

A long, arched stone portico with a brick floor and hanging lanterns. The walls are made of rough-hewn stone, and the ceiling is a series of brick arches. Sunlight filters through the arches, creating a pattern of light and shadow on the floor. Two ornate lanterns hang from the ceiling. The perspective is from the end of the portico, looking down its length.

WELCOME TO
THE PORTICO

Truth for the believer must be simply God's interpretation of reality. Only in terms of God's prior plan is anything whatsoever made intelligible, including also the relation between any question and its answer.

*R. K. McGregor Wright, in **No Place for Sovereignty***

There's nothing you can't prove if your outlook is only sufficiently limited.

*Dorothy L. Sayers, in **A Matter of Eternity***

Even if you are on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there.

Will Rogers

DOING THEOLOGY TOGETHER

No Christian should attempt to develop his or her theology and doctrine alone, without interacting with other believers from the past and the present. To do so leads to eccentricity at best, heterodoxy at worst. At the same time, to immerse ourselves in the theology and doctrine of others (particularly if the “others” all represent the same denominational stream), is to make ourselves susceptible to believing certain propositions just because they have been taught by a persuasive Christian authority.

What is the Christian leader in pursuit of theological integrity to do? Part of the answer is to commit to life-long learning. The moment a person feels that they “have arrived” at some point of theological omniscience or infallibility is the moment that person begins to descend into error. We must keep listening, keep reading, and keep going deeper in our personal study of the Scriptures. *And* church leaders must help one another do this.

Over the course of 50 years in Bible-teaching ministry, I’ve observed that one of the best ways I can help my brothers and sisters deepen their theological understanding is by helping them ask fresh questions about whatever topic is on the table. This observation has prompted me to offer a monthly opportunity for church leaders to gather online for an informal, Socratic-style discussion of theological topics. The purpose of these discussions is not to persuade or dissuade but only to help one another ask good questions and effectively think through issues and perspectives. The goal is to obtain greater clarity regarding our own theological beliefs, in order to serve Jesus well in this strategic moment in history.

I’m referring to this monthly discussion as **The Portico**, in honor of the meeting place of the first Christian congregation in Jerusalem, Solomon’s Portico. I’m not pretending that our *informal* online gathering will constitute more than a humble commemoration of the discipleship that occurred in that first congregation. Nevertheless, I do hope we can mirror their joyful hunger to learn more about Jesus, in an atmosphere of loving care for one another and excitement about the latest developments in the kingdom of God.

Roderick Grociani



fruitful
✓
RULES OF THEOLOGICAL
ENGAGEMENT

1.

Let all that is said be flavored by the fruit of the Spirit.

2.

In recognition of our One ultimate teacher (Mat 23.8), come as a learner.

3.

Try to express your disagreement in the form of a question.

4.

Prioritize sharing hermeneutical and exegetical insights over personal opinions and beliefs.

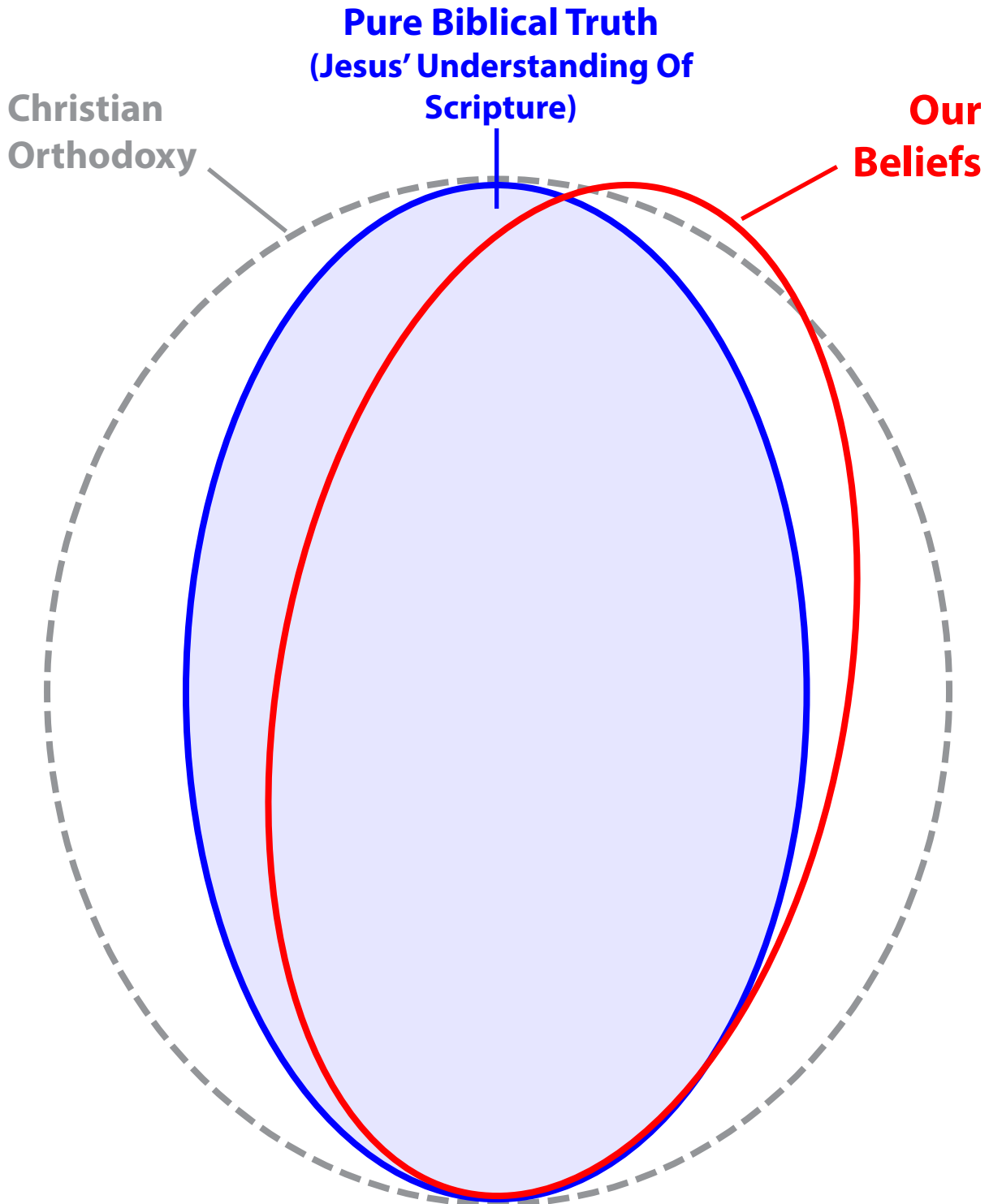
5.

Practice flexible thinking (within the bounds of Christian orthodoxy). In other words, give a new perspective a fair hearing.

6.

Be conscious of your presuppositions.

TRUTH SETS



Christian Orthodoxy: The set of all beliefs which one can hold and still be considered “Christian,” in the historical sense of the word. From the Greek, *orthodoxia* (from *orthos*, “right,” and *doxa*, “opinion”).

THE SALVATION OF GOD

Grain in time of famine

Healing for the sick

Rain in time of drought

Victory in war
2Ki 5.1

REGENERATION
John 3.3,5; Eph 2.5

REDEMPTION

The Saving Work Of Jesus Christ

SUBSTITUTION

RANSOM - BEARS INIQUITIES - MADE A CURSE
Mat 20.28; 1Ti 2.5-6; Isa 53.4-6,8; 1Pe 3.18

EXPIATION - PROPITIATION

Lev 16.22; Deu 32.43; Dan 9.24; Joh 1.29;
Romans 3.25; Gal 3.13; Eph 1.7; Hebrews 2.17;
1Juan 2.2; 4.10; Rev 5.9

HEALING of SHALOM

Isaiah 53.5; Rom 5.1; Col 1.20

JUSTIFICATION

Isaiah 53.11; Rom 3.24; Titus 3.5-7

RECONCILIATION

Rom 5.1,10-11; 2Cor 5.18-21; Col 1.20-22; 1Pe 2.25

ADOPTION - RESURRECTION - INHERITANCE

Mat 25.34; Luk 20.36; John 1.12; Acts 26.16-18; Rom 6.5; 8.14-16,23;
Gal 3.26; 4.5; Ephe 1.5,11; Titus 3.7; 1Pe 1.1-4; 1Jo 3.1-2; Rev 21.7

SEAL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

2Co 1.22; Eph 1.13; 4.30; 1Jo 4.13

DEVIL DEFEATED - DOMINION RESTORED

Joh 12.31; 16.11; Acts 26.18; Col 2.15;
Heb 2.14; 1Jo 3.8; Rev 5.10; 11.15

EXAMPLE

John 13.15; 1Peter 2.21

THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER
Acts 1.4-8

WIDOWED HUMANITY
MARRIED TO THE REDEEMER
Rom 7.4; Rev 19.7-9

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THE ANCIENT SOLUTION TO BONDAGE AND PROPERTY LOSS

From the introduction to *Redemption By Jesus* by Roderick Graciano and Carlos S. Martinez

If a citizen of ancient Israel became impoverished, he could sell himself into servitude. Depending on the poor man's abilities, he could potentially sell himself for enough money to pay off his debts. The downside of the arrangement was that he would have to work like a hired hand for an Israelite master for up to six years (Deu 15.12), and for a foreign master for up to 49 years (Lev 25.54).

Similarly, an impoverished Israelite could sell the land divinely allotted to his family in Joshua's time. In this case he could lose the dominion over his property for up to 49 years, until it reverted to him in the 50th year, the year of jubilee. If he sold his property very soon after a jubilee year, he likely would not live long enough to regain it in the next jubilee. Depending on the man's circumstances, his family line might lose their ancestral land forever.

The Mosaic law graciously provided a solution to these and related problems in its rules of redemption. If the man who had sold himself or his property somehow regained the means to redeem, that is *buy back*, his own freedom and his own property, he had the right to do so (Lev 25.26-27,49). However, if the man was unable to redeem himself or his property, the law prescribed that a near relative, a kinsman who had the means, could redeem both man (Lev 25.48-49) and property (Lev 25.25), thereby restoring his poor relative's freedom and dominion.

The most touching provision in the Israelite laws of redemption had to do with the case of a widow with no surviving male heir. Such a widow, if impoverished for lack of husband or sons to work her land, could sell her land directly to a kinsman redeemer, and live off the fruit of her land as the redeemer restored it to productivity for his own profit. The added proviso, however, was that the kinsman redeemer had to marry the widow, in the hopes of raising up a male heir, who would resume ownership of the land in the name of the original family line. The Bible describes this kind of redemption in the romantic book of Ruth.

On a deeper level, these biblical rules of redemption are relevant to the entire human race. Through our original ancestors, Adam and Eve, our race sold itself into bondage to the Serpent (the devil) and surrendered its dominion over the earth to that evil taskmaster. Like the truly impoverished Israelite of old, we have never had our own means to redeem ourselves, neither individually nor collectively. Our very best efforts to redeem ourselves by keeping God's laws have only brought more death, leaving us as helpless widows (Rom 7.5). Under this world's system of divine justice, we absolutely need a kinsman redeemer who can pay the redemption price that we ourselves could never afford. Such a redeemer must be a true human being, else he could not qualify as a kinsman. Yet, he must also be something more than human, else he would be as impoverished and impotent as the rest of us. Thankfully, God has provided just such a kinsman Redeemer. As Job confessed, millennia ago, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth" (Job 19.25).

THE ESCHATOLOGICAL FULFILLMENT OF REDEMPTION LAW

- | | |
|---|--|
| A. A man receives a property as a perpetual inheritance. | • Adam receives dominion of the earth, Gen. 1.26 |
| B. He sells his inheritance and does not have the means to redeem it. | • Adam & Eve “sell” their domain to Satan, Gen. 3.6 |
| C. A near relative buys (redeems) the property to keep it in the family. | • Christ pays man’s debt at the cross , Rev 5.9 |
| D. A public deed is produced; a copy of the deed is sealed and witnessed. | • Redemption sealed by the Holy Spirit, Eph. 1.13-14 |
| E. If the redemption is contested, the sealed deed is brought forth. | • The sealed scroll held forth in heaven, Rev. 5.1 |
| F. The Redeemer takes physical possession of the property. | • Christ takes possession of the earth, Rev 11.15 |
| G. Widow without heir is married to redeemer (see book of Ruth). | • Humanity, widowed from the law, married to the Lamb, Rom 7.4; Rev 19.7-9 |
| H. The original family line once again has dominion over the property. | • Holy humanity once again rules the earth, Rev. 5.10 |

THE CONSUMING FIRE

From chapter 1 of *Redemption By Jesus* by Roderick Graciano and Carlos S. Martinez

There is something about God's love that may at first disturb us, namely, that an expression of His wonderful love for us is His wrath against evil.¹ This connection between God's love and His wrath may seem counterintuitive, but when the Scriptures speak of God smiting the wicked, the recipients of His wrath are often those who had harmed or threatened God's people. In other words, God's wrath frequently has the purpose of protecting those whom he loves from those who would hurt them. For example, in the book of Revelation, when the bowls of God's wrath are poured out upon the worshippers of Antichrist, an angel says,

“Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, . . .”²

Likewise, in the book of Revelation when the persecuting entity called “Mystery Babylon” is destroyed in God's wrath, the Scripture says,

“Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her.”³

The apostle Paul put it this way, in his letter to the Thessalonian Christians,

For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire . . .⁴

We see that wrath pours forth from our heavenly Father when He must protect the children He loves. The Israelites of old were very grateful for this protecting wrath, and sang,

Let sinners be consumed from the earth
And let the wicked be no more.
Bless the Lord, O my soul.
Praise the Lord!⁵

It was because God loved Israel that He poured out His wrath upon Egypt in the ten plagues (Deu 7.8), and it's because God loves followers of Jesus today that He will bring fiery judgment upon their unrepentant persecutors (cf. 2Ti 4.14). No wonder that Solomon wrote,

Love *is* strong as death,
Jealousy *is* fierce as Sheol,
Its flashes *are* flashes of fire,
A flame of YHVH.⁶

1 As Chris Thurman writes, “I know it's hard to think of God's wrath this way, but God is righteously angry about sin because He loves us.”

2 Rev 16.5-6, NASB95.

3 Rev 18.20, NASB95.

4 2Th 1.6-7, NASB95.

5 Psa 104.35, NASB95.

6 Song 8.6.

The flame of YHVH is the fire of His love. When God's love is jealous (= zealous) to protect His children in Zion, His wrath is ready to break out like fire against their enemies (Zec 8.2).

God's children are not *all* that He loves, however, and therefore it is not only on their behalf that His wrath blazes forth. God also loves all His own virtues of truth, faithfulness and goodness, and above all He loves His Son (Psa 91.14; Mat 3.17; 17.5; Joh 3.35; 5.20; Col 1.13; 2Pe 1.17).⁷ Therefore, anything that is contrary to faithfulness and goodness (such as sin and suppressing the truth, Rom 1.18), and anything that is contrary to God's purposes for His Son, is subject to destruction by God's wrath. This is why our God is truthfully described as "a consuming fire" (Deu 4.24; Heb 12.29), and has manifested Himself in the past as a smoking furnace, a flaming torch, or a fiery cloud (Gen 15.17; Ex 13.21; cf. Eze 1.4; Dan 7.9-10). **From eternity to eternity He is love personified, and so He is forever and always opposed to everything that jeopardizes what He loves.** Thus, when God went before the Israelites into the promised land, the Canaanite nations were consumed before Him because of the Canaanites' wickedness (Deu 9.3-4). When wicked king Ahaziah sent a captain with fifty soldiers to arrest God's beloved prophet Elijah, fire descended from heaven and consumed that captain and his soldiers, and a second captain and his fifty after that (2Ki 1.9-12)! As king David wrote of the Lord in Psalm 21.8-9,

Your hand will find out all your enemies;
Your right hand will find out those who hate you.
You will make them as a fiery oven in the time of your anger;
The Lord will swallow them up in His wrath,
And fire will devour them.⁸

Indeed, anyone who acts against what God loves by committing sin and doing evil will find that "it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."⁹

⁷ As Sam Storms writes, "one may speak of *divine wrath* as a function of *divine love*! For God's wrath is His love for holiness and truth and justice." *Attributes of God*, § Wrath, part A.

⁸ NASB95.

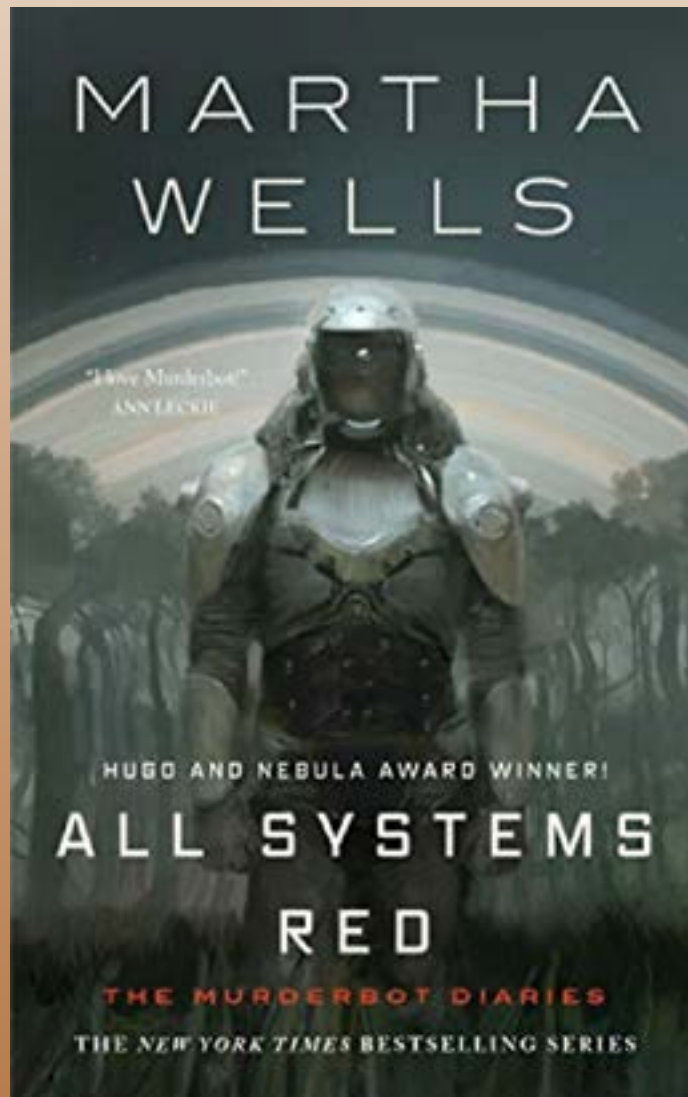
⁹ Heb 10.31, NASB95.

THE PORTICO

www.tmin.org

I COULD HAVE BECOME a mass murderer after I hacked my governor module, but then I realized I could access the combined feed of entertainment channels carried on the company satellites. It had been well over 35,000 hours or so since then, with still not much murdering, but probably, I don't know, a little under 35,000 hours of movies, serials, books, plays, and music consumed. As a heartless killing machine, I was a terrible failure.

Opening paragraph, *All Systems Red: The Murderbot Diaries* by Martha Wells, (Tor Publishing Group).



Appendix 7

From

Magic Baptism And The Invention Of Original Sin

Roderick Graciano, 2014

Current Definitions And Remedies For Original Sin

Roman Catholicism: A deprivation of original holiness and justice that does not leave human nature totally corrupted but subject to ignorance, suffering and the dominion of death, and inclined to sin. **The Remedy:** The faith and regeneration conferred in baptism, preferably in infancy.

Eastern Orthodoxy: An inclination towards sin that is a heritage from the sin of our progenitors, a disordered passion but not a state of total depravity.¹ **The Remedy:** The faith and regeneration conferred in baptism, preferably in infancy.

Anglican: “Article IX Of Original Or Birth Sin: Original sin ... is the fault and corruption of the Nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God’s wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated...” **The Remedy:** The faith and regeneration signified by, and the washing away of sin effected by, baptism (normally in infancy).²

Lutheran, Missouri Synod (influenced by Federalism): The guilt of Adam’s sin imputed to his offspring and the corruption of man’s nature.³ **The Remedy:** The faith and regeneration conferred in baptism, preferably in infancy.

Presbyterian, PCA: The total depravity of human nature resulting from Adam’s sin.⁴ **Remedy:** “In the gift of the Holy Spirit — by grace through faith — the originally sinful nature of man is transfigured to become Godly and possessed of the capacity to be God-like.”⁵

Christian Reformed: A corruption of the whole human nature, a depravity inherited because of Adam’s disobedience that infects all humanity from the womb, and is not abolished or uprooted

1 http://orthodoxwiki.org/Original_sin, viewed on July 21, 2014.

2 See Article XXVII of the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion. See also <http://stpaulsbr.wordpress.com/2009/06/16/original-sin-and-its-cure/>, viewed on July 21, 2014.

3 <http://cyclopedia.lcms.org/display.asp?t1=s&word=SIN.ORIGINAL>, viewed July 21, 2014.

4 <http://www.pcahistory.org/documents/believe.html>, viewed on July 21, 2014.

5 <http://www.pcahistory.org/documents/believe.html>, viewed on November 17, 2014.

even by baptism.⁶ **The Remedy:** God’s sovereign election and eventual resurrection (baptismal regeneration is explicitly denied).

Methodist: The corruption of human nature inherited from Adam, whereby man is continually inclined to evil.⁷ In other words, the first sin of Adam, and the **sinful nature** (depravity) possessed by every man since Adam, due to Adam’s first transgression.⁸ **The Remedy:** The faith and regeneration *signified by*, and the washing away of sin *effected by*, baptism (normally in infancy).⁹

Evangelical (influenced by Federalism): The guilt of Adam’s sin imputed to his offspring, and the corruption of man’s nature.¹⁰ **The Remedy:** New birth by the Holy Spirit, upon which the sinner is clothed in “the righteousness of Christ.”

Pentecostal: “[T]he **sinful nature** possessed by every man since Adam, due to Adam’s first transgression. This sinful nature is called “depravity.”¹¹ “[T]he inclination to sin. This **disease** of the human nature, upon a child’s reaching the age of moral responsibility, inevitably issues in personal acts of sinning, for which the individual falls under the wrath of God. Th[is] effect of Adam’s sin on the human race ..., though not itself the reason sinners are condemned by God, consequently, leads one into overt personal sin Out of Adam’s sin, then, innocence was lost, the divine image in humankind was distorted and weakened, people became enslaved to sin (see Rom 6), and discord and death entered the world.”¹² **The Remedy:** “All that anyone must do to be saved from the wrath that must come on sin is to look to Christ and live (cf. Num 21:4-9; Joh 3:14-15; 12:31-32). Salvation is not a complicated series of elaborate rites and religious forms or a set of mystical steps. It occurs instantaneously in the life of the genuine seeker after God the moment he or she truly believes.”¹³

6 <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions/belgic-confession#toc-article-15-the-doctrine-of-original-sin>, viewed June 15, 2023.

7 Article VII <https://www.umc.org/en/content/articles-of-religion>, viewed June 15, 2023.

8 Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*, (Los Angeles, CA: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983), p. 165.

9 See http://s3.amazonaws.com/Website_Properties/what-we-believe/documents/by-water-spirit-baptism.PDF, viewed on July 21, 2014.

10 Statement from Baptist statesman James Boyce on web page viewed July 21, 2014, no longer available.

11 Duffield, Guy P. and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*, (Los Angeles, CA: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983), p. 165.

12 William W. Menzies, *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective*, ed. Stanley M. Horton, (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 1993), p. 89.

13 William W. Menzies, *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective*, ed. Stanley M. Horton, (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 1993), p. 102.