mere and perfect love.”

It was always God’s purpose to pour out His mercy and goodness upon His people. In fact, God created our first parents in His mercy and goodness. We remember how Adam and Eve knew and loved God, and how they experienced His mercy and goodness. That mercy and goodness were not yet extended to sinners, of course; but God’s attitude towards our first parents before they sinned was mercy and goodness. He gave them to taste and know Him as God. But the fullness of the riches of God’s mercy and goodness was prepared in eternity only in Jesus Christ. What Adam and Eve knew in the Garden of Eden is not what we now have in Jesus Christ—we have a better, higher, richer experience and possession of mercy and goodness! We have, in short, “immortality and life eternal.” It took the profound and mysterious way of sin and grace to bring us into the full experience of eternal life.

By our sins we have forfeited mercy and goodness. Because of our sins, we have no right to life at all. “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us...” (Eph 2:4). By our sins we have earned the bitter wages of death, the curse and destruction. “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:23). “For to be carnally minded is death... if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die...” (Rom 8:6,13). We cannot even begin to satisfy God for our sins. We cannot pay for even the least of our transgressions. Even one of our iniquities is enough to plunge us into damnation forever. But Christ bore our punishment and earned for us eternal life.

He did that by obeying where we could not—and would not—obey. He did that by dying the death we could never die. He did that by removing from Himself—and therefore from us, whom He represented—the guilt of those sins imputed to Him and loaded upon Him. When He cried, “It is finished” (John 19:30), the debt was paid.

We know that the debt is paid and that eternal life has been procured for us because Christ rose again on the third day. Christ was “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom 1:4). Christ was “raised again for [on account of] our justification” (Rom 4:25). Look to the cross. See the Son of God suffering there for sinners and believe in Him. Look to the empty tomb. See that the Son is the victor over death, sin, hell and the devil. Death could not hold Him. Sin could not bind Him. The grave could not keep Him. He has paid it all. And God will demand nothing more from the one for whom Christ died, who trusts in Him for full and free salvation.

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