

FREE
RESOURCE

A Study and
Discussion Guide

for
**Pilgrim
Theology**
by

MICHAEL HORTON



A RESOURCE FOR GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS

Developed by Toby Kurth



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Discussion Guide
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A “Pilgrim” Theology?

“Pilgrim” theology is the relentless pursuit of reality. This journey of understanding must begin with the central claim of all Scripture, which is the gospel—the good news of Jesus Christ. The gospel does not just tell us that God exists. The gospel tells us what God is like, how he has acted in history, and where we stand in relationship to him. As Michael Horton contends in the introduction to *Pilgrim Theology*, “I do not believe the gospel because I believe in God; rather, I believe in God because of the gospel. There are great arguments for the existence of a supreme being, but unless the gospel is true, the claim that a god exists is either personally meaningless or a horrible threat” (*PT*, 20).^{*} Theology drives us to believe in the particular God who is revealed in the Scripture and is known in Jesus Christ. Studying theology is not simply a pursuit of information; rather, it is a pursuit of radical transformation.

We come to the Bible primarily to learn about God; in the process, we learn about ourselves and our world. The Bible is a story about God and how he has revealed himself to humanity. It is an unfolding drama of redemption that gives us the true meaning of history. *Pilgrim Theology* is designed to help guide us on our journey of discovery by helping us “to grasp that the Bible is not chiefly about me and my personal experience or morality. Rather, it is the revelation of God and God’s history with us” (*PT*, 20). As you work through *Pilgrim Theology*, you will see how the Bible keeps you firmly planted in reality and engaged with God, who graciously reveals himself to us.

Theology should connect to practical living. The Bible does not set truth and experience and our head and our heart against each other. *Pilgrim Theology* and this Study Guide are both written to help us integrate our faith and practice, what we know and what we do. “Theology is the lived, social, and embodied integration of drama, doctrine, dox-

^{*} The abbreviation *PT* refers to Michael Horton, *Pilgrim Theology: Core Doctrines for Christian Disciples* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), and *TCF* is the abbreviation of Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011).

ology, and discipleship” (*TCF*, 70). This Study Guide will use Drama, Doctrine, Doxology, and Discipleship like the four coordinates of a compass to guide us on our journey to know God. The discussion/reflection questions in this Study Guide will be organized under these headings. A brief description of each of these headings is provided below.

Drama (“Big Story”)

All of our faith and practice arise out of the drama of Scripture, the “big story” that traces the plot of history from creation to consummation, with Christ as its Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. Everything we learn about God and the Bible is situated somewhere along the line of this unfolding drama. As we work through different theological concepts, we must keep an eye on where and how they fit into the big story.

Doctrine (“What We Believe”)

What we believe about God, ourselves, and our world directly emerges from God’s unfolding drama of redemption. “From what God does in history we are taught certain things about who he is and what it means to be created in his image, fallen, and redeemed, renewed, and glorified in union with Christ. As the Father creates his church, in his Son and by his Spirit, we come to realize what this covenant community is and what it means to belong to it; what kind of future is promised to us in Christ; and how we are to live here and now in the light of it all” (*PT*, 16). The Study Guide questions focused on doctrine will help us better understand the key terms and distinctions in each chapter.

Doxology (“Praise and Worship”)

Drama and doctrine together with God’s Spirit produce doxology. “When the doctrine is understood in the context of its dramatic narrative, we find ourselves dumbfounded by God’s grace in Jesus Christ, surrendering to doxology (praise)” (*TCF*, 22). We stand amazed before God, desiring to surrender our lives to him. We are captivated and humbled by God’s truth and self-revelation to us in Christ. Doxology is not just about Sunday worship; it transforms all of life. The Study Guide questions focused on doxology are designed to help engage our hearts with what we learned in the chapter.

Discipleship (“Reshaped Lives”)

God uses drama, doctrine, and doxology to produce disciples. “Our minds transformed by God’s Word so that we are grateful captives of praise to God, we become reshaped in Christ’s image as new characters in his drama” (*TCF*, 23). God adds us to his covenant community and teaches us how to live in this world as disciples of Christ. Theology should always be done for and by the church to serve God’s unfolding drama of redemption. We are each called to live in Christ, together with his church, so that the world may believe he was sent (John 17:21). These Study Guide questions will focus on how to translate what we are learning into how we are living.

Knowing God

Theology begins with God’s self-revelation. Everything we know about God first came from God. This means we only know things about him because he first taught them to us. We do not know God “as he is” in himself; we know him as he acts in history, as he has chosen to introduce himself to us. As Michael Horton explains, coming to “know” God is like meeting a stranger who has come to rescue us from the danger we did not even realize existed. This chapter explains how we know what we know about God as well as how God reveals himself to us in the gospel—namely, through the illumination of the Spirit in the written Word of God and consummately in Jesus Christ. God’s self-revelation corrects our distorted view of him, of ourselves, and of our world.

Key Terms	
<i>PT:</i> 28–29 <i>TCF:</i> 36–39	Polytheism: Belief in many gods.
<i>PT:</i> 28–29 <i>TCF:</i> 36–39	Pantheism: All is divine.
<i>PT:</i> 28–29 <i>TCF:</i> 36–39	Panentheism: All is within divinity; the divine and worldly principles are mutually dependent.
<i>PT:</i> 28–29 <i>TCF:</i> 39–41	Deism: God created the world but does not intervene miraculously within it.

<i>PT:</i> 28–29 <i>TCF:</i> 39–41	Atheism: God does not exist.
<i>PT:</i> 30 <i>TCF:</i> 47–57, 126–29	Accommodation: We know things as God has revealed them to us, accommodating his knowledge to our feeble capacity to understand.

Key Distinctions

<i>PT:</i> 30, 35 <i>TCF:</i> 47–79	Transcendence/Immanence: God is entirely above and outside of creation (transcendent) as well as entirely within creation (immanent). He is incomprehensible in his majesty, but in his condescending goodness and love, he freely relates us to himself.
<i>PT:</i> 33–34 <i>TCF:</i> 47–79	Archetypal/Ectypal: Archetypal knowledge is the knowledge that only God possesses. It is the original, whereas all else is the copy (ectypal knowledge), always imperfect, incomplete, and dependent on God’s perfect knowledge.
<i>PT:</i> 34–35 <i>TCF:</i> 54–57, 126–29	Analogical/Univocal/Equivocal: Analogical knowledge holds that creaturely knowledge is a copy of divine knowledge, whereas univocal knowledge views the knowledge of God and creatures as identical, and equivocal knowledge holds that God’s knowledge and creaturely knowledge have nothing in common.
<i>PT:</i> 37–39 <i>TCF:</i> 135–39	Law/Gospel: In the widest sense, the law is everything in Scripture that commands, and the gospel is everything in Scripture that makes promises based solely on God’s grace to us in Christ.
<i>PT:</i> 37–41 <i>TCF:</i> 139–50	General/Special Revelation: Creation (general revelation) displays the existence, wisdom, power, goodness, and righteousness of God “so that everyone is without excuse” (Rom 1:20). However, in special revelation God more clearly discloses these attributes, correcting our sinful distortions, and also reveals the gospel of his Son, which is not known apart from this source.

Discussion/Reflection Questions

Drama (“Big Story”)

1. Why does our ability to know God depend on his acts of creation, providence, and redemption in history? (*PT*: 31–32)

Doctrines (“What We Believe”)

1. Which of the different theories of knowledge do you see in your culture (**atheism**, **deism**, **panentheism**, **pantheism**, **polytheism**)? How does each of them contradict the way God has revealed himself in history? (*PT*: 28–29)
2. Why is **accommodation** necessary for us to know God? (*PT*: 31)
3. How has God displayed his **transcendence** in history? How has God displayed his **immanence**? (*PT*: 30, 35)
4. How does God’s knowledge (**archetypal**) relate to our knowledge (**ectypal**)? How can we as limited human beings know God truthfully? (*PT*: 33–34)
5. Compare and contrast an **analogical** knowledge of God with a **univocal** or **equivocal** knowledge of God. (*PT*: 34–35)
6. Why are God’s works in creation and providence described as **general revelation**? (*PT*: 37–41)
7. How does God use the **law** and the **gospel** to relate to his people? (*PT*: 37–39)
8. How does **special revelation** relate to **general revelation**? (*PT*: 40–41)

Doxology (“Praise and Worship”)

1. How does understanding the way you know God help you to trust him? (*PT*: 31)
2. How should God’s transcendence and immanence guide the way that we worship him? (*PT*: 30–35)
3. Why is God the only proper object of our worship? What are some things that compete for your worship? (*PT*: 43)
4. How do the historical facts and the doctrine of the resurrection produce repentance and trust in you? (*PT*: 49)

Discipleship (“Reshaped Lives”)

1. Describe some of the ways that understanding the “big story” of God’s unfolding drama of redemption changes and challenges the way you live?
2. How does the third use of the law help a believer to follow Christ? (*PT*: 39)
3. Why is it important to understand that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is grounded in history? (*PT*: 44–49)
4. How do drama, doctrine, and doxology lead to discipleship? (*PT*: 49)

Further Reading

Horton, Michael S. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*.

Chapter 1: Dissonant Dramas: Paradigms for Knowing God and the World, 35–79.

Chapter 2: The Character of Theology: A Theoretical or a Practical Science? 80–112.

Chapter 3: The Source of Theology: Revelation, 113–50.

Carson, D. A., and John Woodbridge. *Scripture and Truth*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992. Intermediate.

Packer, J. I. *Knowing God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979. Beginner.

Vanhoozer, Kevin. *The Drama of Doctrine*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005. Advanced.

God's Written Word

Everything for the Christian comes back to the person and work of Christ, including our view of Scripture. There are many reasons to believe and trust in Scripture, but the most powerful testimony to the Word of God as authoritative and inspired comes from Christ himself. Since Jesus has certified his claims by his resurrection, Jesus' view of Scripture must also be our view. Christ did not rise on the third day merely to prove the authority of Scripture, but his resurrection validates everything he taught his disciples. Over and over again Jesus proclaims that Scripture is historically reliable and the final court of appeal in matters of faith. Jesus taught his disciples to look to Scripture as the norm for faith and practice.

Key Terms	
<i>PT</i> : 52–54 <i>TCF</i> : 151–55	Canon: Together the Old and New Testaments are called a <i>canon</i> (from the Greek word meaning “rule”): the norm for faith and practice.
<i>PT</i> : 54 <i>TCF</i> : 160–61	Verbal-Plenary Inspiration: God is the ultimate author of Scripture, in its words (verbal), and in its entirety (plenary).

<i>PT:</i> 57–58 <i>TCF:</i> 176–78	Inerrancy: Scripture is without error in all that it affirms. God spoke to his people at different times, in their own context, and according to their ordinary capacities.
<i>PT:</i> 59–60 <i>TCF:</i> 992–93	Covenants of Redemption, Creation, and Grace: Before creation, the persons of the Trinity entered into a covenant of peace (or redemption), the Father appointing the Son by the power of the Spirit to redeem his people. This plan was then executed in history through the covenant of creation (or works) and then, after the fall, through the covenant of grace.
<i>PT:</i> 65 <i>TCF:</i> 822–23	The Regulative Principle: The church's authority goes only as far as the canon allows but must submit to everything that the canon contains.

Key Distinctions	
<i>PT:</i> 53–54 <i>TCF:</i> 155–164, 167–72	Inspiration and Illumination: Scripture is inspired—that is, God-breathed (2Ti 3:16), and therefore without error. Human interpretation, though assisted by God through the illumination of the Spirit, is always subject to error and revision in light of further study and knowledge.
<i>PT:</i> 55–56 <i>TCF:</i> 155–64	Mechanical and Organic Views of Inspiration: A mechanical view of inspiration assumes that God suspended ordinary human agency. An organic view recognizes the fully human character of Scripture, evident in the diversity of style, interest, and cultural-linguistic context of each author.
<i>PT:</i> 67–68 <i>TCF:</i> 189–98	Magisterial and Ministerial Authority: The ruling (magisterial) authority in the church is Scripture. The authority of church and church tradition is always dependent (ministerial) on the authority of God's revealed Word.

Discussion/Reflection Questions

Drama (“Big Story”)

1. What is the primary story line of Scripture? Why do you think Jesus is called the Word of God? (*PT:* 51–52)

Doctrines (“What We Believe”)

1. What does **canon** mean? Why did the early church describe Scripture as a canon? (*PT*: 52)
2. What does **verbal-plenary inspiration** mean? What does verbal-plenary inspiration teach us about the authority of Scripture? (*PT*: 54)
3. How would you describe the concept of **inerrancy** in your own words? (*PT*: 57–58)
4. What is the relationship between the **covenants of redemption, creation, and grace**? (*PT*: 59–60)
5. How does the **regulative principle** not only guide the church, but also limit its authority? (*PT*: 65)
6. What does **inspiration** teach us about God’s relationship to Scripture? What does **illumination** teach us about how we can understand Scripture? (*PT*: 53–54)
7. How is the **mechanical** view of inspiration different from the **organic** view of inspiration? Have you ever thought about how God worked through ordinary human beings to write Scripture? (*PT*: 55–56)
8. What is the ruling (**magisterial**) authority for the church? What is the difference between **magisterial** authority and **ministerial** authority? (*PT*: 67–68)

Doxology (“Praise and Worship”)

1. Every good gift comes to us *from* the Father, *in* the Son, *by* the Spirit. How do the Father, Son, and Spirit work together to help us understand and trust in Scripture? (*PT*: 55–56)
2. How does thinking about Scripture as God’s own speech to us help you to trust what you are reading? (*PT*: 53–54)
3. How does the resurrection of Jesus relate to your ability to trust Scripture? (*PT*: 51–52)

Discipleship (“Reshaped Lives”)

1. Why does hearing God’s Word simultaneously inform you and transform you? (*PT*: 70–71)
2. God has given us Scripture in the context of his covenant with us. Discuss how Scripture guides you into relationship with God. (*PT*: 68–70)

3. How does understanding who God is, what he has done, and the future he has promised help us to follow him as our Great King?
(*PT*: 70)
4. Why can't disciples of Christ be formed apart from Scripture?

Further Reading

Horton, Michael S. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*.

Chapter 4: Scripture as Covenant Canon, 151–85.

Chapter 5: The Bible and the Church: From Scripture to System, 186–222.

The Living God

Scripture teaches that God is a living God, who is independent, immortal, invisible, and eternal (1 Tim 1:17). God is the “only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see” (1 Tim 6:15). Yet even though God is so far above us in every way, he created us in his image to live in covenantal relationship with him. Some of God’s attributes can be known and understood by us, and others can be grasped only enough to leave us in awe of him. The attributes that are unique to God are considered incommunicable (not shared with us). That is why these attributes most often have a negative prefix (infinite, immortal, invisible, etc.). Yet, because human beings are created in God’s image, we share some similar attributes with God; but even in those communicable attributes (knowledge, wisdom, power, etc.), God is always qualitatively different and greater.

Key Terms	
<i>PT:</i> 74–75 <i>TCF:</i> 265–66	Simplicity (Unity): As infinite spirit, God is not made up of different parts; his attributes are identical with his being. His attributes should not be ranked against one another.
<i>PT:</i> 76–77 <i>TCF:</i> 230–35	Aseity (Independence): Self-existence.
<i>PT:</i> 77–81 <i>TCF:</i> 235–44	Immutability and Impassibility: God is unchangeable and cannot be overwhelmed by emotions.

<p><i>PT:</i> 81–82 <i>TCF:</i> 253–55</p>	<p>Eternity and Sempiternity: God is eternal and transcends time. Sempiternity says that with respect to time, God is not qualitatively, but merely quantitatively distinct from creation.</p>
<p><i>PT:</i> 83–85 <i>TCF:</i> 259–60</p>	<p>Knowledge, Wisdom, and Power: God’s knowledge, wisdom, and power are inseparable. God knows all things perfectly from eternity, perfectly discerns truth from error, and acts with comprehensive freedom to accomplish his purposes.</p>
<p><i>PT:</i> 83, 85–86 <i>TCF:</i> 268–70</p>	<p>Holiness, Righteousness, and Justice: God’s holiness, righteousness, and justice describe attributes of his character. God is altogether unlike us, separate from all unrighteousness and injustice, incapable of sinning or acting in an unrighteous way, and absolutely committed to what is right and just.</p>
<p><i>PT:</i> 83, 86–87 <i>TCF:</i> 270–72</p>	<p>Jealousy and Wrath: God’s jealousy and wrath are exercised only when his holiness, righteousness, and justice are violated. God loves his people and zealously binds them to himself and justly judges transgression and rebellion.</p>
<p><i>PT:</i> 83, 87–88 <i>TCF:</i> 265–68</p>	<p>Goodness, Love, and Mercy: God’s knowledge, wisdom, and power are inseparable from God’s goodness, love, and mercy.</p>

<h3>Key Distinctions</h3>	
<p><i>PT:</i> 74–82 <i>TCF:</i> 223–72</p>	<p>Incommunicable and Communicable Attributes: God’s incommunicable attributes (e.g., eternity, aseity, and immutability) are not shared with us at all. God’s communicable attributes (e.g., goodness, love, knowledge, wisdom, and righteousness) are shared analogically with us because we are image-bearers.</p>
<p><i>PT:</i> 78–79 <i>TCF:</i> 362–64</p>	<p>God’s Revealed Will and Hidden Will: God’s Word reveals his promises and commands. However, his eternal plan, which includes everything that happens, is not revealed to us.</p>

Discussion/Reflection Questions

Drama (“Big Story”)

1. How do God’s incommunicable attributes (e.g., independence, immutability, immortality, eternity) assure you that he can and will accomplish all he has promised in his covenants? (*PT*: 74–82)

Doctrines (“What We Believe”)

1. What is the difference between an **incommunicable** and a **communicable** attribute? (*PT*: 74–82)
2. How does understanding God’s **simplicity** (unity) help us not to set God’s attributes against each other? (*PT*: 74–75)
3. What does the **aseity** (independence) of God tell us about how he relates to the world? (*PT*: 76–7)
4. Does the **immutability** and **impassibility** of God mean that he is not affected by our actions? (*PT*: 77–81)
5. What is the difference between **eternity** and **sempiternity**? (*PT*: 81–82)
6. How do God’s **knowledge**, **wisdom**, and **power** compare to ours? (*PT*: 83–85)
7. How do God’s **holiness**, **righteousness**, and **justice** work together? (*PT*: 83, 85–86)
8. How does God’s love for his people relate to his **jealousy** and **wrath**? (*PT*: 83, 86–87)
9. How does God reveal his **goodness**, **love**, and **mercy** toward his covenant people? (*PT*: 83, 87–88)
10. How do we discover God’s **revealed will**? What remains **hidden** from us? (*PT*: 78–79)

Doxology (“Praise and Worship”)

1. How do God’s incommunicable attributes (e.g., independence, immutability, immortality, eternity) lead us to praise and worship him as our Lord and King? (*PT*: 74–82)
2. How do God’s knowledge, wisdom, and righteousness compare to yours? (*PT*: 74–82)
3. How has God displayed his goodness, love, and mercy in your life? (*PT*: 87–88)
4. What is the appropriate response to God’s holiness? (*PT*: 86)

Discipleship (“Reshaped Lives”)

1. Is holiness a communicable attribute? How does a disciple’s personal holiness relate to God’s holiness? (*PT*: 75–76)
2. How can studying God’s communicable attributes help you to better understand your identity as an image-bearer of God? (*PT*: 74–82)
3. How can you display goodness, love, and mercy toward others in your life? (*PT*: 87–88)
4. What are some ways that studying God’s attributes has challenged you to grow as a disciple?

Further Reading

Horton, Michael S. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*.

Chapter 6: God: The Incommunicable Attributes, 223–58.

Chapter 7: God: The Communicable Attributes, 259–72.

The Holy Trinity

The Trinity is not one doctrine among others; rather, the Trinity is our interpretive framework for all Scripture and doctrine. The doctrine of the Trinity—God as one in essence and three in person—shapes and structures Christian faith and practice in every way. Scripture reveals the three persons (Father, Son, and Spirit) as distinct actors in the historical outworking of creation, redemption, the application of salvation, and the consummation.

Key Terms	
<i>PT:</i> 89–104 <i>TCF:</i> 273–306	Trinity: God is one in essence and three in person.
<i>PT:</i> 95–97 <i>TCF:</i> 279–80	Homoousios: “Of the same essence.” The key definition that defended the equality of divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
<i>PT:</i> 96–99 <i>TCF:</i> 280–82	Hypostasis: Each person of the Trinity is a distinct entity with his own attributes, but sharing in the one essence.
<i>PT:</i> 97 <i>TCF:</i> 277, 296–299	Perichoresis: Each person of the Trinity mutually indwells the other.
<i>PT:</i> 98–99 <i>TCF:</i> 303–306	Filioque: The Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Key Distinctions	
<i>PT: 94–96</i> <i>TCF: 300–302</i>	Economic/Immanent Trinity: Scripture reveals the three persons (Father, Son, and Spirit) as distinct actors in the economy (historical outworking) of creation, redemption, the application of salvation, and the consummation. Christianity teaches that this is a truth not only in revelation, but in reality. In other words, God reveals himself economically as one God in three persons because he is in fact such (ontologically).
<i>PT: 96–99</i> <i>TCF: 280–82</i>	Essence and Persons (Hypostases): A person (or hypostasis) is a distinct bearer of an essence. Applied to the Trinity, it means that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are distinct persons, each with his own personal attributes, while each also shares equally the attributes of deity (i.e., the divine essence).

Discussion/Reflection Questions

Drama (“Big Story”)

1. How do the Father, Son, and Spirit all participate in God’s unfolding drama of redemption? (*PT: 94–96*)

Doctrines (“What We Believe”)

1. How would you define the **Trinity**? (*PT: 89–104*)
2. Why was the term **homoousios** (“of the same essence”) so important to the historical definition of the Trinity? (*PT: 95–97*)
3. Why is **hypostasis** important to understanding the distinct roles of the Father, Son, and Spirit? (*PT: 96–99*)
4. What does the term **perichoresis** teach us about how the Father, Son, and Spirit relate to one another? (*PT: 97*)
5. Why was **filioque** added to the Nicene Creed? (*PT: 98–99*)
6. What distinct roles does Scripture ascribe to the Father, Son, and Spirit in the **economy** (historical outworking) of creation, redemption, the application of salvation, and the consummation? (*PT: 94–96*)
7. What contributions did Irenaeus, Tertullian, Athanasius, the Cappadocian Fathers, and Augustine make toward defending the Trinity in the ancient church? (*PT: 101*)

Doxology (“Praise and Worship”)

1. Everything we do in worship and praise is to the Father, in the Son, by the Spirit. Does this challenge your idea of what worship is?
2. How does the doctrine of the Trinity inform how you pray?
3. Why is it not possible to understand God’s work in creation, redemption, the application of salvation, and the consummation apart from the Trinity? (*PT*: 94–96)

Discipleship (“Reshaped Lives”)

1. How could reducing the Trinity to the Father distort your view of God’s work in your life? (*PT*: 104)
2. How could reducing the Trinity to the Son distort your view of God’s work in your life? (*PT*: 104)
3. How could reducing the Trinity to the Spirit distort your view of God’s work in your life? (*PT*: 104)
4. What can we do to cultivate an awareness of the Father, Son, and Spirit in our daily lives?

Further Reading

Horton, Michael S. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*.

Chapter 8: The Holy Trinity, 273–308.

Creation and Human Personhood

Since we are created in God's image, our knowledge of ourselves must begin with our knowledge of God. If we want to know who we are, we have to first know who God is and how and why he created us. We learn from the unfolding drama of Scripture that God created us to be in covenantal relationship with him. This covenantal relationship is not something added to human nature but is essential to it. To be a human being means that we were created to live in society, communing with God and one another. That goes to the core of who we are and why we so desperately need God's redeeming work, not just to save us from our sins but to recover what it means to be truly human.

Key Terms	
<i>PT:</i> 112–13 <i>TCF:</i> 356–62	Concursus: Divine and human agency go together. God sometimes acts directly and immediately and at other times acts indirectly and mediately through human beings.
<i>PT:</i> 117–18 <i>TCF:</i> 373–79	Dualism: Dualism in its various forms is based on the idea that the mind or soul is the divine part of us struggling toward liberation from its bodily imprisonment.

<i>PT</i> : 121–22 <i>TCF</i> : 377–81	Trichotomy and Dichotomy: Trichotomy says that human beings are composed of spirit/mind, soul, and body (in descending rank). Dichotomy has human beings are composed of soul (synonymous with spirit or mind) and body.
<i>PT</i> : 121–22 <i>TCF</i> : 373–79	Monism and Modified Monism: Human beings are physical organisms; the characteristics traditionally associated with the soul or mind are attributable to chemical and neurological processes and interactions.
<i>PT</i> : 122–28 <i>TCF</i> : 379–407	Imago Dei: Human beings are created in God’s image to represent his glory.

Key Distinctions

<i>PT</i> : 110–12 <i>TCF</i> : 324–328, 350–53	Creation <i>Ex Nihilo</i> and Providence: While God’s fiat word brought the world into being out of no preexisting matter (<i>ex nihilo</i>), God’s providence governs history so that his purposes are realized gradually in the world—yet without subverting the free agency of creatures.
<i>PT</i> : 113–16 <i>TCF</i> : 364–68	Common Grace and Saving Grace: The civil kingdom (i.e., the particular government of nations) is no less under Christ’s ultimate lordship than is his church. However, he rules the one through his providence and common grace in the world and the other through his miraculous saving grace in the church.
<i>PT</i> : 117–20 <i>TCF</i> : 373–79	Radical Dualism, Monism, Biblical Dualism: Radical dualism contrasts a divine soul with its bodily prison house. Monism is equally radical in denying any distinction between body and soul. Biblical dualism recognizes a distinction without denying the unity of the human person.

Discussion/Reflection Questions

Drama (“Big Story”)

1. How does God’s unfolding drama of redemption show what it means to be truly human?

Doctrines (“What We Believe”)

1. What does **concursum** mean? What does it teach us about how God’s actions relate to our actions? (*PT*: 112–13)
2. How does **dualism** tell us our spirit is related to our body? (*PT*: 117–18)
3. What is the difference between **trichotomy** and **dichotomy**? Which idea is more consistent with Scripture (*PT*: 121–22)
4. How does monism deny that human beings are image-bearers of God? (*PT*: 121–22)
5. How does being created in the image of God (*imago dei*) connect us to God relationally? (*PT*: 122–28)
6. What do **creation ex nihilo** and **providence** teach us about how God created and sustains the universe? (*PT*: 110–12)
7. What is the difference between **common grace** and **saving grace**? (*PT*: 113–16)

Doxology (“Praise and Worship”)

1. How should a covenant servant respond to their covenant Lord? (*PT*: 125–28)
2. How can an image-bearer of God be described as both a covenant servant and a son? (*PT*: 125–28)
3. The psalmist describes human beings as being crowned with glory and honor (Psalm 8). Do you have trouble believing what Scripture tells you about your identity in Christ? (*PT*: 127–28)
4. What are some ways that covenant changes the way you relate to God? (*PT*: 127–28)

Discipleship (“Reshaped Lives”)

1. Can an image-bearer of God exist outside relationship to God? Why? (*PT*: 107–13)
2. How should understanding that God created and sustains you change the way you live? (*PT*: 111–13)
3. Can anything ever happen to you that is outside of God’s providence and care? (*PT*: 111–13)
4. What does the image of God teach you about your responsibilities to God? (*PT*: 128)

Further Reading

Horton, Michael S. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*.

Chapter 10: Creation: God's Time for Us, 324–49.

Chapter 11: Providence: God's Care for All He Has Made,
350–72.

Chapter 12: Being Human, 373–407.

The Fall

Adam was created in covenantal relationship with God and was promised a future consummation. If Adam had been faithful in his covenant trial, he would not only have entered the consummation himself, but the whole creation would have come with him. But Adam chose sin and rebellion instead. This original sin, this act of legal and relational rebellion against God, corrupted humanity. Since Adam's original rebellion, every human being is born with a sinful nature. The effects of sin are both legal and transformative: we are guilty and corrupt. Our natural abilities to reason, observe, experience, and judge remain intact, but our moral ability is gone.

The problem is not that we cannot but that we will not turn from our sin to the living God (John 8:44). All of the gifts that God gave to humanity to accomplish his purposes and to live for his glory are instead used for selfish gain and work against God. But just as all humanity stands in solidarity with Adam, having inherited all of the effects of the fall, we can now stand in solidarity with Christ, as a part of God's plan to bring redemption and consummation to a fallen world. In Adam we are imprisoned (Rom 5:12), but in Christ, the second Adam, we are set free to be truly human (John 8:36). The history of redemption that leads from Genesis 3 to Revelation 22 is God's rescue mission for humanity.

Key Terms	
<i>PT</i> : 134–35 <i>TCF</i> : 139–50	Law of Nature (or Natural Law) : Every human being is an image-bearer of God, and knowledge of God’s existence and moral requirements is engraved on our hearts.
<i>PT</i> : 140–41 <i>TCF</i> : 421–23	Concupiscence : A category of human behavior that is not an actual transgression, but a natural inclination within human nature toward sin. Specifically, areas of failure like lust are understood not as sin but as concupiscence.
<i>PT</i> : 140–41 <i>TCF</i> : 139–146, 605–8	<i>Donum Superadditum</i> : The idea that Adam needed God to add gifts of grace to his natural abilities in order to reject a natural human inclination toward sin.
<i>PT</i> : 147–48 <i>TCF</i> : 423–34	Original Sin : Adam’s disobedience to God resulted in the corruption of human nature. Every human being after Adam inherits depravity and possesses the root that produces every sort of sin.
<i>PT</i> : 148–53 <i>TCF</i> : 423–30, 313–15	Pelagianism : Pelagianism denies original sin and teaches that every human being is born in the same condition as Adam before the fall, with the free will to determine whether they will obey or disobey God’s commands. If they do obey, they will be saved.

Key Distinctions	
<i>PT</i> : 153–55 <i>TCF</i> : 431–37	Natural and Moral Ability : The fall has not eradicated any aspect of our humanity (natural ability). We are still God’s image-bearers and have everything God gave us to fulfill our purpose. However, since the fall we are in bondage to unbelief and unrighteousness (moral inability).

Discussion/Reflection Questions

Drama (“Big Story”)

1. How does the fall fit into the big story of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation? What effect did the fall have on creation? (*PT*: 156)

Doctrines (“What We Believe”)

1. What does **natural law** teach us about the moral requirements of God? (*PT*: 134–35)
2. Do you think the concept of **concupiscence** is consistent with what the Bible teaches about sin? (*PT*: 140–41)
3. Did Adam need God to add gifts of grace (*donum superadditum*) to his natural abilities to keep him from sinning? Why or why not? (*PT*: 140–41)
4. What effect did Adam’s **original sin** have on human nature? (*PT*: 147–48)
5. How does **Pelagianism** deny the effects of the fall on human nature? (*PT*: 148–53)
6. Has the fall destroyed our **natural ability** to reason, observe, experience, and judge? What does our **moral inability** do to our **natural ability** to please God? (*PT*: 153–55)

Doxology (“Praise and Worship”)

1. What did humanity deserve after the fall? How did God respond to the fall? (*PT*: 134–35)
2. What does God’s response to the fall teach you about his love for humanity? (*PT*: 138)
3. How does understanding the effects of original sin help us to depend entirely on Christ? (*PT*: 147–48)
4. Why are you entirely dependent on Jesus to live in a way that is pleasing to God? (*PT*: 148)

Discipleship (“Reshaped Lives”)

1. How does knowing that God will finish his work of redemption and consummation change the way you live today? (*PT*: 49)
2. How have you experienced your natural abilities being corrupted by original sin? Are there areas of your life where you are living for your glory and not God’s? (*PT*: 153–155)
3. What are some ways God has enabled you to use your natural abilities for his glory? (*PT*: 153–55)
4. How should understanding the fall and your utter dependence on Christ’s work produce humility in your life toward others, including non-Christians? (*PT*: 132)

Further Reading

Horton, Michael S. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*.

Chapter 13: The Fall of Humanity, 408–45.

Jesus Christ: The Lord Who Is Servant

The historical Jesus is Lord and Servant. As Philippians 2 says, though being God, Jesus was willing to empty himself of his rightful privileges, “taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men,” humbling himself even to the point of death on the cross. Yet “God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (vv. 5–11). This is the Jesus whom we worship as the Son of God and the Son of Man—our one true Messiah, who faithfully accomplished everything that Adam and Israel did not. He is our Prophet, Priest, and King, who entered history as the second Adam to redeem humanity. At the heart of the Christian faith is the belief that Jesus of Nazareth is fully God and fully man: two natures in one person.

Key Terms	
<p><i>PT:</i> 163–74 <i>TCF:</i> 446–57</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Biblical Titles</p> <p>Messiah: Jesus is the Anointed One, the true Prophet, Priest, and King that Adam and Israel failed to be for the world.</p> <p>Son of Man: The title that Jesus used to refer to himself more frequently than any other. The Son of Man is the King of kings, who will conquer the whole earth and judge all nations.</p> <p>Son of God: Son of God refers as much to human characteristics as divine identity.</p> <p>Servant: Philippians 2 identifies Jesus as “taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men,” humbling himself even to the point of death on the cross.</p> <p>Only Begotten Son: Only Begotten, or Firstborn Son, is a legal title that identifies Jesus, God the Son, as the one true heir of the Father.</p>
<p><i>PT:</i> 177–183 <i>TCF:</i> 470–82</p>	<p>Christological Heresies: Christological heresies deny the person and work of Christ as defined by Scripture and clarified by the historic ecumenical creeds. These heresies fall into four main categories below:</p> <p>Deny Christ’s Divinity: Ebionitism, Subordinationism, Adoptionism, Arianism/Semi-Arianism.</p> <p>Deny Christ’s Humanity: Docetism, Gnosticism, Apollinarianism, Monothelitism.</p> <p>Confuses the Two Natures of Christ: Monophysitism.</p> <p>Divides the Two Natures of Christ: Nestorianism.</p>
<p><i>PT:</i> 182 <i>TCF:</i> 479–82</p>	<p>Kenotic Christologies: View of Christ that tend to collapse his deity into his humanity, so that in the incarnation the Son empties himself of his deity in order to share our human nature.</p>

Key Distinctions	
<p><i>PT:</i> 160–163 <i>TCF:</i> 414–23, 446, 486–92</p>	<p>Covenant of Law/Covenant of Grace: There is law in the covenant of grace, but a covenant of law (or works) makes the oath-taker’s personal fulfillment of its commands the condition or basis of blessing or curse. Christ fulfilled the law so that we can inherit everlasting blessing by a covenant of grace. Thus, the law still obliges us, but cannot condemn those who are in Christ.</p>

<p><i>PT</i>: 174–180 <i>TCF</i>: 446–82</p>	<p>Person/Nature (Christology): In the incarnation, the eternal Son assumed fully our human nature (in both body and soul). He is therefore one person, but in two natures. His becoming human in no way changed his deity into humanity or his humanity into deity. The divine and human natures are united in one person without being confused.</p>
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Discussion/Reflection Questions

Drama (“Big Story”)

1. How does the threefold office of Christ (Prophet, Priest, and King) fit into the big story? Why did Christ have to become Prophet, Priest, and King in place of Adam and Israel? (*PT*: 183–89)

Doctrines (“What We Believe”)

1. How does the title **Messiah** point to Jesus as the one who accomplished what Adam and Israel did not? (*PT*: 163–66)
2. Why can Jesus take on himself both the titles **Son of Man** and **Son of God**? (*PT*: 166–74)
3. What does Philippians 2 teach us about Jesus as a **Servant**? (*PT*: 168–70)
4. Why is Jesus called the **Only Begotten Son**? (*PT*: 173–74)
5. **Christological heresies** deny what Scripture teaches us about the person and work of Christ. What are the four main categories of these heresies? (*PT*: 177–83)
6. What do **Kenotic Christologies** say about the relationship of the deity of Christ to his humanity? Did Jesus have to empty himself of his divine nature to share in human nature? (*PT*: 182)
7. How does the **Covenant of Law** relate to the **Covenant of Grace**? (*PT*: 160–63)
8. Did Christ’s becoming human make him any less God? Did Christ’s being God make him any less human? (*PT*: 174–80)

Doxology (“Praise and Worship”)

1. How does the divine nature of Jesus inform the way that you worship him? (*PT*: 174–80)

2. How does the human nature of Jesus inform the way that you worship him? (*PT*: 174–80)
3. Is Christ’s work for you tied at all to what you do for him? How does what you know about the Covenant of Law and the Covenant of Grace inform your response? (*PT*: 174–80)
4. Read Philippians 2:5–11. What does Christ’s willingness to humble himself even to the point of death on a cross teach you about how much he loves you? Do you live in the security of that kind of unconditional love? (*PT*: 172)

Discipleship (“Reshaped Lives”)

1. How does Christ function as your Prophet? (*PT*: 183–86)
2. How does Christ function as your Priest? (*PT*: 186–87)
3. How does Christ function as your King? (*PT*: 187–89)
4. How does Christ’s fulfilling the Covenant of Law help you to place your confidence, both in life and in death, solely in the Covenant of Grace? (*PT*: 160–63)

Further Reading

Horton, Michael S. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*.

Chapter 14: The Person of Christ, 446–82.

Chapter 15: The State of Humiliation: Christ’s Threefold Office, 483–520.

Chapter 16: The State of Exaltation: The Servant Who Is Lord, 521–50.

The Work of Christ

All of God's purposes in his unfolding plan of redemption were accomplished by Jesus Christ (2 Cor 1:20). As the Last Adam, he has fulfilled the covenant of creation. The requirement of obedience in that covenant was not set aside; instead, it was fully satisfied by Jesus. The law's death sentence against us has been borne fully by him. He not only conquered death through his resurrection, but he also proved his divine identity and the success of his atoning work. His resurrection was the beginning of the new creation, and its effects are taking hold even now. Everything in life and death for the Christian comes back to the work of Christ. Our confidence in living and our confidence for our eternity begin and end with Jesus.

Key Terms

PT: 201–5
TCF: 492–501,
509–20

Penal Substitution: Christ's sacrifice was the payment of a debt to divine justice in our place.

PT: 204–5
TCF: 498–500

Expiation and Propitiation: Expiation takes away the guilt, while propitiation appeases God's wrath provoked by it.

<p><i>PT:</i> 205 <i>TCF:</i> 498–500, 895</p>	<p>Reconciliation: God makes us right with himself through Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection on our behalf.</p>
<p><i>PT:</i> 206–13 <i>TCF:</i> 501–9</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Atonement Theories</p> <p>Substitution: Christ died in our place, bearing God’s wrath, satisfying his justice, and reconciling us to the Father.</p> <p>Recapitulation: This view underscores Christ’s life as well as his death as undoing humanity’s collective transgression, replacing Adam’s headship over the human race with his own. This view also emphasizes immortality as the supreme gift of Christ’s saving work.</p> <p>Ransom: This view held that Christ’s death was a ransom paid to Satan for the ownership of humanity. However, Scripture represents Christ’s death as a payment of our debt to God’s justice, not to Satan.</p> <p>Christus Victor: A key aspect of atonement theology especially in the East (as well as in Lutheran and Reformed teaching), this theory emphasizes Christ’s victory over the powers of death and hell at the cross. Yet this can be true only because his death cancels the law’s death sentence for us.</p> <p>Satisfaction: This view understands Christ’s atonement primarily as an appeasement of God’s offended dignity rather than divine justice.</p> <p>Moral Influence: This view interprets the atonement as a demonstration of God’s love rather than as a satisfaction either of God’s dignity or of his justice. The effect of the atonement is to provide a moving example of God’s love that will induce sinners to repent.</p> <p>Moral Government: According to this view, Christ’s atonement exhibits God’s just government of the world and thereby establishes repentance as the basis on which human beings approach God.</p>

Key Distinctions

<p><i>PT:</i> 196–98 <i>TCF:</i> 509–16</p>	<p>Active/Passive (Obedience of Christ): Christ’s lifelong fulfillment of all righteousness (active obedience) is imputed or credited to believers, while their sins are imputed to Christ in his death (passive obedience).</p>
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<p><i>PT:</i> 210–12 <i>TCF:</i> 516–20</p>	<p>Sufficient/Efficient (Atonement): Christ’s redeeming work is unlimited in its ability to save everyone in the world. Hence, it is proclaimed to every human being as sufficient for his or her salvation. Yet in accord with the eternal covenant of the triune God, Christ actually secured the redemption of the elect.</p>
<p><i>PT:</i> 213–16 <i>TCF:</i> 483–89</p>	<p>Humiliation/Exaltation: This distinction refers to Christ’s voluntary descent to us, in our nature, under the conditions of a servant. Sharing in our common suffering as well as the uncommon suffering of his enemies and even the judgment of his Father due to us for our sins, he was raised in glorious exaltation on the third day as the King of kings and Lord of lords.</p>
<p><i>PT:</i> 219–20 <i>TCF:</i> 653–61</p>	<p>Already/Not Yet: Christ’s kingdom is present now, but is not yet consummated. It is a “semi-realized” kingdom. Even now, the blessings that Christ has won for us are being distributed by him through his Spirit in the ministry of preaching and sacrament. We are already chosen, redeemed, called, justified, and renewed; we are being sanctified; and we will one day be glorified. For now, though, we live in the tension between the kingdom’s inauguration and its consummation.</p>

Discussion/Reflection Questions

Drama (“Big Story”)

1. Why do you think it was necessary for Christ to become a man and actively and passively obey God? How does Christ’s work fit into the unfolding drama of redemption?

Doctrines (“What We Believe”)

1. What does **penal substitution** say about the penalty of sin and the work of Christ? (*PT:* 201–5)
2. Why are **expiation** and **propitiation** both necessary to make us right with God? (*PT:* 204–5)
3. What did God have to do to reconcile us to himself? What do we have to do in order to be reconciled to God? (*PT:* 205)
4. How do the following theories explain Christ’s work in the atonement: **substitution**, **recapitulation**, and **ransom**? (*PT:* 206–13)
5. How do the **Christus Victor** and **satisfaction** theories of the

atonement explain what Christ's death accomplished? (*PT*: 206–13)

6. How do the moral influence theory and the moral government theory differ in what they say Christ's atonement exhibits? (*PT*: 206–13)
7. What is the difference between Christ's **active obedience** and his **passive obedience**? Why are both essential for a believer to be made right with God? (*PT*: 196–98)
8. Why is Christ's redeeming work described as both sufficient and efficient? Sufficient for what? Efficient for what? (*PT*: 210–12)
9. How do the **humiliation** and **exaltation** of Christ demonstrate that he is both Servant and Lord? (*PT*: 213–16)
10. What have you **already** received as a result of Christ's atonement, and what have you **not yet** received? (*PT*: 219–20)

Doxology (“Praise and Worship”)

1. Why should Christ's redeeming work be the centerpiece of our worship?
2. If Christ was willing to lay down his life for us, becoming a servant even to the point of death on a cross, how should we orient ourselves toward his mission and serving others? (*PT*: 172)
3. How does Christ's obedience on your behalf help you to trust him? (*PT*: 196–98)
4. The same Jesus who laid down his life for you is King of kings and Lord of lords and is exalted in heaven. How do his power and his love for you help you to trust him? (*PT*: 213–16)

Discipleship (“Reshaped Lives”)

1. Why is it important to keep the Already/Not Yet distinction in view when you are thinking about what you experience in your life? (*PT*: 219–20)
2. How does knowing what God has done in Christ enable you to appreciate your reconciliation with God? (*PT*: 205)
3. How does knowing that Christ's active and passive obedience have been imputed to you inform the way you view your own obedience to God? (*PT*: 196–98)
4. How does knowing that discipleship under Jesus has nothing to

do with offering any of our own sacrifices or works of atonement help you to live gratefully before God in the joy of your salvation?

Further Reading

Horton, Michael S. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*.

Chapter 14: The Person of Christ, 446–82.

Chapter 15: The State of Humiliation: Christ's Threefold Office, 483–520.

Chapter 16: The State of Exultation: The Servant Who Is Lord, 521–50.

The Spirit and the Kingdom

Ascended to the right hand of the Father, Jesus Christ is absent from us in the flesh, but his ministry continues by the Spirit. Christ fulfilled Adam's and Israel's commission of exodus and conquest, but Christ's work was far above theirs. Christ did not merely provide an exodus from captivity and oppression, but from sin, death, and hell. His field of conquest is the whole cosmos. This work of redemption and recreation is being carried out from the Father, in the Son, through the Spirit. The same Spirit who has been working powerfully throughout history is now at work in you. Tracing the Spirit's work from creation through redemptive history helps us understand how the Spirit is working to extend God's kingdom in and through us.

Key Terms	
<i>PT:</i> 229–31 <i>TCF:</i> 969–70, 688	Exodus and Conquest: Jesus’ earthly ministry recapitulated Israel’s and Adam’s commission of exodus and conquest, but with a far greater scope. Christ did not merely provide an exodus from captivity and oppression, but from sin, death, and hell. Christ’s field of conquest was not merely a plot of land in the Middle East, but the whole cosmos.
<i>PT:</i> 240–41 <i>TCF:</i> 556–60	Arrabon: The Spirit is the down payment (<i>arrabon</i>) of our final redemption. The Spirit gives us the “already” of our participation in Christ as the new creation, and it is the Spirit within us who gives us the aching hope for the “not yet” that awaits us in our union with Christ.

Key Distinctions	
<i>PT:</i> 242–43 <i>TCF:</i> 521–29	Kingdom of Grace/Kingdom of Glory: United to Christ, the church also lives under a period of humiliation, bearing its cross in testimony to Jesus, in order to reign with Christ when he returns. For now, Christ’s kingdom expands by his Word and Spirit, proclaiming the forgiveness of sins to the ends of the earth. At Christ’s return, this kingdom will be consummated and the kingdoms of this age will be finally judged and absorbed into his everlasting reign.

Discussion/Reflection Questions

Drama (“Big Story”)

1. Describe the Spirit’s role in God’s unfolding drama of redemption from creation to consummation? How does the Spirit’s ministry differ from and also serve Christ’s ministry?

Doctrines (“What We Believe”)

1. What was the scope of Adam’s and Israel’s commission of **exodus** and **conquest**? (*PT:* 229–31)
2. What was the scope of Christ’s **exodus** and **conquest**? (*PT:* 229–31)

3. How is the Spirit the down payment (*arrabon*) of our final redemption? (*PT*: 240–41)
4. How does the Spirit help us participate in Christ and new creation? (*PT*: 240–41)
5. What is the difference between the **Kingdom of Grace** and the **Kingdom of Glory**? (*PT*: 242–43)
6. In what sense is the church united to Christ and living under a period of humiliation? (*PT*: 242–43)
7. How does Christ's kingdom expand by his Word and Spirit? What is the primary message of Christ's kingdom? (*PT*: 242–43)
8. At Christ's return, what will the **Kingdom of Glory** look like? (*PT*: 242–43)

Doxology (“Praise and Worship”)

1. The same Spirit that hovered above the waters at creation (Gen 1) and raised Jesus from the dead is living in you (Rom 8:11). How does that truth give you confidence to trust in all that God is doing in your life? (*PT*: 234)
2. Read 2 Corinthians 3:7–18. How does the Spirit help you to see Christ and set you free to live for him? (*PT*: 234)
3. Do we tend to identify the Spirit's work too narrowly with the individual experience of conversion and sanctification? How does the Spirit work to build individuals together into the body of Christ? (*PT*: 231–41)
4. What are the negative and positive aspects of sanctification? How do you see both of these functioning in your life and in your church? (*PT*: 232–33)

Discipleship (“Reshaped Lives”)

1. Christ fulfills his promise always to be with his followers through the Holy Spirit. What are some ways the Spirit reminds you of who Christ is and who you are?
2. How does sharing with Christ in his sufferings help prepare us to reign with Christ when he returns? (*PT*: 242–43)
3. How does the Spirit's ongoing ministry convince you of Christ's purposes for your life? (*PT*: 236–41)
4. Through the Spirit's ministry, we are remade in Christ's likeness as prophets, priests, and kings. How does knowing that the Spirit

is working through you help you to be a true and faithful witness of Christ? (*PT*: 241)

Further Reading

Horton, Michael S. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*.

Chapter 17: Called to Be Saints: Christ's Presence in the Spirit, 551–86.

Chosen and Called

All that Christ accomplished for his people through his redemptive acts is being applied to them by the Spirit. People “from every tribe and language and people and nation” are being made into “a kingdom and priests to our God” (Rev 5:9–10). The fact that Jesus Christ is exalted and sits enthroned in heaven can make him seem so far away. However, Scripture promises us that we can experience a far more intimate fellowship with him than his disciples did during his earthly ministry. That is because the Spirit unites us to Christ in a supernatural and transformative way. Christ united himself to us in our flesh, sharing in our suffering and death, and now he unites us to himself in his victorious life by his Spirit.

Key Terms

PT: 245–46
TCF: 560–61,
565–72

Election: Election is God’s choice, out of the mass of condemned humanity, of a particular people as recipients of his merciful grace in his Son .

PT: 256–61
TCF: 560–61,
572–75

Effectual Calling: Reformed theology understands the divine call in terms of an outward call, by which God summons the whole world to Christ through the preaching of the gospel, and an inward or effectual call, as the Spirit illumines the hearts of his elect and gives them faith through the gospel.

<p><i>PT:</i> 247–48 <i>TCF:</i> 562–63, 575–77</p>	<p>Arminianism: Arising from within the Dutch Reformed Church, the followers of James Arminius issued their Five Points of the Remonstrants in 1610: (1) God’s election of sinners is conditional (based on foreseen faith); (2) Christ died to make salvation possible for every person; (3) all human beings are born in sin and therefore incapable of being saved apart from grace; (4) this grace is offered to all and may be resisted; (5) it is possible for the regenerate to lose their salvation.</p>
<p><i>PT:</i> 262–65 <i>TCF:</i> 575–77</p>	<p>Conversion: In conversion, those made alive by God’s Spirit through the gospel respond in repentance and faith, though these too are gifts of God.</p>
<p><i>PT:</i> 262–65 <i>TCF:</i> 577–80</p>	<p>Repentance: Repentance is not only modifying a few convictions here and there, but realizing that your whole interpretation of reality—God, yourself, your relation to God and the world—is misguided.</p>
<p><i>PT:</i> 265–69 <i>TCF:</i> 580–86</p>	<p>Faith: Faith is not only knowledge of and assent to gospel truths, but trust in Christ as one’s own Redeemer.</p>

Key Distinctions

<p><i>PT:</i> 245–46 <i>TCF:</i> 560–75</p>	<p>History of Salvation/Order of Salvation: Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption at the cross and in his resurrection, but the Spirit applies it when he calls us effectually through the gospel and unites us to Christ. So the history of salvation refers to the unfolding stages from promise to fulfillment, while the order of salvation focuses on the various stages in the believer’s experience of salvation’s blessings.</p>
<p><i>PT:</i> 249–51 <i>TCF:</i> 680–86</p>	<p>Monergism/Synergism: Monergism (“one working”) holds that God saves sinners without their assistance, while synergism (“working together”) teaches that salvation depends on our cooperation. In all of its varieties, synergism teaches that God’s grace makes everything possible, but our response makes everything actual. However, monergism teaches that God’s grace accomplishes everything, even granting us repentance and faith.</p>
<p><i>PT:</i> 256–61 <i>TCF:</i> 560–61, 572–575</p>	<p>Outward/Inward (Effectual) Call: Scripture proclaims the gospel to everyone. In this outward call, Christ delivers himself to all as the only Savior. Yet only when the Spirit inwardly and effectually draws sinners to Christ do they actually receive the gift announced to them in the gospel.</p>

<p><i>PT:</i> 262–65 <i>TCF:</i> 572–77</p>	<p>Regeneration/Conversion: In regeneration (or effectual calling), we are passive recipients of God’s grace: “Even when we were dead in our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places” (Eph 2:5–6). In conversion, however, those now quickened by God’s Spirit through the gospel respond in repentance and faith, though these too are gifts of God.</p>
<p><i>PT:</i> 268–69 <i>TCF:</i> 486–500</p>	<p>Passive/Active Righteousness: Faith receives Christ for everything: not only for salvation from judgment, but also for the fruit of good works. However, in justification, faith is passive: receiving, resting, clinging to Christ alone for an imputed righteousness even while we are still ungodly. In sanctification this same faith is active in good works. Having received everything in Christ, faith goes to work in love and service to our neighbors. There is no justification by works. However, there is no genuine faith (and therefore justification) that fails to bear the fruit of good works. Faith is passive with respect to God (receiving rather than giving), but active toward our neighbors (giving without demanding anything in return).</p>

Discussion/Reflection Questions

Drama (“Big Story”)

1. How does God’s work to create a new people fit into his unfolding drama of redemption?

Doctrines (“What We Believe”)

1. How would you describe the doctrine of **election** in your own words? Does God’s choice in election bring you comfort? Why? (*PT:* 245–46)
2. What is the difference between an outward call and an inward or **effectual call**? (*PT:* 256–61)
3. According to evangelical **Arminians**, what are the effects of original sin on human beings? How does this view differ from a Reformed view of the effects of original sin? (*PT:* 247–48)

4. How would you describe **conversion** in your own words? How does **regeneration** differ from **conversion**? (*PT*: 262–65)
5. How does **repentance** utterly transform an individual's view of reality? (*PT*: 262–65)
6. How is **faith** different from knowledge of and assent to gospel truths? (*PT*: 265–69)
7. How does the **history of salvation** or the **order of salvation** describe the various stages in the believer's experience of salvation's blessings? (*PT*: 245–46)
8. What is the difference between **monergism** and **synergism**? Why is salvation described as a monergistic work? (*PT*: 249–51)
9. What is the difference between the **passive** and **active righteousness** of Christ? (*PT*: 268–69)

Doxology (“Praise and Worship”)

1. How should studying election and effectual calling strengthen your faith and trust in God? (*PT*: 245–61)
2. Do you believe that you can have fellowship with Jesus that is more intimate than his disciples had during his earthly ministry? Why? (*PT*: 245–46)
3. How should repentance lead you to trust in Jesus? (*PT*: 262–65)
4. Why is trust in Christ so central to genuine faith? What is the difference between knowledge about Christ and trust in Christ? (*PT*: 265–69)

Discipleship (“Reshaped Lives”)

1. How does faith in Christ work in us to help us love and serve our neighbors? (*PT*: 268–69)
2. How is loving your neighbor directly connected to Christ's love for you? (*PT*: 268–69)
3. Can genuine faith fail to bear the fruit of good works? Why? (*PT*: 268–69)
4. What are some areas of your life where you lack trust in Christ? How can faith in Christ help you grow in those areas? (*PT*: 268–69)

Further Reading

Horton, Michael S. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*.

Chapter 17: Called to Be Saints: Christ's Presence in the Spirit,
551–586.

Union with Christ

Without Christ, we are separated from God by our sin and rebellion, are miserable, and are without hope. With Christ our entire reality is transformed. The Spirit grants us faith in Christ, unites us to him, and makes us beneficiaries not only of his gifts but of the Giver himself. Christ exchanges his glorious redeeming work for our sin and rebellion. He gets our debt, and we get his riches. Our experience of brokenness and isolation is replaced by real fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. No wonder union with Christ is so often described as the “marvelous exchange.”

Key Terms

PT: 271–72
TCF: 587–619

Union with Christ: In effectual calling, the Spirit grants us faith in Christ as he is clothed in his gospel. Chosen in Christ and redeemed in Christ, we are united to Christ by the Spirit through faith. We identify this wonderful reality as union with Christ.

PT: 271–72
TCF: 591–92

Organic Union: Being in Christ is a fact that can never be improved, diminished, or withdrawn; nevertheless, we grow experientially in this union as we come to know, communicate with, and respond to each other.

<i>PT: 271–72</i> <i>TCF: 620–47</i>	Forensic (Legal) Union: Forensic pertains to the courts, as in forensic evidence used in a trial. In this case, the forensic aspect is an inheritance: the legal transfer of debts and riches.
<i>PT: 271–72</i> <i>TCF: 590–602</i>	Mystical Union: As in marriage, the legal union leads to a mystical union. As the two persons become “one flesh” without losing their distinct identities, so Christ is supernaturally united to his church, and yet the two remain distinct. There is communion and fellowship, but not fusion.
<i>PT: 272</i> <i>TCF: 589–90</i>	Koinonia: The goal of our union with Christ is not mere imitation, but fellowship and communion (<i>koinonia</i>). We are supernaturally united and yet remain distinct.
<i>PT: 271–72</i> <i>TCF: 592–602</i>	The “marvelous exchange”: Christ assumes our debts, and we inherit his wealth.

Discussion/Reflection Questions

Drama (“Big Story”)

1. How does union with Christ write us into God’s unfolding drama of redemption?

Doctrines (“What We Believe”)

1. How do we enter into **union with Christ**? What are the benefits of this union? (*PT: 271–272*)
2. How does the idea of **organic union** help us to understand how we grow experientially in our union with Christ? (*PT: 271–72*)
3. What does the **forensic (legal)** aspect of our union with Christ teach us about Christ’s work for us? (*PT: 271–72*)
4. What is meant by **mystical union**? (*PT: 271–72*)
5. What is the difference between mere imitation and fellowship and communion (*koinonia*)? (*PT: 272*)
6. How would you describe the **“marvelous exchange”** in your own words? (*PT: 271–72*)

Doxology (“Praise And Worship”)

1. How does union with Christ make genuine fellowship possible? (PT: 272)
2. Does the idea that you can have genuine fellowship with Christ feel real to you? Why or why not? (PT: 271–72)
3. How do the objective realities of your union with Christ help you to take hold of the subjective aspects of your union with Christ? (PT: 274–75)
4. List some of the things in your life that union with Christ makes it possible to exchange (e.g., happiness in place of misery). (PT: 274)
5. How does the Lord’s Supper remind you of your union with Christ? (PT: 271–72)

Discipleship (“Reshaped Lives”)

1. How does your forensic union with Christ free you up to live for God without fearing that your salvation weighs in the balance? (PT: 274)
2. What are some ways that you have seen the character of Christ manifested in your life? (PT: 274–75)
3. What are some ways you would like to grow in your fellowship with Christ? (PT: 274–76)
4. How does your union with Christ give you confidence that you can grow in those areas? (PT: 274–76)
5. If your union with Christ unites you to other believers with the same kind of fellowship, how should that change the way you relate to your brothers and sisters in Christ? (PT: 277)

Further Reading

Horton, Michael S. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*.

Chapter 18: Union with Christ, 587–619.

Chapter 19: Forensic Aspects of Union with Christ: Justification and Adoption, 620–47.

Justified and Adopted

We have been justified and adopted into our heavenly Father's family through the work of his Son, by his Spirit. We have been incorporated into the fellowship of the triune God. We stand before God, as sons and daughters, fully accepted on the basis of Christ's substitutionary atonement. All of our sins have been credited to Christ, and all of his righteousness has been imputed to us. Learning to more fully embrace our new identity as sons and daughters of the living God will transform absolutely everything about how we live our lives.

Key Terms	
<i>PT:</i> 291–92 <i>TCF:</i> 620–47	Justification: To justify means “to declare righteous.” In justification, believers are declared righteous solely on the basis of Christ’s work for them.
<i>PT:</i> 294–96 <i>TCF:</i> 635–47, 592–602	Imputation: Crediting our sins to Christ (on the basis of his substitutionary atonement) and his righteousness to us (on the basis of his active obedience).
<i>PT:</i> 293–94 <i>TCF:</i> 635–40	Alien Righteousness: The righteous granted to believers is not their own; it is an alien righteousness that belongs to Christ alone.

<i>PT:</i> 296–300 <i>TCF:</i> 642–47	Adoption: Adoption is not a goal held out to children who successfully imitate their parents, nor is it the result of an infusion of familial characteristics or genes. Rather, it is a change in legal status that issues in a relationship that is gradually reflected in the child’s identity, characteristics, and actions.
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Key Distinctions

<i>PT:</i> 281–86 <i>TCF:</i> 622–27	Imputed/Infused Righteousness: “Imputed” means credited. Christ’s fulfillment of the law is credited to us. By contrast, “infusion” refers to an inner strengthening of the soul to cooperate with God’s grace in attaining righteousness.
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Discussion/Reflection Questions

Drama (“Big Story”)

1. What does your adoption into God’s family teach you about where you fit in God’s unfolding drama of redemption?

Doctrines (“What We Believe”)

1. Is **justification** a process of growing in grace or a declaration? Why is it important to clearly understand the difference? (*PT:* 291–92)
2. What is the basis of **justification**? (*PT:* 291–92)
3. What does **imputation** do for a believer? Why do we need the active obedience of Christ to be justified? (*PT:* 294–96)
4. Why is Christ’s righteousness referred to as **alien**? (*PT:* 293–94)
5. How does **adoption** change your identity? How does **adoption** change the way you live? (*PT:* 296–300)
6. What is the difference between **imputed** and **infused** righteousness? (*PT:* 281–86)
7. What are some ways that Protestant liberalism has distorted the doctrine of **justification**? (*PT:* 287–90)
8. Review the anathemas issued against the Reformed understanding of **justification** at the Council of Trent. (*PT:* 284–85) Do you think it is possible to reconcile these anathemas with what

Scripture teaches about justification? Why or why not? (*PT*: 290–95)

Doxology (“Praise And Worship”)

1. Have you been declared righteous solely on the basis of Christ’s work? How does Christ’s work on your behalf give you confidence to approach God’s throne of grace? (*PT*: 291–92)
2. Can you ever be more loved or accepted by God than you are today? How should God’s acceptance give you peace in the midst of any struggle you might face in life? (*PT*: 291–92)
3. How has your adoption into God’s family been reflected in your identity? (*PT*: 296–300)
4. How might reflecting more deeply on your adoption and new identity change the way that you approach corporate worship, prayer, the preached Word, and the Supper? (*PT*: 296–300)

Discipleship (“Reshaped Lives”)

1. How has your adoption into God’s family been reflected in the way you approach decisions in your life? (*PT*: 296–300)
2. Do you ever face the temptation to self-justify or not fully embrace the forgiveness that Christ won for you? (*PT*: 291–93)
3. How does being justified by Christ and adopted into God’s family inform the way you deal with sin and struggles? (*PT*: 291–93)
4. Discuss some ways that you can strengthen your understanding of your adoption and how doing so might help you grow as a follower of Christ. (*PT*: 296–300)

Further Reading

Horton, Michael S. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*.

Chapter 18: Union with Christ, 587–619.

Chapter 19: Forensic Aspects of Union with Christ: Justification and Adoption, 620–47.

Sanctification and Perseverance

Our union with Christ creates our new identity as sons and daughters of God. There are different aspects of our experience as believers that flow from our new identity, but we must not set these different aspects against one another. Our faith produces our good works, and our sanctification flows from our justification. All of these are gifts given to us because of our union with Christ. As a result of the work of the Spirit, we have been justified and we will be sanctified. Not only that, but God promises us that we will also persevere in our faith until the very end. The justified are free to pursue good works out of love for God and neighbor. Fear is no longer in the driver's seat, so love can flourish.

Key Terms

PT: 319–21
TCF: 661–62

Mortification and Vivification: Sanctification has two parts: mortification (dying) and vivification (rising). Christ died *for* our sins, but we die *to* our sins. We die to sin and live for Christ. Although we cannot work for our own salvation, we can and must work out that salvation in all areas of our daily practice, realizing more and more the amazing truth of our identity in Jesus Christ.

<i>PT:</i> 322–23 <i>TCF:</i> 680–86	Apostasy: Falling away from faith. Those who apostatize have been beneficiaries of the Spirit’s ministry through the means of grace— <i>even as merely formal or external members of the covenant community</i> , but then reject it.
<i>PT:</i> 321–24 <i>TCF:</i> 680–86	Perseverance: The believer’s perseverance is guaranteed by God’s perseverance, so that Paul can say, “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Php 1:6).
<i>PT:</i> 323–24 <i>TCF:</i> 680–86	Eternal Security: We are not secure in our salvation because we made a decision for Christ. Our eternal security is that the God who begins a good work will complete it (Php 1:6).

Key Distinctions

<i>PT:</i> 304–5 <i>TCF:</i> 662–80	Faith/Works: In determining the basis for our relationship with God, faith and works are completely opposed. However, the justified are free finally for the first time to pursue good works out of love for God and neighbor. Fear is no longer in the driver’s seat, so love can flourish. The proper order is the word (specifically the gospel), then faith (created by the Spirit through the gospel), then love (which expresses itself in good works). In seeking justification, faith and works are opposed; in sanctification, however, works are the fruit of faith.
<i>PT:</i> 305–11 <i>TCF:</i> 650–80	Justification/Sanctification: With the distinction between faith and works in mind, we can also distinguish (without separating) justification and sanctification. Both gifts are given in union with Christ. Through the same act of faith we embrace Christ for the imputation of righteousness (justification) and gradual conformity to his likeness (sanctification). Justification is a legal verdict pronounced on us; sanctification is the Spirit’s work within us, bringing forth good works.

Discussion/Reflection Questions

Drama (“Big Story”)

1. What do sanctification and perseverance teach us about the character of God and the certainty that he will accomplish his purposes in his unfolding drama of redemption?

Doctrines (“What We Believe”)

1. How does **mortification** relate to **vivification**? (*PT*: 319–21)
2. Can a true believer **apostatize**? Why or why not? In what sense can someone benefit from the Spirit’s ministry without being saved? (*PT*: 322–23)
3. How is your **perseverance** directly tied to God’s perseverance? (*PT*: 321–24)
4. Does your **eternal security** rest on anything that you do? Why or why not? (*PT*: 323–24)
5. What is the relationship of **faith** to **works**? (*PT*: 304–5)
6. What is the difference between **justification** and **sanctification**? (*PT*: 305–11)

Doxology (“Praise And Worship”)

1. How does your justification free you up to pursue good works out of love for your heavenly Father? (*PT*: 304–11)
2. How do your brothers and sisters in Christ and your church contribute to your sanctification? (*PT*: 304–14)
3. How does better understanding your sanctification help you to offer yourself as “a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable” (Ro 12:1)? (*PT*: 314–16)
4. What are some barriers to sanctification that you are experiencing in your heart? (*PT*: 314–16)
5. How does God’s promise to you that you will persevere in your faith help you to trust him in all of life? (*PT*: 321–24)

Discipleship (“Reshaped Lives”)

1. Can you have genuine faith without producing good works? (*PT*: 304–5)
2. How can understanding the relationship between justification and sanctification help you to avoid legalism and antinomianism? (*PT*: 306–9)
3. How do mortification and vivification contribute to our working out our salvation? (*PT*: 319–21)
4. How do mortification and vivification help you to increasingly embrace your identity in Christ? (*PT*: 319–21)
5. How does God’s promise in Philippians 1:6 give you confidence that you will get through whatever you are struggling with

today? “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” (*PT*: 321–24)

Further Reading

Horton, Michael S. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*.

Chapter 20: The Way Forward in Grace: Sanctification and Perseverance, 648–87.

The Doctrine of Glorification

You have been called and justified, you are being sanctified, and you will be glorified (Ro 8:30). All of this work in you is from the Father, in the Son, by the Spirit. God has guaranteed that he will bring his work in you to completion. You will one day stand together with Jesus Christ, having been made like him in his resurrection and glorification. The “already” and the “not yet” will converge, completing immediately and perfectly that which the Spirit began when he called us into fellowship with Christ by the gospel (Php 1:9–10). God’s declaration that we are righteous in Christ will correspond fully to the actual reality of our lives. What a glorious day that will be! That future reality ought to transform the way we view our present reality.

Key Terms

PT: 325–27
TCF: 688–710

Glorification: As Jesus is now, we will be also together with him: head and members joined in unending joy. This future hope is what theology identifies as glorification. When this day dawns, there will no longer be a “not yet” to our salvation; no longer a *simil iustus et peccator* (just and sinner simultaneously). Rather, God’s declaration that we are righteous in Christ will actually correspond fully to the actual reality of our lives.

<p><i>PT</i>: 328–29 <i>TCF</i>: 689–703</p>	<p>Theosis: Deification. The concept of theosis (deification) is close to what Western theology has called the “marvelous exchange.” Irenaeus put it this way: “In his immense love he became what we are, that he might make us what he is.” For Orthodoxy, deification has never meant that the soul becomes one with God in essence.</p>
<p><i>PT</i>: 333–41 <i>TCF</i>: 703–8, 992</p>	<p>Beatific Vision: Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox teaching that the angels and souls in heaven will see and experience God face-to-face, with the result of perfect and supreme blessedness. Reformed theology is willing to speak of glorification in terms of the beatific vision, but primarily as it relates to the resurrection of the body and glorification.</p>

Discussion/Reflection Questions

Drama (“Big Story”)

1. What will glorification do to you and your ability to fellowship with God? When does glorification take place?

Doctrines (“What We Believe”)

1. How will **glorification** put and end to the “already/not yet” that we experience as believers in this age? (*PT*: 325–27)
2. What does **theosis** mean? Do you believe that theosis (deification) is a biblical idea? Why or why not? (*PT*: 328–29)
3. How has Reformed theology spoken about **beatific vision** as it relates to the resurrection of the body and glorification? (*PT*: 333–41)

Doxology (“Praise and Worship”)

1. In light of what you have learned about glorification, what do you think 2 Peter 1:4 means when it says that through God’s promises “you may become partakers of the divine nature”? (*PT*: 330–32)
2. What does your future resurrection and glorification teach you about how much God values your body and your life now? (*PT*: 337–41)
3. How does your future resurrection and glorification help you to trust God today? (*PT*: 337–41)

Discipleship (“Reshaped Lives”)

1. How did the apostle Paul apply the truth about future resurrection and glory to people struggling with sexual immorality in the church at Corinth (1 Cor 6:12–20)? (*PT*: 337–41)
2. How might understanding your future resurrection and glorification change the way you view and use your body? (*PT*: 337–41)
3. We will one day be fully conformed to Christ’s image in his resurrection and glorification when humanity is finally redeemed and restored in Christ by the Spirit. This is your future destiny, and nothing in this life can touch it. How might meditating on this truth change the way you look at your life? (*PT*: 339)

Further Reading

Horton, Michael S. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*.

Chapter 21: The Hope of Glory: “Those Whom He Justified He Also Glorified” (Ro 8:30), 688–710.

Word and Sacraments

The triune God is the creative and sustaining force behind the universe. He spoke the universe into existence, and he continues to create by his word. He spoke through his prophets and apostles to bring his new covenant community into being and continues to preach his kingdom into existence today. The church itself is a creation of God's word. We speak this word to each other in our homes with our families, in our neighborhoods with friends, and in the public places where our lives intersect with the wider world. Our lives, shaped by this word, become a fragrance of life, attracting people to the gospel. God loves his people so much that that he not only calls them into fellowship with his Son by his Word; he assures them of his goodwill, binding himself to them and binding them to himself and to each other through sacraments that he has personally instituted. Together with the word, these sacraments are means of grace and the essential marks of the true church.

Key Terms	
<i>PT:</i> 346–47 <i>TCF:</i> 751–61	Sacramental Word: Jesus Christ is the Word of God in his essence, while Scripture is the canonical word (norming our preaching and practice), and preaching is the sacramental word. In Scripture we find the normative canon of saving speech, and in preaching, the ongoing means by which this saving speech generates a new creation, so that even in this present evil age we “[taste] the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come” (Heb 6:5).
<i>PT:</i> 346–47 <i>TCF:</i> 751–61	Creation of the Word: God himself preached the world into existence; through the prophets and apostles he preached a new covenant community into being, and by the continual ministry of the word today he continues to preach his kingdom into existence, expanding its borders and adding immigrants daily. Even through the speech of his ambassadors, the triune God is the speaker. In this way the church can be said to be a creation of the word.
<i>PT:</i> 359–60 <i>TCF:</i> 763–85, 1000	Sacrament: A visible sign and seal of a spiritual grace.
<i>PT:</i> 354 <i>TCF:</i> 764–65, 994	<i>Ex opere operato:</i> A medieval sacramental formulation meaning, “By doing it, it is done.” <i>Ex opere operato</i> came to mean that sacraments work automatically and meritoriously, causing grace to flow into the soul.
<i>PT:</i> 357 <i>TCF:</i> 766–71	Sacramental Union: In the sacramental union of sign and thing signified, God truly offers and gives his saving grace through earthly means. Baptism and the Supper remain objective sacraments even apart from one’s faith. Faith does not make a sacrament, but it does receive the reality of the sacrament; otherwise, one receives only the sign without the object signified.
<i>PT:</i> 359 <i>TCF:</i> 779–85	Signs and Seals: Scripture identifies sacraments as signs and seals of the covenant. They outwardly ratify the new relationship between Lord and servant.

Key Distinctions	
<p><i>PT</i>: 343–46 <i>TCF</i>: 751–63, 771–73</p>	<p>Means of Grace/Means of Gratitude: Means of grace are creaturely media through which the Spirit delivers Christ and all of his benefits. We are effectually called into union with Christ by the preaching of the gospel. Through this ministry of the word, the Spirit gives us faith in Christ. He further ratifies his gracious promise by baptism and the Lord’s Supper, the signs and seals of the covenant of grace. Means of gratitude are our appropriate response to the gift that is given to us through the means of grace. Chief among these is prayer, along with witness, mutual instruction, and admonition (including through singing, Col 3:16), church discipline, meditation on God’s word, and service to others (our families, fellow saints, and neighbors).</p>
<p><i>PT</i>: 353 <i>TCF</i>: 835–42</p>	<p>Sign/Reality: We distinguish without separating sign and reality, applied to the church and the sacraments. Some confuse them, as if the water, bread, and wine were transformed into the body and blood of Christ. Others separate them, as if the signs only point to but do not convey Christ and his benefits.</p>

Discussion/Reflection Questions

Drama (“Big Story”)

1. What function has the creative power of the word played in God’s unfolding drama of redemption?

Doctrines (“What We Believe”)

1. Why is preaching described as the **sacramental word**? (*PT*: 346–47)
2. In what way can the church be said to be a **creation of the word**? (*PT*: 346–47)
3. What is a **sacrament**? Why are baptism and the Lord’s Supper called sacraments? (*PT*: 359–60)
4. What does *ex opere operato* mean? How does *ex opere operato* deny the distinction between the sign and the thing signified? (*PT*: 354)

5. How would you define **sacramental union** in your own words? (PT: 357)
6. How do the sacraments function as **signs and seals** of the covenant? (PT: 359)
7. What is the difference between a **means of grace** and a **means of gratitude**? (PT: 343–46)
8. What is the relationship between **sign** and **reality** in the sacraments? (PT: 353)

Doxology (“Praise And Worship”)

1. How should understanding that preaching is the sacramental word change the way we view our pastor’s sermons? (PT: 346–47)
2. How does sacramental union help us understand how we can receive the sign and the thing signified in the sacraments? (PT: 357)
3. How does thinking about your own church as a creation of the word deepen your appreciation for its supernatural origin? (PT: 346–47)
4. How are you taking advantage of the means of grace and means of gratitude to help you grow in your love for God and neighbor? (PT: 343–46)

Discipleship (“Reshaped Lives”)

1. How is your faith and spiritual life a creation of the word? Would you describe yourself as someone who is shaped by God’s word? (PT: 346–47)
2. If the triune God is the sole authoritative voice behind all creative and sustaining power in the universe, how should that inform how we respond to his word in our lives? (PT: 346–47)
3. How do God’s signs and seals function in your life to strengthen your faith? (PT: 359)
4. How does preaching function as the primary means of grace in your life? If it does not, why not? (PT: 346–51)

Further Reading

Horton, Michael S. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*.

Chapter 23: Word and Sacrament: The Means of Grace, 751–87.

Baptism and the Supper

The covenant of grace continues unbroken from the promise in Genesis 3:15 to Abraham and David all the way to us now, as coheirs with Christ in the new covenant. Baptism and the Lord's Supper, together, are the sign and seal of God's covenant with us and remind us of his continued love toward us. The sacraments point us back to God's faithfulness to deliver his people from the waters, judgment, and death, and forward to our final deliverance when we will be gathered together with Jesus Christ at the great Wedding Supper of the Lamb. Scripture attributes great significance to baptism and the Lord's Supper. Christ commanded baptism in the Great Commission (Mt 28:19) and personally instituted the Supper. In baptism we participate in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (Ro 6:3–4), and in the Supper we participate in his body and blood (1Co 10:16). Christ is truly given to all who hear the gospel and receive baptism and the Lord's Supper, yet he must be received for everlasting life.

Key Terms	
<i>PT:</i> 378–81 <i>TCF:</i> 812–20	Real Presence: The view that Christ was truly offered and given in the Supper and received through faith. Christ can be truly and really present in the Word and the sacraments, even though he is not yet on earth bodily, because the Spirit unites us to him by his mysterious operation.
<i>PT:</i> 379 <i>TCF:</i> 804	Transubstantiation: Change undergone by the physical elements of the Eucharist, according to Roman Catholic teaching. The bread and wine, in this view, materially change into the body and blood of Christ, although the accidents of the bread and wine (their appearance, taste, and smell, for instance) remain unchanged.
<i>PT:</i> 379 <i>TCF:</i> 805–7	Communication of Divine Attributes: The Lutheran confession teaches that the two natures are so united as to allow a communication of the divine attributes to the human nature. Accordingly, Christ may be said to be omnipresent not only in his divinity but in his humanity. Consequently, even though the bread and wine are not transformed, Christ is bodily present wherever he wills, and he promises to be present bodily in the word and the sacraments.
<i>PT:</i> 380 <i>TCF:</i> 805–7	Doctrine of Ubiquity: Ability to be omnipresent. “Ubiquitarianism” teaches that the human nature of the resurrected Christ is omnipresent and therefore is able to be in the elements of the Lord’s Supper simultaneously around the world.

Discussion/Reflection Questions

Drama (“Big Story”)

1. How do baptism and the Lord’s Supper point us to God’s unfolding drama of redemption?

Doctrines (“What We Believe”)

1. How is Christ’s **real presence** in the Supper made possible? (*PT:* 378–81)
2. According to the **transubstantiation** view, what happens to the bread and the wine during the Supper? (*PT:* 379)

3. According to the Lutheran confession, how is the **communication of divine attributes** in the Supper made possible? (*PT*: 379)
4. What is the doctrine of **ubiquity**? How do Lutherans relate the doctrine of **ubiquity** to the Supper? (*PT*: 380)

Doxology (“Praise and Worship”)

1. How does Christ’s real presence in the Supper affect the way you view your participation? (*PT*: 378–81)
2. How does reminding yourself of what God did for you in your baptism reassure you of God’s love for you? (*PT*: 367–70)
3. How does regularly partaking of the Lord’s Supper put the gospel on display and remind you of what Christ has done and will do? (*PT*: 374–78)
4. How does regularly partaking of the Lord’s Supper strengthen your faith? (*PT*: 374–78)

Discipleship (“Reshaped Lives”)

1. Do you ever think about your baptism? Does your baptism assure you of God’s work in your life? Why or why not?
2. How important is partaking of the Lord’s Supper for your personal faith? (*PT*: 374–78)
3. How does the Lord’s Supper remind you not only of your union with Christ, but also of your union with your brothers and sisters in Christ? How should the Lord’s Supper promote unity in the church? (*PT*: 374–78)
4. What is the role of the sacraments in extending God’s kingdom? (*PT*: 352)

Further Reading

Horton, Michael S. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*.

Chapter 24: Baptism And The Lord’s Supper, 788–827.

The Church

The church is summoned into existence by the living and active speech of the triune God. The church is the result of God's purpose and energy, and he defines its mission. It is not a voluntary association of those with similar interests, choices, and activities. The church does not vote itself into being as the collective will of the many. Rather, God calls his people out of the world through the ministry that he has ordained. The church's mission is to incorporate strangers into the family of God, calling sinners out of this passing evil age into the age to come. The church is brought into being, is sustained, and expands across all times and places only as a recipient of the gospel of Jesus Christ, in the power of the Spirit, through the means of grace.

Key Terms

PT: 410–12
TCF: 872–92

Apostolic: To say that the church is apostolic is to say not simply that it belongs to a long tradition deriving from the apostles, but that it is to be engaged in the mission that Christ entrusted to the apostles.

PT: 412–13
TCF: 875, 891

Apostolic Succession: The Roman Catholic argument that authority in the church has been passed through a succession of apostolic authority from the apostle Peter through all the popes up until today.

PT: 413
TCF: 878

Regulative Principle: The Reformed and Presbyterian teaching that only what Christ commands regulates faith, practice, and church worship.

Key Distinctions	
<i>PT</i> : 395–97 <i>TCF</i> : 852–53	Invisible/Visible Church: It is helpful to distinguish between the invisible and visible church. Many confuse them, as if the visible church were identical to the full number of elect and regenerate—as if everyone who is baptized is united to Christ even apart from exercising faith in Christ. Others separate them, as if the visible church were merely a “man-made” organization unrelated to the spiritual church of the “truly saved.” These are not two churches, but the church as God knows it now (as the communion of his glorified elect) and the church that is visible to us now in history (as a mixed body with even the elect as simultaneously just and sinner).
<i>PT</i> : 414–15 <i>TCF</i> : 874, 881–82, 886–92	Extraordinary/Ordinary Ministry: Sometimes the triune God works directly and apart from means, as in the creation of the world. This is his extraordinary work. More regularly, though, God works through ordinary means. Even in miraculous activity, God usually works through creaturely means. Applied to the Spirit’s ministry in the history of revelation, this distinction holds that the extraordinary ministry of the prophets and apostles is qualitatively distinct from the ordinary ministry of the pastors, elders, and deacons who followed the foundation-laying era of the old and new covenants.
<i>PT</i> : 416–17 <i>TCF</i> : 882–86	General/Special Office: The church is both a divinely ordained organization and a Spirit-empowered organism, with special offices (pastors, elders, and deacons) as well as the general office (prophet, priest, and king) shared by all believers equally. All believers are priests, with Christ as their only Mediator; nevertheless, only some believers are called to special offices in Christ’s body for the service of all.

Discussion/Reflection Questions

Drama (“Big Story”)

1. How does the church fit into God’s unfolding drama of redemption?

Doctrines (“What We Believe”)

1. What does it mean for the church to be **apostolic**? (*PT*: 410–12)
2. What is **apostolic succession**? Is **apostolic succession** supported by Scripture or early church history? (*PT*: 412–13)
3. What does the **regulative principle** say should regulate the faith and practice of the church? (*PT*: 413)
4. What is the difference between the **invisible** and **visible church**? Why is it important not to confuse the **invisible** and **visible church**? (*PT*: 395–97)
5. How has God used **extraordinary** and **ordinary** means to accomplish his purposes in his unfolding drama of redemption? (*PT*: 414–15)
6. What are the **general** and **special offices** of the church? (*PT*: 416–17)

Doxology (“Praise And Worship”)

1. What is the source of unity of the church according to the Scriptures? (*PT*: 406)
2. How does your understanding of the nature and origin of the church affect the way you relate to the church? (*PT*: 404–6)
3. How does knowing that God instituted the church and supernaturally forms it by calling his people together increase your faith for the church? Especially when church life gets messy? (*PT*: 388–89)

Discipleship (“Reshaped Lives”)

1. Has this chapter challenged or changed your understanding of the church? If so, how?
2. Have you ever been personally discouraged with a situation at your church? How would you process challenging church situations in the future in light of what you have learned in this chapter? (*PT*: 388–89)
3. Who defines the mission of the church? Is the mission of the church clearly defined in Scripture? (*PT*: 410–11)
4. What is the mission of the church? How do you fit into that mission? (*PT*: 410–11)

Further Reading

Horton, Michael S. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*.

Chapter 25: The Attributes of the Church: Unity, Catholicity, and Holiness, 828–71.

Chapter 26: Apostolicity: A Fellowship of Receivers and Deliverers, 872–905.

The End Times

Human beings were created for glory. By nature, we are creatures who hope, longing for someone to tell us not only who we are but where we're going. Is there something more than life “under the sun”? Is our destiny greater than just a random accident on an accidental planet, where we create a few thrills for ourselves until our lives dissolve into the abyss of nothingness? Tell me something that I haven't heard before, something that gives me a reason to look forward to the future, so that my life even now will be more than a succession of events. We need a paradigm shift. Our orientation needs to be recalibrated to Christ's victory rather than to our projects and programs. We know that Christ is coming again to bring consummation, to complete God's unfolding drama of redemption.

Key Terms	
<i>PT:</i> 424 <i>TCF:</i> 908–10	Physicalism: Physicalism (or materialism) denies that there is a soul that can exist separately from the body.
<i>PT:</i> 425–35 <i>TCF:</i> 920–45	Millennium: Revelation 20 refers to a thousand-year reign of Christ. Christians differ on whether the “thousand years” should be interpreted symbolically or literally.
<i>PT:</i> 435–37 <i>TCF:</i> 950–54	Antichrist: It seems that “antichrist” refers to figures in the past, the present, and the future—perhaps with a culminating representative of Christless religion prior to Christ's return.

Key Distinctions	
<i>PT</i> : 423–24 <i>TCF</i> : 907–18	Intermediate/Final State: At death, the souls of believers are immediately present with the Lord (2Co 5:8). This is a wonderful consolation. Nevertheless, this condition is only temporary (hence, “intermediate”), as we anticipate “the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting” in a new heavens and earth.
<i>PT</i> : 425–35 <i>TCF</i> : 919–45	<p style="text-align: center;">Views on the Millennium</p> <p>Amillennialism — Interpreted symbolically, the “thousand years” in Revelation 20 refers to the present age in between Christ’s two advents.</p> <p>Dispensational Premillennialism — Expectation of a literal thousand-year kingdom in the future that will also culminate in human failure. Israel and the church represent two distinct peoples with different programs in salvation history.</p> <p>Historic Premillennialism — A literal millennium in the future, but with less discontinuity between Israel and the church than in the dispensationalist view.</p> <p>Postmillennialism — A literal millennium that dawns gradually now, at the end of which Jesus returns.</p>

Discussion/Reflection Questions

Drama (“Big Story”)

1. How do the end times relate to the consummation of God’s unfolding drama of redemption?

Doctrines (“What We Believe”)

1. What does **physicalism** teach about the relationship between the soul and the body? (*PT*: 424)
2. Do you believe that the **millennium** should be interpreted symbolically or literally? Why or why not? (*PT*: 425–35)
3. How is the “**antichrist**” described in Scripture? Does there appear to be more than one **antichrist**? Do you believe that there will be one culminating **antichrist** prior to Christ’s return? (*PT*: 435–37)

4. Describe the relationship between the **intermediate state** and the **final state**. (PT: 423–24)
5. Compare and contrast **amillennialism**, **dispensational premillennialism**, **historic premillennialism**, and **postmillennialism**. Which view do you believe is most consistent with Scripture? Why? (PT: 425–35)

Doxology (“Praise And Worship”)

1. Does Scripture teach that death is “natural”? Is it okay to hate death? (PT: 423–24)
2. What does 2 Corinthians 5:8 say happens to the souls of believers at death? (PT: 423–24)
3. How much of a personal comfort is it to you to know that when you die you will go immediately to be with the Lord? (PT: 423–24)
4. How does knowing that God is sovereign over the end times help you to trust him for your own life?

Discipleship (“Reshaped Lives”)

1. How could knowing that when believers die they go immediately to be with the Lord help you to bring comfort to someone grieving the loss of a believing friend? (PT: 423–24)
2. How do you understand the “thousand years” (millennium) in Revelation 20? How would you respond to other interpretations? (PT: 425–35)
3. How does knowing that Jesus will return again one day impact the way you live your life today? (PT: 423–24)
4. How does the reality of future judgment impact how you view those who do not know Jesus? (PT: 425–35)

Further Reading

Horton, Michael S. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*.

Chapter 27: A Dwelling Place, 906–18.

Chapter 28: The Return of Christ and the Last Judgment, 919–56.

The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting

As wonderful as it is to rejoice in the hope of being with the Lord upon our death, how much greater still is our expectation of being raised bodily in a world that is full of the glory, peace, justice, and love of the triune God. This is the consummation of our hope. Jesus walked through a curtain that no mortal has walked through before. He died and was raised to life in glory. As the prototype of the new creation, Jesus ate and drank with his disciples after his resurrection. “Touch me, and see,” he invited. “For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have” (Lk 24:39). Not only is the bodily resurrection of Christ affirmed in the Gospels, where Jesus eats with his disciples and even invites Thomas to inspect his wounds, but it is also clearly taught in the letters of Paul, particularly 1 Corinthians 15. The resurrection and the new creation will not transcend our humanity; rather, we will be set free from the bondage of our humanity to the conditions of sin and death. At the end of history, Satan is “thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet [are], and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev 20:10; see also 19:11–20:9). The dead are then judged. “This is the second death, the lake of fire” (20:14). The

finality of this judgment ushers in the new heavens and earth, where there is no longer any judgment, war, pain, suffering, or oppression. And it is there, finally, where the Tree of Life yields its fruit and leaves “for the healing of the nations” (22:2).

Key Terms	
<i>PT: 447–52</i> <i>TCF: 976–79</i>	Apokatastasis: The concept of universal restoration (universal salvation) for all of creation, humanity, and fallen angels alike. Ancient Gnostics and the early church theologian Origen (c. 185–254) taught this view, but it was condemned at the Fifth Council of Constantinople in 553.
<i>PT: 447–52</i> <i>TCF: 976–79</i>	Inclusivism: The belief that although Jesus Christ is the only Savior, people may be saved without explicit faith in Christ.
<i>PT: 451–52</i> <i>TCF: 979–80</i>	Annihilationism: Those who hold to this position interpret various passages as teaching that unbelievers are raised on the last day for destruction (the second death) rather than for everlasting, conscious torment.

Discussion/Reflection Questions

Drama (“Big Story”)

1. God’s unfolding drama of redemption includes Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation. How do the resurrection of the body and everlasting life fit into the consummation?

Doctrines (“What We Believe”)

1. What does the concept of **apokatastasis** say will happen to all of creation at the end of time? (*PT: 447–52*)
2. Does **inclusivism** teach that people can be saved without the work of Christ? (*PT: 447–52*)
3. What does **annihilationism** teach will happen to unbelievers on the last day? (*PT: 451–52*)
4. What does Scripture teach about the **resurrection** of the body? (*PT: 444–46*)
5. What is the basis of **everlasting life** according to Scripture? (*PT: 444–46*)

Doxology (“Praise And Worship”)

1. Is the goal of our salvation to go to heaven when we die? Why or why not? (*PT*: 444–46)
2. How does the future hope of the resurrection assure you of God’s love for you? (*PT*: 444–46)
3. Does the idea of hell and eternal punishment upset you or make it more difficult for you to trust God? Why or why not? (*PT*: 446–52)
4. Take a moment to try and imagine heaven. Far from the vision of disembodied spirits floating on ethereal clouds with harps, Isaiah 65 speaks of a “new heavens and a new earth” with buildings and vineyards, trees, labor, and fellowship with God and all of creation. Have you thought about heaven in this way before? (*PT*: 455–56)

Discipleship (“Reshaped Lives”)

1. How does looking forward to “the restoring of all things” (Ac 3:21) and the participation of the whole creation in our redemption (Ro 8:18–21) help us to value the world we live in?
2. If you really believed that every brother and sister in Christ you know is destined for glory, how might that change the way you interact with them? (*PT*: 455–56)
3. What are some ways that understanding the full picture of salvation, the resurrection of the body, and the consummation might help you to share the gospel with someone who does not know Jesus? (*PT*: 444–46)

Further Reading

Horton, Michael S. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*.

Chapter 29: The Last Battle and Life Everlasting, 957–90.

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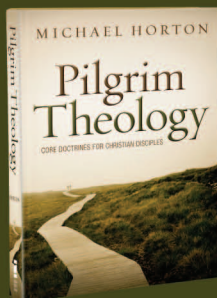
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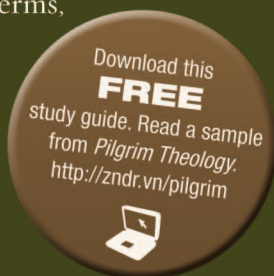
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