

HARTFORD SEMINARY FOUNDATION

SOME CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS TO THE CHRISTOLOGICAL PROBLEM: A Basic Exploration

2007 Note from Nolan:

The information in this essay is quite dated, but representative of some theological students' basic understandings of New Testament scholarship in the 1960s.

I have not refined or corrected my spelling, grammar, punctuation, style, etc. The use of a portable electric typewriter in those days was so cumbersome that any revisions while writing were a major nuisance.



The original essay had wide margins and was double-spaced – probably to make it seem longer! Copies, if any, were made via carbon paper!

The essay is limited by design and does not explore the *meanings* of the Resurrection event. Related items are available within the subsites “The Christs of Faith” and “Biblical Thought.” Hundreds of scholarly books on various Christological issues have been published since 1960.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Perspective. Central to the Christian religion is the historical Event, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The predominance of this Event is attested to by Saint Paul's declaration that "if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain." (I Cor. 15:14) It is from the perspective provided by the Resurrection that the Christian community began its new life in Christ. As Professor Laymon notes: "The Resurrection is pivotal in this total New Testament portrait of Christ. . . . had it not been for the Resurrection and the events which developed from it, the chances are that they (the Gospels' authors) would not have written of Jesus in the first place."¹

The Christological Problem. Who was this Person of whom it is claimed that God raised Him from the dead? Scholars have offered many answers to this question throughout the history of Christianity. The challenge of heretical answers required the Church from its earliest history to attempt formulations of a statement about the person of Jesus Christ.

Some views had to be rejected because of their inadequacy to describe the salvation accomplished by God for man in Jesus Christ. Heresies such as docetism and gnosticism denied Christ's real manhood. Gradually these views were excluded in favor of the idea that Jesus actually possessed a normal, but sinless, human nature.

¹C. M. Laymon, *Christ In The New Testament* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1958), p. 13.

An opposite tendency was to deny the full deity of Jesus. This idea was essential to an adequate Christology, so the Church has maintained in her traditionally Catholic branches. Ideas arose of the adoption of Jesus the man into the Godhead. Another view taught that Jesus, although the Son of God before all worlds, was born in time. The Church eventually formulated statements that Christ was "begotten, not made" and "of the same substance with the Father." Thus, His eternal deity was

subscribed to by the Church, as well as His humanity while on earth. Some theologians' efforts to emphasize the humanity or deity of Jesus ultimately led to the doctrinal formulation that two natures, human and divine, constituted the person of Jesus Christ. Preceding the establishment of this dogma, however, numerous "heresies", such as those mentioned above, were condemned.

During the past hundred years or so the motif of the humanity of Jesus has been a dominant popular view in many theological circles. Professor F.C. Grant observes the modern humanistic tendency by stating:

A vast emphasis was laid upon the humanity of Jesus, not to the exclusion but certainly to the considerable obscuring of the divine nature - a kind of "Jesuolatry," with many features borrowed from nineteenth-century romanticism and also from earlier Pietism.¹

Doctor Grant states further that "... the New Testament knows nothing of this type of piety;

¹F. C. Grant, *An Introduction to New Testament Thought* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1950), p. 187.

its conception of Christ is theological from beginning to end of the sacred volume."

Thus, the controversy remains to this very day. This Jesus who was crucified and whom God raised from the dead - Who Is he ? The importance of the issue should not be underestimated because the Christian religion rests much of its foundation upon the belief that God acted in the Person of Jesus. It is, therefore, most desirable that an adequate understanding of Jesus' person be sought with the view towards solidifying that foundation.

Some Sources for Christological Discussion. The Synoptic Gospels are chief contributing sources in any Christological discussion. In those early Christian documents are much of Jesus' teachings and work, which are indications of His Person. Professor Grant cautions, though, that "the necessity of a fresh approach to the Gospels - in fact to the whole New Testament, but especially the Gospels - is growing more apparent every year. It is clear that they are not biographies; ... instead, they are sacred books of a religious movement which came out of first-century Judaism and grew into the Catholic Church - a movement which brought with it, into the Greek-speaking Gentile world, a number of stories about Jesus, anecdotes from his life, examples of his teaching, of his explanation of scripture, and of his

¹ *Ibid.*

controversies with the scribes, above all the brief but majestic account of his death" ¹

Now in the twentieth century with the help of modern biblical criticism, scholars are faced with the task of applying "a fresh new approach" to the Synoptic Gospels. Such a task becomes increasingly complex as it is realized that the evangelists had different emphases of purpose and similar as well as different sources of information for their writings. A glance at the respective purposes of the Synoptics would be advantageous to subsequent discussion.

It is probable that the author of Matthew wrote primarily for fellow Jews. His frequent references to the Old Testament, the idea that Jesus' primary mission is to the "lost sheep of Israel", and the implications that the Church is the new Israel all bear the marks of one who wrote for the Jews.

On the other hand, Mark, the Gospel generally agreed by scholars to be the earliest of the three, apparently was written with non-Jewish readers in mind. It may be noticed, for example, that this Gospel's author rarely quotes from the Old Testament, that he explains Jewish customs, and that he translates Aramaic expressions by their Greek equivalent.

¹*Ibid.*, p. 190.

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Luke, like Mark, apparently wrote primarily for non-Jewish reader. For example, a Gentile centurion is singled out for having more faith in Jesus than was to be found in Israel; and, Samaritans, who were anathema to the Jews, are praised.

Thus, with some differences, the Synoptic Gospels were written. With these general dissimilarities in mind it is our hope in this essay to explore some points of diversity and unity of Christological thought. With concentration upon the concepts of Jesus as man, Jesus as Messiah, Jesus as Son of Man, and Jesus as Son of God, an attempt will be made to discover the three evangelists' ideas of those motifs, and then to explore the possibilities of an underlying Synoptic view of them. Thereafter, the possibilities of a Synoptic Christology will be discussed, and, finally, this student's evaluation will be aired as to the contribution of the Synoptics to the Christological problem.

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II. CONTRIBUTING CONCEPTS

Jesus The Man. Throughout the Synoptic Gospels the actual humanity of Jesus is seriously implied, if not taken for granted, and is a contributing factor to the over—all perspective of His person. According to the Synoptic stories of Jesus' life, both his mind and body underwent natural development. He experienced natural needs such as hunger¹ and human emotions.²

Jesus' human religious experiences included prayer to the Father for strength and guidance to accomplish the Father's will for Him. Although He used His powers ultimately for God's work, Jesus faced real and repeated temptations that involved Him with internal and external conflicts. These are all very real human characteristics, although, to be sure, much more receptive to God's will and purpose.

Even though at times Jesus demonstrated unusual understandings of the hearts and minds of men, it would be a mistake to ascribe omniscience to his character, for as it written in Mark (13:32): "But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only

¹ "And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry." (Matt. 4:2). "On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry." (Mark 11:12) "And he ate nothing in those days; and when they were ended, he was hungry." (Luke 4:2).

² "And he went out and wept bitterly." (Matt.26:75) (Luke 22:62); "And he broke down and wept." (Mark 14:72).

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the Father.”¹

Neither does Jesus claim omnipotence, but ascribes the accomplishment of miracles to faith in the Father’s power, and thanks the Father during acknowledgment of His power.²

Although some theologians have attempted to include in a Synoptic view of Jesus the idea of double-will or double consciousness, one human and the other divine, such a notion does seem to negate the impression of Jesus’ self-unity that the Synoptics render. This idea ignores the three evangelists’ teaching of the difference in Jesus’ status produced by the Resurrection. Furthermore, such an approach denies that Jesus’ life was distinctly human in the flesh with natural limitations. (This interpretation usually enters theology by way of the Fourth Gospel.)

Whether Jesus as man was with or without sin is not conclusively indicated by the Synoptics. However, Jesus never judged himself while calling others to repentance. There is no indication of his recollection of his own sins, but he was most sensitive to others’ sins. It may be postulated that from his close relationship with God that Jesus knew no moral evil in his own life; but, on the other hand, the claim can be made that such inclusion of his sins would

¹A parallel passage is found in Matthew (24:36).

²“... and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him, ‘Ephphatha’, that is, ‘Be opened.’ (Mark 7:34). “...he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke, and gave the loaves...” (Matt. 14:19; parallel in Luke 9:16).

serve no purpose for the Synoptic authors.

Thus, it may be concluded from the first three Gospels that Jesus, whatever or whoever else he may have been, was definitely a human being. This the Synoptics seem to regard as a matter of fact.

Jesus as Son Of Man. At the time of the first century A.D. “Son of Man” was a divine title. It meant “a supernatural, heavenly being.”¹ Its uses in the Synoptics are to denote One who is to appear at the Last Judgment “coming with the clouds of heaven,” (Mark 14:62) or “sitting on the throne of His glory.” (Matt. 19:28), in passages which relate to the future sufferings, death, and Resurrection of the Messiah (Matt. 17:22, Mark 8:31), and in passages where it definitely refers to Christ himself (Matt. 8:20 & Luke 6:22).

The title has its ancestry in Old Testament religion. By the time of Daniel it had taken on the technical meaning symbolically representing the ideal Israel and also, secondarily, a real heavenly person. In Enoch, however, the Son of Man became linked with the heavenly Messiah.

In Mark, “Son of Man” is he who has come to earth and has been killed by wicked men. As Professor Grant comments on Mark, he points out the following facts:

¹F.C. Grant, “Mark, Introduction,” *The Interpreter’s Bible*, VII, p. 642.

.... the basic supposition is the identity of Jesus with the celestial figure of Daniel’s vision (Dan. 7:13, originally a symbol of triumphant Israel, which was to enjoy world empire and dominion after the successive beast-empires had been destroyed); as in I Enoch, this Son of Man is

to come in the end and hold the judgment... . Jesus knew himself to be and referred to himself as the divine, heavenly Man (or “Son of Man”).¹

In Matthew, Jesus is portrayed as the Son of man who was to come upon the clouds of heaven (Matt. 16:28; 26:64; 24:30) and judge (16:28; 19:28; 25:31). According to Matthew, Isaiah had foretold the circumstances (1:22) and Micah, the place of his birth (2:5).

Luke also uses the phrase much in the same way as Mark, but with less emphasis as being the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies as in the case of Matthew.

The title “Son of Man” is used only by Jesus in the Synoptics and was applied to himself alone. [The earliest mention in the Synoptics is in Mark (2:10)]. A number of scholars have noted that the passages where it is mentioned is divided into two groups which refer to Jesus’ work on earth (particularly to his Passion) and to the final glory of his Parousia.

It seems that Jesus adhered to the traditional meaning of the title, but added a significant idea of his own with his claim that the Son of Man had power on earth to forgive sins (Matt. 9:6).

Professor Laymon has this to say about Jesus’ use of the term:

¹*Ibid.*

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In the issue at hand, instead of taking at face value the term “Son of man” as found in Enoch, Daniel, and Ezekiel, Jesus may well have applied it to himself in his own way, to suggest a significance for his person and mission which he felt to be unique. It carried the ideas of both humility and exaltation that enabled him to keep from seeming to suggest an earthly royal ruler (Davidic), and yet made it possible to assert that there was a special significance to his person and work.¹

Thus, the title both links Jesus to humanity and singles him out from other men. It attributes to him earthly humiliation and supernatural glory. Perhaps to Jesus the title suggests one who embodies a life of service and suffering with transcendent glory. For the Synoptic writers, then, “Son of Man” represented Jesus’ divine calling and destiny, his humanity and uniqueness among men.

Jesus as Messiah. The idea of the Messiah had its roots in Jewish theology. Meaning “anointed,” the term designated the person invested by God with special powers and functions, who is destined to appear as the divinely appointed deliverer and ruler of Israel. The Greek translation of the word as it appears in the Septuagint is *christos*, from which Jesus received the title: Christ.

According to Mark, Jesus silenced the demons who recognized him as Messiah (Mark 1:24 ff.) and repeatedly directed those whom he healed not to tell anyone about the incidents (Mark 1:43 ff.). After the Transfiguration he told the disciples not to reveal the incident (Mark 9:9), and

¹C. M. Laymon, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

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Jesus instructed them to tell no man of him (Mark 8:30). Mark most likely believed Jesus to be the Messiah, but thought Jesus not to have used the title until the conclusion of his ministry.

According to Matthew, Jesus was the promised Christ, being actually descended from David, and through him from Abraham. In the first Gospel Jesus was the culminating point in his family's history. In David the family had risen to monarchical power (1:6), subsequently declined, and was renewed in Jesus (1:16). Jesus was, therefore, born "king of the Jews" (2:2). As king, he entered Jerusalem (21:5), suffered death (27:38), and would someday judge (25:31 ff.).

Matthew represents in his Gospel the earliest time at which Jesus' Messiahship became a definite matter between the Master and the Twelve. The famous incident was at Saint Peter's Confession at Caesarea Philippi (Matt. 16:16). The conclusion may be reached from the wording of Jesus' question and the joy he received at the reply. Peter was greeted with unusual emotion by Jesus, for Peter had gained a view of Jesus' vocation from contact with Him.

According to Luke also, "Jesus was indeed the supernaturally accredited Messiah of Jewish expectation."¹ The messianic concept did not, however, receive so much emphasis in Luke as was the case with Matthew, for Luke wrote with

¹S.M. Gilmour, "Luke, Introduction," *The Interpreter's Bible*, VIII, p. 6.

different emphases. With regard to this title, Luke and Mark seem to be quite similar in usage.

The Synoptic picture of Jesus' Messiahship gives this student the impression that although Jesus retained the essentials of the Old Testament motif, he also permeated it with a unique spiritual meaning. This new insight seems to signify the Messiah as the bearer and finisher of God's purposed salvation. Unlike the Old Testament notion, Jesus' view was not primarily one of a lawgiver or founder of a new faith.

According to the Synoptics, Jesus received full consciousness of his Messiahship and its function about the time of his Baptism. Whatever may have happened at the time of the coming of the Holy Spirit to him, he in any case received understanding and strength necessary to his vocation.

Professor Laymon comments (contrary to some other scholars) on Jesus as the Messiah by writing:

It is my personal conclusion that Jesus did regard himself as the Messiah. This does not mean that he fitted himself automatically into any one of the historic or contemporary messianic patterns. Neither was it a matter of holding a specific title.... Instead, it was the reality of the relation he felt to God and men in the Kingdom that constituted for him a special function, and gave an unprecedented meaning to his life and death. He chose to do the will of his heavenly Father, and God chose to make him both Lord and Christ.¹

¹C. M. Laymon, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-150.

Why, it may be asked, did Jesus keep his Messiahship a secret? The fact that he wished to is evident in the Synoptics. This student shares the opinion that it was a practical necessity. In view of the common Jewish notion of the messianic deliverer, Jesus would have faced greater difficulties if his vocation had been announced, for he was primarily a Deliverer from hardness of heart rather than from

political domination. Thus, he announced himself as a prophet (Luke 4:18), and was known as the Christ only by those whose perspective allowed for him to be viewed as such.

Jesus as Son of God. The title “Son of God”, according to Professor Grant, has connotations that are “totally different from those of “Son of Man” or “Messiah’.”¹ Doctor Grant further states that the title “cannot be derived from the messianic category - the use of Ps. 2:7 in Mark 1:11, and elsewhere in the New Testament, is an afterthought, an elucidation of the psalm in the light of Jesus’ exaltation, resurrection or baptism.”²

The origin of the title must be looked for in the early Christian mission among the Gentiles, according to the same scholar’s ideas. Dr. Grant states:

In native Jewish thought God could not have a son - the conception was simply mythological and denied the oneness of God. But for Gentile Christianity, possibly even

¹F. C. Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 642.

²*Ibid.*

for Diaspora Judaism, there could exist another divine being - or other beings - in the presence of God, subordinate to God, after the pattern of the Greek ‘sons of God.’¹

Professor Grant further theorizes that the term was “taken over from paganism as a term already filled with rich religious meaning - somewhat as other terms: ‘Saviour,’ ‘Lord,’ ‘Logos,’ ‘Redeemer’ were taken over by the early Greek-speaking church.”²

With whatever meaning Jesus himself may have understood his Sonship, the conception of him as the Son of God in the early Church was probably a corollary of his Messiahship. In Mark his Sonship and Messiahship seem to be equivalent (Mark 3:11 ff, 5:7), but as Professor Grant notes:

The evidence (in Mark) is difficult to interpret. At least we may say that the connotations of the title “Son of God” included pre-existence, though Mark himself may not have gone that far. . . Mark is sometimes thought to be an early “adoptionist” (Christ “became” Son of God by his resurrection, or by his holy life, or by his baptism...³

In Matthew the title “Son of God” is used a number of times throughout the book as it is in Luke. Some scholars think that (as mentioned above) it is a synonym for “Messiah,” but here also the term is difficult to understand. Jesus is not portrayed as having used the title himself, probably because it did have messianic overtones that he sought to avoid. Whatever the case may have been,

¹*Ibid.*, p. 643.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*

the term in Matthew and Luke, as in Mark, does emphasize in Jesus a unique relationship with the Father. (That this understanding foreshadows trinitarian thought as developed in later centuries is highly doubtful.) An important passage worth noting here appears in Matthew: “All things have been delivered

to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” (Matt. 11:27, with parallel in Luke 10:22) Here, indeed, is implied a unique, mutual relationship between Jesus and God – a relationship most likely considered by the Synoptic authors as the harmonious activity between God and His Christ.

Thus, the Synoptic motif of the “Son of God” defies precise analysis, but does suggest a special relationship between the Father and the Son.

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III. THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS AND CHRISTOLOGY

A Recapitulation. Having discussed some insights into the issues at hand, our discussion might be well served if some points are reviewed.

Mark is a Gospel of action, especially action of God’s Messiah directed toward the saving of men’s lives both eschatologically and historically. The humanity of Jesus shines clearly here both in His reaction to conditions around him and in the force of his personality on others. As Son of Man and as Son of God Jesus stands forth as One who has a unique relationship with God, but a relationship that is not clearly defined.

Matthew stresses Jesus’ Jewishness. This Gospel shows Jesus in relationship to Jewish hope and prophecy as the One who meets messianic expectations. Matthew emphasizes Jesus’ uniqueness among men, not only by including the Christmas Story, but by omitting some mundane details of his human life as seen in Mark. Detailed accounts of Jesus’ teaching have been incorporated in Matthew, with about three-fifths of the text devoted to the words of Jesus.

Luke portrays Jesus especially in his human sympathy for people of all sorts. There is less that is distinctively Jewish in this Gospel, the author seeing instead Jesus’ underlying connection with the human race as a whole and God’s world-wide purpose. Jesus is portrayed as a man of prayer in the crisis of his life and in his daily experiences.

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Reliability of the Synoptics. The question may be raised whether any of the Synoptic material may be regarded as reliable indications of Jesus’ person. If all of the material is viewed skeptically as the invention of the early church, we can know nothing about the historical Jesus. If the Synoptic material as found is accepted as a reliable, though inevitably interpreted, indication or portrait of his life, person and teachings, reliability is more possible. (There remain some scholars who hold this latter view.) This student shares the position that the only adequate explanation of the Apostles’ Faith and missionary efforts is their witness to the Risen Christ and belief in the event of the Resurrection. (Scholars do differ as to what the Resurrection event *was*.) The very existence of the Gospels without a Resurrection Event perspective is, in some scholars’ opinions, inexplicable. On the other hand, fanatical fundamentalism fails to account for the varied emphases and chronologies among the Synoptics.

The recognition of the Gospels for what they are in view of their respective purposes may provide a guide towards an understanding of their representations of Jesus. Relying upon scholars’ analyses of the purposes of the Synoptics, this student is of the opinion that it may be fair to Synoptic Christology to conclude that the four motifs (Jesus as Man, as Son of Man, as Messiah, as Son of God) are present in each of the three evangelists’ writings, but that each motif is emphasized according to the respective

purposes of the authors. Thus, an apparent variety in Christology may seem to exist, but in fact exists only in emphases rather than in essence. Each motif in its vagueness seems to contribute toward the

portrait of Jesus, as do colors to a painting.

Some Contributions of the Synoptics. In attempts to analyze precisely the person of Jesus Christ, theologians have made efforts to synthesize the motif of Christ's relationship to God with the concept of his humanity. As Professor Pittenger points out:

The whole history of Christian theology, in so far as it concerns itself with the person of Christ, is the attempt first to make this double assertion as clearly and plainly as possible, and then to find ways in which the double assertion can be justified and maintained.¹

Christological doctrines have been offered repeatedly - all of which have been unable to satisfy most of man's quests for an understanding of the issue. A contemporary offering is this:

... he (Jesus Christ) is that One in whom God actualized in a living human personality the potential God-man relationship which is the divinely intended truth about every man. In him that which is thus a possibility - and thereby the ground of our human existence; that which in each of us is to some slight extent partially realized and effectual - and thereby the secret of our growth in true manhood; *that* is made real and factual. And how was this accomplished? It was brought to pass by the coincidence in him of the divine Self-Expression (and thus the Word or *Logos* of God, humanwise) and free human response in self-surrender and faith and dedicated love (and thus the limit of human action in its supreme form). Therefore he is the fulfillment of man's capacity for God; but first he is the fulfillment of God's purpose in man. He is *the* man, and by fellowship with him through life *en Christo* men are restored and brought to their own fulfillment by the gracious loving action of God in him, and through him in his brethren.²

From the point of view of the Synoptics one could accept Dr. Pittenger's statement -- with the exception of the

¹W. N. Pittenger, *The Word Incarnate* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), p. 284.

²*Ibid.*, p. 235.

Logos-Incarnate motif. The presence of notions of Jesus as the incarnation (the historical exhibition of) the Father's pre-existent Self-expression is debatable in the Synoptics.

A difficult area of the whole problem seems to center about the precise nature of the relationship of Jesus with God - as Professor Pittenger noted above. There is ample evidence in the three Gospels of Jesus' *humanity*.

Can any definitive conclusion of Jesus "unique" relationship with God be reached on the basis of the Synoptics? If such a conclusion can be reached, this student is unable to determine it. The most precise statement that can be offered in this complex area seems to be the affirmation that Jesus is the Son of God, and it has been seen during previous discussion that this concept cannot be pinned down.

That God raised the Christ from the dead and the relevance of His Message provided the foundation of the early Christian community. The Synoptic Gospels are products of the developing Church, and their vagueness with regard to precise Christology reflects the stage of their growth. In terms of doctrinal formulation of the Christological problem, the Synoptics offer little precise information. They do, however, affirm a faith in this Jesus and focus significance not in an analysis of his Person, but in the Resurrection perspective that God acted through Him for the redemption of the world.

This student concludes from the evidences which he has been able to gather in this introductory study that according to the Synoptics, Jesus is the Messiah prophesied by the Old Testament religion,

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and that he enjoyed a relationship with God unique among men, expressible in human terms most adequately as "Son." Herein is the extent to which the Synoptic Gospels contribute to the Christological problem.

Concluding Reflections. The Synoptic contribution to the Christological issue as above discussed may seem to be of little consequence. If these narratives are chief sources for such, where is man to look further in his quest for an understanding of the issue? Perhaps in other canonical writings indications may be found; perhaps in the writings of the Fathers.

The writer suspects, though, that the quest may be not only fruitless, but also *relatively* unimportant. As the three Evangelists affirm, the Resurrection Event with the Message of Jesus Christ, the "Son," may be sufficient for providing adequate foundation for the Christian's faith in Him. Quests concerning His nature may well "passeth man's understanding", and may not be at all vital to THE Gospel of *agape*.

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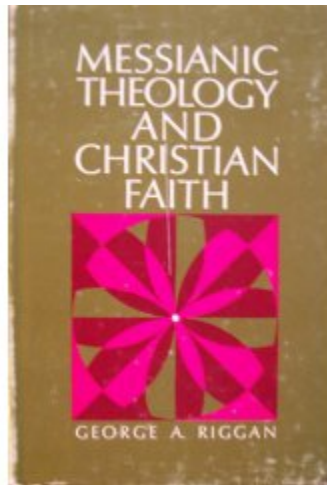
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Information About The Instructor



adapted from *The Hartford Courant* (January 12, 1999)

George Arkel Riggan of Leverett, Mass., a theologian, professor and author, died of a heart attack Thursday at the Buckley Nursing Home in Greenfield, Mass. He was 89.

Dr. Riggan was born in Hamilton, Ala. He graduated *magna cum laude* from Oklahoma City University in 1934. He did graduate work at Southern Methodist University in Dallas and received his divinity degree from Garrett Theological Seminary in Chicago in 1938. In 1949, Riggan received his Ph.D. in theology from Yale University.

Dr. Riggan was Riley Professor of Systematic Theology at the Hartford Seminary Foundation from 1959 to 1977. From 1938 to 1944, he was pastor of the First Congregational Church in Essex, and the Spring Glen Congregational Church from 1944 to 1952. In 1957 his book *Messianic Theology and Christian Faith* was published by Westminster Press. Dr. Riggan also published numerous articles.