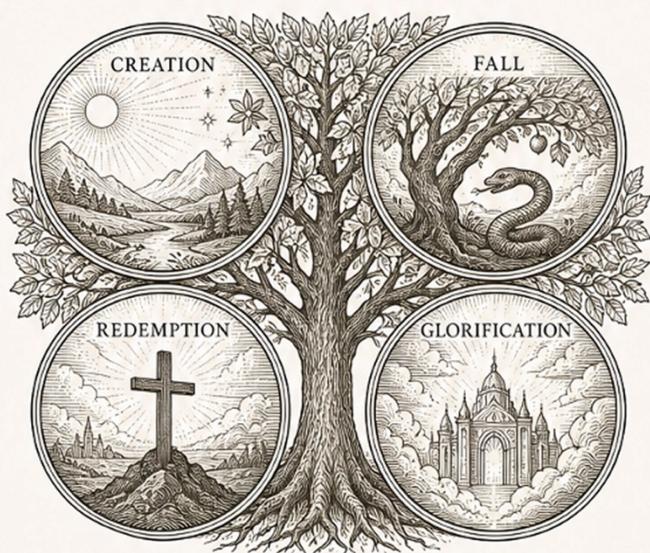


— THE BEAUTY OF THE TRIUNE GOD —

The Reformed Theological Paradigm

— ✦ —
CREATION • FALL • REDEMPTION • GLORIFICATION

A Theological Study in Four Movements



— ✦ —
Pastor Baltazar A. Niangar
Pastor Emeritus, Th.B., A.B., D.D

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DEDICATION

*To the God of all creation,
whose sovereign work encompasses
every movement of history —
from the first word of creation
to the last trump of glorification.*

*To the pastors and teachers of
Holistic Enhancement for Lay-leaders and Pastors (HELP, Inc.),
who carry the reformed faith faithfully
into the next generation.*

*To my beloved wife, Estrella,
to my son, Dr. Ellaazar,
and to my daughter, Zarelle Grace —
whose encouragement never failed.*

*And to every student of Scripture
who refuses to surrender the whole counsel of God
in exchange for the spirit of the age.*

Soli Deo gloria.

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Foreword

Every generation of the Church inherits a theology. The question is never whether it will have one, but whether it will have a good one — one that is biblically grounded, historically informed, and capacious enough to make sense of the whole of reality from creation to consummation.

Pastor Baltazar A. Niangar has spent a lifetime in pastoral ministry, and this volume is the fruit of that labor. What he offers here is not novelty — he would be the last to want it. What he offers is something rarer and more valuable: a clear, faithful, and comprehensive account of the classical Reformed theological paradigm, the fourfold framework of creation, fall, redemption, and glorification, set out with pastoral warmth and biblical precision.

This framework is not merely an academic construct. It is the architecture of the Christian understanding of reality. Get it right, and everything else — anthropology, soteriology, eschatology, ethics, culture — falls into its proper place. Get it wrong, and the distortions multiply without end. Dr. Niangar writes as one who has watched that multiplication in the congregations he has served, and who has seen the corrective power of returning to the paradigm every time.

Read this book as a corrective, a map, and a call. It will do each of these things for you if you let it.

*For the reformation of the Church,
and the glory of her Lord.*

Preface

The Reformed theological tradition has always understood itself in terms of a grand narrative: God creates, humanity falls, God redeems in Christ, and the whole of creation is brought at last to its consummation in the glorification of God's people. This fourfold movement — creation, fall, redemption, glorification — is not merely a handy organizational device. It is the shape of the biblical story itself, the lens through which every doctrine and every human experience must be properly understood.

This essay began as a sermon outline, preached to the faithful men and women of Holistic Enhancement for Lay-leaders and Pastors (HELP, Inc.) in the context of their monthly fellowship. As I developed the material, I became convinced that the simple elegance of this paradigm deserved fuller treatment — that each of its four movements contained depths that a single sermon could only gesture toward.

What you hold in your hands is that fuller treatment. It is not a systematic theology in the technical sense. It is, rather, a theological orientation — an attempt to show how the four great movements of the biblical story, understood through the lens of the Reformed tradition, provide an inexhaustible resource for Christian thinking, Christian living, and Christian ministry.

My prayer is that this work will serve the Church not as a monument to ideas but as a lamp to the feet of those who wish to walk faithfully in the counsel of God.

"But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed."

— Romans 6:17

Pastor Baltazar A. Niangar
Pastor Emeritus, Th.B., A.B., D.D.

Introduction

The Need for a Reformed Paradigm

"But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed."

— Romans 6:17

A paradigm is a framework for understanding reality. It is the set of presuppositions, categories, and logical relationships through which we interpret everything we encounter — every event, every doctrine, every human experience. We all have one. The question is not whether we operate within a paradigm, but whether ours is formed by Scripture and the whole counsel of God, or assembled haphazardly from the fragments of whatever cultural and intellectual influences happen to surround us.

The Reformed theological tradition proposes a paradigm that is neither haphazard nor culturally conditioned in its foundations. It is drawn directly from the narrative architecture of Holy Scripture and has been refined and articulated across more than five centuries of disciplined theological reflection. Its four great movements — creation, fall, redemption, and glorification — are not imposed upon the biblical text from outside. They are the movements of the text itself, the shape of the story that God has been telling from Genesis to Revelation.

"For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen."

— Romans 11:36

The importance of getting this paradigm right cannot be overstated. Theological error is almost never a matter of pure invention. It is almost

always a matter of distortion — of taking one element of the biblical narrative and elevating it at the expense of others, or of allowing an alien framework to displace the biblical one. The great heresies of the early Church were not fabricated from nothing; they were distortions of genuine Christian truths, pressed in wrong directions by wrong frameworks. The same pattern repeats in every century.

The Reformed paradigm — creation, fall, redemption, glorification — guards against this distortion by holding the whole of Scripture's narrative together. It prevents us from so emphasizing the goodness of creation that we minimize the devastation of the fall. It prevents us from so emphasizing the depth of the fall that we despair of the possibility of genuine transformation. It prevents us from so spiritualizing redemption that we lose sight of its cosmic and material dimensions. And it prevents us from so focusing on present blessing that we lose the eschatological urgency that belongs to every Christian life.

This volume examines each of the four movements in turn — creation, fall, redemption, and glorification — with the biblical texts that illuminate them, and with attention to the practical theological implications that flow from each. It is, at bottom, an invitation: come and see the whole of reality as the Reformed faith invites you to see it, through the lens of God's grand narrative from beginning to end.

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

— Colossians 1:15–17

PART ONE

Creation — The State of Divine Order

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

— Genesis 1:1

CHAPTER 1

God the Creator

Process and Purpose

"For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things were created through him and for him."

— Colossians 1:16

The Reformed theological paradigm begins, as all theology must begin, with God the Creator and His creative act. This is not a mere chronological starting point. It is a theological one: everything that follows in the paradigm — the fall, redemption, glorification — is intelligible only against the backdrop of what God originally made and what He originally intended. Distort the doctrine of creation, and every subsequent doctrine will be distorted in turn.

The Scriptures describe God's creative work in a rich variety of terms, each of which illuminates a different dimension of His creative activity. The author of Hebrews captures the fundamental reality: "By

faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible” (Heb. 11:3). This is creation *ex nihilo* — out of nothing. There was no pre-existing material that God shaped into the world; the material world itself owes its existence entirely to the divine word.

A. The Processed Organization of Creation

The opening chapters of Genesis describe God’s creative work as an ordered, sequential process — not a single undifferentiated act, but a richly articulated series of creative movements that issue in a world of breathtaking organization and beauty. Four distinct Hebrew and Greek terms illuminate different aspects of this creative work.

“By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.”

— Hebrews 11:3

1. **Fiat Creation (bara)** — God spoke things into existence from non-existence. The Hebrew *bara*—used exclusively of divine creative activity in Scripture—denotes creation from absolutely nothing. No pre-existing material, no cooperation with prior reality. God alone, by the pure authority of His word, called the universe into being. This is the irreducible foundation of the Christian understanding of both God and world: God is absolutely self-sufficient; the world is absolutely dependent.
2. **Formed World — God the Potter (asah)** — Having called matter into existence, God then shaped and ordered it with the intentionality of a master craftsman. Job 38 presents God’s questioning of Job as a panoramic survey of the divine craftsmanship visible in every dimension of the physical world — the foundations of the earth, the gates of death, the treasures of snow and hail, the Pleiades and Orion. The world was not merely spoken; it was formed with care and intentionality.

3. **Framed World — God the Architect (katartizo)** — The New Testament term *katartizo* — to frame, to fit together, to bring to completion — suggests the work of an architect who not only conceives a design but ensures that every element of the building is properly fitted and joined. Isaiah 25:4 describes God as a refuge and strength for the poor and needy, the One whose ordering of reality provides shelter and security. The world is not a random accumulation but a coherent structure, designed by infinite wisdom.
4. **Fashioned World — God the Designer (yatsar)** — The Hebrew *yatsar* — to mould, to fashion — is the word used of the potter working clay, and it appears in Genesis 2:7 to describe God's formation of Adam from the dust of the ground. It suggests not only the external shaping of matter but the intimate, personal, purposeful care with which God forms His creatures. The world is not merely structured; it is fashioned — made with an eye toward the beings who will inhabit it, especially the human beings who bear His image.

Together, these four terms describe a creation that is the product of sovereign divine power (*bara*), skillful divine craftsmanship (*asah*), wise divine architecture (*katartizo*), and intimate divine care (*yatsar*). The world that emerges from God's creative work is simultaneously vast and intricate, powerful and delicate, ordered and beautiful.

B. The Perfect Organization of Creation

"And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good."

— Genesis 1:31

The refrain of Genesis 1 is insistent and cumulative: "God saw that it was good." And at the conclusion of the sixth day, with the creation of humanity, the assessment reaches its climax: "behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). This is not merely aesthetic appreciation. It is a theological

verdict. The world that God made was, in every dimension, perfectly fitted for its purpose.

1. **The Physical Universe** — The physical universe — the stars, the planets, the vast reaches of space — was created good. This is a radical claim in the context of the ancient Near East, where competing religious systems often regarded the material world as evil, as the product of conflict among divine beings, or as a prison from which the human spirit must escape. Biblical faith affirms the goodness of matter. The physical world is not a mistake, not a prison, not a lesser reality. It is God's good creation.
2. **Organic and Animate Life** — The organic world — plants, animals, the astonishing diversity of living creatures — was created good. God surveyed the abundance and variety of life He had made and declared it good. This has profound implications for a Christian account of the natural world: the diversity of species, the complexity of ecosystems, the beauty of living organisms, are not accidents of blind process but the deliberate creation of a God who delights in His work.
3. **Humanity — The Image-Bearer** — The creation of humanity represents the apex of the creative process. Genesis 1:26–28 describes humanity as created in the image of God (*imago Dei*) — a category that has no parallel in the rest of the created order. Human beings are uniquely designed to represent God in the world, to exercise dominion over the creation as His vice-regents, and to relate to Him in covenant relationship. The creation of humanity as male and female, and God's blessing and commission to them, establishes the basic contours of human dignity, vocation, and community.

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

— Genesis 1:27

C. The Permanent Order of Creation

The created world is not merely organized and good; it is ordered by permanent structures and laws that God has established for its governance and flourishing. Genesis 2:1–6 describes the completion of God’s creative work and the institution of the sabbath rest — a rest that signals not the exhaustion of the Creator but the completeness and sufficiency of what He has made.

1. **The Atomic and Molecular Order** — The physical laws that govern the non-living world — the laws of physics, chemistry, thermodynamics — are expressions of the permanent creational order established by God. Hebrews 11:3 affirms that the worlds were framed by the word of God; they hold together by the same word that called them into being. The regularity and reliability of the physical world, which makes science possible, is a theological reality: it reflects the faithfulness of the God who created and sustains it.
 2. **Celled Living Organisms** — The biological world is governed by laws and structures of its own — the laws of genetics, ecology, and organic life — that reflect the permanent order God has built into the living creation. The diversity of life forms, each reproducing according to its own kind (Gen. 1:11–25), expresses the richness and stability of the creational order.
 3. **Personal Human Life** — The order governing personal human life — the moral law written on the conscience (Rom. 2:15), the structures of marriage and family, the reality of moral accountability before God — is the most intimate and most demanding dimension of the creational order. Human beings are not merely biological organisms; they are moral agents whose personal lives are ordered by the law of their Creator.
-

CHAPTER 2

The Perfection and Permanence of the Created Order

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork."

— Psalm 19:1

Having surveyed the threefold structure of the created order — its processed organization, its perfect goodness, its permanent laws — we pause to draw out the theological and practical implications of this account of creation. The doctrine of creation is not merely a statement about what happened at the beginning. It is a comprehensive account of where we are, what we are, and what reality is.

First, the doctrine of creation grounds the dignity of every human being. Because every person is made in the image of God, every person possesses an inherent worth that is not derived from their social utility, their intellectual capacity, their physical ability, or any other creaturely attribute. The image of God is the non-negotiable foundation of human dignity, and it cannot be forfeited by sin, diminished by disability, or revoked by any human authority.

Second, the doctrine of creation grounds a robust engagement with the created world. Because God made the world good — because the physical, biological, and social orders are God's good creation — the Christian has every reason to engage the world with care, curiosity, and delight. The sciences that study the natural world, the arts that celebrate its beauty, the social institutions that order human life — these are all legitimate and valuable expressions of the cultural mandate given to humanity in Genesis 1:28.

Third, and crucially for the Reformed paradigm, the doctrine of creation establishes the standard against which the fall will be measured. The fall is not merely a moral failure or a legal transgression. It is a

catastrophic departure from the goodness, order, and purpose that God built into the creation at the beginning. To understand how deep the fall goes, we must first understand how good the creation was.

"For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations."

— Psalm 100:5

Reflection Questions — Part One

1. In what ways does the doctrine of creation ex nihilo challenge the assumptions of your surrounding culture? How might you articulate this doctrine to someone formed by a naturalistic worldview?
2. What are the practical implications of the imago Dei for the way you relate to other people — particularly those who are most different from you, or most marginalized by society?
3. How does the goodness of God's creation shape your own engagement with the physical world, with the natural sciences, and with the arts?

PART TWO

Fall — Sin and Its Cosmic Consequences

"Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin."

— Romans 5:12

CHAPTER 3

The Origin and Nature of Sin

"How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!"

— Isaiah 14:12

The second movement of the Reformed paradigm is the most painful and the most contested. The fall is painful because it explains the damage we see in ourselves and in the world around us. It is contested because the modern world has been deeply invested — for philosophical and cultural reasons — in denying its reality or minimizing its scope. The Reformed tradition will not allow either move. It insists that the fall is total in its reach and radical in its nature.

But before we can understand the human fall described in Genesis 3, we must reckon with the prior fall described in the prophetic literature

— the fall of Satan, the great adversary, whose pride became the prototype and occasion of all subsequent sin.

A. The Pride of Self — The Primordial Sin

"Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor."

— Ezekiel 28:17

Isaiah 14:12–15 and Ezekiel 28:12–18 together describe the primordial act of sin — the self-exaltation of the creature against the Creator. Isaiah's taunt against the king of Babylon contains, within it, a description that reaches beyond any merely human king to the spiritual power that stood behind the Babylonian empire: Lucifer, the Day Star, who said in his heart, "I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high."

This is the essence of sin: the creature's refusal to accept the limits and the lot of its creaturely existence before God. Pride does not merely dislike its circumstances; it disowns its creatureliness itself. It says, "I will be like the Most High" — a claim that is both metaphysically impossible (no creature can be the Creator) and morally catastrophic (the attempt shatters the order on which all creaturely flourishing depends).

- 1. Discontent of Self — Refusing One's Lot in Life** — The first expression of the primordial sin is discontent — the refusal to accept one's created identity and creaturely place. Isaiah 14:12–14 depicts this as a fivefold "I will" — a cascade of self-assertion against the divine order. Discontent, in this deep sense, is not merely emotional dissatisfaction. It is a theological rebellion: the creature's declaration that the life and limits God has given it are not good enough.
- 2. Discord with God — Rebellion Against the Creator** — Discontent inevitably issues in discord. Job 34:35–37 describes the person who adds rebellion to sin and speaks words against God without knowledge. Discord with God is the natural fruit of the

prideful refusal to accept one's creaturely place. It cannot be contained within the merely personal; it radiates outward, disrupting every relationship and every dimension of created order.

B. The Perversion through Sin

"Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness."

— 1 John 3:4

The fall of Satan set the stage for the human fall, but it did not make it inevitable. Adam and Eve were created with genuine moral freedom — not the freedom to escape their creatureliness, but the freedom to choose within it between obedience and disobedience. The account of Genesis 3 shows how the temptation worked: not by the imposition of irresistible force, but by the corruption of the good faculty of desire, turned away from its proper object toward an illicit one.

Romans 5:12 states the consequence with devastating clarity: "Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned." The solidarity of the human race in Adam is the foundation of Paul's soteriology: as death came through one man, so life comes through One Man, Jesus Christ, the Last Adam (1 Cor. 15:22, 45).

- 1. Disobedience — The Disruption of the Law** — 1 John 3:4 gives the simplest and most comprehensive definition of sin: "Sin is lawlessness." Sin is not merely the violation of a rule; it is the repudiation of the order — the law for life — that God has built into the creation for the flourishing of His creatures. Every act of disobedience is, at its root, a declaration that the creature knows better than the Creator how life ought to be ordered.
- 2. The Distortion of Love** — 1 John 2:16 identifies the three-fold structure of the distortion that sin works in the realm of love and desire: the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and pride in possessions. These are not the creation of new desires but the

corruption of good desires — the God-given appetites for physical life, for beauty, and for significance, turned away from their proper ordering toward God and toward one's neighbor, and redirected toward the self.

"For all that is in the world — the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions — is not from the Father but is from the world."

— 1 John 2:16

CHAPTER 4

The Pervasive Reach of the Fall

"For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God."

— Romans 8:20–21

The Reformed tradition has always insisted on the totality of the fall — the doctrine known as total depravity, which does not mean that every human being is as evil as they could possibly be, but that every dimension of human life and every dimension of the created order has been affected by the entrance of sin. The fall is not a limited local damage; it is a systemic disruption that reaches into every corner of creation.

C. The Problem in the Surrounding Creation

Paul's remarkable passage in Romans 8:18–23 extends the consequences of the fall beyond the human sphere to the creation as a whole. The

creation, Paul writes, was “subjected to futility” — not willingly, but because of the one who subjected it — and has been “groan[ing] together in the pains of childbirth” ever since. The created order itself bears the marks of the fall in its current state of bondage to corruption.

1. **Dystrophy and Atrophy of Matter — The Second Law** — The physical world itself reflects the consequences of the fall in its tendency toward disorder, decay, and death — what the Second Law of Thermodynamics describes as the universal increase of entropy. Romans 8:22 speaks of the whole creation “groaning together in the pains of childbirth.” This groan is not merely metaphorical; it is the physical reality of a world that is running down, that is moving from order to disorder, from life to death, from the good to the corrupted. The fall is written into the thermodynamics of the universe.
2. **Disorder, Death, and Mortality** — Romans 5:12 and 1 Corinthians 15:12–32 together make clear that death — physical death, the separation of soul from body — entered the world through sin and has reigned over every human life since. Death is not a natural part of the originally created order; it is an intruder, the “last enemy” (1 Cor. 15:26) that will be destroyed at the resurrection. The universal experience of human mortality is the most intimate and inescapable evidence of the reality and consequence of the fall.

*"For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.
For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."*

— 1 Corinthians 15:21–22

Reflection Questions — Part Two

1. In what ways does the doctrine of the fall challenge the optimistic assumptions about human nature that are prevalent in your

surrounding culture? How might you engage these assumptions with grace and truth?

- 2.** How does the biblical account of sin as lawlessness — as the disruption of God's created order rather than merely the violation of arbitrary rules — change the way you think about specific sins in your own life?
- 3.** How does the vision of a groaning creation (Rom. 8:18–23) shape your understanding of environmental degradation, disease, and natural disaster? How does it ground both lament and hope?

PART THREE

Redemption — Salvation by Christ

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses."

— Ephesians 1:7

CHAPTER 5

Spiritual Regeneration

"Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.'"

— John 3:3

The third movement of the Reformed paradigm is the most glorious: God's decisive, comprehensive, and sovereign intervention in human history to undo the consequences of the fall and to restore — indeed, to elevate beyond its original form — the creation He made. This intervention is accomplished in and through Jesus Christ, the Second and Last Adam, whose life, death, and resurrection address every dimension of the fall's damage and secure every blessing that the fall forfeited.

The first dimension of this redemption is spiritual regeneration — the sovereign, supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the sinner, bringing new life where there was only death, creating sight where there was only blindness, and producing faith and repentance where there was only hardness and rebellion. Romans 3:24 frames this work

with precision: we “are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

A. Spiritual Regeneration

"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked... But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ."

— Ephesians 2:1–5

1. **Spiritual Life with God — Romans 8:1–14** — The regenerated believer enters into a new relationship with God — a relationship no longer defined by condemnation and alienation but by adoption and access. Romans 8:1 declares the fundamental reality: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” The Spirit of God, dwelling within the believer, enables a new quality of life that is oriented toward God and toward others rather than toward the self. This is not moral self-improvement; it is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).
2. **Spiritual Life-Force — Romans 8:11** — Romans 8:11 makes the astonishing claim that the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead now dwells in the believer and will also give life to their mortal bodies. The Spirit of God is not merely an external influence or an occasional visitor; He is the permanent, indwelling life-force of the regenerated soul. His presence is the guarantee of both present transformation and future resurrection — the firstfruits of the age to come dwelling already in the hearts of God’s people.

"If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you."

— Romans 8:11

CHAPTER 6

Sacrificial Redemption and Societal Renewal

"You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."

— 1 Peter 1:18–19

Regeneration addresses the internal, spiritual dimension of the fall — the deadness of the human spirit before God. But the fall had legal as well as spiritual consequences: humanity stands guilty before a holy God, subject to His just wrath and condemnation. The second dimension of Christ's redemptive work addresses this legal reality: the work of sacrificial redemption, through which God both satisfies His justice and freely justifies the guilty.

B. Sacrificial Redemption

1. **Appeasement and Acquittal before God** — Acts 17:30 declares that God “commands all people everywhere to repent” — a command that presupposes both the universality of human guilt and the availability of divine forgiveness. Romans 11:32 states the comprehensive scope of God's redemptive purpose: “God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.” The mercy that God extends is not a relaxation of His justice but the satisfaction of it — accomplished in the atoning death of His Son, who bore the penalty of human sin in the place of those who believe.
2. **Acceptance by God — Ephesians 1:6** — The purpose of Christ's sacrificial work is not merely the removal of guilt but the positive

declaration of acceptance: Ephesians 1:6 speaks of the glorious grace by which God “has blessed us in the Beloved.” The justified sinner is not merely acquitted; she is accepted, adopted, welcomed into the family of God as a co-heir with Christ. This is the logic of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness: the believer receives not only forgiveness of sins but the positive standing of the Son Himself before the Father.

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

— 2 Corinthians 5:21

C. Self and Societal Renewal

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

— 2 Corinthians 5:17

The redemption accomplished by Christ is comprehensive in its reach: it addresses not only the spiritual and legal dimensions of the fall but the personal and social dimensions as well. The new creation that Christ inaugurates (2 Cor. 5:17) is not a private spiritual transaction with no implications for the visible world. It is the beginning of the renewal of all things — a renewal that begins in the heart but does not end there.

Repentance of sin — the turning away from the false self and the false gods that sin constructs — is the first dimension of this renewal. Ezekiel 18:30 calls for a thoroughgoing personal repentance: “Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin.” Genuine repentance is not merely remorse for consequences; it is a comprehensive reorientation of the will, the affections, and the life toward God.

Reliance on God in faith is the correlate of repentance. Hebrews 11:6 declares that “without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” Ephesians 2:8–9 is the locus classicus of the

Reformed understanding of saving faith: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

— Ephesians 2:8–9

Reflection Questions — Part Three

1. How does the doctrine of spiritual regeneration — the new birth as a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit — shape your understanding of evangelism, of prayer, and of the nature of Christian conversion?
2. What is the difference between remorse and genuine repentance? Can you identify a moment in your own life when you moved from one to the other?
3. How does the comprehensiveness of Christ’s redemption — its reach into the personal, social, and even material dimensions of human life — shape your understanding of the Church’s mission in the world?

PART FOUR

Glorification — Sanctification and Consummation

"When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

— Colossians 3:4

CHAPTER 7

Genuine Reconciliation and Genetic Reformation

"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

— 2 Corinthians 5:20

The fourth and final movement of the Reformed paradigm encompasses both the present work of sanctification — the ongoing transformation of the believer into the image of Christ by the Holy Spirit — and the future work of glorification, the final and complete conformity of the redeemed to the image of the Son at the resurrection. These two dimensions — present and future, process and completion — belong together and must be held together.

The Scriptures are consistently clear that the work of redemption that God begins in the believer in regeneration and justification is a work

He intends to complete. Philippians 1:6 states this with confidence: “He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” The glorification of the people of God is not contingent on their perseverance in the sense that it might fail; it is secured by the power and faithfulness of God. But it is also not instantaneous — it unfolds through the process of sanctification, the lifelong work of the Spirit in conforming the believer to the image of Christ.

A. Genuine Reconciliation

"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."

— 2 Corinthians 5:18

1. **Repentance of Heart — 2 Corinthians 7:10** — 2 Corinthians 7:10 distinguishes godly grief from worldly grief with surgical precision: “Godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.” Genuine reconciliation with God begins with genuine repentance — not the sorrow of one who is merely sorry for the consequences of sin, but the sorrow of one who sees sin as God sees it and turns away from it with the whole heart. This is not a once-for-all event but a characteristic orientation of the sanctified life.
2. **Real Faith in God — Romans 10:9–10** — Romans 10:9–10 gives one of the most direct accounts of saving faith in the New Testament: “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Faith is not merely intellectual assent; it is the wholehearted orientation of the person toward Christ — confessing His lordship with the mouth, trusting His resurrection with the heart. This faith is the instrument by which the benefits of Christ’s redemption are received and appropriated.

B. Genetic Reformation

"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another."

— 2 Corinthians 3:18

The phrase “genetic reformation” is deliberately provocative. It is meant to capture the radical depth of the transformation that the Holy Spirit works in the believer — not a surface-level adjustment of behavior, not a cosmetic renovation of the old nature, but a transformation that goes to the very root of the person, re-orienting the deepest structure of the self toward God.

1. Spiritual Life Renewal — Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 3:1 —

Ephesians 2:1 describes the believer’s pre-conversion state as death: “you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked.” The renewal that the Spirit works is therefore not the improvement of a sick person but the resurrection of a dead one. Colossians 3:1 draws out the implication: “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.” The new life that begins in regeneration is to be pursued with the totality of the renewed self.

2. Personal Life Renewal — 2 Corinthians 4:16–18 —

2 Corinthians 4:16–18 holds together the painful and glorious dimensions of the ongoing process of renewal: “Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.” The outward, physical dimensions of life may deteriorate; the inward, spiritual dimensions are being progressively renewed. And both are set within the eschatological horizon of the glory that is coming.

CHAPTER 8

The General Resurrection

"Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment."

— John 5:28–29

The final dimension of the fourth movement of the Reformed paradigm is the general resurrection — the bodily raising of all the dead at the last day, the consummation of God's redemptive purposes, and the beginning of the eternal state in which God will be all in all. This is not a peripheral doctrine or an optional addendum to Christian faith. It is the destination toward which the entire biblical narrative is moving.

1 Corinthians 15 is the New Testament's most sustained treatment of the resurrection, and Paul is insistent on its necessity: "If the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:16–17). The resurrection of Christ is not merely a miracle; it is the firstfruits of the resurrection of all who belong to Him. The general resurrection of the dead is the completion of what Christ's resurrection began.

"Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed."

— 1 Corinthians 15:51–52

1. **Physical Resurrection from Death — 1 Corinthians 15:51–57 —**
1 Corinthians 15:51–57 describes the physical reality of the resurrection with vivid particularity: at the last trumpet, the dead will be raised imperishable, and those who are alive at Christ's return will be changed. This is not the immortality of the soul — the perpetuation of a disembodied spiritual existence. It is the resurrection of the body: the reunion of soul and body in a transformed, glorified, imperishable form that will never again be subject to death, decay, or suffering.
2. **Personal Refashioning of the Corruptible Body — 1**
Thessalonians 4:15–17 describes the drama of the Last Day: the Lord Himself will descend from heaven, the dead in Christ will rise first, and those who are alive will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. This is not an escape from physical reality but its ultimate redemption: the body that was fashioned from dust by the divine yatsar, corrupted by the fall, and awaiting its final transformation, will be refashioned into the glorious likeness of Christ's resurrection body (Phil. 3:21).

"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself."

— Philippians 3:20–21

Reflection Questions — Part Four

1. How does the doctrine of progressive sanctification — the ongoing work of the Spirit in transforming the believer — guard against both complacency and despair in the Christian life?
2. What is the relationship between the bodily resurrection of Christ and the promised resurrection of all who belong to Him? Why does Paul treat the resurrection of the dead as a non-negotiable element of the Christian gospel?

- 3.** How does the eschatological hope of the general resurrection shape your attitude toward your body, toward death, and toward the sufferings of the present life?

Conclusion

Walking in the Paradigm

*"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"*

— Micah 6:8

We have traversed the whole of the Reformed theological paradigm — creation, fall, redemption, glorification — and at every stage we have found the same reality: a God of inexhaustible wisdom, justice, and love, who has ordered all of history, including its darkest chapter of human sin, toward the ultimate display of His glory and the ultimate good of His people.

This paradigm is not merely an intellectual achievement. It is a map for living. It tells us where we have come from (the good creation of a good God), where we now are (a fallen world being redeemed by a sovereign God), where we are going (a glorified creation in which God is all in all), and therefore how we ought to live in the present moment — as those who know the whole story, who trust the Author, and who live accordingly.

*"And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to
completion at the day of Jesus Christ."*

— Philippians 1:6

The paradigm keeps us from doctrinal error. When we lose sight of creation, we lose the goodness of the material world and the dignity of the human person. When we lose sight of the fall, we lose the seriousness of sin and the urgency of the gospel. When we lose sight of redemption,

we lose the hope that is our anchor in suffering and the motivation for our witness in the world. When we lose sight of glorification, we lose the eschatological horizon that prevents us from investing too much in the present age and too little in the age to come.

The paradigm also keeps us from practical failure. A Church that knows where it stands in the story — that understands itself as a community living between redemption accomplished and glorification awaited — will be a Church marked by both urgency and patience, by both confidence and humility, by both engagement with the world and detachment from the world's ultimate pretensions.

Walk in the paradigm. Let it shape your preaching, your praying, your relationships, your work, your engagement with culture, your response to suffering, your hope in the face of death. It is, in the end, nothing other than the shape of the biblical story — the story that God is telling, and to which every human life is a response, whether of faith or of unbelief.

Soli Deo gloria.

To God alone be the glory.

Personal Questions and Challenges

The theological study you have completed is not an end in itself. The Reformed paradigm is a framework for living, and its final test is practical: does it change the way you think, the way you pray, the way you relate to others, the way you engage the world? The following questions are offered as an invitation to bring the paradigm from the page into your life.

On Creation

1. Do you genuinely believe in the goodness of the material world? Or do you operate with a hidden dualism that treats the spiritual as more real, more important, or more valuable than the physical? How might a deeper doctrine of creation challenge that dualism?
2. How does the reality of the *imago Dei* — the image of God in every human person — shape the way you treat the people you encounter every day, especially those who are most different from you or most difficult to love?
3. Are you fulfilling the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28 in your own vocation and daily life? In what ways are you exercising responsible dominion over the portion of the creation entrusted to you?

On the Fall

4. Have you come to terms with the totality of the fall — not merely its effects in the world around you, but its effects in your own heart, your own desires, your own patterns of thought and behavior? What does honest self-examination reveal?
5. How do you relate to the reality of suffering in your own life and in the lives of those around you? Does the Reformed paradigm — which locates suffering within the larger story of creation, fall, redemption, and glorification — change the way you experience and respond to suffering?
6. Are you tempted by the primordial sin of discontent — the refusal to accept the lot in life that God has given you? What does repentance from discontent look like in your specific situation?

On Redemption

7. Have you experienced the new birth that Jesus describes in John 3 — the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit that brings new life to the spiritually dead? If you are uncertain, what would it mean to seek that certainty?
8. Do you live in the reality of your justification — the fact that, in Christ, you stand before God not as a guilty sinner but as a fully accepted, fully forgiven, positively righteous child of God? Or do you still relate to God as though your standing before Him depends on your performance?
9. Is your repentance genuine — a turning away from sin with the whole heart — or is it primarily a sorrow about consequences? What might deeper, more thoroughgoing repentance look like in an area of your life where you have settled for less?

On Glorification

- 10.** How does the eschatological hope of the resurrection and the new creation shape your day-to-day priorities? Are you investing in things that will last, or primarily in things that will pass away?
- 11.** Are you growing in your Christian life? Not in a spirit of anxious self-monitoring, but in honest acknowledgment of whether the Spirit's work of sanctification is visible in your life over time?
- 12.** What would it mean, in your specific circumstances, to live today as a citizen of heaven (Phil. 3:20) — as one whose ultimate home, ultimate loyalty, and ultimate hope are located not in this present age but in the age to come?

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About the Author

Pastor Baltazar A. Niangar is a Pastor Emeritus who holds the degrees of Th.B. (Bachelor of Theology), A.B. (Bachelor of Arts), and D.D. (Doctor of Divinity). He has devoted his life and ministry to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the theological formation of God's people, and the equipping of pastoral leaders for faithful service in the Church and in the world.

Dr. Niangar served for many years as a pastor and theological educator, and has been a leading figure in the work of Holistic Enhancement for Lay-leaders and Pastors (HELP, Inc.), a ministry organization committed to equipping the whole people of God for faithful ministry in every sphere of life. His monthly lectures to the HELP, Inc. fellowship have addressed some of the most foundational questions of the Reformed theological tradition, and this volume grows directly out of that ministry.

His theological formation reflects deep engagement with the whole of the Reformed and evangelical tradition, from the church Fathers through the magisterial Reformers to the modern Reformed theologians. Among those whose thought has most shaped his own are John Calvin, Abraham Kuyper, Louis Berkhof, Benjamin B. Warfield, Oscar Cullmann, Herman Dooyeweerd, R.C. Sproul, and Ravi Zacharias. He reads Scripture through the lens of the whole counsel of God, and teaches others to do the same.

Dr. Niangar is the author of several theological works published through Crossway, including *Spiritual Unity and Personal Diversity in Christ*, *Why God Did Decree and Allow Evil to Exist*, and *What the Christian Church Should Be*. Each of these volumes represents a different facet of his lifelong conviction that the Reformed theological

tradition — properly understood and faithfully applied — remains the most comprehensive and most biblically faithful account of the Christian faith available to the Church in any age.

He lives with his wife, Estrella, and is the father of Dr. Ellazar and Zarelle Grace. He continues to preach, teach, write, and pray for the reformation and renewal of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Soli Deo gloria.