

The logo features the letters 'JTLL' in a large, bold, green, sans-serif font. The 'J' is on the left, followed by 'T', 'L', and 'L'. The text 'JOURNAL OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP' is centered over the 'T' and the first 'L' in a smaller, black, sans-serif font.

JTLL
JOURNAL OF TRANSFORMATIVE
LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP

Journal of Transformative Learning and Leadership (JTLL)

Volume 2, Number 1, Fall 2024

Digital Edition

Agathon University Press
2024

Journal of Transformative Learning and Leadership (JTLL)
Digital Edition
ISSN 2836-1539

Volume 2, Number 1, Fall 2024 – Digital Edition
Copyright ©2024, Agathon University

JTLL Open Access Policy

The Journal of Transformative Learning and Leadership (JTLL), an Agathon University publication, is Open Access (fulfilling the DOAJ definition of open access). Agathon University allows for immediate free access to the Digital Edition of JTLL, permitting any user to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose.

The Journal of Transformative Learning and Leadership (JTLL) is a twice-per-year, peer review academic journal, for the advancement of understanding and applying transformative learning to educational and leadership contexts in diverse disciplines.

JTLL Mission

The JTLL serves as a scholarly forum for the refinement and dissemination of research pertaining to interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary implications of transformative learning and its applications for leadership in diverse contexts.

JTLL Core Values

The JTLL espouses the essential idea that learning that transforms is best understood through Biblical descriptions and processes. The JTLL is thus committed to refinement and dissemination of research and applications from the platform of the Biblical worldview in every discipline engaged. The JTLL also is rooted in the idea that those engaging in transformative learning ought also to be well equipped and active in transformative leadership – the application of transformative learning principles in the processes of assisting and guiding other individuals and communities in their own transformative growth.

JTLL Editorial Board

(In Alphabetical Order)

Jeff Christianson, PhD

Professor of Science and Worldview – Agathon University

Christopher Cone, ThD, PhD, PhD

President, Professor of Transformative Learning and Leadership – Agathon University

Jamie Ervin, EdD

Professor of Transformative Learning and Leadership – Agathon University

S. Michael Houdmann, ThM, DMin (Studies)

Founder, GotQuestions.org

Paul Miles, DMin

Founder, International Society for Biblical Hermeneutics

Mike Stallard, PhD

Vice President for International Ministries, Friends of Israel

Christine Tan, PhD, PhD

President, GRACE School and College (Philippines)

Paul Weaver, PhD

Associate Professor of Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary

Research and Article Submission Standards and Style Requirements

Submissions to the JTLL should be submitted publish-ready in the style (Chicago, Turabian, APA, MLA) typical for work in the discipline(s) that the article addresses. As a multidisciplinary journal, the JTLL evaluates style on a per-article basis. The JTLL Editorial Board will prioritize research and article submissions that demonstrate alignment with the JTLL Mission and Core Values. Submissions must be received by published call for papers due date to receive consideration for the upcoming issue, and no guarantee of publication is made. Proposals and articles may be submitted to the JTLL Editorial Board via email at jtll@vyrsvity.com.

Table of Contents

JTLL, Volume 2, Number 1, Fall 2024

Digital Edition

1. LET LOVE BE UNHYPOCRITICAL: THE AGAPE OF GOD AND AMNON – Morris.....7-24

2. EXPOSITORY COMMUNICATION AS PRIMARY TOOLS FOR TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING – Philip and Cherion.....25-39

3. DOES 1 JOHN 1:9 AFFIRM THAT *BELIEVERS* SHOULD CONFESS THEIR SINS? – Fankhauser.....41-79

4. CULTURAL MARXISM AS A CASE STUDY ON THE WORLDVIEW IMPACT OF EDUCATION STRATEGY – Wyett.....91-130

LET LOVE BE UN-HYPOCRITICAL:
THE *AGAPE* OF GOD AND AMNON

A. W. Morris, MDiv, PhD

INTRODUCTION

More than fifty years ago, Billy Graham delivered a passionate evangelistic message called “True Love.” With characteristic zeal he proclaimed to his audience that the Greeks had not one but *four* words for love: *storge* (family affection), *eros* (romantic / sexual love), *phileo* (friendship), and, fourthly:

Agape love. This is another word that the Greeks used; they invented this word for the New Testament. This is God’s love. *Agape* love is a supernatural love, a love that we know nothing about apart from God. It’s so deep and so wide and so high and so great and has such dimensions to it that no words in any language can describe it.¹

It is worth asking whether the Greeks actually invented the word ἀγάπη (*agape*) specifically for the New Testament. Also, does this word refer only to God’s supernatural love that is higher than the other three and beyond all human description?

¹ Transcribed from a video recording of “True Love,” given by Billy Graham in St. Louis, MO in 1973
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahKWms8ItLQ> (accessed 10/01/2024).

A Christian understanding of love is based not on Greek philosophy but on plainly interpreted Scripture. This article demonstrates that the Scriptures reveal not four but *two* categories of love; and any expression of love – physical, emotional, relational, spiritual, or any combination thereof – falls into one of these two categories.

FOUR LOVES

The idea of four Greek categories of love did not originate with Billy Graham. The first modern treatment of this topic was a book by C.S. Lewis titled *The Four Loves* (1960). In the broadest sense he distinguished between what he called “need-love” and “gift-love,” and then he devoted a full chapter to each of the four loves:

- 1) Affection: “The Greeks called this love *storge* ... I shall here call it simply Affection. My Greek Lexicon defines *storge* as ‘affection, especially of parents to offspring’; but also of offspring to parents.”²
- 2) Friendship: “We admit of course that besides a wife and family a man needs a few ‘friends.’ But the very tone of the admission, and the sort of acquaintanceships which those who make it would describe as ‘friendships’, show clearly that what they are talking about has very little to do with that *Philia* which Aristotle classified among the virtues or that *Amicitia* on which Cicero wrote a book.”³

² C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1960), 41.

³ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 73.

- 3) Eros: “By *Eros* I mean of course that state which we call ‘being in love’; or, if you prefer, that kind of love which lovers are ‘in’.”⁴
- 4) Charity: “That such a Gift-love comes by Grace and should be called Charity, everyone will agree.”⁵

The first three he classified as “need-love,” but Charity he classified as Divine Love or “gift-love.” Lewis did not directly link the Greek word ἀγάπη (*agape*) to Divine Love or Charity in his book, but he did mention it in a personal letter from 1954 that was published in 1966:

Charity means love. It is called Agape in the New Testament to distinguish it from Eros (sexual love), Storge (family affection) and Philia (friendship). So there are four kinds of love, all good in their proper place, but Agape is the best because it is the kind God has for us and is good in all circumstances.⁶

Only a few years after Billy Graham’s message, Norman Wright and Wes Roberts wrote a pre-marital counseling book titled *Before You Say “I Do”* (1977). In chapter 3 they described the three types of love needed in marriage:

Eros is the love that seeks sensual expression. Eros is a romantic love, sexual love. It is inspired by the biological structure of human nature. The husband and wife, in a

⁴ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 117.

⁵ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 172.

⁶ W.H. Lewis and Walter Hooper, eds., *The Letters of C.S. Lewis* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1966), 601.

good marriage, will love each other romantically and erotically.

In a good marriage the husband and wife are also friends. Friendship means companionship, communication, and cooperation. This is known as *philia*.

Agape is self-giving love, gift love, the love that goes on loving even when the other becomes unlovable. *Agape love is not just something that happens to you; it's something you make happen.* Love is a personal act of commitment. Christ's love (and hence the pattern for our love) is gift love. Christ's love for us is sacrificial love. Christ's love is unconditional. Christ's love is an eternal love. Agape is kindness. It is being sympathetic, thoughtful, and sensitive to the needs of your loved one. Agape is contentment and agape love is forgiving love.⁷

Wright and Roberts did not mention *στοργή* (*storge*), most likely because they did not deem it as relevant to marriage as the other three. They used Lewis's term "gift-love" as a synonym for *ἀγάπη* (*agape*); and their descriptions of *ἔρως* (*eros*), *φιλία* (*philia*), and *ἀγάπη* (*agape*) generally match those of Lewis and Graham.

Around twenty years later, Warren Wiersbe wrote *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (1996), a two-volume edition covering the entire New Testament. His comments on NT

⁷ H. Norman Wright and Wes Roberts, *Before You Say "I Do"* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1977), 23–24 (emphasis original).

passages dealing with love focused on the Greek words used in those passages, which were only ἀγάπη (*agape*) and φιλία (*philia*):

- **John 21:9–18:** “In His questions in John 21:15–16, our Lord used *agape*, which is the Greek word for the highest kind of love, sacrificing love, divine love. Peter always used *phileo*, which is the love of friend for friend, fondness for another.”⁸
- **Galatians 5:22–26:** “This word for love is *agape*, which means divine love.”⁹
- **Colossians 3:18–19:** “However, the husband has the responsibility of loving his wife; and the word for ‘love’ used here is *agape*—the sacrificing, serving love that Christ shares with His church. A marriage may begin with normal, human, romantic love, but it must grow deeper into the spiritual *agape* love that comes only from God.”¹⁰
- **1 Thessalonians 4:9–10:** “*Philia* love is the love of deep affection, such as in friendship or even marriage. But *agape* love is the love God shows toward us. It is not simply a love based on feeling; it is expressed in our wills. *Agape* love treats others as God would treat them, regardless of feelings or personal preferences.”¹¹
- **1 John 2:7-11:** “When we read in 1 John about “love,” the Greek word used is *agape* (ah-GAH-pay), the word for

⁸ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary, Volume 1* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 398.

⁹ Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary, Volume 1*, 720.

¹⁰ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary, Volume 2* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 142.

¹¹ Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary, Volume 2*, 177.

God’s love toward man, a Christian’s love for other Christians, and God’s love for His church (Eph. 5:22–33). Another Greek word for love, *philia* (fee-LEE-ah), used elsewhere, carries the idea of ‘friendship love,’ which is not quite as profound or divine as *agape* love.”¹²

Wiersbe did acknowledge that the terms ἀγάπη (*agape*) and φιλία (*philia*) were at times used interchangeably as close synonyms.¹³ But he consistently treated “*agape* love” and “*philia* love” as separate categories with different meanings.

More recently, Jen Wilkin wrote *In His Image* (2018) on the communicable attributes of God. In the chapter on love she explained,

The Greek of Jesus’s day, which is also the language of the New Testament, distinguishes four different kinds of love, using a specific word for each. Becoming familiar with them helps us understand how the Bible describes God’s love, and can help clear up some of the cultural fog that has settled around our own conceptions of it. *Eros* is the word used to describe romantic love. *Philia* is the word used to describe brother-sisterly love shared between peers. *Storge* is the word used to describe a parent’s love for a child. *Agape* is the word used to describe the love of God.”¹⁴

¹² Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary, Volume 2*, 486.

¹³ Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary, Volume 1*, 398.

¹⁴ Jen Wilkin, *In His Image: 10 Ways God Calls Us to Reflect His Character* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 33. She cited *The Four Loves* by C.S. Lewis as a source for her descriptions.

Interestingly, none of these authors cited any Greek grammar textbook or linguistic treatise to support their claims. They simply treated it as “common knowledge” that the four words for love in the Greek language represented different categories of love, with ἀγάπη (*agape*) being the highest category that refers exclusively to God’s love.

MEANING AND CONTEXT

Any word in any language has a range of possible meanings, and the meaning of any *specific use* of a word is entirely dependent upon the *context* in which it is used. The word “touchdown” means something completely different on a football field than on an airstrip. The words ἔρως (*eros*), στοργή (*storge*), φιλία (*philia*), and ἀγάπη (*agape*) all have ranges of meaning in the Greek language, and as Christians our understanding of these words depends on the various contexts in which they are used in Scripture.

The Biblical context for these words includes the Greek Old Testament (known as the Septuagint [abbreviated LXX]), which was translated more than two centuries before the writing of the New Testament. The authors of the NT frequently quoted the LXX directly rather than simply translate the Hebrew OT text on their own, and the usage of these words in the LXX is equally relevant to their use in the NT.

The noun ἔρως (*eros*) is not used in the NT and is used only twice in the LXX:

- **Proverbs 7:18**, where the seductress says to the simpleton,

δεῦρο καὶ ἐγκυλισθῶμεν ἔρωτι (“Come and let us be reeled in to love(making)”)

- **Proverbs 24:51** (30:16 in Hebrew), where one of the things that never says “enough” is a ἔρως γυναικὸς (“sensuous wife”)

The noun στοργή (*storge*) is not used in the NT or the LXX, but the adjective ἀστοργος (usually translated “heartless”) is included in “sin lists” describing rebels against the gospel (Romans 1:31) and false believers in the last days (2 Timothy 3:3). The noun φιλόστοργος (“affection,” a compound of φιλία [*philia*] and στοργή [*storge*]) is used in connection with φιλαδελφία (“love of brother”) in a series of positive commands to believers (Romans 12:10).

The noun φιλία (*philia*) and verb φιλέω (*phileo*) are both used in the LXX and the NT. The noun φιλία is only used once in the NT by itself (James 4:4, referring to “friendship with the world”), but it is a constituent of several compound words that refer to “love of” something – φιλαδελφία (love of brother), φιλάργυρος (love of money), φιλοπρωτεύω (love of being first), etc. The verb φιλέω not only referred to “love” in the general sense, but it could also refer specifically to kissing, either romantic (Proverbs 7:13, Song 1:2), familial (Genesis 33:4), or formal (Mark 14:44).

The verb φιλέω (*phileo*) could also be used synonymously with ἀγαπάω (*agapao*) to refer to God’s love either for the Son or for His people:

- **John 3:35:** “The Father loves (ἀγαπάω) the Son and has given all things into his hand.”

- **John 5:20:** “For the Father loves (φιλέω) the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing.”
- **Hebrews 12:6:** “For the Lord disciplines the one he loves (ἀγαπάω) and chastises every son whom he receives.”
- **Revelation 3:19:** “Those whom I love (φιλέω), I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.”

There is no discernible difference in meaning between ἀγαπάω (*agapao*) and φιλέω (*phileo*) in either of these parallel uses. One of the primary topics of the gospel of John is the relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Son, and the theological contexts of Hebrews 12:6 and Revelation 3:19 are nearly identical – in both cases the topic is God’s discipline of believers in Christ.

To summarize, ἔρως (*eros*) and στοργή (*storge*) were both used rarely in Scripture and had limited ranges of meaning, with ἔρως (*eros*) referring primarily to sexual love and στοργή (*storge*) referring primarily to familial affection (or lack thereof). φιλία (*philia*) and φιλέω (*phileo*) were used more often and could refer specifically to kissing or more generally to the love of God for humans, the love of humans for each other, or the love of humans for non-human things such as money or primacy.

THE SEMANTIC RANGE OF *AGAPE*

The noun ἀγάπη (*agape*) and verb ἀγαπάω (*agapao*) were used a combined total of more than 500 times between the NT and LXX. To get an idea of their overall ranges of meaning, here is a representative list of biblical uses of these terms:

- **Ephesians 3:17–19:** “That you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love (ἀγάπη) of Christ that surpasses knowledge ...” This is the meaning to which the aforementioned authors are referring – the transcendent, perfect, Divine love of God Himself.
- **John 3:35:** “The Father loves (ἀγαπάω) the Son and has given all things into his hand.” Again, as the previously mentioned authors describe, this is the perfect love between God the Father and God the Son.
- **1 John 4:10:** “In this is love (ἀγάπη), not that we have loved (ἀγαπάω) God but that he loved (ἀγαπάω) us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” This is describing God’s perfect love expressed toward humanity through Christ’s death on the cross.
- **Deuteronomy 6:5:** “You shall love (ἀγαπάω) the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” This command, quoted by Jesus (Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30), describes the appropriate response of wholehearted love for God from God’s people that reflects God’s love for us.
- **1 Corinthians 13:4–7:** “Love (ἀγάπη) is patient and kind; love (ἀγάπη) does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love (ἀγάπη) bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” This is a list of characteristics that describe how God intends for love to be expressed among His people,

especially in the context of worship in the gathered church.

- **Ruth 4:15:** “He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves (ἀγαπάω) you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”

The women of Bethlehem blessed Naomi by reminding her of the strong familial love between Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth.
- **1 Samuel 20:17:** “And Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him, for he loved (ἀγαπάω) him as he loved (ἀγαπάω) his own soul.”

David and Jonathan had a covenantal brotherly love for each other despite the fact that they were not blood relatives.
- **Ephesians 5:25:** “Husbands, love (ἀγαπάω) your wives, as Christ loved (ἀγαπάω) the church and gave himself up for her ...”

The love of a husband for his wife within the marriage covenant is intended to be reflective of Christ’s sacrificial love for the Church.
- **Song 2:7, 3:5, 8:4:** “Do not arouse or awaken love (ἀγάπη) until it pleases.”

The emotional and physical desire that God intends for a husband and wife to express only to each other within their marriage covenant is not to be aroused before marriage.
- **Judges 16:4:** “After this he [Samson] loved (ἀγαπάω) a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.”

Samson’s sexual appetite for Gentile women was first gratified through an unnamed Philistine wife

(Judges 14) and then eventually through Delilah, who married Samson and then betrayed him to the Philistines.

- **1 Kings 3:3:** “Solomon loved (ἀγαπάω) the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father, except that he sacrificed and made offerings at the high places.”
Early in his reign as king of Israel, Solomon loved the Lord; but his love was not entirely pure because he worshiped at pagan “high places” that should have been destroyed.

- **2 Timothy 4:10:** “For Demas, loving (ἀγαπάω) this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.”

Paul’s fellow-laborer Demas loved the world, not in the way that God loved the world (John 3:16) but in the way that God’s people are commanded *not* to love the world (1 John 2:15).

- **1 Kings 11:1–2:** “Now King Solomon loved many foreign women ... from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel, ‘You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.’ Solomon clung to these in love (ἀγάπη).”

Solomon loved all of his Gentile wives and all the false gods that went with them.

- **Ezekiel 16:37:** “Therefore, behold, I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved (ἀγαπάω) and all those you hated ...”

The prophets metaphorically described Israel’s idolatry as adultery and prostitution with Israel’s “lovers” (see also Jeremiah 2:25, Hosea 8:9, Lamentations 1:2).

- **Hosea 3:1:** “And the Lord said to me, ‘Go again, love (ἀγαπάω) a woman who is loved (ἀγαπάω) by another man and is an adulteress, even as the Lord loves (ἀγαπάω) the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins.’”

Gomer, the woman Hosea was commanded to marry (Hosea 1:2), committed adultery against Hosea; yet he took her back even though she had been “loved by another.”

- **2 Samuel 13:1,4,15:** “Now Absalom, David’s son, had a beautiful sister, whose name was Tamar. And after a time Amnon, David’s son, loved (ἀγαπάω) her.”

“And he [Jonadab] said to him [Amnon], ‘O son of the king, why are you so haggard morning after morning? Will you not tell me?’ Amnon said to him, ‘I love (ἀγαπάω) Tamar, my brother Absalom’s sister.’”

“Then Amnon hated her with very great hatred, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love (ἀγάπη) with which he had loved (ἀγαπάω) her. And Amnon said to her, ‘Get up! Go!’”

In one of the most sinful and disturbing narrative accounts in all of Scripture, David’s oldest son Amnon lusted after his half-sister Tamar (in violation of Leviticus 18:9, which prohibited sexual relations with either “your father’s daughter or your mother’s daughter”). Amnon’s crafty cousin Jonadab concocted a plan to help Amnon gratify his incestuous lust – pretend to be ill and ask Tamar to be his nurse. Once Amnon had deceived her into coming into his bedchamber to feed him cakes while he was lying on his bed, Amnon forcefully grabbed her and demanded that she have

sexual relations with him. Tamar protested that such disgraceful things were not done in Israel, a likely allusion to the violation of Jacob's daughter Dinah (Genesis 34:7). Tamar even tried to persuade Amnon to ask his father to give her to him rather than take her by force; but Amnon did not listen and sexually violated her, after which his hateful scorn for her was even stronger than his lust for her had been.

To summarize, ἀγάπη (*agape*) and ἀγαπῶ (*agapao*) were used hundreds of times in Scripture and could refer to God's perfect love within the Godhead, God's perfect love expressed to humans, spiritual human love for God, romantic human love within marriage, familial human love, close brotherly friendship, tainted worship, worldliness, idolatry, polygamy, adultery, and incestuous lust that leads to rape.

TRUE OR FALSE?

What do we make of the fact that the same word ἀγάπη (*agape*) is used in Scripture to describe God's perfect love and Amnon's incestuous lust? Notwithstanding Billy Graham's rhetorical flourish, Amnon's "*agape*-love" for Tamar was most certainly *not* God's love. It was sinfully natural, the overflow of Amnon's depravity. It was a love that we know all too well apart from God. It was so shallow and so small and so low and so evil and had such vacuity to it that almost no words in any language can describe it. On the other hand, the positive examples of "*agape*-love" in Scripture include the family affection of Ruth and Naomi, the friendship of David and Jonathan, and the romantic / sexual love portrayed in the Song

of Songs. Are ἔρως (*eros*), στοργή (*storge*), φιλία (*philia*), and ἀγάπη (*agape*) really four discrete and separate categories?

The use of these words in Scripture reveals *two* categories of love – “true” and “false.” There are expressions of love that reflects God’s character and God’s commands (such as a husband for his wife within a Christ-honoring marriage), and there are expressions of love that *do not* reflect God’s character or God’s commands (such as Amnon for Tamar).

In Romans 12:9, Paul commanded his readers to let their love be ἀνυπόκριτος (“un-hypocritical”), that is, without any false pretense or insincerity (the term ἀνυπόκριτος is usually translated “sincere”). Peter similarly reminded his regenerated readers that their souls had been purified for φιλᾶδελφίαν ἀνυπόκριτον (“un-hypocritical brotherly love” [1 Peter 1:22]). Clearly, the command to love one another in a way that is *not* hypocritical pre-supposes the possibility of loving in a way that *is* hypocritical; and there are many examples in Scripture:

- Solomon’s love for God early in his life was tainted with hypocrisy. He had already married Pharaoh’s daughter (1 Kings 3:1), who would eventually turn his heart away from God like all the rest of his wives (1 Kings 11:1–3); and he still worshiped God at pagan “high places” (1 Kings 3:3).

- Amnon’s love for Tamar was the very definition of hypocrisy. Amnon pretended to be ill and maneuvered Tamar into his bedroom so that he could commit an abomination by sexually violating her (2 Samuel 13:6–14).

- Demas’s hypocrisy was revealed when he deserted Paul’s gospel work because of love for the world (Philemon 1:24, 2 Timothy 4:10).

- Jesus repeatedly rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy. The scribes affirmed the importance of loving God and loving neighbor (Mark 12:32–33) but also devoured widows’ houses and for a pretense made long prayers (Mark 12:38–40). The scribes and Pharisees were, according to Jesus, the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy about those who worshiped God with their lips but whose hearts were far from God (Matthew 15:1–9, quoting Isaiah 29:13).

Even if Lewis and the others are correct about how the ancient Greeks categorized love, the semantic “overlap” among the four terms in Scripture – especially ἀγάπη (*agape*) with the other three – precludes any strict separation of their meanings. The only non-overlapping categories of love in Scripture are “true” and “false.”

CONCLUSION – WHY DOES IT MATTER?

What difference does it make if we erroneously categorize “love” as long as we strive to love God and love others as God has loved us? The problem is that the “four loves” error tends to *devalue* the non-*agape* “loves.” In particular, the physical and emotional love between husband and wife that God created in Genesis 2 and celebrated in the Song of Songs is treated as somehow having nothing in common with “*agape*-love”:

From Lewis: “You see Agape is all giving, not getting. Read what St Paul says about it in First Corinthians Chap. 13.”¹⁵

¹⁵ Lewis and Hooper, *The Letters of C.S. Lewis*, 601.

Does God *not* intend for a husband and wife to be all about giving *to* each other rather than getting *from* each other in their marriage bed?

From Wright and Roberts: “Agape is kindness. It is being sympathetic, thoughtful, and sensitive to the needs of your loved one.”¹⁶

Does God *not* intend for a husband and wife to be sympathetic, thoughtful, and sensitive to each other in their marriage bed?

From Wilkin: “It is *agape* that 1 Corinthians 13:4–8 describes, the familiar passage we read at weddings ... What makes this passage beautiful for a wedding is the way it challenges the couple to transcend mere *eros*, or even *philia* ...”¹⁷

Does God *not* intend for a husband and wife to be patient, kind, un-self-seeking, etc., in their marriage bed?

Any expression of love can be either true or false, and no expression of love that reflects the character and commands of God is any “higher” or “lower” than any other. When a husband and wife become one flesh as God intended from the creation of the world, their emotional and physical expression of love for each other is not somehow inferior to praying with someone or visiting sick people in the hospital or donating money to help hurricane victims. Our responsibility is not to “transcend” the “lower categories” of love. Our responsibility is to love God and

¹⁶ Wright and Roberts, *Before You Say “I Do”*, 24.

¹⁷ Wilkin, *In His Image*, 35.

love others without hypocrisy, whatever those specific expressions of love might entail.

EXPOSITORY COMMUNICATION AS PRIMARY TOOLS FOR TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Dr. Johnson C. Philip and Dr. Saneesh Cherian

Expository teaching, preaching, and counseling produces the kind of transformation that is not seen in other types of communication. Expository communication is rooted in exegesis, a comprehensive and detailed exploration of Scripture, where passages are examined in their context to extract their true meaning and application. The method of communication involves a thorough and careful unfolding of Scripture, where passages are examined in their historical and literary context, their theological significance explored, and their practical application made clear.

Expository communication (including preaching, teaching, and counseling) is tremendously valuable, primarily due to its steadfast adherence to the message as conveyed by the Holy Spirit. Unlike topical or thematic communication, which may selectively use Scripture to support a preconceived idea, expository communication is dedicated to unfolding the text as it is, allowing the Scripture itself to dictate the message. This approach ensures that the entire counsel of God is taught, including passages that might be overlooked or deemed less appealing in other teaching formats. By closely adhering to the scriptural text, expository teaching aligns with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who inspired the original writing of the Scriptures. This method respects the authority and sufficiency of the Bible, holding to the conviction that every word is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, as affirmed in 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

The effectiveness of the expository approach is deeply rooted in its commitment to presenting the Bible in a way that is true to its original intent and rich in doctrinal depth. It involves a meticulous study of Scripture, considering the historical context, linguistic

nuances, and the overarching narrative of the Bible. This method not only provides a clear understanding of the text but also encourages believers to engage deeply with the Word, fostering spiritual growth and maturity.

Expository teaching is characterized by its systematic approach, often covering entire books of the Bible verse by verse, thereby offering a comprehensive understanding of God's Word. This style of teaching is particularly valuable in nurturing a congregation's ability to understand and interpret Scripture independently, equipping them with the tools to discern truth and apply it to their lives. By focusing on the message inspired by the Holy Spirit, expository preaching and teaching uphold the integrity of the Scripture, guiding believers in their journey of faith and ensuring that the church remains anchored to the unchanging truth of God's Word. Examination of several key passages from the Scripture underscores the importance of the approach.

ROMANS 12:2

Romans 12:2: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will."

Romans 12:2 presents a profound insight into the transformative power of God's Word, particularly as it relates to the practice of expository communication. This verse calls for a radical shift in how believers interact with the world and perceive God's will, highlighting the role of the mind in spiritual transformation¹⁸. The key Greek term in this verse is "transformed," which is translated

¹⁸ Cranfield, C.E.B. *The Epistle to the Romans*. International Critical Commentary Series. 2nd vol. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975-1979.

from the Greek word "μεταμορφουθε" (metamorphousthe). This word is the passive form of "metamorphoo," which means to change into another form, to transform, or to transfigure. This is the same word used to describe Jesus's transfiguration on the mountain, where His appearance was completely altered, gloriously revealing His divine nature.¹⁹ In the context of Romans 12:2, this transformation is not a physical change but a profound and fundamental change in character and perspective—a change from within.

The phrase "by the renewing of your mind" is crucial here. The Greek word for "renewing" is "ἀνακαίνωσις" (anakainosis), which implies a process of renovation or complete change for the better. This renovation of the mind is central to the Christian faith, suggesting that a believer's way of thinking should be continually reshaped and aligned with God's thoughts as revealed in Scripture. This is where expository preaching and teaching become instrumental. By systematically and thoroughly exploring the Scriptures, expository teaching exposes believers to the whole counsel of God, challenging and reshaping their thoughts and beliefs according to the truths of the Bible.

The latter part of the verse, "Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will," implies that this transformation of the mind equips believers to discern and embrace God's will. The words "test" and "approve" here suggest a discerning, thoughtful engagement with God's will, an engagement that is cultivated through a deep and nuanced understanding of Scripture. Expository teaching aids this process by breaking down complex scriptural concepts into understandable

¹⁹ Matthew 17:2.

segments, allowing believers to grasp the depth and breadth of God's will as revealed in the Bible and as a result, to be transformed.

Romans 12:2 stresses the importance of renewing the mind as the means to spiritual transformation, a process that is fostered and facilitated by expository communication. This method of communication does not merely inform the intellect; it seeks to transform the believer's way of thinking and, consequently, their way of living. By faithfully and meticulously expounding the Scriptures, expository preaching provides the tools for believers to understand and apply God's Word, leading to a transformative renewal of the mind that aligns them more closely with God's will and purpose. This alignment is not only about intellectual assent but involves a profound change in the believer's values, priorities, and actions, reflecting a life that is increasingly conformed to the image of Christ.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

2 Timothy 3:16-17 offers a compelling foundation for understanding the role of expository communication, particularly in the context of transforming the heart and equipping believers for every good work.²⁰ The key phrase in this passage is "God-breathed," translated from the Greek word "θεόπνευστος" (theopneustos). This term is a compound of "θεός" (theos), meaning God, and "πνέω"

²⁰ Knight, George W., III. *The Second Epistle to Timothy*. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992.

(pneo), meaning to breathe or blow. *Theopneustos*, conveys the idea that Scripture is breathed out by God Himself, indicative of its divine origin and authority. This concept is crucial in expository education, as it establishes the Bible as the ultimate source of truth, not merely a collection of human writings. By recognizing the divine inspiration of Scripture, expository communication upholds the authority and inerrancy of the Bible as the foundation for all teaching and application.

Further, the passage describes the usefulness of Scripture in several key areas: teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. Each of these elements plays a critical role in the transformative process:

Teaching – The Greek word for teaching here is "διδασκαλία" (didaskalia), which involves instruction or doctrine. Expository teaching delves into the doctrinal truths of the Bible, ensuring that believers are grounded in correct understanding and knowledge of God's Word.

Rebuking – Rebuking, or "ἐλεγχος" (elegchos) in Greek, involves the exposure of error or sin. Expository communication shines a light on wrong beliefs and behaviors, challenging believers to confront and turn away from them.

Correcting – The term "ἐπανόρθωσις" (epanorthosis) denotes setting things right or improvement. This aspect of Scripture's utility involves the rectification of mistakes and guiding believers back to the right path.

Training in Righteousness – Training, or "παιδεία" (paideia) in righteousness, is about nurturing and forming a character that

aligns with God's standards. It involves the holistic development of the believer in all aspects of life.

Finally, the purpose of Scripture is described as thoroughly equipping "the servant of God for every good work." The phrase "thoroughly equipped" translates from "ἐξαρτιζω" (exartizo), meaning to fully furnish or prepare. This comprehensive preparation emphasizes the role of Scripture in not only imparting knowledge but also in shaping character and enabling effective service.

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, expository communication and education emerge as essential tools for educators. This method allows for a deep, systematic exploration of Scripture, ensuring that every aspect of its divine wisdom is communicated and applied. By presenting the full counsel of God, expository communication facilitates a holistic transformation in the heart and mind of believers, equipping them to discern truth, correct errors, grow in righteousness, and be fully prepared for all that God designs them to do. This transformative process is not just about intellectual understanding but about a profound change in the life and character of the believer, aligning them more closely with God's will and purpose.

PSALM 119:130

Psalm 119:130: "The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple."

Psalm 119:130 beautifully encapsulates the essence of expository communication and its role in transforming the heart.²¹

²¹ Ross, Allen P. *Psalms*. Kregel Exegetical Library, Volume 3, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2011-2016.

This passage carries a profound message providing key principles of expository communication. The key phrase in this verse is "the unfolding of your words." In Hebrew, "unfolding" is translated from the word "פֶּתַח" (pethach), which means to open, unfold, or reveal. This term conveys the idea of opening up something that was previously closed or hidden. In the context of Scripture, it implies the revealing or explaining of God's word, which may not be immediately apparent or understandable to all. This unfolding or revealing is at the heart of expository preaching and teaching. It involves systematically breaking down the Scriptures, verse by verse, chapter by chapter, to reveal the deeper meanings and truths contained within.

The verse then states that this unfolding "gives light; it gives understanding to the simple." Light in the Bible often symbolizes knowledge, truth, and understanding. The Hebrew word for light here is "אֹר" (or), implying illumination and clarity. This metaphor of light is significant; just as physical light dispels darkness and allows one to see clearly, the light of God's Word dispels ignorance and misunderstanding, providing clarity and insight. The term "simple" in Hebrew is "פְּתָיִים" (petayim), which refers to those who are naive or lack discernment. Thus, the verse is saying that the Word of God provides clarity and understanding even to those who are not wise or learned by worldly standards.

This verse highlights the transformative power of expository communication. By carefully and thoroughly explaining Scripture, expository communication brings clarity and understanding to all listeners, regardless of their initial level of spiritual maturity or Biblical knowledge. This method of communication demystifies complex passages, makes connections between different parts of Scripture, and appropriately applies Biblical truths to everyday life. As the word of God is engaged, it enlightens the minds and hearts of

listeners, leading to a transformation in their understanding, attitudes, and behaviors. As the truths of Scripture are engaged, they illuminate the hearts and minds of believers, leading to a deeper understanding, spiritual growth, and transformation. This transformative process is essential for educators who seek to guide their learners into a deeper relationship with God and a more profound understanding of His will and ways.

PSALM 19:7-8

Psalm 19:7-8: "The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart."

Psalm 19:7-8 provides a profound insight into the nature and effect of God's Word, underscoring its central role in expository communication.²² These verses highlight the perfection, trustworthiness, righteousness, and joy-giving aspects of God's law, statutes, and precepts, illustrating how they are instrumental in transforming the heart.

"The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul." The term "law" here is translated from the Hebrew word "תּוֹרָה" (Torah), which refers not only to the legal aspects of the Mosaic Law but also to instruction or teaching provided by God. The description of the Torah as "perfect" (תָּמִים, tamim in Hebrew) suggests its completeness, flawlessness, and sufficiency in guiding believers. The effect of this perfection is the refreshing of the soul; it rejuvenates and restores, speaking to the deep needs of the human spirit. In expository communication, the communicator aims to unpack the

²² Ross, Allen P. *Psalms*. Kregel Exegetical Library, Volume 1, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2011-2016.

fullness and richness of God's Word, demonstrating its relevance and power in addressing the complexities of human life.

"The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple." The word "statutes" refers to the decrees or specific instructions given by God. These statutes are described as "trustworthy" (אֱמוּנָה, *emunah* in Hebrew), denoting their reliability and faithfulness. These are a sure foundation upon which believers can build their lives. The result of engaging with these trustworthy statutes is that they make "wise the simple." The word "simple" here (פֶּתִי, *peti* in Hebrew) can describe someone who is naive or lacks discernment. Through expository communication, these statutes are explained and applied, providing wisdom and discernment to all listeners, regardless of their level of understanding.

"The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart." The term "precepts" (פִּקּוּדִים, *pikkudim* in Hebrew) denotes the specific commands or guidelines given by God. They are described as "right" (יָשָׁר, *yashar* in Hebrew), suggesting their moral correctness and alignment with God's character. This righteousness brings joy to the heart, indicating the deep emotional and spiritual satisfaction that comes from living in accordance with God's commands. Expository communication elucidates these precepts, helping believers understand and embrace the righteousness of God's ways, resulting in true joy and fulfillment.

Psalm 19:7-8 beautifully articulates the transformative impact of God's word, as revealed in the law, statutes, and precepts. These verses affirm the integral role of the expository approach in communicating these truths. By thoroughly and accurately presenting the perfection, trustworthiness, righteousness, and joy of God's word, expository communication becomes a powerful tool. It aids in the renewal of the mind, the cultivation of wisdom, the alignment of life with God's righteous standards, and the nurturing

of joy in the heart. This transformative process is essential for deepening the believer's relationship with God and fostering a life that reflects His will and character.

JOHN 17:17

John 17:17: "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."

John 17:17, nestled within Jesus's high priestly prayer, describes the sanctifying power of God's word, highlighting its central role in communication and understanding, providing further value for the expository approach to education.²³

In this verse, Jesus prays to the Father, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." The key term here is "sanctify," which in Greek is "ἁγιάζω" (hagiazō). This word conveys the idea of consecration, setting apart, or making holy. The process of sanctification is essentially a transformation — a spiritual and moral change aligning a person more closely with God's holiness. Sanctification is not a mere moral improvement but a fundamental transformation of character and being, driven by the truth of God's word.

The phrase "by the truth; your word is truth" emphasizes the instrument of this sanctification. In Greek, "truth" is "ἀλήθεια" (alētheia), which signifies the reality as opposed to falsehood, the actual state of affairs, or things as they really are. Jesus is affirming that God's word is the embodiment of this truth. It's not just true in a factual sense, but it's the ultimate reality on which all other truths stand. In the context of expository education, this highlights the necessity of grounding all teaching and transformation in the truth

²³ Köstenberger, Andreas J. *John*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004.

of God's word. It is not merely about imparting knowledge or moral teachings but about leading believers into the deeper reality of God's kingdom and His righteousness.

Expository communication in teaching, preaching, and counseling contexts is a vital tool in this sanctifying process, as the truth of God's word penetrates deeply into the hearts and minds of believers, challenging preconceptions, transforming worldviews, and aligning lives with the truth of God's revelation. In practical terms, expository communication helps equip learners to discern truth from falsehood in the world around them and guides them in living out the truth in their daily lives. This approach to education ensures that the transformative power of God's word is not lost or diluted but is realized in the lives of believers.

John 17:17 highlights the vital role of truth — as revealed in God's Word — in the sanctification (transformation) of believers. This sanctification is at the heart of the believer's journey and is strengthened by expository communication — by the faithful and rigorous communication of Scripture. This is a transformative process leading to a deeper and more authentic life that is aligned with the truth of God's word and His will.

1 PETER 2:2

1 Peter 2:2: "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation."

1 Peter 2:2 offers a compelling statement for understanding the role of God's word in the spiritual growth and transformation of believers, a concept that is central to the practice of expository

communication²⁴. The verse reads, "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation." The key phrase here is "crave pure spiritual milk." The Greek word translated as "crave" is "ἐπιποθέω" (epipothēō), which means to long for, desire greatly, or yearn for. This word conveys an intense desire, similar to the instinctive craving a newborn has for milk. The term "pure" (ἄδολος, adolos in Greek) means unadulterated or without deceit, emphasizing the purity and sincerity of the spiritual nourishment sought.

The figurative expression of milk here is significant. Just as milk is essential for the growth and development of a newborn, so is the "pure spiritual milk" – which represents the word of God – essential for the spiritual growth of a believer. This imagery highlights the basic, yet profound, nature of the nourishment that the word provides. It is foundational and life-sustaining, crucial for the growth and development of one's faith and understanding.

In the context of transformative education, this verse emphasizes the necessity of providing believers with this pure, unadulterated spiritual nourishment. Expository communication involves a deep, comprehensive exploration of Scripture, where the text is carefully studied and its meaning thoroughly expounded. This method ensures that learners receive the whole counsel of God, not just selected parts. It is about being nourished with the pure milk of God's word in a way that is crucial for the growth and maturity of believers, enabling them to "grow up in their salvation."

The phrase "grow up in your salvation" points to the progressive transformational nature of spiritual growth. The Greek word for "grow" here is "αὐξάνω" (auxanō), which means to increase,

²⁴ Davids, Peter H. *The First Epistle of Peter*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990.

grow, or enlarge. It implies a continuous, ongoing process. Salvation is complemented by a journey of growth, maturation, and deepening understanding. Expository communication aids this process by providing a steady diet of in-depth Biblical teaching, which helps believers mature in their faith, understand deeper truths, and live out their salvation more fully.

1 Peter 2:2 beautifully illustrates the critical role of God's word in the spiritual growth and maturation of believers. It highlights the need for learners to deeply desire and engage with the pure, unadulterated teachings of Scripture. Expository communications serve as central tools for delivering this spiritual nourishment, ensuring that believers are not just fed but are growing, maturing, and deepening in their understanding and experience of salvation. This process of growth is vital for the transformation of the heart and the development of a robust, mature faith in Christ.

There are many other passages that denote the value of God's word for changed lives, including:

- Joshua 1:8 - "Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."
- Psalm 119:105 - "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."
- Psalm 119:11 - "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."
- James 1:22 - "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."
- Psalm 1:2-3 - "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree

planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever he does prospers."

- Ephesians 6:17 - "Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."
- Matthew 4:4 - "Jesus answered, 'It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"
- Colossians 3:16 - "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."
- 2 Timothy 2:15 - "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."
- Proverbs 30:5 - "Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him."
- John 8:31-32 - "To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'"
- Deuteronomy 6:6-7 - "These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."
- Jeremiah 15:16 - "When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, LORD God Almighty."

Each of the above verses underscores the transformative effect of God's word on a believer's life, emphasizing its power to guide, instruct, and bring deeper understanding of God's will and purpose. These passages are fertile ground for further examination of the

transformative nature of God's word. They illustrate, along with the passages examined in this particular study, that Biblical truth is communicated for transformation of the entire person through the renewing of the mind.

DOES 1 JOHN 1:9 AFFIRM
THAT *BELIEVERS* SHOULD CONFESS THEIR SINS?

Roger S. Fankhauser, D.Min.

ABSTRACT

The author analyzes 1 John 1:9 to determine whether “confess” addresses the sanctification of believers or the justification of unbelievers. Analysis of the pronouns in 1 John 1 leads to the conclusion that “we” in v. 9 refers to believers. Analysis of the context reinforces this conclusion. The believer confesses (admits to, acknowledges) his or her specific sins, and God forgives that believer. Contrary to the teaching of some, particularly those identified with the so-called “hyper-grace” movement, such forgiveness is not the once-for-all forgiveness coincident with justification, but rather “family” forgiveness for the sins a believer commits which interferes with the intimacy of their day-to-day relationship with his or her Father. This forgiveness allows the believer to restore and enjoy fellowship with God. “Fellowship” is dynamic, that is, growing into or drifting away from fellowship rather than fully “in or out” of fellowship. He challenges his readers' wrong thinking about sin and challenges them to walk in the light (their conduct and thoughts are in accord with God and His character). The confession of sins by the believer as taught by John does not necessitate an unhealthy preoccupation with sin, but rather a healthy awareness that every believer still sins and needs to deal with that sin to fully enjoy his or her fellowship with God.

INTRODUCTION

First John 1:9 makes a very clear statement, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” However, not all agree on who the “we” references. Some understand it as a reference to believers.²⁵ Others take it as a reference to unbelievers.²⁶ Some specifically

²⁵ “The first thing John does as he approaches the subject of sin with his believing readers is stress that believers sin... That God has made a provision for the forgiveness of the believer’s sin is further evidence of the reality of that sin. The believer’s responsibility with regard to his or her sins committed as a child of God is clearly stated in 1:9.” (Robert Lightner, *The Epistles of First, Second & Third John & Jude* [Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003], 19-21). See also David R. Anderson, *Maximum Joy: 1 John—Relationship or Fellowship?* (Grace Theology Press, 2013), 53-55; Gary W. Derickson, *First, Second, and Third John: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), 107.

²⁶ Akin equates confessing with trusting in Jesus: “Because God has sent his Son as Savior of the world (cf. 4:14), to those who confess their sins by trusting in this Jesus whom God has revealed (taking 1:7 and 1:9 together), God is faithful and righteous to forgive them their sins and cleanse them from all unrighteousness. God is able and righteous in forgiving because these sinners will have confessed their sins and trusted in God’s revelation of eternal life in Jesus his Son, whose death is the basis for forgiveness.” (Daniel L. Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*, vol. 38, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 75. Kistemaker and Henriksen add, “The statement *we have not sinned* reveals the blatant attitude of the unrepentant, unregenerate infidel. In verse 8 the unbeliever said that he has no sin; now he asserts that he is not a sinner... In the sequence of three verses (6, 8, and 10), the writer works toward a climax: ‘we lie’ (v. 6), ‘we deceive ourselves’ (v. 8), and ‘we make him out to be a liar’ (v. 10)... If we should go so far as to say that we have not sinned, in spite of all the evidence, then the Word of God has no place in our lives. And that means that we are unbelievers who have rejected the gospel of salvation.” (Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, *Exposition of James and the Epistles of John*, vol. 14, *New Testament Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001], 245–248). However, they are not entirely consistent in describing John’s audience as they also write in this same section, “We confess our sins to show repentance and

identify these unbelievers as Gnostics;²⁷ some suggest these unbelievers are Jewish false teachers who deny Jesus is the Christ.²⁸

The former approach understands the passage as a sanctification issue for believers; the latter understands the passage as a justification issue.²⁹ Which view is right? To answer the question, this analysis looks at 1 John 1:9 in its context (1 John 1:1-2:2) and (1) identifies the referent(s) for “we” and “you”; (2) defines “fellowship”; (3) clarifies the meaning of “walking in light and darkness”; (4) determines whether “the blood of Jesus” has any relevance to the post-conversion Christian experience; (5) identifies the referents for “sin/sins” in the passage; clarifies the meaning of both (6) “confess” and (7) “forgive”; and (8) determines the contextual contribution of 2:1-2. This analysis leads to the

renewal of life. We are not told when, where, and how to confess our sins, but daily repentance of sin leads us to continual confession.” These words seem to speak about believers confessing.

²⁷ For example, Hyper-Grace author Andrew Farley writes, “So John opens his letter by attacking two Gnostic heresies: (1) Jesus as nonphysical, and (2) sin as a nonreality... Verse 9 is a remedy for unbelievers who have been influenced by Gnostic peer pressure and are now claiming sinless perfection.” (Andrew Farley, *The Naked Gospel: Truth You May Never Hear in Church*, Kindle Edition [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009], 151-153). See also Bob George, <http://bobgeorge.net/1-john-1-9/>, accessed October 7, 2019, and D. R. Silva, *Hyper-Grace: The Dangerous Doctrine of a Happy God* (Havre, MT: Up-Arrow Publishing, 2014).

²⁸ Brad Robertson, *Forgiven and Cleansed: First John 1:9 in Context* (NP: Gracereach, 2020), 96.

²⁹ In addressing these issues, this article uses the term “justification” to denote initial salvation or deliverance from the penalty of sin. The verb “justify” (δικαίωω, *dikaioō*) does not occur in John’s writing; however, “justification/justified” are common terms used to describe our status the moment we believe. To be justified means to be declared righteous or not guilty by God. It refers to one’s legal standing before God. Thus, even though this is not a Johannine term it serves in this article as a non-technical term for the *position* in Christ of one who has believed in Him.

conclusion that believers should confess their sins; that is, the passage deals with sanctification, not justification.

CHASING THE PRONOUNS

On the surface, “we,” in the phrase “if *we* confess our sins” (1 John 1:9), appears to refer to believers. The progression of the pronouns in 1 John 1:6-2:2 provides contextual evidence to conclude that “we” does refer to believers (emphasis added) :

¹That which was from the beginning, which *we* have heard, which *we* have seen with *our* eyes, which *we* have looked upon, and *our* hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— ² the life was manifested, and *we* have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to *us* — ³ that which *we* have seen and heard *we* declare to *you*, that *you* also may have fellowship with *us*; and truly *our* fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And these things *we* write to *you* that *your* joy may be full. ⁵ This is the message which *we* have heard from Him and declare to *you*, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If *we* say that *we* have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, *we* lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if *we* walk in the light as He is in the light, *we* have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses *us* from all sin. ⁸ If we say that *we* have no sin, *we* deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in *us*. ⁹ If *we* confess *our* sins, He is faithful and just to forgive *US our* sins and to cleanse *us* from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If *we* say that we have not sinned, *we* make Him a liar, and His word is not in *us*.

^{2:1} My little children, these things *I* write to *you*, so that *you* may not sin. And if anyone sins, *we* have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ^{2:2} And He Himself is the propitiation for *our* sins, and not for *our* only but also for the whole world.

The pronouns in the first five verses are easy to follow. “We” in 1:1-5 clearly speaks of John and the other apostles. Derickson rightfully concludes that

John chooses first person plural verbs throughout this descriptive prologue to describe ... the apostolic band of eyewitnesses, which includes John... Further, John uses the first person singular to refer to himself elsewhere in his epistles [e.g., 1 John 2:1], and so should be seen as fully capable to [sic] doing so here in order to be clear ... [H]is use of “we” is not as an authorial “we” equivalent to “I,” however as the spokesman for a group of eyewitnesses whose experience matches his own. Later this will become significant as he develops his “we” versus “them” distinctions between the apostles and false teachers.³⁰

The “you” in verses two through five represents his readers. So far, no difficulties. The problem arises in verse six where John reverts

³⁰ Derickson, 49–50. He first identified four other interpretations found in the literature for “we” before concluding that this is the best explanation. These four interpretations are: “we” in v. 1-5 refers to John himself as an “authorial plural”; to both John and his readers; to the “Johannine school”; or to “all Christians.” Schreiner affirms that an “apostolic we” is not unique to John: “The ‘we’ here [2 Pet 1:16] stands for the apostles generally... His point was that the churches were founded on apostolic tradition and authority.” (Thomas R. Schreiner *The New American Commentary, Vol. 37, 1, 2 Peter, Jude* [Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003], 312).

to “we.” Is this the same “we” as in 1:1-5; a different composite group defined in context; or a third group entirely? The intended group is clearly defined by the context when John introduces the notion of fellowship, “that you also may have fellowship with us” (1:3). John wants his readers to have fellowship with him and the other apostles, and also with the Father and the Son. We do not have to define the nature of this fellowship to follow the pronouns; whatever it is, John wants his readers to experience it with the apostles. This begins a string of seventeen first-person plural pronouns (“we,” “us,” “our”) in 1:6-10 with no second-person pronouns (“you”). It is thus most logical and consistent with the text to see this second group of first-person plural pronouns representing a group consisting of the initial group (the apostles) plus the second group (“you” = the readers).

John could have accurately written “if we apostles and you” to describe his consolidation of both groups into one “we” in 1:6. Thus, John first speaks of the apostles’ experience and his desire that his readers share the same experience (1:1-4), and he then specifies the truths which must apply to both the apostles (of which he is one, cf. “I” in 2:1) and his readers to satisfy that desire (1:5–2:2).

1 John 2:1 provides another clue that “we” refers to believers and not unbelievers or a mixed group of believers and unbelievers. Here, John addresses his audience as “my little children”—a term of endearment for those whose “sins are forgive.” He then reverts to the second person pronoun “I write to *you* that you may not sin.” This “you” in 2:1 reintroduces his prior distinction between “you” and “we” (1:1-4). His desire for his readers not to sin seems a strange goal for unbelievers whose immediate need is not a change

of lifestyle but a change in position (justification).³¹ John thus distinguishes himself from his readers (“I” [John the Apostle] write to “you” [his readers]), yet he also affiliates with them (“we” have an advocate) as believers in common need of ongoing intercession before the Father (2:1b). This identity is confirmed in 2:1c, where John differentiates “we” from “the whole world” in speaking of Jesus as the propitiation for our sins and also “for the whole world.”³²

³¹ Of course, an unbeliever could read this and realize his or her sinfulness, but that is not John’s purpose.

³² Reformed theologians limit the meaning of “the whole world.” Berkhof writes, “The Reformed position is that Christ died for the purpose of actually and certainly saving the elect, and the elect only. (Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1938], 393). Grudem agrees:

The fact that God foreknew who would be saved, and that he accepted Christ’s death as payment for their sins only, does not inhibit the free offer of the gospel, for who will respond to it is hidden in the secret counsels of God... this view [‘Particular redemption,’ also called ‘Limited atonement’] also holds that Christ died for particular people (specifically, those who would be saved and whom he came to redeem), that he foreknew each one of them individually (cf. Eph 1:3–5) and had them individually in mind in his atoning work. (Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* [Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004], 595).

By contrast, Anderson summarizes the Unlimited Atonement view (the view held in this article):

That’s why John lets us know in no uncertain terms that the death of Christ not only satisfied God’s anger against my sins and the sins of other believers, but also for the sins of the entire world (verses like John 14:19, 27, 30; 15:18; 16:33; and 17:6–26 should make it apparent that the world includes all unbelievers). That means the work of Christ was so great that it not only was sufficient to satisfy God’s anger against the sins of the believers, but also men like Nero, Hitler, Stalin, and Osama bin Laden. (Anderson, 67).

Carefully following the pronouns in context leads to the conclusion that “we” in 1:6-10 designates a composite group of believers that includes the apostles and is a group distinguished from “the whole world” in 2:2.

THE MEANING OF “FELLOWSHIP”

The meaning of fellowship, and how it is experienced, is central to the understanding of 1 John 1:9. The noun translated as “fellowship” is *κοινωνία* [*koinōnia*]. Of the nineteen occurrences in the New Testament (NT) four are found in 1 John 1:3-7.³³ *Koinōnia* speaks of a shared experience of some kind, a “partnership.”³⁴ Louw and Nida define it as “an association involving close mutual relations and involvement—‘close association, fellowship.’”³⁵ BDAG gives as the primary definition “close association involving mutual interests and sharing, *association, communion, fellowship, close relationship*.”³⁶

How does John use *koinōnia* in First John?

[T]hat which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have *fellowship* with us; and truly our *fellowship* is with the Father and with His Son Jesus

³³ The verbal form *κοινωνέω* [*koinōneō*] appears 8 times in the New Testament, only once in John’s writings (2 John 11).

³⁴ Wendell Johnston, “Fellowship,” in Don Campbell, et al, *The Theological Wordbook* (Nashville: Word, 2000).

³⁵ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 445.

³⁶ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 552-53 (hereafter BDAG).

Christ...If we say that we have *fellowship* with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have *fellowship* with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:3, 6, 7)

The first use speaks of John's desire for his readers to have fellowship with "us" (John as a member of the entire apostolic community). The normal sense of *koinōnia* as "close association, fellowship" certainly holds here. John wishes for his readers to enjoy something that he too enjoys, as he defines in the second phrase, "our [the apostles'] fellowship is with the Father and with His Son." While this phrase could conceivably describe their permanent union with God,³⁷ it seems more natural to understand this fellowship as the vitality of their ongoing relationship with God: "We (the apostles) enjoy fellowship with the Father and His Son (experience, not position). We want you to experience fellowship with us at the same level of fellowship we experience with the Father and the Son." In 1:4, John specifies his goal for this fellowship, that "your joy" may be made complete (or "our joy,"

³⁷ Akin sees fellowship in 1 John 1:3 as positional: "This fellowship is dependent on one's reception of life, which is, in turn, dependent on one's believing reception of the Word of life, Jesus as the incarnate Son of God. 'Fellowship' further denotes the 'oneness in community' with other believers, with the Father, and with his Son that results from faith in this Son. Such fellowship for John is, in fact, inseparable from having eternal life: to have eternal life is to have fellowship with the apostolic witnesses who have testified concerning the Word of life." (Akin, 57). Robertson argues that John here "is referring to a common set of beliefs among a group of people that unifies and enables them to enjoy fellowship with each other relationally and with the Father and Son spiritually." (Robertson, 31). However, the New Testament use of *koinōnia* makes either of these understandings highly unlikely.

depending on the textual variant).³⁸ His third use of *koinōnia* occurs in 1:6, contrasting fellowship and walking in darkness: “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.” The one who walks in darkness (defined below) and, at the same time claims to have fellowship with Him (God, 1:5) lies and does not practice [present tense] the truth.” Practice (ποιέω, *poieō*) speaks of activity, not of positional truth.³⁹ Doing the truth means to act in accord with the truth, that is, to act in accord with God’s character and will. John’s fourth and final use of *koinōnia* (1:7) connects fellowship and “walking in the light”: “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” In all four instances in 1 John, “fellowship with God” does not refer to one’s justification (position) but rather to the ongoing vitality of a believer’s existing relationship with Him—a conditional intimacy or richer present experience and enjoyment of eternal life.

Some see this fellowship much like an on/off switch. A person is either completely *in* fellowship or completely *out of* fellowship. And if someone is completely *out of* fellowship, the solution is to confess their sins to return to fellowship. However, a

³⁸ In this case, the pronoun does not change the meaning appreciably. Either *John and the apostles* will be filled with joy knowing their readers are experiencing this fellowship, or *the readers’* joy will be fulfilled by sharing the same fellowship with them. In both cases, the emphasis is upon the joy experienced because of this fellowship.

³⁹ “We lie and do not practice [do] the truth” shows that the person’s *words* and *practice* do not align. The combination of “do” (ποιέω, *poieō*) and “truth” (ἀλήθεια, *aletheia*) appears only here and in John 3:21. “The idea of ‘doing truth’ is unique to John among the New Testament writers. Though the verb ποιέω is commonly used throughout the New Testament with a wide range of meanings, when John uses it conceptually he describes a quality of conduct” (Derickson, 97).

better picture sees fellowship more dynamically, more like a “dimmer switch.” Think of “full bright” as perfect intimacy with God (“walking in the light”). Most believers fall between “fully on” and “fully off.” A believer is either growing closer to God (turning up the dimmer switch) or moving away from God (turning down the dimmer switch).⁴⁰

Several New Testament examples support this concept of dynamic fellowship. In Revelation 2–3, John depicts the spiritual state of seven churches. Several of these churches demonstrate movement away from healthy intimacy with God. For example, Jesus tells the church at Ephesus that they have left their first love (Rev 2:4).⁴¹ To leave one’s first love implies that the church *had* a first love. And the text implies that this departure was not sudden but gradual. He commends them for some good they continue to do (2:2-3) but exhorts them to “remember from where they have fallen.” Thus, they have “turned the dimmer down.” The church in Laodicea is told they are neither hot nor cold (both useful conditions), but rather “lukewarm.” Becoming lukewarm easily fits the idea of a gradual change. Cold water warms to a lukewarm temperature; hot water cools to a lukewarm temperature; both

⁴⁰ What follows describes the process as “gradual.” For purposes here, it simply means “over time.” Nothing is implied about how much time is involved. Some believers drift slowly away; others walk away in a way that seems almost instantaneous on the surface. The dimmer switch analogy fits all these cases, as a physical switch can be used to change the lighting slowly or rapidly.

⁴¹ Granted, John addresses the churches in Rev 2–3 corporately. However, the corporate response of the church reflects cumulative individual responses within the church. A church cannot corporately “leave their first love” if individuals within the church do not do so. Although he does not use the word “fellowship” within Revelation, the individual actions and attitudes he describes fit the basic criteria for fellowship or intimacy. Thus, the passages certainly illustrate the “dimmer switch” concept proposed here.

changes happen through a gradual process. Jesus tells this church that “those whom I love I reprove and discipline, therefore be zealous and repent.” This description affirms that this is a genuine church (i.e., they are believers). He then tells them that He stands at the door and knocks and promises that He will dine with any who respond and they will dine with Him (3:19-20). In the Bible, sharing a meal consistently fits the idea of close fellowship (e.g., Acts 2:42, 46).

The idea of a gradual departure from fellowship is also portrayed in Hebrews.⁴² The author tells his readers and himself “For this reason [referencing chapter 1] we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not *drift away from it*” (2:1). The word translated “drift away” (παρρηῶ, *pararreō*) means “to gradually give up one’s belief in the truth.”⁴³ This is not an “on/off” move; it is a dimmer switch, gradually moving away. On the positive side, increasing levels of fellowship are implied when James commands his readers to draw near to God, promising that He will draw near to them (Jas 4:8). Peter also encourages his readers to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:18). The NT pattern is one of either growing in faith and thereby increasing intimacy (fellowship) with God or drifting away and thereby decreasing intimacy (fellowship) with God.

⁴² Hebrews speaks volumes concerning the danger of drifting away, hardening one’s heart, the need to deal with ongoing sin in the life of a believer, and the potential severity of God’s discipline towards his sinning children. The book demonstrates that God does see and address the sin of his children, who positionally have experienced complete forgiveness of all sin. However, further discussion of this correlation with First John is beyond the scope of this article.

⁴³ Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 374.

This view seems to contradict 1 John 1:6-7 (above) where John's words sound more absolute and thus do not seem to fit the "dimmer switch" analogy. However, John's use of a literary device explains the apparent, but not real, contradiction:

A characteristic of John's writing style involves his use of antithesis, or dualistic imagery. His dualism is expressed in the themes of light versus darkness, love versus hatred/murder, and children of God versus children of the devil... John likes to divide the world into two opposite groups or effects with no intermediate options being offered... the reader will find himself or herself unable to fit honestly into either category. Thus the "either-or" world created forces the reader into introspection and evaluation. That John does not see the world from this ["either-or"] perspective is evident in his discussion of sin in the life of the believer... This can be seen in his reassurances for his readers of their relationship with God in 2:12-14, their confidence before God even when they feel they have failed the test of love in 3:20, as well as his purpose of their assurance of salvation in 5:13.⁴⁴

WALKING IN LIGHT / WALKING IN DARKNESS

What does it mean "to walk?" In the NT, "walk" consistently pictures ongoing activity, not a position secured at a point in time. The term "walk" (περιπατέω, *peripateō*) when used non-figuratively means "to go here and there in walking, *go about, walk around*" or

⁴⁴ Gary W. Derickson, *First, Second, and Third John*, ed. H. Wayne House, W. Hall Harris III, and Andrew W. Pitts, *Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), 34-35.

when used figuratively, “to conduct one’s life, *comport oneself, behave, live.*”⁴⁵

John addresses two spheres in which a person can walk: darkness or light. The metaphorical use of light and dark is common throughout the Bible. John uses the imagery extensively in both his Gospel and his First Epistle. In his Gospel, John identifies Jesus as the light of the world (John 8:12, 9:5); in 1 John, “God is light” and “in Him is no darkness at all” (1:5). Depending on the biblical context, “light” and its functions can refer to absolute purity (1 John 1:5), illumination of the way of righteousness (Psalm 119:105, John 3:21, 8:12), illumination of sin (John 3:19-20), or illumination of one’s spiritual state (John 1:5, 9). Light speaks of life and purity; darkness, by contrast, speaks of death and impurity. The “darkness” of sin is revealed by the purity of the light. In other words, if light speaks of God and His character, darkness speaks of anything contrary to God and His character, including death, sin, and evil. So:

walking in the darkness = conduct/thoughts contrary to God;
 sinning; doing evil; experiencing death; ignoring or
 loving the darkness; becoming less like Jesus
 walking in the light = conduct/thoughts in accord with God;
 doing good; experiencing life; responding when
 “darkness” is revealed; becoming more like Jesus

Is it possible for a believer to “walk in darkness?” Absolutely. While many biblical statements concerning one’s walk state the positive (e.g., “walk worthy of the calling to which you have been called” [Eph 4:1] and “now you are Light [position] in the Lord; walk

⁴⁵ BDAG, 803. See also Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 504.

[practice] as children of Light” [Eph 5:8]), many others sound warnings to avoid practices characterized by darkness. For example, Paul includes admonitions such as “no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind” (Eph 4:17) and do not “participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness” (Eph 5:11).

The point of these passages and others like them is that the believer is fully capable of walking *contrary* to their new, true identity, *contrary* to God’s character. Thus, the believer is fully capable of “walking in darkness.” John, like Paul, desires that the believer not live his life in darkness but in accordance with who God is and his or her identity in Christ (“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children,” Eph 5:1).

HOW DOES “THE BLOOD OF CHRIST” APPLY TO AN AUDIENCE OF ALREADY-JUSTIFIED BELIEVERS?

John affirms that the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7), and that “He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1:9). He then describes the extent of this atonement: “He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world” (2:2). Is this terminology regarding Christ’s blood in 1:7-9 necessarily limited to the event of justification, or could it have some relevance to the believer’s walk? The New Testament speaks of believers cleansing themselves. James does not explicitly speak of the blood as the cleansing agent, but he conceptually supports the idea that John is not speaking of justification but rather the believer’s walk in 1 John 1:7-9:

Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. *Cleanse* your hands, you sinners; and *purify* your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. (Jas 4:7-9, emphasis added)⁴⁶

He commands the readers (believers) to purify their hearts. This purification has nothing to do with one's position in Christ, one's acceptance by God, or the positional forgiveness of sin. Rather, it deals with the "dirt" one picks up in the normal walk of life.

The narrative of John 13:3-11 depicts precisely the kind of cleansing of believers John had in view in 1 John 1:7-9. Foot-washing models the servant leadership Jesus expects of His disciples. Jesus warns the disciples that they would not understand what He was doing at the time, but the event establishes the future prerequisite for their servant leadership. He also uses the act to teach a crucial truth about the position vs. the practice of the disciples. He uses three terms in John 13 to make His point, *νίπτω* (*nīptō*), meaning "to wash a part of the body,"⁴⁷ *λούω* (*louō*), meaning "to wash the body,"⁴⁸ and *καθαρός* (*katharos*), meaning "pertaining to not being dirty"⁴⁹ or "pertaining to being ritually clean or pure"⁵⁰:

He who has bathed [*λούω, louō*]
needs only to wash [*νίπτω, nīptō*] his feet,

⁴⁶ Some may object to believers here being called "sinners" and thus think this appeal applies to unbelievers. However, the focus here is on the believer's practice, not identity. A sinning believer is, in practice, a sinner!

⁴⁷ Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 522.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 522.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 698.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 535.

but is completely clean [καθαρός, *katharos*];
and you are clean [καθαρός, *katharos*], but not all of you
[referencing Judas].

The disciples who are already clean (justified) needed their dusty feet washed as an illustration of dealing with daily sin. “Clean” (καθαρός, *katharos*) pictures positional truth. Every believer is clean (justified) the moment he or she believes and does not need such cleansing again. However, the physical washing of their dusty feet pictures the practical cleansing of sin as the believer lives out his or her daily life. As Ryrie summarizes:

Just as in natural life a man who is bathed needs only to wash the dust off his sandaled feet when he returns home, so in the spiritual life a man who has been cleansed from sin need not think that all is lost when he sins in his walk through life. He need only confess those sins to be entirely clean again (1 John 1:9).⁵¹

What does a forgiven believer do when he or she sins? The blood of Christ covers not just the need for initial (positional) forgiveness contingent with justification, but the practical need of keeping the heart clean in order to live well. Thus, references to the death of Christ in the context of First John do not limit the

⁵¹ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, Th.D., Ph.D., *The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Translation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), 1626, on John 13:10. Constable agrees: “God cleanses us at conversion in the sense that He will never bring us into [eternal] condemnation for our sins. However, we need continual cleansing from the defilement that daily living brings because it hinders our fellowship with God (cf. John 13:10). The ‘blood of Jesus’ is a metonymy for the death of Jesus” (Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* [Galaxie Software, 2003], on 1 John 1:7).

associated cleansing by Christ's blood to the singular event of one's initial salvation.

IDENTIFY THE INTENDED REFERENTS OF "SIN" AND "SINS" IN 1 JOHN

In 1 John, the author uses the word "sin" 27 times (noun, ἁμαρτάνω [*hamartanō*], verb ἁμαρτία [*hamartia*]), ten of the 27 in the verbal form. Note the references to sin/sins in 1 John 1:7–2:2 (emphasis added):

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all *sin* [noun, singular]. If we say that we have no *sin* [noun, singular], we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our *sins* [noun, plural], He is faithful and just to forgive us our *sins* [noun, plural] and to cleanse us from *all unrighteousness*. If we say that we have not *sinned* [verb], we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not *sin* [verb]. And if anyone *sins* [verb], we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our *sins* [noun, plural], and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

John used both singular and plural forms of the noun (ἁμαρτάνω *hamartanō*). Is John addressing our *capacity* to sin or *specific* sins? The answer is "both," but with emphasis on the specific sins. The singular noun points to our capacity for sin, regardless of how one

defines that capacity.⁵² Every person – including every believer – has this inherent “capacity for sin,” and it is this capacity that generates specific “sins.” Here, the plural form points to individual sins, as it does consistently throughout the NT.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR BELIEVERS TO “CONFESS”?

The key issue in 1 John 1:9 centers on the phrase “if we confess our sins,” εὐὸν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἀμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν (*ean homologōmen tas hamartias*). The verb “confess” (ὁμολογῶ, *homologeō*) means “to say the same thing [as God].”⁵³ When a

⁵² Some argue the believer has no sinful nature. For example, Farley argues that the believer does not have one (equating the sinful nature with the “old man”), but that he or she struggles against the flesh. Farley denies the Greek word for flesh (*sarx*) connotes anything sinful or anything about the believer’s nature. Instead, he sees sin as a “parasite” housed in the Christian’s body, within that person but not that person. (Farley, 110-121). He does acknowledge that “regardless of one’s view on this issue, the point is that there’s a sin principle within the physical body.” (p. 119). For a similar view, see also David C. Needham, *Birthright: Christian, Do You Know Who You Are?* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 1999).

Others understand that the believer still possesses a sinful nature. Radmacher rightly notes, “The sin nature, then, was not removed; it was nullified or rendered inoperative. Our ‘old man’ or the other man was ‘crucified with Him.’ The ‘old man’ is what we were in our depraved, unregenerate state without the life of God. That person is gone forever, crucified with Christ. But the ‘body of sin’ was not crucified; it was ‘made of no effect.’ It has lost its power in our lives.” (Earl D. Radmacher, *Salvation* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 2000), 67.

⁵³ BDAG (708–709) defines ὁμολογῶ (*homologeō*) with the following range of meaning: (1) to commit oneself to do something for someone, *promise, assure*, (2) to share a common view or be of common mind about a matter, *agree*, (3) to concede that something is factual or true, *grant, admit, confess*, (4) to acknowledge something, ordinarily in public, *acknowledge, claim, profess, praise*.

person “confesses” something, he or she honestly acknowledges that which is confessed. The context defines what is confessed. First John uses “confess” five times (1:9, 2:23, 4:2, 4:3, 4:15). In all but 1 John 1:9, that which is confessed is Jesus and some aspect of His identity. However, that does not necessarily define what is confessed in 1:9. The context must make that definition. Here, the object is clearly stated: our sins (τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν). As noted above, the plural “sins” denotes our *specific sins*; thus, “if we admit/acknowledge/agree with God about these sins, God promises a relational, family forgiveness” (defined below).

The if/then construction, “If we confess our sins, [then] He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” is a third-class conditional, that is, it speaks of a probable future condition. It could be paraphrased, “Perhaps we will confess our sins, perhaps we won’t. But more than likely, we will.” In the context of 1 John 1:9, it seems best to think of the present tense of “confess” as iterative. If, while walking in the light (1:7) a believer sins (1:6, 1:8, 2:1) and then confesses (honestly acknowledges that sin), the apodosis takes effect. The confession is neither “once for all” nor “continual.”⁵⁴ Rather, it is iterative; confessing whenever one realizes he or she sinned or is willing to deal with an ongoing sin issue).

Many of those who disagree that John wrote this verse for believers offer a caricature of the “confession is for believers” view. They claim it relegates the believer to continually scouring his past and present life, searching for unconfessed sins.⁵⁵ However, John’s

⁵⁴ The Greek present tense is often abused by not carefully considering the ten or more options for its use in any given context (see Daniel B. Wallace, *New Testament Greek Syntax* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009]).

⁵⁵ “If you really believe that you need to confess all your sins to be forgiven, do you know what you would be doing? You would be confessing your sins ALL THE TIME! How then can you have courage before God? How can you

primary purpose is not a morbid preoccupation with “sin searching.” Every believer still possesses a sinful nature that can and will generate both known and unknown sins (implied by the phrase “cleanses us from *all* sin,” 1:7). We must know how to deal with such sin to enjoy fellowship with God. Thus, walking in the light will expose that sin and challenge us to “agree” that we indeed sinned so we can continue (or start again) to walk in the light.

Thus, confession is not mere lip service. By acknowledging that one has sinned, the one confessing recognizes the seriousness of that sin. As David confessed, “Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight” (Psalm 51:4a).⁵⁶ This fact exposes the disconnect should anyone think, “I am free to sin and then simply confess it. God will forgive me.” The meaning of *homologeō* (ὁμολογέω), as John uses it in 1 John, requires an agreement at the heart level.

enjoy liberty as a child of God? I tried it and it is impossible!” (Joseph Prince, *Destined To Reign*. [Tulsa, OK: Harrison House Publishers, 2007] Kindle Edition, location 1631, emphasis his). “Confessing-to-be-forgiven is like washing with dirty water. No matter how hard you scrub you won’t make yourself clean. Faithless confession puts the focus on you and what you have done, but faith-based confession puts the focus on Christ and what He has done on your behalf.” (Ellis, Paul. *The Hyper-Grace Gospel: A Response to Michael Brown and Those Opposed to the Modern Grace Message*, [NP: KingsPress, 2014], Kindle Edition, location 721).

⁵⁶ The concept of sin against God is timeless: “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23).

WHAT KIND OF FORGIVENESS IS IN VIEW?

Does a forgiven Christian need forgiveness? Some say “no,” arguing that the believer is forgiven once for all and that the Bible only speaks of one dimension of forgiveness for this age.⁵⁷ Others answer “yes,” arguing that forgiveness can relate to position *or* practice—relationship *or* fellowship. The range of meaning for the most commonly used Greek terms for “forgiveness” or “forgive” allows for both of these options. The context defines the intended sense. “In the New Testament two words are used to express the concept of forgiveness: *aphiemi*, ‘to send away, to let go,’ and *charizomai*, ‘to show favor, to pardon or forgive.’”⁵⁸ Of these, ἀφίημι (*aphiēmi*) is the most prevalent (49 of the 77 occurrences of “forgive” in its various forms in the NASB; the noun form, ἄφεσις [*aphesis*], accounts for another 15 occurrences). Paul rarely uses the term forgive (fourteen times in nine verses in the NASB, using *aphiēmi* only once, *aphesis* twice, and χαρίζομαι [*charizomai*] eleven times). The vast majority of occurrences of “forgive” in the New Testament occur in the Synoptics (52 of 77 occurrences in the NASB); John uses the word only four times, all four using *aphiēmi* (twice in John 20:23, 1 John 1:9, 1:12).

⁵⁷ Andrew Farley says, “At first glance, this well-known verse [1 John 1:9] appears to muddy the waters concerning once-for-all forgiveness. In many books and articles on the topic of forgiveness, this verse often serves as the foundation on which the author’s belief system is constructed. Either we’ve been forgiven, or there’s a condition for us to be forgiven. Theologians and Christian authors will often agree with John that ‘your sins have been forgiven on account of [Jesus’] name’ (1 John 2:12). But later you find them essentially saying that confession is needed to cause God to forgive you. The problem is that both statements can’t be true at the same time. Either we’ve been forgiven, or there’s a condition for us to be forgiven.” (Farley, 149).

⁵⁸ Wendell Johnston, “Forgiveness,” in *Theological Wordbook*.

The positional forgiveness⁵⁹ of the believer by God is a one-time act coincident with justification. Thus, Paul says we are forgiven (χαρίζομαι, *charizomai*) all trespasses (Col 2:13). If John means *this* aspect of forgiveness in 1 John 1:9, then, of course, he is not referring to post-conversion sins committed by Christians. However, the semantic range of the act of forgiveness in the NT (especially *aphiēmi*) includes meanings other than the believer's positional standing before God.⁶⁰ The context must define the kind of forgiveness in view. For example, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says:

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors... For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not

⁵⁹ Various terms are used to describe this forgiveness vs. the type of forgiveness in 1 John 1:9 defended in this article. Anderson uses the terms fellowship vs. relationship; judicial vs. personal (Anderson 54-55). Constable uses forensic forgiveness vs. family forgiveness; conversion (forensic) forgiveness vs. continual (family) forgiveness (Constable, on 1 John 1:9). Derickson uses positional forgiveness (justification reality) vs. daily forgiveness (sanctification reality) (Derickson, 1 John 1:9). Hodges contrasts the perfect position a Christian has in Christ with familial forgiveness in 1 John 1:9 (Zane C. Hodges, “1 John,” in vol. 2, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck [Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985], 885-886). This article uses the term “positional forgiveness” for that which happens contingently with justification and family forgiveness or relational forgiveness for the type seen in 1 John 1:9.

⁶⁰ The verb *aphiēmi* appears 143 times in the New Testament. The lexicons give it a wide range of meanings; it is not a technical term referring only to judicial forgiveness. Abbott-Smith breaks the meanings into three broad categories, “to send forth, send away, let go,” (under which he includes forgiveness); “to leave alone, leave, neglect, forsake”; and “to let, suffer, permit” (G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937), s.v. ἀφίημι. See also BDAG, 156; Louw and Nida, vol. 2, 40.

forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.” (Matt 6:12-14)⁶¹

There is a connection between an individual’s forgiveness of others and the Father’s forgiveness of that individual. In both phrases that speak of the Father’s forgiveness, the verb is in the future tense. Thus, His forgiveness is *subsequent* to the forgiving of others. This immediately creates a problem: if this is speaking of *positional* forgiveness before God, then that forgiveness is conditioned upon an act on the part of the individual; that is, it depends upon some work. Plus, forgiving others implies something that occurs repeatedly in life (see Matt 18:21-22). It is likely a person will encounter multiple people during his or her life that needs forgiveness. Thus, either (1) this forgiveness from God is not the same as the positional forgiveness a person receives from God, *or* (2) the passage does not apply to the church age, and thus has no relevance to the issue of forgiveness in 1 John 1:9.⁶² The former

⁶¹ Each use of “forgive” in this passage translates *aphiēmi*.

⁶² Since the teaching of Matthew 6 took place during the dispensation of the Law, can we apply Jesus’ words to the church age? While it is true that the events of the gospels do occur “under law,” to dismiss them as having no relevance is overly simplistic and denies that we can apply anything from the Old Testament (OT) without putting us back “under law.” Whenever the law is cited in the Gospels, we need to ask *how* the author intended to handle the OT issue. The teaching may be:

- Adopted directly. For example, Paul quotes Exodus 20:12 in Eph 6:2 (“Honor your father and your mother”) in support of the command for children to obey their parents in the Lord.
- Modified for a unique application. For example, in the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus gave His disciples a “new” commandment – to love one another (John 13:34). The Law included the command to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18). The command to love others was not new; the scope and depth was new. Instead of loving others “as yourselves,” they were to love even as Christ loved them.

seems far more likely than the latter. However, the interpretation of 1 John 1:9 does not rise or fall on whether or not one agrees on the applicability of this passage to the church age.

If we are positionally forgiven for every sin the moment we believe in Jesus, then in what sense does a Christian need forgiveness? The believer never again faces the issue of his or her positional forgiveness, which is settled coincident with justification, but he may face the issue of *family* forgiveness. My son is forever my son; nothing can ever change that. Biologically, he is mine, just as we are God's children by adoption as sons (Gal 4:1-7). His position as my son and my position as God's adopted son are independent of behavior. But my son sometimes did things he should not have done ... given me "the look" ... hit his brother ... argued with us ... goofed off in class. He experienced consequences resulting from those choices. While we were not as close during those times ("dimmer switch"), I still loved him; he still loved me. Yet the practical relationship ("family fellowship") between us changed. Once he admitted to me that he messed up (sinned), I forgave him and we could again grow closer together in our relationship (relational forgiveness). That confession had nothing to do with his position as my son, nor my love for him; it served to

-
- Abrogated. For example, the OT dietary restrictions are no longer applicable.

At least three contextual clues imply that this passage *does* apply to us: (1) Teaching within the Sermon on the Mount should not be ascribed solely to the Old Covenant. While commentators differ as to the exact relationship between the Sermon and the church, few limit it entirely to the era of the law and therefore completely irrelevant. (2) The primary audience of the sermon were disciples (Matt 5:1-2). Arguably, the vast majority of His disciples were already believers at this point, given that the events of John 1-5 occur between Matt 4:11 and 4:12. (3) The idea of "forgive others and God will forgive you" does not appear in the OT explicitly. Thus, it is a new concept introduced within the Sermon.

stop our drift away from each other and allowed us to restore our relationship. James 5:14-15 provides an example of a brother who receives forgiveness for his sins:

Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven [*aphiēmi*] him.

The verbs “will raise him up” and “will be forgiven” designate future actions, thus they occur *after* the prayer of faith. James 5:12 describes this group as “brethren,” thus the sick person is a believer. As a believer, this person is already positionally forgiven. Yet, this forgiven brother still needs forgiveness in practice.

John uses the word “forgiven” again in 1 John 2:12: “I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name’s sake.” The question is: If this use of “forgiven” refers to our position (“positional forgiveness”), how can it also mean “family forgiveness” in 1:9? Whereas the first occurrence of a word in the text normally demonstrates the author’s subsequent intent for that word, the context may show evidence of a change in the intended meaning in the logical flow. Such a change *does* exist between 1:9 and 2:12. The verb “forgive” (*aphiēmi*) in 1:9 is in the aorist tense; in 2:12 it is in the perfect. The perfect tense denotes completed action in the past with results that continue to the present. This fits the idea of positional truth: we have been forgiven every trespass at the moment of salvation, and that position is secure. However, the aorist signifies “action expressed by the verb as a simple event or fact, without reference either to its

progress or to the existence of its result... The time of the action, if indicated at all, is shown, not by the tense, but by some fact outside of it.”⁶³

Thus, the perfect tense conveys an ongoing state resulting from a past event; the aorist simply points to an act itself without reference to an ongoing state. The relational forgiveness in 1:9 (aorist) refers to an act that can be repeated in time because of the believer’s position gained by his or her once-for-all positional forgiveness in Christ—a state that continues up through the present into the future, as indicated by the perfect tense in 2:12. We are positionally forgiven (2:12) as a permanent foundation for our confidence to then “abide” in Christ relationally (1 John 2:28–5:21).

THE BROAD SCOPE OF CHRIST’S “ADVOCACY” IN LIGHT OF SIN, 1 JOHN 2:1-2

This relational forgiveness in 1 John 1:5-10 is guaranteed by the assurance of 2:1-2:

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

John writes “these things” (looking back to 1:5-10) to “my little children” (believers) so that they would not sin. Yet he also acknowledges that as believers they *will* sin: the probable future

⁶³ Ernest De Witt Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek*, 3rd ed. (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1898), 46–47.

condition “if anyone sins” coupled with 1:10 (“If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar”) points to the inevitability of sin in the believer’s life.⁶⁴

Those who sin have (present tense) an “Advocate with [πρὸς, *pros*] the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” John uses πρὸς (*pros*) four times referencing the unique, intimate relationship between Jesus and the Father.⁶⁵ Jesus fulfills His role effectively as an advocate based on his perfect fellowship *with* the Father. The term “Advocate” (παράκλητος, *paraklētos*) is rare in the NT; it is used only by John, only here of Christ, and only here outside of John’s Gospel. Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as *paraklētos* four times in the Upper Room Discourse (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), describing him as “another helper” like himself (John 14:16). The term means “one who appears in another’s behalf, mediator, intercessor, helper.”⁶⁶

Jesus’ as *paraklētos* describes His acting as an intercessor rather than as a defense attorney.⁶⁷ The believer’s position is secure as

⁶⁴ This does not mean, however, that the believer has no power over sin nor that he/she should simply give in to it. In fact, just the opposite is true. Paul makes clear in Romans 6-8 and Galatians 5 that we have the ability through the Holy Spirit to be victorious over sin. This victory comes as the believer “walk[s] by the Spirit” (Rom 8:2, Gal 5:16).

⁶⁵ In John 1:1-2, the Word (Jesus) is said to be with (*pros*) God. In 1 John 1:2, John writes that eternal life (Jesus) is with (*pros*) the Father, and in 1 John 2:1, he writes that the Advocate (Jesus) is with (*pros*) the Father. In all of these verses, “[Pros] presents a plane of equality and intimacy, face to face with each other” (Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. V [Nashville, TN, Broadman Press, 1932], 4).

⁶⁶ BDAG 766. Louw and Nida add that “the principal difficulty encountered in rendering παράκλητος is the fact that this term covers potentially such a wide area of meaning” *Greek-English Lexicon*, 141-2.

⁶⁷ Gary Derickson and Earl Radmacher note that *paraclete* “literally means ‘one called to the side of another’ with the secondary notion of counseling, supporting, or aiding. Though it was rarely used as a legal term, ‘Paraclete’ means more than a defense lawyer. In fact, such a use of the term is rare in

permanently justified the moment he or she believes (e.g., 1 John 2:12; John 5:24; Rom 5:1; Col 1:13) so Jesus is not pleading to preserve his or her justification in light of subsequent sin. Rather, sin in a believer's life necessitates a High Priest to intercede on his or her behalf, precisely as affirmed in Hebrews 4:12-16 and Romans 8:33-34. The most iconic depiction of Jesus' role as advocate is found in John 17 where Jesus prays that the Father might keep all who believe from the evil one (17:15), sanctify them in the truth (17:16), and perfect them in unity (17:23).

Jesus's finished work on the cross guarantees His post-conversion intercession for the believer: He is the propitiation (ἱλασμός, *hilasmos*) for our sins (1 John 2:2). This term occurs only here and in 4:10.⁶⁸ The author of Hebrews uses the related word ἱλαστήριον (*hilasterion*) in Hebrews 9:5 to denote the mercy seat within the Holy of Holies. (9:12) and Paul uses this same term in Rom 3:24-25 to describe Jesus: “[B]eing justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation [ἱλαστήριον (*hilasterion*)] in His blood through faith.” The use of ἱλαστήριον (*hilasterion*) and related terms in the NT is linked to the Old Testament concept of the Day of Atonement, one specific day per year when the High Priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies (Lev 16:29). The priest sacrificed one goat as a sin offering and, after confessing all the iniquities of the people over it, released a second goat into the wilderness (Lev 16:5, 7-10, 15-19). The release of this second goat

the extra-biblical literature... As a legal term it referred more to the friend who goes to court with the defendant than to a professional advisor or attorney.” (*The Disciplemaker: What Matters Most to Jesus* [Salem, OR: Charis Press, 2001], 123.)

⁶⁸Two related terms are used two times each as well: ἱλάσκομαι (*hilaskomai*) in Luke 18:13 and Heb 2:17; and ἱλαστήριον (*hilasterion*) in Rom 3:25 and Heb 9:5.

portrays the removal of sin from the people.⁶⁹ The Day of Atonement covered all the sins⁷⁰ of all the people of Israel.⁷¹ God is thereby dealing with the entire nation *as a redeemed people*.⁷²

However, in addition to the Day of Atonement, which covered the people's sins for one year, the law also provided sacrifices for the people to deal with day-to-day sins. Leviticus 1-7 describes the practices of offerings for both unknown sins (4:1–5:19) and known sins (6:1-7). Since Jesus fulfills every aspect of the OT sacrificial system, His past work on the cross and ongoing work as High Priest sufficiently provide for both positional forgiveness, paralleling the Day of Atonement, and the daily cleansing of family forgiveness, paralleling the burnt, sin, and peace offerings (Heb 2:17-18).

This raises the question of the scope of Christ's propitiatory work. Scripture often links Christ's death with God's justice.⁷³ As Jesus hung on the cross, "darkness fell upon the land" for about three hours followed by Jesus' cry, "My God, my God, why have you

⁶⁹ This is the idea implicit in Psalm 103:10-12, "He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us."

⁷⁰ Attested by the phrases "all their sins" (Lev 16:16), "all the iniquities," "all their transgressions," "all their sins" (16:21), and "all your sins" (16:30).

⁷¹ Attested by the phrases "all the assembly of Israel" (Lev16:17) and "all the people of the assembly" (16:33).

⁷² The Law was never the basis for justification (e.g., Gal 2:16, Rom 4:1-8). The Day of Atonement provided "unlimited atonement" for the nation of Israel since all the sin of all the assembly was propitiated. That does not mean every Jew was a believer; Romans 4 makes it clear that before and during the era of the law, justification was only by faith. The sacrifice was sufficient for all, but only those who believed were saved.

⁷³ See, for example, Rom 4:25, 5:8, 8:3, 1 Cor 5:7, 2 Cor 5:21, Gal 1:4, Eph 5:2, 1 Pet 3:18.

forsaken me?” (Matt 27:45-46, Mark 15:33-34, Luke 23:44-45). The Book of Hebrews refers repeatedly to Jesus' sacrifice for sin (7:27, 9:26, 28, 10:10, 12, 14). This is the event described by Paul in 2 Cor 5:21a, “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf.” Perhaps Isaiah’s prophecy of the suffering servant gives the most graphic picture of God’s justice being poured out on Jesus:

Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed ... the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted... By oppression and judgment He was taken away ... But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering... (Isa 53:4-10)

Clearly, *hilasmos* in Rom 3:24-25 and Heb 9:5 includes satisfying God’s justice. But the term *hilasmos* seems to communicate more than just satisfaction. Elsewhere in the Bible, the removal of sin includes the removal of legal guilt (e.g., John 1:29, 1 John 3:5). Both parties—God and man—benefit from Jesus being the *hilasmos*. God’s justice is satisfied; man’s guilt is removed.

This may be another instance of a Johannine *double entendre* in which he intends ἱλασμός to include both senses. Jesus’ ministry in heaven provides both expiation and propitiation. Thus [the] choice of “atonement” allows for the

ambiguity desired by John that communicates the full scope of Jesus' work to be included.⁷⁴

Jesus' death is sufficient to satisfy God's just requirement for any and all people ("the whole world," 2:2). A person who believes is declared righteous (justified), a permanent change in their legal standing before God. Some have erroneously asserted that as a result of this change in position that God will never deal harshly with His children when they sin; they do not see these sins as a family matter to be addressed with a view toward correction and reconciliation.⁷⁵ They then conclude 1 Jn 1:9 cannot be for believers. However, even though God's just demands against sin are permanently satisfied, God still corrects sinning believers as a loving Father, as explained by the writer of Hebrews:

and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, 'MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES'" (Heb 12:5-6).

⁷⁴ Derickson, *First, Second, and Third John*, on 1 John 2:2.

⁷⁵ Farley writes, "If we miss the message of the gospel, it holds no power to alter natural mind-sets that control us. Partial forgiveness provides partial relief from guilt but breeds an unhealthy fear of judgment. Real forgiveness means that the sin issue is over. Real forgiveness means that there's no present or future punishment for sins. Jesus' death satisfied God forever. And there's nothing about us that will ever anger him again: 'When he had received the drink, Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit' (John 19:30). (Farley,143).

Notice that this discipline comes from the hand of a loving God.⁷⁶ The response of God toward a sinning son is different than the response that requires legal satisfaction for sin. The latter was satisfied at the cross; the former moves God to act in the life of His child with the intent of producing “the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Heb 12:11).

God desires that His children walk in the light (1 John 1:5-10, cf. John 3:21; 12:36). Thus, when they fail to do so (“walk in darkness”), God is free to train them as a loving Father rather than condemn them as a judge. Jesus’ sacrifice fully satisfies God’s justice; His position with the Father ensures His effective role as an advocate on the children’s behalf. So the believer can have absolute confidence that when he or she confesses their sin—no matter how grievous—Christ’s propitiatory blood cleanses them every time from all contamination by sin and “realigns” them, in their fellowship with Him, with the Father’s righteous character (1 John 1:7, 9; 2:1-2).

CONCLUSION

Whether or not fellowship is John’s primary purpose for the entire book of 1 John does not appreciably change the interpretation of this section which clearly addresses fellowship. John says he desires his readers to have fellowship with him, that

⁷⁶ This is Christ’s admonition to those in Laodicea, that those whom God loves, He reproves and disciplines (Rev 3:14). Similarly, Paul teaches that the Word of God is “profitable... for reproof and correction” (2 Tim 3:16). “Discipline” translates παιδεία (*paideia*), which means “to punish for the purpose of improved behavior—’to punish, punishment” (Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 489); “the act of providing guidance for responsible living, upbringing, training, instruction... chiefly as it is attained by discipline, correction” (BDAG, 748).

John's and the other apostles' fellowship is with the Father and with the Son (1:3). Thus, he wants his readers to fully enjoy both horizontal fellowship and vertical fellowship (1:4). This fellowship speaks of something more than entering into a saving relationship with Jesus; it addresses the closeness of one's relationship with God. This closeness is not an "on/off" relationship; instead, it resembles a dimmer switch—the believer either moves closer to or falls farther from God.

John then makes a statement describing God's absolute purity "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all" (1:5). Darkness speaks of death, impurity, and sin. He follows this with three erroneous statements "we" might make and offers a solution for each problem.⁷⁷ As noted in the first section of the article, the use of pronouns identifies "we" as the readers plus John (and presumably the rest of the apostolic community):

Error one: If we say that we have fellowship (closeness, intimacy) with Him and yet walk in the darkness (consciously indulging in conduct and thoughts at odds with God's revealed character, i.e., sin) we lie and do not practice the truth (our claim does not match our conduct; therefore, we are lying), 1:6.

Solution one: But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light (our conduct and thoughts are in accord with His righteous character), we have fellowship (closeness, intimacy) with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin (Jesus' blood is sufficient not only for absolute positional forgiveness but also for cleansing the believer from the day-to-day

⁷⁷ This discussion of these three errors and their solutions borrow heavily from, although not exclusively from, Dr. David Anderson's work on 1 John (Anderson, 50-69).

dust which collects on one's feet when he or she does sin as a believer), 1:7.

Error two: If we say that we have no sin (that is, we are free from both the capacity to sin as well as actual sins), we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us (as in 1:6, our claim does not match the truth), 1:8.

Solution two: If we confess (admit/acknowledge) our sins (*specific* sins as we become aware of them), He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins (a relational or family forgiveness, not positional forgiveness) and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (which addresses any unknown sin, thus this temporal cleansing covers both those sins we know about and those we do not), 1:9.

Error three: If we claim we have not sinned (specific sins) we make Him a liar (because as light He has clearly exposed certain deeds as “darkness” or “evil,” John 3:19-20) and His word is not in us (what we say is contrary to His word, so it is not actively in us. In a sense, we put it on the shelf and ignore it), 1:10.

Solution three: if anyone sins (implied, we will), we need not deny we have sinned for we have an Advocate (mediator, intercessor) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, 2:1, who can wipe out all contamination from sin that might tarnish our reflection of the Father's righteous image, 2:2.

ANSWERING SOME CHALLENGES TO THIS VIEW

Q 1: Some dismiss 1 John 1:9 as relevant for believers because, they say, John was addressing Gnostics, not Christians.

A 1: It is not entirely clear who were the false teachers that John addressed.⁷⁸ Some claim they were Gnostics since John begins this epistle affirming the reality of Jesus coming “in the flesh” and the reality of sin in the lives of his readers.⁷⁹ However, Gnosticism did not rise to prominence until the second century. Most of the information we have concerning Gnosticism comes from documents written long after 1 John was written.⁸⁰ So, history does not side with John addressing unbelieving Gnostics as his primary audience.

However, for the sake of argument, assume that, as it appears, some proto-Gnostic teachings crept into the church, and John wrote in part to address those errors.⁸¹ This assumption does not necessitate that his audience be unbelievers. Galatians supports this logic, where Paul

⁷⁸ “It is probably a mistake to attempt to systematize the thought of the heretics whom John opposed in this letter. According to his own statements, he had ‘many’ false teachers in view (2:18; 4:1). There is no reason to think that all of them held exactly the same views. The ancient Greco-Roman world was a babel of religious voices, and it is likely that the readers were confronted by a variety of ideas. Still, the heretics had in common their denials of the person of Christ, though they could have done so in different ways. On the basis of 2:19 it may be suggested that they had originated chiefly in Judea. But beyond this little can be said with certainty about the exact nature of the heresy or heresies that gave rise to John’s epistle.” (Hodges, 880-81.)

⁷⁹ See footnote 3.

⁸⁰ C. K. Barrett, *The New Testament Background: Writings from Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire That Illuminate Christian Origins*, Rev. ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 92-119, Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), 46-51.

⁸¹ Cerinthus, a contemporary of John and an example of one such proto-Gnostic teacher, “taught that Jesus was only a man and that the divine Christ descended on Jesus at His baptism and left Him before the Crucifixion.” (Hodges, 880-881.)

addresses the problems brought in by Judaizers. He does not assume his audience consists of unbelievers, but rather confused believers. The same is true in 1 Corinthians, where Paul addresses several pagan practices that crept into the church. Descriptions of the Corinthian audience indicate he does not assume his audience consists of unbelievers, but rather confused believers. This same logic fits 1 John: Even if John is addressing Gnostic influence, he does not assume his audience consists of unbelievers, but rather confused believers. Concluding that 1 John 1:9 does not apply because John is addressing unbelieving Gnostics glosses over the text.

Q 2: If “confession” is so important for believers, why did Paul not address it? Didn’t that leave the church in a quandary since 1 John was one of the last books written?

A 2: We must always be careful asking questions like, “Why didn’t Paul say...” Here is what we can clearly say: Paul did not tell his readers, in these exact words, to confess their sins. He nowhere commands believers to confess as the means of receiving family forgiveness nor unbelievers as the means of receiving justification.⁸² However, neither did Paul say anything about abiding in Christ. Nor did John use the term, justification. Each author chose the words he used to convey the message he intended to convey. The early church was not protected primarily by the written word but rather by the apostolic community until the written word was complete. That the church did not have in writing “if you confess your sins”

⁸² Paul does use the verb *homologeō* four times in his writings (Rom 10:9-10, 1 Tim 6:12, Titus 1:6). In none of these verses does he say “confess your sins.” Some use Romans 10:9-10 as a justification verse, but, even if that were true, Paul there says to confess Jesus as Lord, not to confess one’s sins.

until the mid 90's is no less (and no more) problematic than the church not having Romans until the late 50's.⁸³ As the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) demonstrates, the early church dealt with problems as they arose. Seemingly, the problem of denying one's sinful actions (or more fundamentally, one's sinful capacity) had not risen within the church to the point of requiring a written record, and thus Paul had no reason to address it directly. We do not know what the apostles communicated verbally, only what they wrote in the Scriptures. John likely wrote about this problem when he did because it, whether proto-Gnostic thought or some similar error, did not need to be addressed in any earlier inscripturated writing.

Paul implicitly allowed room for confession when he spoke of repentance (2 Cor 7:9-10; 12:21, 2 Tim 2:25).⁸⁴ Repentance means "change of heart, change of mind."⁸⁵ To change one's mind implies an admission of their error. He also allowed room

⁸³ If John wrote this letter prior to AD 70, as some hold, the time-gap issue is even less problematic. (Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistles of John* [Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 1999], 23).

⁸⁴ "The apostle writes [in 2 Cor 7:10] that godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation. While many take *salvation* as a reference to regeneration, that does not fit the context. Paul is writing of the repentance of people already born again. *Salvation* here refers to deliverance from the deadly consequences of unrepentant sin, not only in this life, but also before the Judgment Seat of Christ (cf. Luke 15:11-24)." (Dwight L. Hunt, "The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians," in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin [Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010], 795.)

⁸⁵ For other interpretations of the meaning of repentance, see "Appendix - Free Grace and Repentance" in Grant Hawley, ed., *Free Grace Theology: 5 Ways It Magnifies the Gospel*, 2nd ed., (Allen, TX: Bold Grace Ministries, 2016), 169-177. This appendix gives a brief overview of the traditional view of repentance plus four views of repentance held by various Free Grace authors.

in his numerous statements that communicate “Do not do these sins, instead, act like this” (e.g., Eph 4:17-24). John more explicitly commands confession, probably in response to the error that some claimed they have no sin and/or have not sinned.

The idea of confession is not unique to 1 John. David says, “I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah” (Psalm 32:5). Proverbs 28:13 says, “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.” The details surrounding confession may change (e.g., the NT does not require any animal sacrifice), but the concept of confession transcends the Law.

Q 3: Wouldn't confession of sin lead to a preoccupation with sin instead of enjoying freedom in Christ?

A 3: Not necessarily and, when confession in 1 John 1:9 is properly understood, it should not. Throughout the book, John has a strong emphasis on abiding in Christ and loving one another as God loves us. In other words, he wants his readers to maximize the experience of their eternal life here and now. When a believer in the process of walking in the light stumbles and sins, John says, “Confess it—agree, admit, acknowledge it—then move forward.” He wants the reader's preoccupation to be with Jesus, not sin.

Q 4: What if I do not confess everything?

A 4: On the one hand, sin we are unaware of is covered in the phrase, “cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Thus, when we acknowledge our sins, we have a clean slate. On the other

hand, if I knowingly sin and refuse to acknowledge it as sin, I am still walking in darkness, thus moving away from God rather than closer to Him.

CULTURAL MARXISM AS A CASE STUDY ON THE WORLDVIEW IMPACT OF EDUCATION STRATEGY⁸⁶

Patrick Wyett

ABSTRACT

In 2008, presidential candidate Barack Obama promised that electing him would initiate a fundamental transformation of America. His ascension to power did not represent a time of change as much as it measured the change over time which had already occurred via the Cultural Marxist transformative process initially introduced into an unsuspecting nation via the public education system as well as in bible colleges and seminaries. Properly understood, President Obama was not the herald of a new way of thinking but rather a marker of acceptance of the old ideas which he championed by a society that had surreptitiously already undergone a radical change from its founding principles. So it is that having a working knowledge of Cultural Marxism, its history, strategies, methods, and goals is essential to understanding the guided stages of degradation that American society and the church have undergone. This article will examine the ideological shifts which have taken place by design: culturally, politically, and most importantly, spiritually.

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this article is to delve into Cultural Marxism's complex web, an ideology that has stealthily overridden Western

⁸⁶ Adapted with permission from Patrick Wyett, *Darkened Pulpits: The History and Hiredlings of Social Justice* (Lampstand of Truth Publishing, 2022).

culture throughout the last century. This article highlights the foundation, approaches, and impeccable implications of Cultural Marxism, garnering attention toward its insidious impact on different aspects of contemporary life. From establishing the Fabian Society in 1884 to the choreographed input of like-minded figures into positions of power and influence, the footprints of Cultural Marxism are evident in all the educational, social, and political movements. This article comprehensively explains the historical context and Cultural Marxism's structures, highlighting the key challenges affecting Western civilization and the continuous struggle to maintain the fundamental principles.

CULTURAL MARXISM

There are two different types of Marxism: Classical Marxism⁸⁷ (overthrowing a bourgeoisie government by a violent revolution of the proletariat) and Cultural Marxism⁸⁸ (overthrowing a nation by destroying its society from within through a gradual process of targeted infiltration). Classical Marxism and Cultural Marxism have the same goals and ends but seek to reach them by different means. Marxism, in whatever its form, is a call for human governance that not only denies the God of Creation, it seeks to eliminate Him from human thought. Human history indicates a simple truth: Men must be governed

⁸⁷ Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, (The Merlin Press Ltd., London, 2015). 30.

² Bradley Thomas, "Antonio Gramsci: the Godfather of Cultural Marxism" in Foundation for Economic Education, March 31, 2019, viewed at: <https://fee.org/articles/antonio-gramsci-the-godfather-of-cultural-marxism/>.

by God or they will be ruled by tyrants.⁸⁹ Such tyrants as Mr. Penn warned us about have a plan for today.

The communists' agenda is to destroy your social order. This has been their aim for 125 years and it has never changed; only the methods have changed a little.⁹⁰

The above quote is from 1975. Many years later our social order is that much further down the road to its acquiesced destruction. What we now know as Cultural Marxism was conceived and is being executed with the specific goal of destroying Western Civilization by attacking its foundation, Judeo-Christian Theism.

THE FABIAN SOCIETY

Whereas the Communists had called for open revolution and conquest, organizationally, a more subtle head of the Marxist snake came into being in 1884 with the founding of the socialist Fabian Society in London, England.⁹¹ The Fabian Society was named after the Roman general Quintus Fabius Maximus Verrucosus, who fought against the feared Carthage general Hannibal in the Second Punic War (218 BC – 201 BC).

General Fabius did not attack Hannibal's superior forces directly; instead, he resorted to calculated brief encounters and hit-and-run tactics to demoralize and wear down his opponent,

⁸⁹ Source unverified, viewed at: <https://www.bartleby.com/lit-hub/respectfully-quoted/william-penn-16441718-4/>.

⁹⁰Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Warning to the West* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1986). 72.

⁹¹Amy Tikkanen, "Fabian Society" in Britannica, March 1, 2024, viewed at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Fabian-Society>.

which we would call guerrilla warfare today. The Fabian Society comprised wealthy and influential people, including playwright George Bernard Shaw, writer Edward R. Pease, philosopher Bertrand Russell, economists Sidney and Beatrice Webb, and psychologist Havelock Ellis. The Fabians sought to incrementally infiltrate Western society with Marxist ideology, gradually destroying it by attrition. The Fabian Society formed the London School of Economics (LSE) in 1885 as an educational vehicle to further their cause.⁹² To this day, it remains committed to its founding principles.

Economist and Fabian Socialist John Maynard Keynes attended the LSE. His promotion of big government deficit spending to stimulate a troubled economy, usually in trouble *because* of debt, is quite popular with liberal statist the world over.⁹³ When you hear about the virtues of Keynesian economics, realize you are listening to socialist fiscal policies designed to destroy free market capitalism.

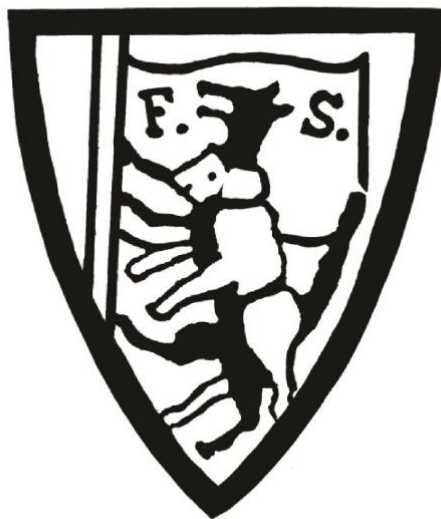
Over fifty heads of state have attended the London School of Economics, including Pierre Trudeau, former Prime Minister of Canada and father of current Prime Minister, far-left socialist Justin Trudeau. The Fabians are a major influence in the British Labour Party, as evidenced by recent Fabian Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. LSE graduates are legion in government and business around the world. The deceptive nature of the Fabian Society is exemplified by its first coat of

⁹²Trevor Loudon, “British Labour Party Elects ‘Moderate’ Starmer As Leader—A Fabian Socialist” in *Epoch Times*, May 20, 2020, viewed at: <https://www.theepochtimes.com/opinion/keir-starmer-british-labour-party-elect-moderate-leader-a-fabian-socialist-and-former-trotskyist-3311886>.

⁹³ Larry Abraham, *Call it Conspiracy*, (Double A Publications, 1985). 132.

arms, a wolf in sheep's clothing.⁹⁴ As for a closer look at the Fabian Coat of Arms in black and white:

THE FABIAN SOCIETY EMBLEM



THE WOLF IN THE SHEEP SKIN

EUGENICS AND RACISM

The Fabians were unapologetically eugenicists. Merriam-Webster defines eugenics as the practice or advocacy of controlled selective breeding of human populations (with sterilization or abortion of undesirables) to improve the population's genetic composition. This so-called "improvement" involves differentiating between what eugenicists term superior and inferior peoples. I am

⁹⁴Author not cited by name, sourced from: "The Fabian Society: Masters of Subversion Unmasked", 31 March, 2013, viewed at: <https://modernhistoryproject.org/mhp?Article=FabianSociety&C=7.0>.

not implying that the Fabians invented racism. That evil, born in the pride of one's perceived superiority, has been evidenced throughout human history. It is not God's plan for, or His view of, people.

“For there is no respect of persons with God.” (Romans 2:11)

Racist Fabian ideology has a direct correlation to Nazi atrocities. Hitler admired anti-God philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's theory of a master race, which he called *Übermensch*, German for Overman or Superman.⁹⁵ Hitler's belief that such a race had the inherent right to rule over or eliminate inferior races came in part from his studying the American eugenics movement.⁹⁶ Hitler merged Nietzsche's idea and Fabian eugenics with National Socialist German Workers Party fervor. This brings us to Fabian Socialist Margaret Sanger, founder of The American Birth Control League in 1921 changed its name to Planned Parenthood in 1942. Sanger was mainly influenced by Fabian eugenicists H.G. Wells and Havelock Ellis. Her Birth Control League was a specific attempt to introduce birth control as a means to decrease the population growth of those she termed "undesirables":

Birth control is not contraception indiscriminately and thoughtlessly practiced. It means the release and cultivation of the better racial elements in our society, and the gradual

⁹⁵ Jack Madon, “*Übermensch* Explained: the Meaning of Nietzsche’s ‘Superman’” in *Philosophy Break*, June 2022, viewed at: <https://philosophybreak.com/articles/ubermensch-explained-the-meaning-of-nietzsches-superman/>.

⁹⁶Edwin Black, “The Horrifying American Roots of Nazi Eugenics”, September 2003, viewed at: <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/the-horrifying-american-roots-of-nazi-eugenics>.

suppression, elimination, and eventual destruction of defective stocks— those human weeds which threaten the blooming of the finest flowers of American civilization.⁹⁷

This kind of eugenics, Negative Eugenics, focuses on preventing the birth of those it considers inferior or unfit. Toward that end, Sanger launched. “The Negro Project” to weed out her definition of the unfit from the population, enlisting black doctors and even NAACP co-founder W.E.B Dubois in support.⁹⁸ Black ministers, too.

The minister’s work is also important and he should be trained, perhaps by the Federation as to our ideals and the goal that we hope to reach. We do not want word to go out that we want to exterminate the Negro population and the minister is the man who can straighten out that idea if it ever occurs to any of their more rebellious members.⁹⁹

Abortion was at the time illegal and a bridge too far to openly advocate for. That would come later. Some state that Margaret Sanger was pro-life and advocated birth control to reduce abortions. This is a cover for her eugenicist/racist ideas. She was not pro-life.

⁹⁷ Margaret Sanger, “Apostle of Birth Control Sees Cause Gaining Here” in New York Times, April 8, 1923, viewed at: <https://www.nytimes.com/1923/04/08/archives/apostle-of-birth-control-sees-cause-gaining-here-hearing-in-albany.html>.

⁹⁸ Bruce Fleury, *The Negro Project: Margaret Sanger's Diabolical, Duplicitous, Dangerous, Disastrous, and Deadly Plan for Black America*, (Dorrance Publishing Co., 2015). Chapter 4.

⁹⁹ Ken Blackwell, “Busting Margaret Sanger” in The Daily Caller, August 31, 2015, viewed at: <https://dailycaller.com/2015/08/31/busting-margaret-sanger/>.

No one can doubt that there are times when abortions are justifiable but they will become unnecessary when care is taken to prevent conception.¹⁰⁰

When conception does occur, abortion becomes just another form of birth control. The spirit of The Negro Project continues today through Planned Parenthood. More blacks are killed by abortion yearly than by all other causes of death combined.¹⁰¹ A majority of abortuaries are located in minority communities for their victims' ease of access. The unborn were not Sanger's only targets of opportunity; she was also involved with the Euthanasia Society. Compare this statement:

¹⁰⁰ Margaret Sanger, *Family Limitations*, (Self-published, 1914). 5.

¹⁰¹ Author not listed. "Health of black or African American non-Hispanic population" in Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, December 13, 202, viewed at: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/black-health.htm>.

¹⁰² Usha Ranji, Karen Diep, and Alina Salganicoff, "Key Facts on Abortion in the United States" in Kaiser Family Foundation, November 21, 2023, viewed at <https://www.kff.org/womens-health-policy/issue-brief/key-facts-on-abortion-in-the-united-states/>.

¹⁰³ Numerous authors, "THE STATE OF ABORTION IN THE UNITED STATES" in National Right to Life, February 2024, viewed at: <https://www.nrlc.org/wp-content/uploads/StateofAbortion2024.pdf>.

¹⁰⁴ Numerous authors, "Medication abortion now accounts for more than half of all US abortions" in Guttmacher Institute, December 21, 2022, viewed at: <https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2022/02/medication-abortion-now-accounts-more-half-all-us-abortions>.

¹⁰⁵ Numerous Authors, "The impact of abortion underreporting on pregnancy data and related research" at National Library of Medicine, April 30, 2021, viewed at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8279977/>.

The most merciful thing that the large family does to one of its infant members is to kill it.¹⁰⁶

With Fabian Socialist George Bernard Shaw:

A part of eugenic politics would finally land us in an extensive use of the lethal [gas] chamber. A great many people would have to be put out of existence simply because it wastes other people's time to look after them.¹⁰⁷

These historical details are not often mentioned in liberal presentations of black history.

President Teddy Roosevelt, a man of passionate opinion, spoke of such:

There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americanism. When I refer to hyphenated Americans, I do not refer to naturalized Americans. Some of the best Americans I have ever known were naturalized Americans born abroad. But a hyphenated American is not an American at all ... The one way of bringing this nation to ruin, preventing all possibility of its continuing to be a nation at all, would be to permit it to become a tangle of squabbling nationalities... There is no such thing as a hyphenated American who is good. The only man who is a

¹⁰⁶ Margaret Sanger, *Woman and the New Race*, (New York : Brentano's, 1920). 63.

¹⁰⁷ Evelyn Cobley, *Modernism and the Culture of Efficiency: Ideology and Fiction*, (The University of Toronto Press, 2009) 159.

good American is the man who is an American and nothing else.¹⁰⁸

TARGET USA

Fabian socialism came to the American church in 1885 via Episcopalian Minister William Dwight Porter Bliss, who called himself a Christian Socialist. Talk about a contradiction in terms. Later, US Fabians collectively went by the more innocuous name "Progressives," which is the same thing that Socialists, Liberals, and Communists identify as today. The Fabians decided that its schools would be the quickest avenue of infiltration into the US culture. In 1906, the Fabian Society established the Rand School of Social Science in New York City as a beachhead to invade the US education system.

A founding member was atheist and Fabian socialist John Dewey, later lauded as the father of modern progressive (liberal) education.¹⁰⁹ That same year, The Intercollegiate Socialist Society was formed at the Rand School to branch out into other institutions of higher learning. In 1921, they changed their name to "The League for Industrial Democracy," having set up a network of 125 chapters in other colleges and universities to remove Christianity from America.

Fabian socialist John Dewey was also a founding board member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909, and helped found the anti-

¹⁰⁸Theodore Roosevelt, "Americanism" in [gutenberg.org](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/68152/68152-h/68152-h.htm), May 22, 2022, viewed at: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/68152/68152-h/68152-h.htm>.

¹⁰⁹Brannon Howse, *Grave Influence: 21 Radicals and Their Worldviews that Rule America from the Grave*, (Worldview Weekend Publishing, 2009). 121.

American, anti-God American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in 1920. Fabians were on the offensive.

Socialists can learn from their adversaries that it is always possible to attack existing law, in the name of democracy, justice, and liberty, in the name of the great ideals of the American Constitution, and in the name of law itself. – Fabian Yale law professor, Felix Cohen.¹¹⁰

John Dewey also served as the honorary President of the ultra-liberal National Education Association (NEA) in 1932. The NAACP and The ACLU are organizations that were founded by Marxists and were/are front organizations to push Marxist ideas into the mainstream, as is the NEA. You may be thinking, I agree with the ACLU and the NEA, but with the NAACP? Revered NAACP founder and socialist William Edward Burghardt (W. E. B.) Du Bois would later openly become a member of the Communist Party USA (CPUSA). This was not a change of heart later in life but a public embrace of who he always was.

While there are some positives of these organizations – equal opportunity for ethnic minorities *is* a good thing – these organizations overall are largely aligned with the Cultural Marxist revolution.

¹¹⁰ R Retta, “Fabian Socialist: Destruction of the Republic” in franklincountyvatriots.com, April 30, 2012, viewed at: <http://www.franklincountyvatriots.com/2012/04/30/fabian-socialist-destruction-of-the-republic/>

FABIAN INFLUENCE IN THE DEMOCRAT PARTY

With their ideas on eugenics, Fabian Socialists found natural allies in the Democratic Party, the party of slavery, Jim Crow laws, segregation, and the Ku Klux Klan. Fabian's infiltration into the US political system reached a high point in 1912 with the election of socialist Democrat Woodrow Wilson to the Presidency. His close friend and advisor was Fabian socialist Edward Mandell House (1858-1938), nicknamed Colonel House, a Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) co-founder. So significant was his influence on Wilson that he, in practice, became the de facto president. House's guidance resulted in the passage of the Federal Reserve Act in 1913, unconstitutionally giving the authority to coin US currency to the private international banking system known as the Federal Reserve.

The enabling Federal Reserve Act was sold to the public and Congress by claiming it would stabilize the banking system and prevent financial panics and banking-related minor depressions of past occurrence. The big bank proponents had orchestrated these events to use as an excuse for the need for a national bank. In this case, it is an international, national bank.

It would be only sixteen years later, in October of 1929, that the Federal Reserve would trigger the stock market crash that began the Great Depression. The timing of this event would place the blame on the policies of sitting president, Republican Herbert Hoover, and help sweep into power liberal Democrat Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the 1932 elections. The Federal Reserve is not just a bank but an instrument of immense worldwide political

power.¹¹¹ Nothing of consequence happens without its foreknowledge and assent.

1913 was an excellent year for Marxism in the US, as it also saw the ratification of the 16th Amendment to the Constitution, making a progressive income tax permanent. A central bank and a progressive income tax, Communist Manifesto planks two and five were largely accomplished. Workers in revolt did not need to achieve this, but it was bloodlessly accomplished through directed political and societal acceptance of socialist ideology. Fabian tactics were catching on elsewhere and being further refined.

REVOLUTIONARY ICON: ANTONIO GRAMSCI

Italian communist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) witnessed the fall of Czarist Russia to the communist forces of Vladimir Lenin. Gramsci surmised that Lenin's tactics of stirring up the masses of poor into a communist revolutionary army, while successful in that predominately low-tech, agricultural nation, would not work in an industrialized, prosperous, and predominately Christian country like the United States due to its higher standards of living and strength of faith. Therefore, Gramsci postulated a more specific strategy:

The civilized world has been saturated with Christianity for 2000 years, and a regime grounded in Christian beliefs and values could not be overthrown until these roots were cut.¹¹²

¹¹¹ George Griffin, *The Creature from Jekyll Island*, (American Media, 2011).

¹¹² Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, (Columbia University Press, 2011).

A quote attributed to Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin embodies this same thought:

America is like a healthy body and its resistance is threefold: its patriotism, its morality, and its spiritual life. If we can undermine these three areas, America will collapse from within.¹¹³

Both are accurate insights. Gramsci's ideas are held in high esteem today by dedicated Cultural Marxists. He diagnosed what to attack (Christianity) and the avenues through which to attack it. Gramsci understood the physical, political, and spiritual scope of the conflict that even then was underway. Notice how he equates Socialism to a religion:

Socialism is precisely the religion that must overwhelm Christianity...In the new order, Socialism will triumph by first capturing the culture via infiltration of schools, universities, churches and the media by transforming the consciousness of society.¹¹⁴

What Gramsci envisioned is now in the latter stages of accomplishment. Generations of distracted Christians have quietly endured Gramscian assault, unaware of what was happening. As to the infiltration of our schools and universities, we turn again to the Marxist point man for the corruption of the US public education system, John Dewey. The active Mr. Dewey personally taught at the universities of Michigan, Chicago, and Columbia. In

¹¹³This quote is popularly attributed to Joseph Stalin though the source of attribution cannot be definitively cited.

¹¹⁴ Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (Columbia University Press, 2011).

the 1920s, Dewey wrote articles praising the Soviet Union and the system it imposed for indoctrinating youth under the guise of education. Communists understood this concept with precision:

Give me four years to teach the children, and the seed I have sown will never be uprooted. -- Vladimir Lenin¹¹⁵

So did the Nazis:

He alone, who owns the youth, gains the future. —Adolph Hitler¹¹⁶

Dewey was so enamored with communist youth indoctrination that he travelled to the Soviet Union in 1928 to study Soviet "education" techniques for implementation in America. The abrupt transition from a Christian-based worldview was made possible by a 1916 mandate from Franklin Knight Lane, Secretary of the Interior, to fundamentally restructure the American education system for the 20th century.¹¹⁷ Lane believed that modern children, and thus the greater society, would no longer need Jesus as Savior or Lord.

Up to this point, education in America had been taught from a Christian perspective. Textbooks had ranged from the Bible-based "New England Primer," Noah Webster's "Blue-Backed Spellers," the "McGuffey. Readers," and the Bible itself. All early American institutions of higher learning had their start as

¹¹⁵ Bruce Hopper, *What Russia Intends: The Peoples, Plans, and Policy of Soviet Russia*, (J. Cape, London, 1931). 83.

¹¹⁶ Adolph Hitler, speech at the Reichsparteitag, 1935.

¹¹⁷ Arthur Dunn, *The Social Studies in Secondary Education*, (Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, 1916).

Christian schools. For example, Yale was founded in 1699 by ten ministers. Harvard's early mottos were "For the glory of Christ" and "For Christ and the church." Faith in God predominated in the United States and prospered under God's blessings. That was then.

The new schools would teach secular humanism and related philosophies. Biblical "myths" were to be phased out and replaced by "science" and human reason. Dewey's ally and signer of the Humanist Manifesto, Charles Francis Potter, published a 1930 book titled, "Humanism: A New Religion." The title is self-explanatory.

Education is thus a most powerful ally of humanism, and every public school is a school of humanism. What can the theistic Sunday school, meeting for an hour once a week, and teaching only a fraction of the children, do to stem the tide of a five-day program of humanistic teachings?¹¹⁸

Control the schools and own current and future generations. The Social Studies and Humanities that we have all been taught as core curriculum in school came from John Dewey specifically to focus on a social viewpoint devoid of Christian influence. Dewey's dedication to all things in opposition to God is evidenced by his influence on and signing the Humanist Manifesto in 1934. This anti-God document is considered a significant milestone in the secular conversion of America. It fits well with Dewey's philosophy of life:

There is no god and there is no soul. Hence, there is no need for the props of traditional religion [Christianity]. With

¹¹⁸ Charles Potter, *Humanism: A New Religion*, (Simon and Schuster, 1930). 128.

dogma and creed excluded, then immutable truth is dead and buried. There is no room for fixed and natural law or permanent moral absolutes.¹¹⁹

By this point, John Dewey's impact on America's future was profound, but the worst was yet to come. The life and death struggles between the warring factions of Marxism in Europe would serve to provide him with a historic opportunity to inject some of Marxism's most lethal thinkers directly into the United States.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined Cultural Marxism's pervasive and complex impact, delving into its inception, approaches, and effects. Cultural Marxism aims to achieve societal change through a gradual but steady infiltration as opposed to violent revolution, which incidentally, Cultural Marxists are not opposed to if given the right societal conditions and acquiescent government support. Additionally, this article highlights how Cultural Marxists created strategies to target US institutions, particularly education, to erode the conventional ethical standards and values with a specific bent towards Christianity. Notable figures like John Dewey propagated this agenda, successfully moving a formerly Christian-based educational system to one foundationally rooted in secular humanism. Moreover, the Democratic Party's conventional links with Fabian Socialism, demystified by the Presidency of Woodrow

¹¹⁹ Patricia Engler, "6 Principles Skeptics Borrow from the Bible", in *Answers in Genesis*, February 17, 2021, viewed at <https://answersingenesis.org/blogs/patricia-engler/2021/02/17/6-principles-skeptics-borrow-bible/>.

Wilson, affirms the indelible mark of the infiltration of Marxist ideologies in American politics to now include growing numbers in the Republican Party. Overall, this article demonstrates how cultural Marxism and the associated ideologies stand as significant threats to contemporary western civilization, profoundly eroding its Judeo-Christian foundation.

WORKS CITED

1. Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, “The Communist Manifesto”, originally printed by the Communist League in 1848. Reprinted by The Merlin Press Ltd. in 1998, author copy printed in 2015.
2. Bradley Thomas, *Antonio Gramsci: the Godfather of Cultural Marxism*, <https://fee.org/articles/antonio-gramsci-the-godfather-of-cultural-marxism/>
3. Source unverified, viewed at: <https://www.bartleby.com/lit-hub/respectfully-quoted/william-penn-16441718-4/>
4. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Warning to the West* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1986). 72.
5. Amy Tikkanen, “Fabian Society”, in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 1, 2024, viewed at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Fabian-Society>
6. Trevor Loudon, “British Labour Party Elects ‘Moderate’ Starmer As Leader—A Fabian Socialist”, in the *Epoch Times*, May 20, 2020, viewed at: <https://www.trevorloudon.com/2020/04/british-labour-party-elects-moderate-starmer-as-leader-a-fabian-socialist/>

7. Larry Abraham, *Call it Conspiracy*, (Double A Publications, 1985). 132.
8. <https://modernhistoryproject.org/mhp?Article=FabianSociety&C=7.0>
9. Jack Madon, *Übermensch Explained: the Meaning of Nietzsche's 'Superman'*, philosophybreak.com, June 2022 <https://philosophybreak.com/articles/ubermensch-explained-the-meaning-of-nietzsches-superman/>
10. Margaret Sanger, "Apostle of Birth Control Sees Cause Gaining Here" *The New York Times*, April 8, 1923
11. <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/the-horrifying-american-roots-of-nazi-eugenics>
12. Bruce Fleury, "The Negro Project: Margaret Sanger's Diabolical, Duplicitous, Dangerous, Disastrous, and Deadly Plan for Black America" 2015
13. Margaret Sanger, letter to Dr. Clarence Gamble, December 10, 1939. [com/2015/08/31/busting-margaret-sanger/](https://www.history.com/2015/08/31/busting-margaret-sanger/).
14. Margaret Sanger, "Family Limitations" 1914, page 5
15. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Health of black or African American non-Hispanic population." *Retrieved June 8* (2017):<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/black-health.htm>
16. Ranji, U., K. Diep, and A. Salganicoff. "Key Facts on Abortion in the United States." *Kaiser Family Foundation*, May 11 (2023). <https://www.kff.org/womens-health-policy/issue-brief/key-facts-on-abortion-in-the-united-states/>

17. National Right to Life. "THE STATE OF ABORTION IN THE UNITED STATES" Retrieved February 2024 [www.nrlc.org](https://www.nrlc.org/wp-content/uploads/StateofAbortion2024.pdf) 11TH EDITION. <https://www.nrlc.org/wp-content/uploads/StateofAbortion2024.pdf>
18. Elizabeth Nash and others. *Medication abortion now accounts for more than half of all US abortions*. Guttmacher Institute, 2022. <https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2022/02/medication-abortion-now-accounts-more-half-all-us-abortions>
19. Desai, Sheila, Laura D. Lindberg, Isaac Maddow-Zimet, and Kathryn Kost. "The impact of abortion underreporting on pregnancy data and related research." *Maternal and Child Health Journal* 25, no. 8 (2021): 1187-1192. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8279977/>
20. Margaret Sanger, *Woman and the New Race*, Chapter 5, "The Wickedness of Creating Large Families." 1920
21. George Bernard Shaw, "Lecture to the London's Eugenics Education Society" in *The Daily Express*, (March 4, 1910), quoted in *Modernism and the Culture of Efficiency: Ideology and Fiction*, Evelyn Cobley, University of Toronto Press (2009) p. 159
22. Theodore Roosevelt, "Americanism" in [gutenberg.org](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/68152/68152-h/68152-h.htm), May 22, 2022, viewed at: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/68152/68152-h/68152-h.htm>
23. Brannon Howse, "Grave Influence: 21 Radicals and Their Worldviews that Rule America from the Grave" 2009

24. R Retta, *Fabian Socialist: Destruction of the Republic*, franklincountyvapatriots.com, April 30, 2012
<http://www.franklincountyvapatriots.com/2012/04/30/fabian-socialist-destruction-of-the-republic/>
25. G. Edward Griffin, "The Creature from Jekyull Island" (American Media, 2011) Fifth Edition
26. Antonio Gramsci, "Prison Notebooks" 1929-1935
27. This quote is popularly attributed to Joseph Stalin though the source of attribution cannot be definitively cited.
28. Antonio Gramsci, "Prison Notebooks" 1929-1935
29. Bruce Hopper, "What Russia Intends: The Peoples, Plans, and Policy of Soviet Russia," 1931, page 83
30. Adolph Hitler, speech at the Reichsparteitag, 1935
31. Arthur Dunn, "The Social Studies in Secondary Education, (Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, 1916).
32. Charles Francis Potter, "Humanism: A New Religion," 1930, page 128
33. Patricia Engler, "6 Principles Skeptics Borrow from the Bible", in Answers in Genesis, February 17, 2021, viewed at <https://answersingenesis.org/blogs/patricia-engler/2021/02/17/6-principles-skeptics-borrow-bible/>
34. End of chapter lead-in to the next chapter which is titled, "The Frankfurt School"