

Formational hermeneutics

[Religion](#), [Jesus](#)



When the Journey of that begins at the intersections of sin and shame, the destination is almost convincingly assured. It is difficult to block out the persistent, internal voice that whispers, uniform no good. You're a sinner. You're a loser. You'll never amount to anything significant in this life. " These internal whispers convince people that they are nothing more than " wretches" who are somehow lucky to be " saved" by God's " amazing grace. " To that point, some of the most significant Christian hymns may even be guilty of reinforcing this type of " theology'. On the other hand, many " good Christian people" are afraid of what they perceive as " the alternative theology' which they somehow think subtlety and incorrectly suggests, muff are gods. You have Christ-consciousness. You are divine. " Many well-meaning followers of Christ are afraid that giving these words any space in their hearts may actually lead them down a completely different road of skewed theology by convincing them that they should be the one sitting in God's place, that they don't need to rely on anyone bigger than themselves because they already have everything they need in and of themselves.

The Christian's primary responsibility is to determine exactly what the Bible says about their true identity and what their responsibilities are as followers of Christ. A Christian living out of their true identity in Christ has the power to change the world. Who is Christ? In order to properly understand their true identity in Christ, a Christian must first appropriately determine who Jesus Christ actually is. While this may seem like a fairly simple question on the surface, it may actually be much more complicated than originally expected.

For example, the Jesus many Christians come to know when they first experience their life-transforming moment of faith (Conversion Experience) may not be the same Jesus to them twenty years later. Life's many twists and turns have a tendency to distort some Christians' understanding of Jesus. The simple, "child-like" faith that originally rescued them from the domain of darkness has become much more complicated and convoluted through the years and their image of who Jesus is has the tendency to be drastically altered through these experiences.

For others, the Christ they came to know by faith turned out to be more of an "intellectual Christ" than anything else. Once they finally had the opportunity to meet the real Jesus "experientially", it changed their complete understanding of who He really is. Much like Saul on the Road to Damascus, when the authentic Jesus shows up in all of His glory, He has a tendency to turn everything we always thought we knew completely upside down! One's personal, intellectual knowledge of Him? Is it through a personal experience one has at some point in life?

Or could it be that the best way to honestly understand who Jesus Christ is can be found in the pages of His Word, the Bible? The story of who Jesus is remains consistent throughout the pages of Scripture according to Stan Janet and Bruce Bicker: Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, The Messiah, The Savior of the World. He came to earth to show humanity how they were designed to live, and as a result of Him living this kind of life fully and completely, humanity sentenced Jesus to death by crucifixion. (Manta 1998, 205-211) But even death couldn't stop Jesus.

His resurrection from the dead proved that He was who He said He was and that He was capable of changing everything for those who trusted Him enough to put their complete confidence in Him. According to Christian Smith, Jesus Christ is also "the purpose, center, and interpretive key" to the entire Bible. (Smith 2011, 97) When the Holy Scriptures are read "Characteristically, Chronologically, and Characteristically", the story of the Bible finally begins making spiritual sense. (Smith 2011, 98) The Bible is all about Jesus.

Every Old Testament story foreshadows Him. Every Prophecy points to Him. The Gospels are an eyewitness account of His life and the remainder of the New Testament reinforces who Jesus is and why He should be the centerpiece for everyone who calls him or herself a Christian. Jesus Christ is God in the flesh pursuing a relationship with His children. He is trying to show them who they really are in relationship to Him. He is desperately trying to convince them of their true identity because he understands the implications of this life-altering truth.

It has been misunderstood and misrepresented by well-meaning Christians for thousands of years and it continues to be misunderstood today, but if those who call themselves followers of Christ could finally understand their true identity and begin living freely and unabashedly out of that identity, it would have the power to revolutionize the world! Christian Smith does an amazing job of convincing his readers that the interpretive key to understanding not only what the Bible is all about, but who they are in their core identity is Jesus Christ Himself. Who Are We in Christ?

In the tenth chapter of John's Gospel we find a very interesting interaction between Jesus and a group of unbelieving Jews during the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem. Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade when he finds Himself surrounded by a group of Jews who desperately want Him to tell them plainly if he is "the Christ". Jesus responds to their intense questioning by ultimately saying, "I and the Father are one." (John 10:30 NIV) Upon hearing this, the Bible says that several of the Jews picked up stones intending to stone Jesus to death.

What could've possibly caused this type of response from the Jews? It could only be that Jesus, a mere man in their eyes, was making a direct claim to be God Himself. This was considered a sin of blasphemy and was punishable by death! This is where the passage starts to get interesting and much can be learned about the Christian's true identity when we understand the intent behind Jesus' words. Even though the Jews reiterate their reasoning for their desire to stone Jesus to death in verse 33 as blasphemy, Jesus' response is what's most intriguing as it relates to the basis of this assignment.

Being the true Rabbi and Scholar He was known to written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'? If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came - and the Scripture cannot be broken - what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son? Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does.' According to Author and Theologian D. A. Carson, when Jesus quotes Psalm 82, He's proving that the word 'god' is "legitimately used to refer to others besides God himself. Carson 1991, 397) If

there are others whom God can address as 'god', then why should anyone object when Jesus says He is God's Son? Furthermore, how could anyone object that one of the most pressing issues in the Church today is for Christ's Followers to begin living as the 'gods' they were created to be? After all, doesn't this Scripture seem to support the idea that True Followers of Jesus Christ are created with God's Divine DNA? In the very essence of their being, aren't true Followers of Christ indeed divine?

It is absolutely essential that Christians begin learning to live appropriately as 'gods' if they're going to experience everything God intended them to experience in this life. In order to completely understand what Jesus is saying in the tenth chapter of John's Gospel, it's critical to read and understand Psalm 82 in it's entirety and determine precisely what was being said, to whom it was being said and why Jesus chose to quote this particular passage of the Bible at this exact moment in time while He was being accused of the sin of blasphemy.

Carson suggests a few options in correctly understanding and interpreting Psalm 82: 1 . God is addressing Israel's Judges - The Judges are referred to as 'gods' because they exercise Justice " divinely' by determining who will be " saved" and who will be " wiped out". Unfortunately these Judges are actually accused of corrupting Justice in Psalm 82. 2. God is addressing Angelic Powers - Based upon evidence in the Separating and certain ancient documents from Kumara, it has been suggested that the 'gods' referred to may be fallen angelic beings.

If these types of angels can be referred to as 'gods', then certainly Jesus appropriately uses the term in reference to Himself. 3. God is addressing Israel at the time of The Giving of the Law - Many Rabbi's ascribed this view of Psalm 82. Carson seems convinced that this is the most simple and yet accurate view of Psalm 82: God addressing all of Israel. (Carson 1991, 398-399) Understanding the entire context of Psalm 82 is critical to an appropriate understanding of what Jesus is saying back in John 10.

If God can refer to the entire nation of Israel as 'gods' and 'sons of the Most High', then Jesus has provided satirical precedent for why He chooses to refer not only to Himself as the " Son of God" throughout the Gospels, but specifically why it's completely appropriate, even more, why it's preferred that we understand our own identity as 'gods' and 'sons of the Most High' as we live the Christian life today. (Gabrielle 1991, 535) Indeed our complete goal in this life according to C. S. Lewis is to become a " little Christ" and to begin living out of this life-transforming truth! (Lewis 1952, 58) A Compelling Argument for Thesis?

Thesis is a term commonly used by the Eastern Orthodox Church to describe the desired end result of the salvation process. " (Lowell1984, 1191) The word was made man, it is that men might become gods. " (Lowell 1984, 1191) Similar phrases are also found with many other Church Fathers such as Euthanasia and many others to support their understanding of what encompasses a true salvation experience. Gregory of Nyssa, Justine Martyr, Hippopotamus of Rome, Basil of Caesar, Clement of Alexandria all understood the process of what later came to be known as " Thesis".

Augustine of Hippo said, " For He hath given them power to become the sons of God.

If we have been made sons of God, we have also been made gods. It doesn't get much more obvious than this. Except maybe when Clement of Alexandria said, " The Word of God became man, that thou majesty learn from man how man may become God. " (Roberts 1994, Volvo. 2) These and other great Theologians down through the years use Biblical Texts like Romans 8: 29, 1 John 3: 2 and especially 2 Peter 1: 4 to support their understanding of the doctrine of Thesis. Certainly one must consider the " preponderance of the evidence" when considering the doctrine of Thesis and whether or not a person has the potential of experiencing divinity.

According to the Apostle Peter, believers are invited to " participate in the divine nature" as the ultimate goal of every human life. This " divination" is in fact the ultimate spiritual experience available to everyone who identifies himself or herself as a follower of Jesus Christ. Becoming more divine, more like God by understanding the importance of taking on a divine nature may be the most important and most neglected aspect of Christian Spirituality today. In fact, if it's true that " divination" is the ultimate fulfillment of what it means to be human, the process may be more appropriately offered to as ultimate " humiliation. (Christensen 2008, 325) Divination is not a transcending of what it means to be human, but the fulfillment of what it means to be human. As the Apostle John so eloquently says in 1 John 3: 2, " when he Jesus) appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. " While many readers believe this text refers to some point in the future when

the believer passes on from this life and meets Christ face-to-face in the next life, a growing number of theologically astute readers recognize this text as a promise for today!

When the Apostle Paul experienced the Risen Christ personally on the Road to Damascus in Acts 9, didn't he " see him as he is", and wasn't he transformed by the power of Christ's Divinity? This same power is at work in the world and available to Followers of Christ today! When those who claim to be believers in Christ experience the power of the Resurrected Jesus, they are truly never the same. Their lives are transformed. They are changed into Little Chrism's.

They have the power of Divinity within them now as Children of the King of the Universe. In his Epistle to the Romans Paul said God predestined" those whom He foreknew to be " conformed to the likeness of his Son. " Was this simply a promise for life in the next world, or was this meant to be a promise lived out powerfully in today's world? When Paul lived out of this life-transforming truth himself, he was used by God to change almost everything and everyone around him.

He testified as he was locked to prison guards, he stood before powerful Kings and unlike anyone else before him was able to do, Paul took the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles which changed the first-century world and continues to change the world today! A Holistic, Spiritual Response Are we all God's Children, or only Christians? This is a provocative question and one determine the way one approaches all of life.

There are so many people who describe themselves as "Christians" in the world, yet never received a proper understanding of their true identity.

What exactly does it mean to be a true "Christian", a "little Christ"? Does it mean you are simply a follower of Christ, relying upon Him for your existence in this world but more importantly looking forward to the promise of your true "deification" in the next world? Or could it mean that your true "divination" is available right here, right now in this world and that it has untapped power and potential to not only completely alter your life as you know it, but everyone else's life who comes into contact with you?

It has been the intention of this paper to show that true "Christians" are sons and daughters of God right here, right now in this life today, and as God's Children, today's Christians have the power of God's Divine DNA living in them today! Imagine what an incredible impact this truth could have upon our world! Imagine what could happen if all Christians began understanding and living out of their true identity in Christ. God's Word says that as confessing Christians, we are all "gods" and "partakers in the Divine Nature" according to Holy Scripture.

For many people who know this truth intellectually but have never learned out the power of this truth practically, it has had little to no impact upon their lives and religion has been just that, stale, old religion with no perceived power to impact their lives in a practical way. But for a small minority of others who are beginning to grasp this truth beyond simply intellectually, it is impacting their lives and their worlds in unimaginable

ways! Is it genuinely possible that Protestants have missed this amazing Biblical truth for all these years?

And for those Orthodox brothers and sisters who are taught this doctrine from a very young age, why hasn't it had the life-transforming effect on their lives that seems so inevitable when one begins to understand the Biblical Teaching of Thesis and Divination? What did Jesus really mean when He quoted Psalm 82 as He was about to get stoned to death for claiming to be God? It seems as though people making a claim to divinity has always had two very distinct effects on people: Some are drawn to the person and give up everything to follow them and learn from them as either God's Representative or in some cases as God Himself.

Or they are completely put off by the claim and seek to put an end to the person making it (Remember the peoples' response to Jesus in John 10: 33). Could it be possible that there is a better way to understand Jesus' complex teaching on this topic? What if the Doctrine of Thesis was never meant to have such a divisive and popularizing effect, but instead was intended to bring power to the life of every Christian and enable to live the way God originally designed them to live in this life and the life to come?

It is the intention of this author to prove that the " Christian" response to the teaching of " Divination" and " Self- Deification" or " Thesis" should not be an " either/or" response, but a " yes/and" reply. (Roar 2013, 205) Yes, the Bible seems to very clearly teach that Jesus is 100% human, and it also teaches that Jesus is 100% divine. This is non-dual, inclusive thinking (Roar 2013, 235) and it is the type of thinking Christians need to implement more often if

they are ever going to live the way they were designed to live - as gods in a God-bathed world.

What Difference Does it Make in Practical Ministry? Responsibility in parenting their children. An effective parent wants nothing more than for their children to know who they are at their core and to live out of that unique, God-given identity. An effective pastor also wants the members of his or her congregation to understand who they are created to be and to be able to live out of that identity. The problem with so many Christians today is that they've never been taught who they really are in Christ: At their core being, according to Jesus' own teaching in John 10, they are gods.