

A
DISPENSATIONAL
THEOLOGY

Charles F. Baker



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by
CHARLES F. BAKER

Preface by
PETER VELTMAN

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PREFACE

This is a book which had to be written. Primarily, it is a labor of love from the pen of a man who spent a lifetime in its preparation.

This book had to be written for it is much-needed. Dispensationalism has been often misunderstood, frequently maligned, and that commonly without knowledge. Here is a clear presentation of the case. The tone of the presentation is entirely positive. Let the reader decide whether these things be truth, not in light of his prejudice but in light of the test of Scripture, searching it to see "whether these things be so."

The volume is written lucidly and directly, as a textbook should be written. It quotes standard sources which are accounted for in customary footnotes. Thoughts are submitted from the perspective of the author's position, clearly defined in Chapter I.

The author, a graduate of Wheaton College and Dallas Theological Seminary, has been a lifelong student of the Word and is President Emeritus of Grace Bible College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Endorsement of this work can hardly be considered objective by the undersigned. His own father also made the dispensational pilgrimage - often misunderstood and often alone. Exposure to study of the Word from this perspective for years has left its mark. In part, this introduction is a tribute to a faithful father, long since in the Glory, to which he alluded often, and the road to which he set forth always conscientiously, directly, and plainly as being solely through the vicarious blood atonement of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the greatest tribute which could be made to Mr. Baker is that he spent four years in writing this book, some twenty-five years in teaching its content with distinction, and, most convincing, a rich lifetime in living it.

Those who know Mr. Baker can certainly attest to the fact that his life has been an "epistle read of all men," the Scripturally-implied outcome for all who live faithfully by the Word.

But, as the author humbly submits in his last paragraph, the final purpose of the volume is not to garner tribute for Mr. Baker but, rather, to glorify Christ and to make Him known. The work goes forth with the prayer that the God of all Grace, Who alone is worthy of adoration, may be magnified through it.

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FOREWORD

Very few attempts have been made to produce a work on Theology which is dispensationally oriented. A survey of some two dozen standard works on the subject revealed the fact that more than half of them make no reference whatsoever to the subject of the dispensations. Most of those that do make mention of the Scriptural expression devote only the briefest reference to the subject, and their treatment of it is mainly from the viewpoint of Covenant Theology, which fails completely to recognize the distinctive character of the present dispensation, called by Paul *the dispensation of the mystery*, a plan and program of God which was kept secret from all former ages and generations ([Colossians 1:26](#)). Only one major work on Theology was found which recognized the dispensational principle in the interpretation of Scripture.

Because of the prevalent misunderstandings and misconceptions among Christians concerning the methods and results of dispensational interpretation, it was felt advisable at the outset to make some definite statements about the basic tenets upon which this book is built.

The verbal inspiration and infallibility of the entire Bible in its original manuscripts is recognized and accepted.

The entire Bible is acknowledged to be profitable for the believer today, in keeping with the words of Paul that not only is all Scripture God-breathed, it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works ([2 Timothy 3:16, 17](#)). Probably the most common distortion of the dispensational position is that it fragments the Bible, rejecting the major part of it as being for the Jews only and accepting only a few epistles from the New Testament. More will be said in the Prologue in defense of the dispensational principle.

While no part of the Bible is rejected as not being for the believer today, it is contended that not all of the Bible is addressed specifically to Christians today for their obedience. In fact, it is safe to say that no one would contend that the commands to offer animal sacrifices which are contained in the Bible are addressed to believers today for their obedience, or even that the command of Christ Himself to observe all that is bidden by those who sit in Moses' seat ([Matthew 23:1-3](#)), is applicable to the present day.

The clear distinction between Israel's earthly Messianic Kingdom and the Church which is Christ's Body is maintained throughout. The one is recognized to be the subject of all of the prophecies given from the very foundation of the world ([Acts 3:19-21](#)), and the other to have been a secret never before made known to

the sons of men in other ages and generations until it was revealed to and through the Apostle Paul ([Ephesians 3:9](#)).

It is here contended that personal salvation has always been through faith in God's Word, but that since the Bible presents a progressive revelation covering many centuries of time the object of faith has not always been the same, unless the object is said to have been God Himself and not the particular message given by God for acceptance. It should be evident from Peter's testimony in Matthew 16:16 that he was a saved man, and it is just as evident from the verses which follow and from Luke 18:31-34 that at the time Peter was completely ignorant concerning the truth of the death and resurrection of Christ, which is stated by Paul to be the very heart of the gospel of salvation in this present dispensation ([1 Corinthians 15:1-3](#)). And if this be true of the disciples who lived under the earthly ministry of Jesus, what shall be said of those who lived in the early shadow days of revelation?

It is further contended that the present dispensation began with the special revelation which was vouchsafed to the Apostle Paul before he wrote his first epistle. Some would begin this dispensation with the birth of Christ, or with the ministry of John the Baptist, or with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. However, we shall endeavor to show from the Scripture that all of the events leading up to and including Pentecost had in view the Messianic Kingdom and not the Body of Christ. In support of this argument it is necessary to see the distinctions between the various churches of the Bible. Israel is said to have been a church in Old Testament times ([Acts 7:38](#)). Christ's disciples comprised a church when He was on earth ([Matthew 18:17](#)). The church at Pentecost was a continuation of that church which Christ called His *little flock* ([Luke 12:32](#)), to which the Father would give the kingdom. The church which is the subject of the special revelation given to the Apostle Paul is designated as *the Body of Christ* and is declared to have been a mystery or secret to all former generations of mankind ([Colossians 1:24-27](#)). The church of Pentecost which was to be heir to the earthly Messianic kingdom ([Acts 1:6](#)), did not enter into that kingdom due to the rejection of Christ in resurrection by the nation of Israel ([Romans 11:7-29](#)). It is our contention that it was at this point that God raised up another apostle, independent of the Twelve, and revealed to and through him the dispensation of the mystery which concerns the Church which is Christ's Body.

In Eschatology this book holds to the pre-tribulation, premillennial coming of Christ for the members of His Body, and His second coming back to earth at the end of the Great Tribulation to establish His Millennial Kingdom. At the end of the thousand year reign of Christ Scripture indicates that there will be a Satan-inspired rebellion, which will be followed by a final resurrection and judgment at the Great White Throne. The unsaved, along with Satan and his angels, will be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death, where they will be consciously punished for the ages of the ages.

The above points give a very condensed view of the dispensational position taken by the author of this book. If any of these views seem to be strange or new to the reader, it is to be hoped that he will not close his mind to them, but will emulate the noble Bereans, and not only read and study the chapters which follow, but will also search the Scriptures to see whether these things be so.

While written as a textbook for college and seminary level of work, effort has been made to make the text useful for the layman also by avoiding as far as possible theological jargon and by Anglicizing Hebrew and Greek words. It is recommended that the Theological student consult the standard, evangelical works on Systematic Theology for more complete treatment of certain areas, as the purpose of this volume has not been to simply duplicate what capable and spiritual scholars have already written, but to give prominence to that which has been neglected, namely, the dispensational thrust of the Scriptures.

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Part One

Introduction

1 PROLOGUE

Introduction to Dispensational Interpretation

DEFINITION OF THE WORD

One dictionary defines dispensation in its theological sense as "One of the several systems or bodies of law in which at different periods God has revealed his mind and will to man, or the continued state of things resulting from the operation of one of these systems; as the Mosiac *dispensation*."¹ This definition recognizes that at different periods God has revealed His mind and will to man in various system or bodies of law. If this definition is true, then it follows that the study of Bible dispensationally will result in noting the differences or distinctions between these several systems or bodies of principles by which God has governed man, as well as in seeing the similarities. The differences, however, are much more important than the similarities from the dispensational point of view. If, for example, the automobile speed laws are the same in every state of the Union, it makes little difference whether one obeys the law for Maine or for California. But if the law differs from state to state, then it is the mark of wisdom to consult the law of the particular state in which one is driving. The difference in this case becomes important. However, some principles do not change but run throughout several or all dispensations, and it is important that these similarities be noted also.

Our English word *dispensation* is derived from the Latin. It is a translation of the Greek word of the New Testament *oikonomia*. This is a compound word composed of *oikos* (house) and *nemo* (to distribute or dispense food or laws). Liddle and *Scott's Greek-English Lexicon* defines the word: "The management of a household or family, husbandry, thrift."² The idea of thrift is derived from the wise management of a household and is reflected in our English word *economy*, which is a transliteration of *oikonomia*. An *oikonomos* is a household manager or administrator. This word is always translated *steward* in the A. V. (cf. [Luke 12:42](#); [16:1](#), [3](#), [8](#); [Romans 16:23](#); [1 Corinthians 4:1](#), [2](#); [Galatians 4:2](#); [Titus 1:7](#); [1 Peter 4:10](#)). *Oikonomia* is translated *stewardship* and *dispensation* (cf. [Luke 16: 2, 3, 4](#); [1 Corinthians 9:17](#); [Ephesians 1:10](#); [3:2, 9](#); [Colossians 1:25](#); [1 Timothy 1:4](#)). The verb form occurs but once ([Luke 16:2](#)).

¹ *The Practical Standard Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1927).

² *Greek-English Lexicon*, Liddell & Scott (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1889).

Dr. C. I. Scofield, whose Reference Bible has had a great impact in the field of dispensational interpretation, defined dispensation as "A period of time during which man is tested in respect to some *specific* revelation of the will of God."³ Dr. L. Berkhof, who admits that the word *dispensation* is a Scriptural one, contends that Dr. Scofield uses the word in an unscriptural sense. He says: "It denotes a stewardship, an arrangement, or an administration, but never a testing time or a time of probation."⁴ It is unfortunate that Dr. Scofield began his definition as a period of time, for a dispensation is not a period of time, although it must be admitted that a dispensation must take place during a certain period of time, and doubtless this is what Dr. Scofield intended to say. It is also true that the word in itself contains no thought of being a time of testing, but the words of Paul should bear some weight at this point, for he says: "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2), and it should be remembered that our Lord emphasized this same point in the parable of the unfaithful steward, (Luke 12:42-48). The steward was not the owner of the household: he was a mere servant and the master would necessarily put him to some test to prove his trustworthiness. Hence, Scofield's idea of God putting His stewards to a test is not far-fetched.

Ryrie gives what he calls a concise definition: "A dispensation is a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God's purpose."⁵ He also comments: "A dispensation is from God's viewpoint an economy; from man's, a responsibility; and in relation to progressive revelation, a stage in it."⁶

Chafer agrees with Scofield in emphasizing the time element. He says:

As a time measurement, a dispensation is a period which is identified by its relation to some particular purpose of God – a purpose to be accomplished within that period. The earlier dispensations, being so far removed in point of time from the present, are not as clearly defined as are the later dispensations. For this reason, Bible expositors are not always agreed regarding the precise features of the more remote periods.⁷

It will be observed that in the Gospel records the words steward and stewardship (or dispensation) are used in the literal, physical, and material sense; whereas Paul uses these words in the spiritual sense of God's household., It is from Paul's use of the word that dispensationalists get their authority for applying this term to other divine arrangements in other ages. If Paul could rightfully apply the word *oikonomia* to the present plan and program of God, then it should be proper to apply it to any past or future arrangements of the

³ The Scofield Reference Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 5.

⁴ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941), p.290.

⁵ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), p. 29.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁷ L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), I, p. 40.

plan and will of God. The dictionary definition, quoted earlier, recognizes this usage in speaking of the Mosaic dispensation.

NUMBER OF DISPENSATIONS

Ehlert has compiled a history of dispensationalism which traces the various views on the subject from the beginning of the Christian era to the present.⁸ The study reveals that students of the Word have broken down the entire redemptive history into anywhere from two to twelve distinct dispensations. No doubt the majority of those who call themselves dispensationalists today follow fairly closely Dr. Scofield's outline of seven dispensations. Berkhof, a covenant theologian, opposes the Scofield view and states: "On the basis of all that has been said it is preferable to follow the traditional lines by distinguishing just two dispensations or administrations, namely, that of the Old, and that of the New Testament, and to subdivide the former into several periods or stages in the revelation of the covenant of grace."⁹ Hodge, another covenant theologian, recognizes four dispensations.¹⁰ It is interesting to note that these covenant theologians who see the present order as the last of the dispensations, completely overlook the fact that Paul speaks of a dispensation which is yet future, the dispensation of the fulness of times, ([Ephesians 1:10](#)), which fact, at once brands these schemes as inadequate.

Just as with any other doctrine which man tries to formulate from the revelation of the Word, it is to be expected that there will be differences of opinion on the subject of the dispensations. Dispensationalists are no more agreed on the number and the divisions of the dispensations than they are on the doctrines of election or the second coming of Christ. Some men call themselves either non- or anti-dispensationalists, arguing that lack of agreement is proof of the falsity of the doctrine. To say the least, this is a rather immature position to take. The lack of agreement should be a challenge to more diligent study. No one man, with the exception of Christ, has had all over that truth. An open-minded, unprejudiced study should bring believers close to unity in this field. It is no mark of spirituality call one's self anti-anything that is in Scripture, simply to avoid differences or controversy.

DIFFERENT SYSTEMS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

Covenant Theology sees all of God's dealings with humanity under one of two covenants. The Covenant of Works, though not mentioned in the Bible, is supposed to be a covenant God made with Adam when He created him, under which Adam had the opportunity to earn eternal life by his good works. It is taught that Adam broke the covenant, and that he and his offspring, having

⁸ Arnold D. Ehlert, *A Bibliographic History of Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965).

⁹ Berkhof, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

¹⁰ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1940) II, p. 373.

become totally depraved, were no longer able to earn eternal life by their works. Therefore God proceeded to make a Covenant of Grace with Adam and his seed, so that everything that follows from Adam to the present and to the end of time is the outworking of this Covenant of Grace. The Mosaic Covenant, according to this view, is not a covenant of works, as Paul represents it in both Romans and Galatians, but is a part of the covenant of grace. Says Berkhof: "The covenant of Sinai was *essentially* the same as that established with Abraham, though the form differed somewhat."¹¹ This system of doctrine makes the Church of this dispensation to be spiritual Israel; it spiritualizes all of the promises of the Old Testament; it denies that Israel as a nation will ever be established in a Messianic Kingdom here on earth; it denies the truth about a Millennium; and it fails completely to recognize the truth which the Apostle Paul emphasizes, namely, that the present dispensation of the grace of God was formerly hidden in God and never before revealed to the sons of men in other ages and generations.

Most of those who call themselves dispensationalists recognize something of the uniqueness of the special revelation given to the Apostle Paul. Scofield, in an oft quoted footnote in his Bible, commenting on Paul's use of the word *mystery*, states: "The revelation of this mystery (about the church), which was foretold but not explained by Christ ([Matt.16:18](#)), was committed to Paul. In his writings alone we find the doctrine, position, walk, and destiny of the church."¹²

Scofield felt there was sufficient warrant for distinguishing seven distinct and consecutive methods of God's dealing with mankind. The purpose of these seven dispensations was to prove to man his total depravity and his complete inability to save himself. Thus God places man under every conceivable arrangement: under Innocence in Eden, under Conscience until the flood, under Human Government until Abraham, under Promise until Moses, under Law until Christ, under Grace until the Second Coming of Christ, and under the personal reign of Christ on earth in the Millennial Kingdom. Each of these dispensations is said to end in man's failure, followed by God's judgment and then a new beginning.

Considerable criticism has been leveled against this dispensational scheme, especially as represented on charts of the dispensations, which appear to be saying that the principle which characterized each of these economies ceased or became inoperative at the end of each period. This is obviously not true. Conscience did not cease with the flood; human government did not cease with the call of Abraham; the promise assuredly did not pass away with the giving of the law, for Paul plainly states that the law covenant could not disannul, "that it should make the promise of none effect" ([Galatians 3:17](#)). These facts show us that these dispensation are inter-related that many of principles injected into an earlier dispensation continue in effect throughout subsequent ones.

¹¹ Berkhof, op cit., p.297.

¹² Scofield, op. cit., p. 1252.

The Scofield scheme has also come to be known as *Acts 2 dispensationalism*, because it brings the present dispensation at the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. It is of much greater importance for us to be correctly informed about our present dispensation than about past ones; hence the importance of knowing when our dispensation began, and hence the reason for classifying dispensational views on this basis. There are many dispensationalists who believe that while Pentecost was a most important day in God's dealings with the nation of Israel, it was assuredly not the casting away of Israel and the beginning of the new and unprophesied dispensation of the mystery with its hitherto unheard of Church, the Body of Christ. These latter are divided into two groups, one believing that the new dispensation began with either the conversion or the ministry of the Apostle Paul to whom this new revelation was made, at either Acts 9 or 13, and the Other group believing that it began with Paul after Acts 28. Since there is little practical difference between the Acts 9 and the Acts 13 views, these positions are usually considered in general as one. Those who hold the Acts 2 position like to refer to those who hold the Acts 13 or Acts 28 views as extreme or ultra-dispensationalists. Ryrie, who holds the Acts 2 position, refers to those of the Acts 13 persuasion as *Moderate Ultradispensationalists*, and those who hold the Acts 28 position as *Extreme Ultradispensationalists*,¹³ although he admits that his own view is considered to be ultradispensational by antidispensationalists.¹⁴ There are thus four major groups of dispensationalists, Covenant theologians who recognize only two basic dispensations and who oppose dispensationalism as a principle of biblical interpretation, and the three groups who do recognize this principle but being the new dispensation of the mystery at either Acts 2, Acts 3, or Acts 28.

THE DISPENSATIONAL POSITION OF THIS BOOK

This book represents the position that the present dispensation began with the Apostle Paul before he wrote his first epistle. This is the position of the organization known as the Grace Gospel Fellowship. In order to justify this position it will be necessary to show the impossibility of our dispensation having begun at either Acts 2 or Acts 28. The position of Covenant Theology will be discussed more fully in the section on Ecclesiology. That section will also develop more fully the Mid-Acts position in contrast with the Early Acts and Late Acts positions.

Reasons Why This Dispensation Did Not Begin at Acts 2

1. Everything that happened at Pentecost was in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Could that which was made known to the sons of men in other generations be the same as that which was never made known to them? ([Acts 2:16](#); [3:24](#) cf. [Ephesians 3:5, 9](#); [Colossians 1:25, 26](#)).

¹³ Ryrie, *op. cit.* pp. 194, 195.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

2. The Body of Christ of this dispensation is a joint-body of Jews and Gentiles, but the ministry of Pentecost and for some seven or eight years thereafter was to the Jews only ([Ephesians 3:6](#) cf. [Acts 2:14, 22; 3:12, 25, 26; 4:8; 5:31; 11:19](#)). If it is argued that God began the Body of Christ secretly at Pentecost, not revealing it until Paul came upon the scene, it must be admitted that the message being dispensed between Pentecost and Paul was that of the prophets and not that of the Pauline revelation.

3. The Scripture states that Pentecost ushered in the last days of Israel ([Acts 2:17](#)). There is no hint that Pentecost was the first day of a new and hitherto unpredicted dispensation.

4. The first real offer of the kingdom was given to Israel after the day of Pentecost ([Acts 3:19-21](#)). Christ Himself made it very clear that He had to first suffer before the glories of the kingdom could come in ([Luke 24:26](#) cf. [1 Peter 1:11](#)). If God had already begun this present dispensation it seems highly unlikely that He would have then offered to send Jesus back to establish the kingdom of the millennial dispensation.

5. Paul teaches that it was because of Israel's being cast aside that reconciliation was sent to the Gentiles, which marked the beginning of this dispensation ([Romans 11:11, 12, 15](#)). But Israel was not cast aside at Pentecost; rather the message was sent to them first of all ([Acts 3:26](#)).

(NOTE: Those who suppose that Holy Spirit baptism is proof that the Body of Christ began at Pentecost are referred to that subject under the section on Ecclesiology).

Reasons Why This Dispensation Did Not Begin At or After Acts 28

1. The fact that Israel had already fallen is clearly set forth before the close of the Acts. In fact, it is set forth in Paul's earliest epistle ([1 Thessalonians 2:16](#)). This is why we have taken the position as stated earlier that we believe that the present dispensation began with Paul before he wrote his first epistle. [Romans 11](#) also clearly speaks of Israel's fall before Acts 28.

2. The Body of Christ of this dispensation is definitely addressed in Paul's epistles written during the Acts period ([1 Corinthians 12:13, 27; Romans 12:5](#)).

3. The mystery is likewise revealed in Paul's earlier epistles ([1 Corinthians 2:7; 15:51; Romans 16:25](#)).

4. Paul was in prison in Acts 28 for preaching the mystery ([Ephesians 6:19, 20](#)). Advocates of the Acts 28 view admit that [Ephesians](#), [Philippians](#), and [Colossians](#) were written during that imprisonment (cf. Appendix 180, *The*

Companion Bible). Paul must, therefore, have preached the mystery before Acts 28.

5. The gospel of the grace of God which is the message of the dispensation of the grace of God was the subject of Paul's preaching in [Acts 20:24](#), and he had by no means just begun that ministry.

6. There was a good work begun in the Philippian believers in Acts 16, and after Acts 28 these same believers were having the same good work carried on in themselves ([Philippians 1:5, 6](#)). There could not have been, therefore, any change of dispensation between these two points.

7. There is only one Body of Christ, according to [Ephesians 4:4](#), but if the Body of [1 Corinthians 12:13](#) is a different Body then there are two bodies.

8. Both the pre-prison and the prison epistles of Paul:

(1) Link this One Body with One Spirit and One Baptism ([Ephesians 4:4, 5](#) cf. [1 Corinthians 12:13](#)).

(2) Teach that this One Body is composed of believing Jews and Gentiles ([Ephesians 2:16](#) cf. [1 Corinthians 12:13](#)).

(3) Teach reconciliation of believing Jews and Gentiles on the basis of the Cross ([Ephesians 2:14-16](#) cf. [2 Corinthians 5:14-21](#)).

(4) Associate the message with God's purpose which He purposed before the ages ([Ephesians 1:3, 4, 9](#) cf. [1 Corinthians 2:7](#)).

Thus far the discussion concerning the dispensational position taken in this book on Theology has centered around the time of the beginning of the present dispensation. Dispensationalists generally agree that this dispensation will close with the rapture or catching up of the saints as recorded in [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#), but again three views have been held as to the time of this rapture: before, in the midst, and at the end of the seven year period of Tribulation. The first named view, that of a pre-tribulation rapture, is here considered to be the teaching of Scripture, after which God will again take up His prophetic dealings with Israel. After the Tribulation it is believed that Christ will return to earth to establish His millennial kingdom. This will be followed by a brief rebellion and concluded by the final resurrection and judgment. These topics will be fully covered under Eschatology.

In other matters this book is in general agreement with the regularly accepted view of the seven dispensations. It should be noted that the dispensations of Innocence, Conscience, Human Government, Promise, Law, and Kingdom are all closely related to God's expressed purpose of establishing a kingdom upon

this earth; whereas the present dispensation of Grace is related to His purpose for the Body of Christ in the heavenlies. It will thus be seen that the main difference between the dispensationalism of this book and that of the generally held Scofield system is the time of the beginning of this present dispensation and the casting aside of Israel.

2 RELATION OF DISPENSATIONALISM TO THEOLOGY

Theology in the broad sense of the word is the study, not only of God, but also of all of His works. God's works are usually considered as they affect man and his relationship to God. If God has dealt differently with man during the various epochs of human history, then it would appear that these differences should be of great importance in formulating a true Theology. Not only would the dispensations be taken into account as one of the doctrines of Scripture, but an effort would be made to see and to understand man's particular dispensational relationship to God in any given period of history under consideration.

In order to establish a relationship between dispensationalism and Theology it must be shown that God has indeed dealt differently with men at different periods of human history. Some reference has already been made to this fact, but in what sense has God dealt differently? When we say that God dealt differently with Moses than He did with Noah, do we mean that He gave Moses a different way to be saved than He did to Noah? Was Abel saved by obeying his conscience? Was Moses or David saved by keeping the Ten Commandments? Were the disciples saved by living up to the Sermon on the Mount? By stating that men were subjected to various tests during the course of the dispensations, do we mean that mankind is still on probation? The above questions have been asked because it is evident that many opponents of dispensationalism have supposed that this is what dispensationalists teach. Berkhof, for example, states:

According to the usual representation of this theory man is on probation right along. He failed in the first test and thus missed the reward of eternal life, but God was compassionate and in mercy gave him a new trial. Repeated failures led to repeated manifestations of the mercy of God in the introduction of new trials, which, however, kept man on probation all the time. This is not equivalent to saying that God *in justice* holds the natural man to the condition of the covenant of works--which is perfectly true--but that God *in mercy and compassion*--and therefore seemingly to save--gives man one chance after another to meet the varying conditions, and thus to obtain eternal life by rendering obedience to God.¹⁵

Dr. Berkhof is one of the very few theologians who has taken the trouble to even deal with the subject of dispensationalism, and it is evident from the above quotation that he has either been reading some dispensationalists who were

¹⁵ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941), p. 291.

deeply in error, or he has failed to grasp what dispensationalists were trying to say. The fact of the matter is that many dispensationalists have gone out of their way to explain that this is exactly what they do not believe. In fact, Berkhof quotes Bullinger, whom many consider to be extreme in his dispensational views: "Man was then (in the first dispensation) what is called 'under probation.' This marks off that Administration sharply and absolutely; for *man is not now under probation*. To suppose that he is so, is a popular fallacy which strikes at the root of the doctrines of grace. Man has been tried and tested, and has proved to be a ruin."¹⁶ Ryrie quotes a number of well known dispensationalists who say the same thing.¹⁷ A quotation from Pettingill perhaps expresses the point as clearly as could be stated: "Salvation has always been, as it is now, purely a gift of God in response to faith. The dispensational tests served to show man's utter helplessness, in order to bring him to faith, that he might be saved by grace through faith plus nothing."¹⁸ In the face of these plain statements it is difficult to understand how or why Berkhof and other covenant theologians continue to make such accusations.

Actually it is the covenant theologian who teaches that there have been two ways of salvation. It is taught that God made a Covenant of Works with Adam before he fell, whereby Adam could earn eternal life by his own works. After Adam fell it became impossible for him to gain eternal life by works, and so God then made a Covenant of Grace with Adam and we are told that every one from that day to this has been saved by believing the same gospel message.

This so-called Covenant of Works, which is a basic concept in Covenant Theology, is not to be found in Scripture. Berkhof admits that "it is perfectly true that no such promise is explicitly recorded," and "it is perfectly true that Scripture contains no explicit promise of eternal life to Adam."¹⁹ Cocceius and Turretin invented this teaching back in the seventeenth century and it has since become a dogma of the Reformed bodies. It is true that Adam's obedience was tested by the command: "Thou shalt not eat of it," (Genesis 2:17), but there is no suggestion that Adam had to earn eternal life. He was created with life. He was not created in a lost condition wherein he needed to obtain life. He had life as a gift from God, but his continuance in that life depended upon his obedience to God.

It is no doubt true that Scripture recognizes a potential way of salvation by works, but it is equally true that no one has ever been able to attain to it by that means. Paul in Romans 2 argues for the righteous judgment of God. He says: "Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life." But in the next chapter he proves that neither Jew nor Gentile by nature is

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

¹⁷ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), pp. 113-115.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 114, 115.

¹⁹ Berkhof, *op. cit.*, pp. 21B, 216.

seeking after God: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." This, then, is only a potential way of salvation: man's utter depravity makes it impossible of attainment. Dispensationalists do not teach that God had different ways of saving people in different dispensations, and they surely do not teach that God has been experimenting in the various dispensations to see whether man might be able to save himself by one means or another. They do teach, however, that man in the various dispensations has been called upon to manifest his faith in different ways. God did not tell Abel, or Noah, or Abram, or Moses, or David to believe the same message that Paul told the Philippian jailer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." But all of these men believed the message that God gave them and they were all saved on the basis of faith.

It must be admitted by all that in former times men were accepted or rejected before God on the basis of the sacrifice they offered. Cain's vegetable sacrifices were rejected because they were not offered in faith. Now, were men in those days saved by animal sacrifices? Did these sacrifices have anything to do with their salvation? If man was saved by grace through faith apart from any ceremony, as he is today, what was the purpose of offering animal sacrifices? And could a man have been saved who refused to offer the sacrifices which God had prescribed? Since the breaking of one of the commandments was equivalent to breaking the whole law ([James 2:10](#)), and since every one who broke the law was under the curse ([Galatians 3:10](#)), and since every Israelite was guilty of breaking at least one of the commandments, every Israelite must have been under the curse. Could one under the curse be saved? If so, how?

The answer to these and similar questions is difficult and involved, and that for several reasons. When one reads of salvation and of being saved in the Old Testament and even in the Gospels, he discovers that the salvation is usually from physical enemies, disease, or death. When Peter cried, "Lord, save me" ([Matthew 14:30](#)), he was not thinking about salvation from sin: he was sinking in the water and asked to be saved from drowning. When the father of John the Baptist prophesied, the emphasis was upon the physical side of salvation. He declared that God "hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David: as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began; that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us " ([Luke 1:69-71](#)). When Jonathan spoke of "the great salvation" which the Lord had wrought for all Israel ([1 Samuel 19:5](#)), he was referring to David's slaying of Goliath. Also, the Old Testament does not ask the question: "What must I do to be saved?" And it does not answer it clearly either. A third thing that complicates the problem is the fact that in the Old Testament God was dealing both with the nation of Israel and with individuals within that nation. Part of the ritual was a collective work for the whole nation, such as the great covenant sacrifice of [Exodus 24:1-8](#) and the sacrifices of the annual day of

atonement of [Leviticus 16:5-22](#); other sacrifices were offered by individuals. What effect did the national sacrifices have upon the individual's salvation, if any, and was there any advantage of being a circumcised Israelite rather than an uncircumcised Gentile?

It is to be hoped that most of these questions will be satisfactorily resolved under the study of Soteriology, but this much has been said to show the necessity of considering the doctrine dispensationally in order to rightly understand it. And what is true of the doctrine of salvation is true of practically every other great doctrine of the Bible.

In conclusion it should be said that dispensational truth has more to do with the religious or spiritual program for God's people than it does with basic salvation. Many practical questions could be asked concerning God's program for the Church today in the light of all that God has commanded throughout the ages. For example, should it build a tabernacle or temple? Should it have candlesticks and burn incense? Should it have holy days and celebrate feasts at the new moon? Should it heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, and raise the dead? Should its preachers go out two by two, and provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in their purses, nor scrip for their journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves? Should its members speak with tongues? Should it baptize for the remission of sins? Should its members eat only fruits and vegetables? Should they obey the dietary regulations of Leviticus 11, or may they eat pork and rabbit and catfish? Should they assemble on the sabbath or on Sunday? Should they sell all of their possessions and have everything in common? All of these things were at one time or other a part of God's program for His people. Upon what principle is it to be decided which, if any, of the above things should be included in the program of the Church, if not upon a dispensational one?

Dr. Chafer's words form a fitting conclusion to this chapter on the relation of dispensationalism to Theology:

God's program is as important to the theologian as the blueprint to the builder or the chart to the mariner. Without the knowledge of it, the preacher must drift aimlessly in doctrine and fail to a large degree in his attempts to harmonize and utilize the Scriptures. Doubtless a spiritually minded person who does not know the divine program may discern isolated spiritual truths, much as one might enjoy a point of rare color in a painting without observing the picture itself or the specific contribution which that color makes to the whole.

In spite of its importance as one of the qualifying features of doctrine, Systematic Theology, as set forth generally in textbook, is without recognition of the divine program of the ages.²⁰

²⁰ L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), I, p. xiii.

3 WHY THEOLOGY?

The question may be asked: Why study Theology? Is not the Bible by itself a sufficient guide for the believer? Is not Theology simply man's ideas and reasonings, whereas the Bible is God's divine revelation? What can Theology teach us that the Bible cannot? These and similar questions are legitimate and deserve an answer.

1. To begin with, Theology is not a substitute for the Bible. True Christian Theology is constructed basically upon the teachings of the Bible. A certain mastery of the Bible is a prerequisite to the study of Theology. Theology in its narrowest sense is the science or study of God. In its broadest sense it includes the study, not only of God, but of all of the relationships which exist between God and His universe. Theology may be thought of as a systematizing of the teachings of the Bible.

2. The Bible is not a textbook or encyclopedia. It is a book containing many facts which may be compared with the building materials for a house. A pile of bricks and lumber and hardware may contain everything essential to the construction of a house, but it cannot be called a house until each piece is fitted together according to plan. This is not to say that the Bible is a jumble of incoherent statements. Bricks, lumber, and hardware may be piled in a very orderly arrangement before being assembled. The materials of the Bible were delivered, so to speak, over a period of more than fifteen centuries. This makes it necessary to go through the Bible over and over again to ascertain all that it has to say upon each subject which it treats. Knowledge which is classified is always more valuable than that which exists as isolated islands. Man has known certain facts about electricity and magnetism for thousands of years, but it is only since he has made a science of these things that he has learned to use them to the best advantage. The Bible reveals many facts about God, man, sin, and a host of other things all the way from Genesis to Revelation. By assembling, classifying, and drawing conclusions from these facts our knowledge is greatly enhanced.

3. Partial knowledge, like partial truth, may be a very dangerous thing. Pope's dictum: "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing," may well apply here. Few people would want to submit to a surgeon who was ignorant of physiology or any one of the other sciences which are essential to the practice of surgery. He who handles the Bible is dealing with life and death situations of even greater and graver importance than confronts the surgeon. Lack of knowledge here could lead to eternal loss.

4. The dispensational character of the Bible produces many seeming contradictions which can only be resolved by a systematic study. For example, the Bible in one place limits man's diet to fruits and vegetables; in another place it grants him the right to eat of every moving thing that liveth; and in yet another

place it limits the kinds of meat which may be eaten. In one place the Bible commands circumcision with the warning that the uncircumcised man would be cut off from God's people; in another place man is told that if he is circumcised Christ will profit him nothing. In one place preachers are told to go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; in another they are told to go to all mankind without distinction. These and a host of other seeming contradictions and inconsistencies are resolved through a systematic and dispensational interpretation of Scripture.

5. The progressive character of revelation in the Bible makes necessary a systematic study of each doctrine. The Old Testament emphasizes the unity of God. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord" (Deuteronomy 6:4). The New Testament recognizes three as God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These statements are not contradictory. The New Testament is a more complete revelation of the one God who exists in three personal distinctions.

6. It would appear that God has made man's mind so that it cannot rest until it has harmonized and systematized the facts of knowledge. One may object that he doesn't need Theology, that he has a thorough knowledge of the Bible, that he has read it through many times and has tried to discover all it has to say about God, man, sin, and salvation, but without being aware of the fact, this man has been engaged all along in formulating a Theology. Strong quotes Richie: "Just those persons who disclaim metaphysics are sometimes most apt to be infected with the disease they profess to abhor - and not know when they have it."²¹

7. The Scriptures encourage a thorough and systematic study of truth. The Bereans were praised for searching the Scriptures daily to see whether those things which they had heard were true ([Acts 17:11](#)). Christ told the Jews to search the Scriptures ([John 5:39](#)). Paul told us to compare spiritual things with spiritual ([1 Corinthians 2:13](#)). Paul told Timothy: "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:13, 15, 16). Timothy was commissioned to be a teacher as well as a preacher of the Word. A teacher of the Word must know the doctrines of the Word.

8. Finally, the Scriptures speak of becoming established in the truth. The special ministry of teaching-pastors is "the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministering, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:12-14). People who are not well-grounded in the great doctrines of the Word are an easy prey to religious cultists. A person must know what he

²¹ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1912), p. 16.

believes and why he believes it, and this calls for much more than simply quoting isolated verses of Scripture.

Although it was stated earlier that the Bible is not a textbook of Theology, it should be pointed out that there are portions, especially in Paul's epistles, which stand out as theological treatises. For example, the first five chapters of Romans treat quite fully the doctrine of justification by faith. Here Paul goes back and gathers together the facts of revelation all the way from Abraham, Moses, and David to the then present, and from those facts draws the conclusion: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28). Paul's question: "What saith the scripture?" (Romans 4:3), is basic to the formulation of doctrine, and the fact that Paul himself thus formulated doctrine is further authority for our practice of the same.

OBJECTIONS TO THEOLOGY

Thiessen quotes Orr:

Every one must be aware that there is at the present time a *great prejudice against doctrine* - or, as it is often called "dogma"-in religion; a great distrust and dislike of clear and systematic thinking about divine things. Men prefer, one cannot help seeing, to live in a region of haze and indefiniteness in regard to these matters. They want their thinking to be fluid and indefinite--something that can be changed with the times, and with the new lights which they think are being constantly brought to bear upon it, continually taking on new forms, and leaving the old behind.²²

The main objection from one quarter is that so-called knowledge of God is purely subjective, and therefore relative and lacking in authority. The Bible is rejected as an authoritative revelation, and it is thus claimed that there is no real basis for Theology. From another quarter comes the objection that Theology is theoretical, intellectual, and formal, rather than inspirational, devotional, and practical. Paul has been quoted as supporting this charge: "for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Corinthians 3:6), as though Paul meant by *letter*, doctrinal teaching! Doctrines may be discussed in a cold and unspiritual manner, but this is no fault of the doctrine but of the persons involved. On the other hand, emotionalism apart from doctrine may lead to fanaticism. Strong says that ignorance is the mother of superstition, not of devotion, and he quotes Talbot W. Chambers: "Doctrine without duty is a tree without fruits: duty without doctrine is a tree without roots."²³ Anything professing to be Scriptural doctrine which is not spiritual and practical is either false or it represents a very incomplete induction of the facts.

²² Henry C. Thiessen, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), p. 23.

²³ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

God has placed no premium on ignorance. Through ignorance of Scriptural doctrine many people mistake emotionalism for spirituality, snobbishness for separation, and religious activity for service. The value of knowledge is stressed throughout the Bible. Although we are not saved by knowledge, it should be remembered that in order to be saved there must first be the knowledge of sin and its consequences, and of the sufficiency of Christ's redeeming work, and this is the beginning of Theology.

There is no doubt that the Christian must constantly be on guard against anything that would deaden his spiritual life, but he should be assured that nothing is better fitted to mature and strengthen his spiritual life than true doctrinal study and understanding of God's Word. The most virile Christian testimonies have come from those who have been well instructed doctrinally. Thiessen makes the following observation:

Oratorical, textual, or topical preaching may bind the congregation to the preacher; but when the preacher leaves the people also leave. Joseph Parker and T. DeWitt Talmadge may be cited as men of great oratorical powers who built up large congregations by their oratory; but City Temple in London fell into the hands of R. J. Campbell, the founder of the New Theology, soon after Parker's death, and the Brooklyn Tabernacle into the hands of Charles T. Russell and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.²⁴

Chafer reminds us that "While it is true that the Bible is the source of the material which enters into Systematic Theology, it is equally true that the function of Systematic Theology is to unfold the Bible,"²⁵ and he argues for an "unabridged" study of Theology for the ministerial candidate, simply because a part of anything is never equivalent to its whole.²⁶

4 SOURCES AND DIVISIONS OF THEOLOGY

SOURCES

Human knowledge stems from four main sources: Intuition, Tradition, Science, and Revelation. Theology makes use of knowledge from all four sources, although Revelation is the chief and only authoritative source.

1. INTUITION: This is what we might call direct knowledge. This is not to say that man is born with a set of facts implanted in his mind which he knows apart from experience. Rather it is a kind of knowledge which must be assumed in order to make possible any observation or reflection.

²⁴ Thiessen, *op. cit.*, pp. 29, 30.

²⁵ L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), p. viii.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xi.

Strong classifies first truths under three heads:

(1) intuitions of relations, as space and time; (2) intuitions of principles, as substance, cause, final cause, right; and (3) intuition of absolute Being, Power, Reason, Perfection, Personality, as God.

And he continues,

"We hold that, as upon occasion of the senses cognizing (a) extended matter, (b) succession, (c) qualities, (d) change, (e) order, (f) action, respectively, the mind cognizes (a) space, (b) time, (c) substance, (d) cause, (e) design, (f) obligation, so upon occasion of our cognizing our finiteness, dependence and responsibility, the mind directly cognizes the existence of an Infinite and Absolute Authority, Perfection, Personality, upon whom we are dependent and to whom we are responsible.²⁷

2. TRADITION: In this context we mean by tradition all knowledge which has been handed down to us which we ourselves have not personally experienced. All of our knowledge of the past falls into this category. In this sense, even the revelation contained in the Bible and passed down to us is called tradition ([see 1 Corinthians 11:2, A.S.V.](#)). Most of what we read in the daily press or hear from news broadcasts must also be included under this heading. No doubt the major part of our total knowledge has been transmitted to us in this manner and we accept or reject it depending upon the strength of evidence which accompanies it.

3. SCIENCE: By science is meant, not only that knowledge which has come through the various science disciplines, but all knowledge which we individually gain through personal experiences. Tradition may be thought of as second-hand knowledge; experience as first-hand knowledge. A student may learn from his text-book that water is composed of two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen. This is accurate knowledge, although second-hand. But when he goes into the laboratory and decomposes water by electrolysis and measures and identifies the resultant gases this knowledge becomes first-hand and personal. Such knowledge carries with it the strongest assurance of truth.

4. REVELATION: By revelation is meant a special act of God whereby He makes known to man truth that could not otherwise be known. For example, no man was present to observe the creation of the universe. Therefore the best man can do by himself is to speculate on how it came into being. With all of his probings and scientific know-how he could never be sure that he had the right answer. The Bible purports to make known by revelation how God created all things in the beginning. Whereas experiential knowledge appears to be the most convincing type, only Revelation assures of absolute truth. Apart from Revelation

²⁷ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1907), p. 52.

there might be absolute truth, but man could possess no absolute knowledge that it was so. But it should be remembered that although the Bible presents absolute truth, our understanding and comprehension of it is incomplete and relative, otherwise there would be no point in studying it.

All knowledge that comes from tradition and experience is relative, limited, and uncertain. Scientific theories are in a state of constant flux. New facts are constantly being discovered which modify our knowledge of history. Even our senses are not always reliable. Under certain circumstances straight lines appear as curves; materials change color under lights of differing spectral contents; the application of heat may give a sensation of cold; and who has not felt the frustration of trying to maintain one's balance while going through a "crazy house," designed to produce every conceivable optical illusion.

We believe that if God willed to reveal His truth to man, He was able to do so in such a way that that truth would be communicated in an inerrant manner, overcoming the limitations and shortcomings of human nature, so that man would possess an objective, reliable and infallible record. Our purpose here is not to defend or to give evidence for Revelation-that will be done in a future chapter - but to simply mention it as one of the sources of human knowledge and the chief source of theology.

DEFINITION AND DIVISIONS OF THEOLOGY

THEOLOGY (Gk. *theologia*), lit. the 'Science of God'. In its Christian sense it is the science of the Divinely revealed religious truths. Its theme is the Being and Nature of God and His Creatures and the whole complex of the Divine dispensation from the Fall of Adam to the Redemption through Christ and its mediation to men by His Church, including the so-called natural truths of God, the soul, the moral Law, etc., which are accessible to mere reason. Its purpose is the investigation of the contents of belief by means of reason enlightened by faith (*tides quaerens intellectum*) and the promotion of its deeper understanding. Catholic theology differs from Protestant theology in that it also admits the authority of tradition, the utterances of which are accounted binding, whereas Protestant theology, insofar as it is conservative, is circumscribed by the Biblical revelation. Liberal Protestant theologians, however, recognize the existence of no revelation except insofar as it is confirmed by the conscience and reason of the believer. In the course of time theology has developed into several branches, among them dogmatic, historical, and practical theology. The methods of classification of the sub-disciplines, however, fluctuate in different theological systems.²⁸

²⁸ *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 1344.

As noted in the last sentence of the above definition, methods of dividing the general field of Theology differ. Strong gives a four-fold division: Biblical Theology, Historical Theology, Systematic Theology, and Practical Theology.²⁹ A. A. Hodge proposes six divisions: Sciences auxiliary to the study of Theology, Apologetics, Exegetical Theology, Systematic Theology, Practical Theology, and Historical Theology.³⁰ Chafer lists twelve uses of the word: Natural Theology, Revealed Theology, Biblical Theology, Theology Proper, Historical Theology, Dogmatic Theology, Speculative Theology, Old Testament Theology, New Testament Theology, Pauline, Johannine, Petrine Theologies, Practical Theology, and Systematic or Thetic Theology.³¹ Thiessen classifies the field: Exegetical Theology (which includes the study of Biblical Languages, Biblical Archaeology, Biblical Introduction, Biblical Hermeneutics, and Biblical Theology); Historical Theology (embracing Biblical History, Church History, History of Missions, History of Doctrine, and History of Creeds and Confessions); Systematic Theology (including Apologetics, Polemics, and Biblical Ethics); and Practical Theology (embracing Homiletics, Church Organization and Administration, Liturgics or the Program of Worship, Christian Education, and Missions).³²

It will be helpful at this point to try to define more completely the content and methodology of these sub-disciplines of Theology.

1. BIBLICAL THEOLOGY: This term has had various usages. Some have used it of any theology claiming to be based solely upon the Bible. Others have made it mean a more popular presentation of doctrine, as opposed to a scholastic or ecclesiastical one. Still others apply it to the early creed of the apostolic age in contrast to the developments of the history of doctrine. Theologians, however, give the term a more technical meaning.

Strong says: "Biblical Theology aims to arrange and classify the facts of revelation, confining itself to the Scriptures for its material, and treating of doctrine only so far as it was developed at the close of the apostolic age."³³

Ryrie states: "Biblical Theology is that branch of theological science which deals systematically with the historically conditioned progress of self-revelation of God as deposited in the Bible." He further describes it as "a combination partly historical, partly exegetical, partly critical, partly theological concerned with the reason why a thing was written as well as with what was written."³⁴

²⁹ Strong, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-43.

³⁰ A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Ass'n, 1878), pp. 17, 18.

³¹ L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), I, pp. 4, 5.

³² Henry C. Thiessen, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), p. 46.

³³ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

³⁴ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), p. 12.

Lindsay remarks: "The importance of Biblical Theology lies in the way it directs, corrects and fructifies all moral and dogmatic theology by bringing it to the original founts of truth. Its spirit is one of impartial historical inquiry."³⁵

Kaehler has this to say: "Biblical Theology, or the orderly presentation of the doctrinal contents of Scripture, is a comparatively modern branch of theological science. In general the term expresses not so much the construction of a theology which is Biblical in an especial sense as a method of dealing with Biblical matter which is midway between exegesis and dogmatics." He says that at the beginning the aim was to make the Bible the only and sole source of Christian doctrine by allowing it to speak for itself, but that a one-sided maintenance of the historical and religious-historical method in the hands of liberal theologians resulted in what he calls, "the self-immolation of the discipline." He therefore goes on to say: "Accordingly it is not the task of Biblical Theology to criticize the theology of the Bible and to judge it by the measure of a probable understanding of the original to be obtained scientifically but to show as a matter of fact what the contents of the Bible are and at the same time to bring into view the different forms and shapes in which these contents are offered."³⁶

2. DOGMATIC THEOLOGY: This term has also had various meanings assigned to it. It is often identified with Systematic Theology, but originally it had to do with the setting forth and defense of the doctrines of a particular church body or denomination. In Greek Theology, dogma and doctrine meant the same thing. The word *dogma* is used five times in the New Testament and translated *decree* and *ordinance* (cf. [Luke 2:1](#); [Acts 16:4](#); [17:7](#); [Ephesians 2:15](#); [Colossians 2:14](#)). Dogma is derived from *dokeo*, which means to be of opinion, to think, to suppose, to come to a conclusion, so that dogma has not only the sense of an opinion, but of a judgment or decree that such and such is true or binding.

Strong makes a clear distinction between Dogmatic and Systematic Theology:

Systematic Theology is to be clearly distinguished from Dogmatic Theology. Dogmatic Theology is, in strict usage, the systematizing of the doctrines as expressed in the symbols of the church (by which he means confessions, creeds, articles of faith, etc.), together with the grounding of these in the Scriptures, and the exhibition, so far as may be, of their rational necessity. Systematic Theology begins, on the other hand, not with symbols, but with the Scriptures. It asks first, not what the church has believed, but what is the truth of God's revealed word.³⁷

Berkhof expresses a different view. He says that the term *dogmatics*

³⁵ James Lindsay, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Chicago: The Howard Severance Company, 1915), I, p. 470.

³⁶ M. Kaehler, *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949) II, p. 183.

³⁷ Strong, *op. cit.*, pp 41, 42.

is preferable even to the much used name of *systematic theology*, (1) because it is more specific and designates the real object of the study with greater precision, and (2) because the modifier 'systematic' is apt to give the impression that the study under consideration is the only theological study which treats the subject-matter in logical order...³⁸

He makes the following remarks about dogmas:

a dogma is a *doctrine officially* defined by the Church and declared to rest upon divine authority.³⁹ Personal opinions, however true and valuable they may be, do not constitute Christian dogmas.⁴⁰ The question may arise, what church body has the power to determine what must be believed ... Reformed Churches particularly have always stressed the fact that every local church is a complete representation of the Church of Jesus Christ, and therefore also has the *potestas dogmatica* or *docendi*, the power to determine what shall be recognized as dogma in her own circle.⁴¹ While they (Protestant churches) demand acceptance of their dogmas, because they regard them as correct formulations of Scripture truth, they admit the possibility that the Church may have been in error in defining the truth. And if dogmas are found to be contrary to the Word of God, they cease to be authoritative.⁴²

3. SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: Of necessity, something has already been said about this discipline. Strong states: "*Systematic Theology* takes the material furnished by Biblical and Historical Theology, and with this material seeks to build up into an organic and consistent whole all our knowledge of God and of the relations between God and the universe, whether this knowledge be originally derived from nature or from the Scriptures."⁴³

Chafer submits this definition: "Systematic Theology may be defined as the collecting, scientifically arranging, comparing, exhibiting, and defending all facts from any and every source concerning God and His works."⁴⁴

4. HISTORICAL THEOLOGY: This discipline is practically equivalent to the History of Christian Doctrine. It traces the development of Christian doctrine from the apostolic age to the present.

5. PRACTICAL THEOLOGY: This branch of Theology deals with those disciplines which have to do with the preparation of men to propagate the

³⁸ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941), p. 12.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.25.

⁴³ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁴⁴ Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 6.

message of Theology and the means and methods of accomplishing it. Even in this area dispensational considerations play an important role. The Lord told His disciples: "Take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak" (Matthew 10:19). Does this command apply to the present, or should ministerial students prepare themselves in a Bible College or Seminary? Again, the Lord sent His disciples out two by two (Mark 6:7). Is this God's will for preachers today? Many other questions might be asked concerning both methods and message for ministers of the Gospel, which can only be answered from a dispensational consideration of the Scriptures.

5 CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY

Hordern has described the contemporary theological scene in these words:

If an uninitiated layman or parish clergyman walked in on a modern theological discussion, he might believe that he had entered some 'Alice in Wonderland' territory. He would find theologians seriously asking if the 'kerygmatic Christ' (i.e., the Christ preached by the Church) is the same as the Jesus of history. He would hear some arguing that Christian faith has no interest in the historical Jesus. He would hear that faith can be neither helped nor hindered by knowledge of the historical Jesus.⁴⁵

And we might add, he would hear a host of other strange things, all the way from the demythologization of the Scriptures to Christian atheism and God is dead.

To analyze the modern scene in depth would require many volumes, and the student will find that many volumes have been written on this subject. In the limited space of this chapter only the most limited treatment can be given, with the purpose simply to acquaint the student with some of the major trends away from orthodox theology. One hears of many approaches to the Bible: Historicism, Literary Analysis, Form Criticism, Historical Relativism, etc., etc. Numerous labels have been given to systems of modern theology: Modernism, Liberalism, Neo-orthodoxy, Neo-liberalism, Bultmannism, Crisis Theology, Barthianism, Neo-evangelicalism, Conservatism, Fundamentalism, etc. To gain an understanding of the ferment that is going on in the theological world one must be familiar with the teachings of such men as Friedrich Schleiermacher, Soren Kierkegaard, Immanuel Kant, Adolph Harnack, Ernst Troeltsch, Albert Schweitzer, Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Martin Heidegger, Rudolf Bultmann, Harvey Cox, Paul Tillich, Reinhold Niebuhr, and a host of others, all of whom are outside the conservative camp.

We should use great care in pinning labels upon particular persons, unless that label is derived from his own name, such as Bultmannianism. Bultmann,

⁴⁵ William Hordern, *New Directions in Theology Today* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), I, p. 56.

Brunner, and Barth have been grouped together as Neo-orthodox, and yet there is a wide gulf between the views of these men. E. J. Carnell, Carl Henry, and Dewey Beegle have been classified as Neo-evangelicals, and yet they differ considerably in their views of the inerrancy of the Scriptures. We may refer to Pentecostals, Nazarenes, and Dispensationalists as Fundamentalists, and yet there are areas of wide divergence in their doctrines and practices. It is doubtless unwise and unfair to categorize men with such labels and then either condemn or justify them by association. When labels are used they should be well-defined and care should be taken to make sure that the individual actually comes under that definition.

THE BASIC DIFFERENCE

There are many differences between the various theologies which are extant today and it would be difficult to find a simple means of distinguishing them. However, it would appear that the one basic difference between all Protestant, orthodox, conservative, evangelical, fundamental theology and all other systems is that of attitude toward the Bible. Those who hold to the traditional-Protestant orthodox view of the Bible, that it is an inerrant and infallible revelation from God in its original writing, are in basic agreement in their theological systems. Their differences are over the *interpretation* of certain truths, such as the time of Christ's second coming, but not on the *fact* of His second coming. On the other hand, those who deny the verbal inspiration of the Bible, either in part or in whole, produce theologies based upon some other source than divine revelation.

But what has caused many theologians to turn away from the Bible as a divinely inspired book? Basically, the cause is to be found in the scientism of the day, working hand in hand with a fallen, depraved nature. Science has sought to explain everything as natural phenomena. Modern man feels that Science is a sort of savior, before whose shrine he should bow down in humble obeisance. Whether it be the healing of the body, control of the forces of nature, space travel, or hope for the future, mankind has turned to science for its answers and in so doing has turned away from a personal God as unnecessary and as a rather bothersome idea. Much that was once thought to be only in the domain of God's power and control is now manipulated by science. Science hopes to create life and control genetic inheritance factors, and when and if this occurs the average person will feel that man himself is God. Such a situation as this in a future day is described in [2 Thessalonians 2:2, 4](#). Not only has mankind come to trust explicitly in Science for what it can do, but they have come to feel that it is unscientific to believe in a personal, extra-mundane God who has control over the forces of nature.

HISTORICAL CRITICISM

In this scientific age the Bible has been subjected to certain types of criticism with an apparent purpose at the outset to disprove the authority and historicity of

the various books of the canon. One such attempt which has had devastating effects upon the faith of many is what is called Historical Criticism. It is also known as Higher Criticism, and, because of its results, as Destructive Criticism. It should be understood that the word *Criticism*, as used in this context, does not mean to find fault with, but rather to apply principles or rules for judging the character of a piece of literature. Lower or Textual Criticism is concerned with the examination of all of the extant ancient manuscripts of the Scripture and through a comparison of them to arrive at a text which is as near as possible to the original. Higher Criticism is not higher in the sense of superiority. Rather it is higher in order: arriving at the exact text comes first, followed by a criticism which examines the contents of the Scripture with reference to composition, authorship, date, and historical value as judged by internal evidence. It should be pointed out that both of these types of criticism are good and valuable when carried out properly. But, as Orr points out:

Criticism goes wrong when used recklessly, or under the influence of some dominant theory or prepossession. A chief cause of error in its application to the record of a supernatural revelation is the assumption that nothing supernatural can happen. This is the vitiating element in much of the newer criticism, both of the O. T. and of the N. T.⁴⁶

Biblical Criticism will be enlarged upon under the heading of Bibliology, but suffice it here to say that the school of Higher Criticism fell into the control of men who did approach the Bible on the basis that nothing supernatural could happen, and with all of their boasted scholarship proved to their own satisfaction that the supernatural elements of the Bible had to be ruled out. They denied the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. They dated the prophetic books much later than the traditional dates in order to nullify the predictive element in them. They placed the priestly code (Leviticus) after the Babylonian captivity. Baur developed the theory that two antagonistic parties developed in the New Testament Church, headed by Peter and Paul respectively, and that the Acts was written a century later to try to palliate the differences. Only four of Paul's epistles were regarded as genuine and John was dated about 170 A.D. Orr further states:

"On the other hand, a new and intensely aggressive radical school has recently come to the front, the so-called 'historical-critical,' which treats the text and history of the Gospels generally with a recklessness to which no limits can be put. It is even doubted if Jesus claimed to be the Messiah (Wrede). Sayings are accepted, rejected, or mutilated at pleasure.⁴⁷

Orr expressed the belief that "these excesses may be depended on to cure themselves," but since his day Historical Criticism has gone to even greater excesses.

⁴⁶ James Orr, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Chicago: The Howard Severance Company, 1915), II, p.749.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, II, p. 753.

BULTMANNISM

One of the radical theological systems of the day is that developed by Rudolf Bultmann and known chiefly for its tenet of demythologizing the Scriptures. Bultmann claims that the supernatural elements in the Bible, such as the bodily resurrection of Christ, are myths. Myths are defined by him as, "the use of imagery to express the otherworldly in terms of this world and the divine in terms of human life, the other side in terms of this side."⁴⁸ Bultmann claims that the resurrection of Christ is not an historical event. Most people would define an historical event as one that actually occurred at a certain place and time. However, those who use the Historical- Critical method of criticism do not define history in exactly this manner. History is not simply what a historian has written in a book. Such accounts may contain legends and myths, as does much of ancient history that has come down to us. These elements must be sifted out. Now these critics have treated the Bible just the same as they would any other ancient book, as a purely human production. Before anything in the Bible can be considered historical the critics must sift out all of the legend and myth. But what kind of a sifter do they use? Their first principle is that of historical continuity: historic events must have historical causes. Their second principle is that of analogy: studying analogous events in the culture of the times.

While a historical cause can be found for the death of Christ (He was put to death by the Roman governor), and by studying analogous events we know that many others were put to death in those days by crucifixion, there is no historical cause for His resurrection. (We believe that His resurrection was caused by a power outside of history, by the supernatural power of God). And there is no analogous event in history with which to compare His resurrection. (We believe it was unique). The critics tell us that experience and science agree that dead people do not come back to life. Therefore the critic concludes that the dead body of Jesus could not have come back to life, hence the resurrection accounts in the New Testament are myths which must be sifted out. But according to Bultmann, the myth of the resurrection has been used in Scripture to express the "otherworldly" in terms of "this world." He says that the resurrection of Christ takes place in the kerygma, that is, when the gospel is preached Jesus is present. Bultmann, along with others, seems to feel that science has spoken the last word, hence its canons must be applied to the Bible record to free it of everything unscientific before man in this enlightened age can accept it. But, of course, when everything supernatural is removed from the Bible there is not much left for the modern man.

Had modern man been living in Egypt at the time of the Exodus or in Israel during the earthly ministry of our Lord, he would have been much aware of supernatural miracles, but in this present day he has taken up the old atheistic

⁴⁸ Rudolf Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth*, p. 10, by George E. Ladd, *Christian Faith and Modern Theology* (New York: Channal Press, 1964), p. 279.

slogan: The fact that miracles are not happening today is proof that they never did happen. The answer to this problem is a dispensational one. Sir Robert Anderson addressed himself to this problem in his book, *The Silence of God*, and gave a very satisfactory answer to why outward, physical miracles do not occur today, based largely upon the dispensational character of God's dealings with the nation of Israel. Peter also deals with the same problem when he reminds us that in the last days men will appeal to this doctrine of historical continuity for rejecting any belief in the visible return of Jesus Christ, by saying that all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation (2 Peter 3:4). Peter's answer is that such men have made themselves willingly ignorant of the past divine interventions into human history. The very fact that many scientists of stature have been firm believers in the Bible as the inspired Word of God is evidence that science does not necessitate the demythologizing of the Bible before it can be accepted. Some of the modern theologians (?) who look to science as an infallible guide have seemingly not even taken the first step essential to becoming a Christian; for "him that cometh to God must first believe that He is" (Hebrews 11:6), and how can men who call themselves Christian *atheists* qualify as *theologians*, to say nothing of calling themselves *Christian*. They should be called *Atheologians*.

EXISTENTIALISM

Another philosophical doctrine which has strongly colored modern theology is that of Existentialism. Soren Kierkegaard of Denmark is usually considered to be the father of this doctrine. Young defines Existentialism:

Contemporary movement in both theology and philosophy. In philosophy it has a strong atheistic, nihilistic, and pessimistic emphasis. In theology (also known as, Barthianism, dialectical theology, crisis theology, neo-supernaturalism, realistic theology, etc.) it emphasizes man's absolute dependence upon God and the complete subjectivity of religious experience.⁴⁹

This doctrine is called Existentialism because of its radical concern for the individual existing person, rather than for universal essences. Kierkegaard began by asking such questions as, "What is the point of man's life? What sense can he make out of human existence? Is it possible to base eternal happiness upon historical knowledge?" Long ago Socrates had presented the paradox that although man could become educated it was impossible for him to actually learn anything. He asked, "How can one learn that which he does not know?" He argued that man has all possible knowledge within him and what we call learning is only recollecting what is already in us. Kierkegaard presented a different answer to this paradox. He agreed that it was true that prior to acquiring knowledge man has no means of recognizing truth when he meets it. But if he

⁴⁹ Warren C. Young, *A Christian Approach to Philosophy*, (Wheaton, Ill.: Van Kampen Press, 1954), p. 247.

does learn anything, something must have happened to him which makes him different than he was before. Instead of knowledge coming by recollection, he explains it as a moment of enlightenment, a sort of miraculous transformation which takes place in the learner at some decisive moment in his existence. And whatever was the cause of this enlightenment Kierkegaard called God. His philosophy was one of scepticism and uncertainty. Man by himself can know nothing. Sense experience and historical information are constantly changing and man cannot tell whether any of this information is true. Man is trapped in an awful predicament: he has no real knowledge and yet he needs to know the meaning of human existence. What is he to do? Kierkegaard says that he can decide to remain in darkness or he can take "the leap into absurdity" by blindly believing that there is a God who will, if we desire it, give us enlightenment. But there is no way of knowing what to believe in; there is no evidence for faith: all one can do is to believe in faith alone.

There are some philosophers who have accepted Kierkegaard's existentialism but have rejected his solution as being an act of belief. Men like Jean-Paul Sartre are completely atheistic and their philosophy is one of humanism. No doubt the catastrophic events in Europe produced by two world wars, with all of the senseless destruction and bloodshed, left people with a sense that the world is unintelligible and that values of life once held are now meaningless. With the unrest that is in the world after years of "cold war" which keeps getting "hot" in spots, with the threat of a third World War, the horrors of which are beyond imagination, and with nothing to look forward to but becoming "cannon fodder," many young men are prone to accept this pessimistic view of the world, and feel that all of the values men once talked about are no longer valid.

NEO-ORTHODOXY

Neo-orthodoxy is based upon existential premises, as stated earlier. Karl Barth arose as champion of this system of theology at the close of World War II. Two wars had completely overthrown the optimism of the liberal theology which had led people to believe that man was able by himself to solve all of the world's problems through a social gospel. It was time for the pendulum to swing back, and Barth called men back to the reality of sin and to the transcendence of God. He opposed all natural theology and science as giving any revelation of God. The Bible to Barth was not an objective revelation of God: it was a human and fallible book, but it had the ability of becoming the word of God in the existential encounter of man with God. Barth represented a partial return to orthodoxy. His views have also been called "Crisis Theology," because it holds that all human institutions are inevitably confounded by their own contradictions and that the crisis which results from this forces man to despair of his own efforts and may cause him to turn to divine revelation and grace in faith. Barthianism is also called Dialectical Theology because of its use of the dialectic method.

Neo-orthodoxy, along with Bultmannianism, accepts the findings of the liberal, destructive critics, as far as the Bible is concerned. Ryrie quotes Brunner, a neo-orthodox Swiss theologian, "Orthodoxy has become impossible for anyone who knows anything of science. This I would call fortunate."⁵⁰ Ryrie also quotes from Hendry, *The Rediscovery of the Bible*, p. 144, to show that Neo-orthodoxy thinks it can combine the views of both liberalism and orthodoxy into a synthetic system of a new-orthodoxy:

If there is anything to which the name of 'rediscovery' may be applied, it is surely to this view of the Bible (which is but the Bible's view itself) as a witness to the Word of God. It liberates us from the false antithesis which had been set up by 'orthodoxy' and 'liberalism,' through each concentrating its attention on one aspect of the Bible, to the detriment of the other, and enables us to see it in both its aspects, without detriment to either.⁵¹

Note the dialectic: Orthodoxy, the thesis; Liberalism, the antithesis; and Neo-orthodoxy, the Synthesis.

This brings us back to our original thesis that the point of departure of all modern theologies from orthodoxy is attitude toward the Bible. Liberalism or Modernism, through the claims of Destructive Criticism, has made it a purely human book full of errors and contradictions. Orthodoxy believes it to be the infallible, verbally inspired Word of God. Neo-orthodoxy holds to a synthesis of both views. Ryrie also quotes Hendry concerning the Orthodox view of inspiration: "This view issued in the notorious doctrine of verbal infallibility, which lay for so long like a blight upon the Protestant Church. It is the great and undisputed merit of modern criticism that it demolished this doctrine and rediscovered the human character of the Bible."⁵²

Orthodoxy's view of faith is that it is belief based upon authoritative fact. If the events recorded in the Bible did not actually happen, then there is no basis for faith. Neo-orthodoxy's view of faith seems to be, as Kierkegaard expressed it, "a leap into absurdity," believing in faith alone without any evidence to substantiate it. We agree with Horder that modern theology is indeed a theological *Alice in Wonderland*.

⁵⁰ Charles Ryrie, *Neo-orthodoxy, What It Is and What It Does* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1956), p. 45.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

Part Two

Bibliology

Bibliology is the doctrine of the Bible, the department of Theological science which deals with Biblical literature. It is placed first in logical order before all other doctrines, simply because it is considered to be the authoritative source of all other doctrines. Our knowledge of God, of His will, of His spiritual provisions, of His plans and purposes would have no objective basis apart from some kind of revelation of these truths. The Bible lays claim to being such a revelation from God and the Christian Church has always accepted the Bible as such.

6 REVELATION

THE MEANING OF REVELATION

The Word *APOKALUPSIS* means an uncovering, an unveiling. It is sometimes used in a subjective sense, as in the case of God revealing His mind to the believer ([Philippians 3:15](#)). It is also used in an objective sense, as when Christ is revealed to the world at His second coming ([Luke 17:30](#)). When used in speaking of the content of the Bible, the word means primarily the making known of truth to man which he could never learn through sense experience alone. It is only in a secondary sense that the word means enlightenment received from reading the primary revelation contained in the Bible. For example, it was by direct revelation of Jesus Christ that Paul received the truth of the mystery ([Ephesians 3:3](#); [Galatians 1:12](#)). In a secondary way the other apostles received this revelation through the instrumentality of Paul's preaching and the illumination of the Holy Spirit ([Galatians 2:2](#); [Ephesians 3:5](#)). It is a general belief that revelation in its primary sense ceased with the completion of the New Testament canon, and that since that time any divine truth that comes to man comes from the Bible through the illumination of the Holy Spirit. It should be pointed out that there is much truth in the Bible for which there was no need for special revelation, such as historical events which the writers already knew. Other truths, such as the eternal purpose of God, could never have been known apart from special revelation.

THE NEED OF REVELATION

In spite of the fact that we live in the most enlightened age of man's history, man has not been able to attain to any absolute knowledge. Man cannot be sure that his knowledge today will not be modified or overthrown by the findings of tomorrow. Science is in a constant state of flux. A popular layman's book on philosophy states: "Our sense experience and historical information are always changing. We cannot tell whether any of our sense information is necessarily true

.... In order to be absolutely certain we would have to be able to show that it is impossible that it could be false."⁵³ One can view an object rotating thousands of times a minute in the light of a stroboscope and his senses will tell him it is standing still. Objects change color when viewed in light of varying wavelengths. Psychologists have devised many optical illusions. Heisenberg's *Uncertainty Principle* which operates in the field of quantum mechanics has been transferred by philosophers into other fields of knowledge. Knowledge gained through our senses appears to be relative. There may be absolute knowledge; there may be a God, but the sceptic and agnostic say we cannot know for certain.

In the light of all of this uncertainty it should be admitted by all that it would be a very desirable thing for man to possess some absolute, certain knowledge. The great majority of scientists and philosophers do not think that man has been able to attain to such knowledge through the empirical disciplines, so if man is ever to possess such knowledge, it must come through some other channel. This other channel is Revelation: the Divine communication of absolute truth which man could never learn by his own reasoning and investigation.

Even the agnostic must confess man's need for Revelation, even though he denies its existence. And this need is not simply in the intellectual world of science. It is vastly greater in the realm of morals and human behavior. Is there absolute right and wrong? Or are so-called moral laws simply the innovations of changing cultures? Is man a responsible being who must some day give account to a higher Authority? Or is he simply an irresponsible animal? Human suffering and moral degradation alike show the need for a higher knowledge than man has been able to attain in and by himself.

THE POSSIBILITY OF REVELATION:

The Atheist claims too much when he dogmatically states that there is no God, for the fact that he cannot find rational evidence for the existence of God neither proves that He does or does not exist. The Agnostic claims too much when he declares that we cannot know anything for certain, for how can he know this if he can know nothing for certain? As we shall see there are many evidences for the existence of God. These evidences may not compel a person to believe in the existence of God, but they surely demonstrate the possibility and the probability of His existence. When the scientist is confronted with many evidences for the existence of an object or a principle, he accepts the evidence and works with it until he has proof that the evidence is not valid. A college text on science states: "Science is not the field of certainties that so many people seem to think. It is a field of probabilities, of suspended judgments, and it requires a willingness to let the evidence decide the case."⁵⁴

⁵³ Richard H. Popkin and Avrum Stroll, *Philosophy Made Simple* (New York: Made Simple Books, Inc., 1956), p. 188.

⁵⁴ Richard Wistar, *Man and His Physical Universe* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1953), p. 248.

Astronomers had evidence from the motions of Uranus and Neptune of the existence of a trans-Neptunian planet and even predicted its approximate location many years before the Planet Pluto was discovered from Lowell Observatory in 1930.

If there is evidence that God exists, then there is evidence that Revelation may exist, for it would be a contradiction of our definition of God to say that He could not reveal Himself. Omnipotence is the basic concept of God. Therefore, if God exists it must be possible for Him to reveal Himself, but is it probable that He would do so? Other basic concepts of God are that He is omniscient, holy, loving, merciful. Arguing from the need of man and from these other attributes of the Omnipotent God, it appears extremely probable that such a God would in some way reveal Himself to man, either to judge him for his sin, or to in some way come to his assistance. Even man in his sinful and selfish condition communicates and comes to the assistance of his fellowman. How much more likely it is that an all-wise and loving God would do at least as much.

THE CLAIM OF THE BIBLE:

The Bible claims to contain the revelation of God. More will be said later about these claims and the validity of them, but suffice it here simply to state the fact of the Bible's claim. The words *reveal* and *revelation* in their various forms appear some seventy times in the Bible. Many hundreds of times such expressions occur as, "Thus saith the Lord." It can hardly be gainsaid that no other book exists which makes the claims the Bible does for being a divine revelation.

THE MODE OF REVELATION:

Chafer lists seven modes of divine revelation⁵⁵ which will be used as a basis for the present consideration.

1. God Revealed Through Nature. This is the basis for *natural* religion as distinct from revealed religion, although there is an element of revelation in natural religion. The Bible in numerous places appeals to nature, that is, the physical creation, as displaying in some measure the existence and power of God.

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork." (Psalm 19:1).

"Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their hosts by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth." (Isaiah 40:26).

⁵⁵ L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), Vol. I, p. 53.

The Apostle Paul goes so far as to say that the revelation of God in nature is sufficient to leave man completely without excuse before God: "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." (Romans 1:19, 20).

This revelation of God in nature is not merely the external universe of which the Psalmist or Isaiah spoke: it also includes the internal world of man's own being. Man is created in the image of God. He possesses an innate or intuitive knowledge of moral laws which makes him inexcusable for his sinful acts. Paul goes on to speak of the Gentiles to whom no special revelation had been given:

"For when the Gentiles, which have not the law (that is, the special revelation), do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts." (Romans 2:14, 15)

This revelation of God in nature is not sufficient to inform man how to find salvation from his sin, but it is sufficient to give him the knowledge that God exists and that he is responsible to God for his acts.

2. God Revealed Through Providence. Many evidences may be found in nature of God's providence or care and provision for His creation. He makes the sun to shine and the rain to fall upon the just and the unjust alike. He cares for even the sparrow and not one falls to the ground without His permission. But on the other hand the unbeliever can cite facts from nature for just the opposite effect. He sees the cruelty in nature, millions suffering and dying of disease, hunger, and war, innocent people trampled under foot, justice miscarried. Where, he asks, is there any evidence of God's providence in these things? There is evidence, if one understands man's rebellion against God is responsible for all of the evil in the world. God could have justly left man to his own devices and have withdrawn all of His providential care. Whatever of that providence which may still be seen is simply the manifestation of God's kindness and mercy to a fallen race, which, in spite of God's provision of eternal salvation as His free gift, has not only in the main rejected His proffered mercy, but complains against God for the plight he has brought upon himself.

3. God Revealed Through Preservation. It is evident that creation continues in existence. Does it exist and continue to exist by powers within itself? Owing to its magnitude, age, and many unknowns, this is a difficult question to answer. Some scientists think that the universe is running down, so that billions of years hence all energy will have been dissipated and all molecular motion will have ceased. Others suppose that there are creative powers within nature which keep it continually rejuvenated. Others hold to the "big bang" theory, supposing that the universe goes through cycles which last for billions of years, beginning with

concentrated matter exploding and expanding to the far reaches of space and finally collapsing back upon itself, only to repeat the cycle over and over. These are all human speculations, but there is another possibility and that is that there is a God "who upholds all things by the word of his power." (Hebrews 1:3) If the universe made itself, if it created itself out of nothing, then it is conceivable that it could possibly maintain itself. But if belief in that which is contrary to all human experience and reason places too much strain upon credulity, it may be believed that the One who created all things also holds all things together ([Colossians 1:17](#)). The atomic physicist may well ask what holds the positively charged protons together in the nucleus of the atom when, in fact, they repel each other with tremendous force, as is manifested when atomic fission occurs. Scientists call it "atomic glue," for want of a better name. Christians call it Christ, the Creator and Preserver.

4. God Revealed Through Miracles. Miracle consists in either the manifestation or the control of power in the physical world beyond human capability. It is not the breaking of the laws of nature, but rather the exercising of supernatural power or control over those laws. In Bible times God chose to work through physical miracles and signs and wonders with His people Israel ([Exodus 7-19](#); [1 Corinthians 1:22](#)). Having cast that nation aside during this present dispensation, He no longer works in this way, as Paul makes plain in [1 Corinthians 13:8](#). Christ appealed to His mighty works as one of the witnesses of His Deity ([John 5:36](#)). These miracles reveal both the power of God and His goodness, as He healed the sick, opened blind eyes, raised the dead, and delivered His saints from prison.

5. God Revealed by Direct Communication. This type of communication is confined to the prophets of God who lived in the days of the formation of the canon: "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." (Hebrews 1:1,2) The divers manners of speaking included visions, dreams, and theophanies, but of Moses it is written: "With him will I speak mouth unto mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold." (Numbers 12:8) It should be noted that God used such means as long as He was dealing with the nation of Israel and until His written revelation was completed. In the early churches which Paul established there were those with the gift of prophecy who received revelations from the Lord to communicate to the assembly, since they did not as yet have a New Testament Scripture ([1 Corinthians 14:29-33](#)). But Paul made it abundantly clear that this was a temporary gift which would cease when the revelation for this dispensation was completed. Therefore, we do not believe that God speaks to His people in this way today. He speaks through His completed Word. Of course, it is recognized that God may speak indirectly to His people today in many ways, through providential dealings, circumstances, influence of others, etc.

6. God Revealed Through the Incarnation. "God... hath in these last days spoken to us by (in) his Son." (Hebrews 1: 2) The Son is the Logos, the human expression, the manifestation, the communicator of God. He is "God manifest in the flesh." (1 Timothy 3:16) It is important to clearly distinguish the dispensational character of our Lord's earthly ministry, as it was confined to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but we should never let this fact in any way make less meaningful to us the glorious Person who was thus ministering. It is that same Person who so wonderfully manifested the love and grace of God who is also our Savior and Head of the Body. In all other cases of revelation God was communicating His thoughts to and through mere men: in this last case it was God Himself in Christ speaking to man.

7. God Revealed Through the Scriptures. There were many prophets who received revelations from God who never, as far as we know, put them in written form. As noted above in No. 5, there were many prophets in the New Testament church who never wrote any Scripture. It seems evident that if God wanted His people to possess a complete revelation of His will the best way to preserve that revelation intact for succeeding generations was to put it in written form. We could have little, if any, assurance of an oral tradition even approximating the original after being passed down for nineteen centuries by word of mouth. We would have nothing by which to check its accuracy. Therefore we believe that God directed certain of the prophets and apostles to put into written form the revelations which were given to them, and further, that the Holy Spirit so superintended their writing as to record exactly what God wanted recorded. While some New Testament books may have been written after Paul's prison epistles, he states that it was the revelation of the truth of the mystery which fulfills or completes (*plerosai*--fills up to completion) the word of God ([Colossians 1:23-27](#)).

PROGRESSIVE REVELATION:

The fact needs to be continually remembered that the Bible was not written at one sitting or even during one generation. Its composition covered a period of over fifteen hundred years. The Bible grew somewhat as the plants do: "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear" (Mark 4:28). There was, therefore, progress in revelation. But what do we mean by progressive revelation? Does it mean that the early writings were filled with superstitions and myths which needed to be refined and perfected in a sort of evolutionary process, so that when we come to the New Testament we have progressed from the crude, semibarbarous ideas of Deity to the true concept of a God of love and mercy? Or does it mean that each step in the unfolding of God's plan and purpose was perfect in itself and that each step combined to produce a flawless and complete whole?

It is to be expected that those who hold an evolutionary view of the development of the human race would adopt the former of the above views. And

it should be pointed out that destructive, historical criticism of the Bible has endeavored to reconstruct the Bible upon the assumptions of evolution. Believing that man emerged from the brute world and progressed through various stages from animism and fetishism to polytheism, and then to monotheism and finally to Christianity, these critics find it necessary to redate the books of the Bible, simply because they assume that it would have been impossible for man to have certain religious ideas at so early a date. We are therefore told that the books of Moses could not have been written by Moses but were composed at least a thousand years later, etc.

Strong expresses, in part, at least, what progressive revelation means to the one who believes the Bible to be the Word of God:

There is progress in revelation from the earlier to the later books of the Bible, but this is not progress through successive steps of falsehood; it is rather progress from a less to a more clear and full unfolding of the truth. The whole truth lay germinally in the *protevangelium* uttered to our first parents (Gen. 3:15 - the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head).⁵⁶

Progressive revelation is also basic to the dispensational character of the Bible. If God had purposed only one dispensation for man, He might have given him all of the truth at once or have progressively revealed it to him. But the fact that one dispensation has succeeded another necessitates added revelation for the succeeding dispensations. In this sense progressive revelation becomes almost synonymous with dispensationalism.

7 INSPIRATION

THE MEANING OF INSPIRATION

The English word *inspiration* means the act of inbreathing or inhalation. Figuratively the word means the imparting of emotion, or mental, or spiritual influence, as: *He was an inspiration to all of us*. Theologically it means the supernatural divine superintendency exerted over the writers of the Scripture which guarantees the accuracy of their writings. The central passage on Inspiration is 2 Timothy 3:16:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

The expression, "given by inspiration of God," is in the Greek one compound word, *theopneustos*, meaning *God-breathed*. This statement, therefore, does not

⁵⁶ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1907), p. 175.

mean that the Scripture is inspiring or that it imparts an emotional or spiritual influence upon its readers (although, of course, it does this), but rather it has reference to the origin of the Scripture. The Scripture came into being by the breath of God. Just as God breathed into man's nostrils and he became a living soul, so in like manner God breathed into the writers and brought into being His infallible Word.

Another key passage on inspiration is 2 Peter 1:20, 21:

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Peter is not here stating that private individuals are unable to interpret Scripture, and hence, as Rome teaches, must leave the interpretation to the Church. He is likewise speaking of the origin of the Scripture. The verb "is" is *ginetai*, to become, arise, originate. Peter is saying that no prophecy of Scripture originated in the mind or in the will of man, but that holy men spoke as they were borne along by the Holy Spirit.

THE MANNER OF INSPIRATION

The Bible plainly states the fact of Inspiration, but it does not explain the manner or mode by which it is imparted. The Bible states that in time past God spoke in divers manners ([Hebrews 1:1](#)), but it does not elucidate upon these various manners. Theologians have tried to explain the manner in which this inspiration took place and these views are generally referred to as theories of inspiration.

Natural Inspiration:

This is the lowest concept of inspiration. It places the inspiration of Scripture on the same plane with the so-called inspiring writings of the great authors and poets of history. But, as already noted, Biblical inspiration refers to the fact that Scriptures are God-breathed, not that they are inspiring to the reader.

Partial Inspiration:

A certain bishop is purported to have said that he believed the Bible to have been inspired in spots. When asked for his authority for such a statement, he quoted Hebrews 1:1, stating that this meant that God spoke at various times in varying degrees. Thus, some spots were fully inspired, others were only partially inspired, and still others were not inspired at all. The bishop was embarrassed when a layman asked: "How do you know that Hebrews 1:1, the one Scripture upon which you base your argument, is one of those fully inspired spots?"

Some people suppose that the New Testament is more inspired than the Old. The *Red Letter Edition* of the New Testament is apt to give the impression that the words of Jesus are more inspired than the words of Moses or of Paul. Some claim that the spiritual or doctrinal truth in the Bible is inspired but that the historical, geographical, and scientific references are not, and are therefore liable to error. All of these theories are open to the same embarrassment which confronted the bishop. Who is to judge which parts of the Bible are to be accepted as truth? It comes down finally to every man taking or leaving whatever he decides. The objectivity of Bible truth is thus destroyed and it becomes a matter of subjective judgment. It must be admitted that this kind of inspiration would have been about the poorest that God could have chosen by which to reveal truth to man. It would be comparable to giving a sack of candy to a person with the information that although all of the pieces look like candy, some have the very best ingredients, others contain adulterations, and still others are poisonous. Why should God guide a man to state the truth in one sentence and allow him to state error in the next? If He was able to guide him in the first case, why should He not also guide him at other times?

But after all, as Hodge says: "The question is not an open one. It is not what theory is in itself most reasonable or plausible, but simply, What does the Bible teach on the subject?"⁵⁷

Concept Inspiration:

Proponents of this theory state that God placed concepts of truth in the minds of the Bible writers but left it to them to give expression to these concepts. If this view were true it would be inconsistent to call the Bible the Word of God, for it would be only the word of man.

To begin with, the Bible in no place gives the impression that God gave only concepts to its writers. But the Bible does have much to say about the words of Scripture. Christ said in His prayer to the Father: "I have given them the words which thou gavest me." (John 17:8). He said to His disciples: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63). Paul said: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." (1 Corinthians 2:13).

Further, it is questionable whether it is possible to convey a concept apart from words. Concepts become meaningful only as they are framed in words.

Mechanical Inspiration:

This is the view that the writers of the Bible were merely secretaries to whom God dictated the Bible. Thus it is sometimes referred to as the Dictation Theory

⁵⁷ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Win. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1940), Vol. I, p. 182.

of Inspiration. It is true that there are some parts of the Bible that might be classified as dictation, such as those passages which read: "Thus saith the Lord." It would also seem that it was a case of dictation when God spoke the law to Moses in the mount and said to him: "Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel." (Exodus 34: 27).

The major portion of Scripture, however, cannot be classified as dictation. It is evident that the style and vocabulary differ from one writer to the next. Surely when the Apostles wrote letters expressing their feelings in the first person singular, this could not be classified as dictation from God. Hodge says:

The Church has never held what has been stigmatized as the mechanical theory of inspiration. The sacred writers were not machines. Their self-consciousness was not suspended; nor were their intellectual powers superseded. Holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. It was men, not machines; not unconscious instruments, but living, thinking, willing minds, whom the Spirit used as His organs... The sacred writers impressed their peculiarities on their several productions as plainly as though they were the subjects of no extraordinary influence.⁵⁸

Dynamical or Non-Verbal, Plenary Inspiration

This view is represented by such theologians as A. H. Strong and James Orr. A few statements from Strong will make plain this position.

Inspiration, therefore, did not remove, but rather pressed into its own service, all the personal peculiarities of the writers, together with their defects of culture and literary style. Every imperfection not inconsistent with truth in a human composition may exist in inspired Scripture.⁵⁹

Inspiration did not guarantee inerrancy in things not essential to the main purpose of Scripture.⁶⁰

Inspiration is therefore not verbal, while yet we claim that no form of words which taken in its connections would teach essential error has been admitted into Scripture.⁶¹

When the unity of the Scripture is fully recognized, the Bible, in spite of imperfections in matters non-essential to its religious purpose, furnishes a safe and sufficient guide to truth and to salvation.⁶²

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 157.

⁵⁹ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1907), p. 213.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 218.

In short, inspiration is characteristically neither natural, partial, nor mechanical, but supernatural, plenary, and dynamical.⁶³

The unity and authority of Scripture as a whole are entirely consistent with its gradual evolution and with great imperfection in its non-essential parts.⁶⁴

Strong answers three questions:

(a) Is any part of Scripture uninspired? Answer: Every part of Scripture is inspired in its connection and relation with every other part. (b) Are there degrees of inspiration? Answer: There are degrees of value, but not of inspiration. Each part in its connection with the rest is made completely true, and completeness has no degrees. (c) How may we know what parts are of most value and what is the teaching of the whole? Answer: The same Spirit of Christ who inspired the Bible is promised to take the things of Christ, and, by showing them to us, to lead us progressively into all the truth.⁶⁵

Orr holds essentially the same position as Strong. He says:

In view of these facts, it is felt by many that, to express the idea of an inspiration which pervades all the parts of the record, the word '*plenary*' is more suitable than '*verbal*' This term... avoids the mistake into which others fall of speaking as if *parts* of the record were inspired, and *parts* uninspired.⁶⁶

Plenary, according to this view, apparently means that while inspiration pervades all parts of the Bible, it guarantees only the accurate communication of spiritual truth, and that in matters of historical, geographical, and scientific detail the writers employed only such information which they had at their natural disposal, which may or may not have been in error. It is difficult to see how this view differs from the Partial theory, since it is admitted that parts which deal in non-spiritual matters may be in error. We might ask: Where did Moses get his scientific information on the creation of the universe? Was this simply the scientific theory of the day, or did God supernaturally reveal this truth? Since history is so intertwined with spiritual truth, where, according to this theory, is the line between truth and error? Orr himself says: "It must be confessed that the principle here employed may be *pushed too far*, and made to sustain conclusions which cannot in justice be rested on it."⁶⁷

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 220, 221.

⁶⁶ James Orr, *Revelation and Inspiration* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 211.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 202, 203.

Orr adopts the view that the subject of Inspiration must be approached through that of Revelation. He says:

The older method was to prove first the inspiration (by historical evidence, miracles, claims of writers), then through that establish revelation. This view still finds an echo in the note sometimes heard-If the inspiration of the Bible (commonly some theory of inspiration) be given up, what have we left to hold by? It is urged, e.g., that unless we can demonstrate what is called the "inerrancy" of the Biblical record, down even to its minutest details, the whole edifice of belief in revealed religion falls to the ground. This, on the face of it, is a most suicidal position for any defender of revelation to take up.⁶⁸

Orr's argument is that revelation came before inspiration to write the Scriptures, and had God never inspired men to write, the revelation of the Gospel would have been just as much a reality as it is with an inspired written record. While this is true, it would appear that this fact would have been meaningful only to those who lived in the same generation with the men who received the revelation and who could speak authoritatively. After nineteen hundred years, how do we know what these men spoke unless we have an inerrant record? It seems to us that what Orr calls "the older method" is still the necessary one for today.

Verbal Plenary Inspiration

Verbal means that inspiration extends to the very words which the writers used in the original writings. This does not mean that God dictated the words, but that He so guided men to write in their own language, with their own words, and in their own style that when they had written they had said exactly what God wanted said. If God intended to accurately convey truth to us it was necessary, in the very nature of the case, to see to it that the writers used the words which would accomplish that end. If men hire lawyers to frame legal documents in words which cannot be gainsaid, how much more important to have the right words in documents dealing with the eternal welfare of men's souls!

Plenary is usually taken to mean that inspiration is *full*, extending to all parts of the Bible. Paul did not say, "Some Scripture is inspired of God," but ALL Scripture. Since there are no degrees of inspiration, a writing is either inspired of God or it is not inspired. While some Christians do not believe in plenary inspiration, none can doubt but that the Bible claims this for itself.

MISUNDERSTANDINGS CONCERNING VERBAL PLENARY INSPIRATION

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 197, 198.

1. Verbal plenary inspiration does not mean that everything in the Bible is a record of what God has said. The Bible contains records of what men and angels have said, of historical events which have happened, of places and times and circumstances surrounding these events. Inspiration guarantees the accuracy of all of these records.

2. Verbal plenary inspiration does not mean that every statement in the Bible is true: it means only that every statement is accurately recorded. The Bible records the lies of both Satan and of men, but they are accurately recorded as lies.

3. Verbal plenary inspiration does not mean that the Bible writers were infallible in themselves. They were all beset with weaknesses and infirmities. Moses sinned in that he smote the rock twice and was not permitted to enter the promised land. David was guilty of murder. Peter erred when he declared: "If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise." James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritans and Christ rebuked them: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." Paul said, "For the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do." The inspiration and the resulting infallibility is not of men, but of the writings.

4. Verbal plenary inspiration does not mean that the writers were omniscient or imbued with plenary knowledge. Paul didn't know what things to pray for. John did not as yet know what he was to be, but he did know that when Christ appears he would be like Him. Peter tells us that the prophets of old did not understand some of the things they themselves had written. Chafer points out:

Moses could hardly have known the typical significance latent in the history of Adam, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, and Joseph, or of the typology of Christ hidden in his description of the tabernacle which he wrote according to the pattern that was showed him in the Mount. He could not have understood why no reference should be made to the parents, or the beginning or ending of days, of Melchisedec (Heb. 7:1-3).⁶⁹

REVELATION AND INSPIRATION DISTINGUISHED

While every word of Scripture is God-breathed, not every word is direct revelation. The Bible contains revelation. It does not contain the word of God: it is the word of God. There are many historical details in the Bible for which there was no need of direct revelation. Chafer states:

While these two divine operations do often concur, it is equally true that they often function separately. By revelation of the purest character Joseph was warned of God in a dream that he should flee into Egypt with Mary and the infant Jesus. It is not asserted, however, that he was inspired to record the revelation for the benefit of others.

⁶⁹ L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), Vol. II, p.68.

On the other hand... human authors of the Bible often recorded things they themselves saw or did, in which case there would be no need of direct revelation.⁷⁰

Strong gives examples of Inspiration without Revelation ([Luke 1:1-3](#)); Inspiration including Revelation ([Revelation 1:1, 11](#)); and Revelation without Inspiration ([Exodus 20:1, 22](#)).⁷¹

PROBLEMS CONCERNING VERBAL PLENARY INSPIRATION

1. There are supposed contradictions between the Bible and modern science. This objection would cover such topics as the age of the earth, the evolution of life, attributing supernatural agency to natural phenomena ([1 Samuel 7:10](#); [Psalm 18:7-16](#); etc.). It should be remembered that science admits that it cannot produce absolute truth but only educated guesses. Science has often proved science wrong. Not all scientists agree. The question arises: With which of the various scientific theories past or present should we try to make the Bible agree? As to natural phenomena, such as rain, thunder and lightning, etc., the Bible does not deny the existence of natural laws which are responsible for these occurrences, but it does claim that God has control over nature, and that if He so chooses He can use natural phenomena in seemingly miraculous ways.

2. Contradictions in the Bible itself have been pointed out. Gaussen, in his book, *The Origin and Inspiration of the Bible*, devotes some 118 pages to answering objections based upon seeming errors and contradictions within the Bible. He deals with such objections as: How can we believe in verbal inspiration when New Testament writers quoted from the uninspired Septuagint translation? What good is a doctrine of verbal inspiration when there are so many differences in the readings of the ancient manuscripts? Do not the following passages contradict one another: [Mark 16:5](#) cf. [Luke 24:4](#) (Mark relates that the women saw a young man, whereas Luke says that TWO men stood by them); [Matthew 20:30](#) cf. [Mark 10:46](#) and [Luke 18:35](#) (Matthew relates that Jesus healed TWO blind men as He departed from Jericho; Mark mentions only ONE man, and to compound the problem, Luke speaks of only ONE man who was healed as Jesus drew near to Jericho); [Matthew 27:5](#) cf. [Acts 1:18](#) (Matthew says Judas hanged himself, whereas Luke says that he fell headlong and burst asunder in the midst). Are there not contradictions of numerical calculations which would rule out verbal inspiration, as between [1 Kings 9:28](#) and [2 Chronicles 8:18](#); [2 Samuel 24:9](#) and [1 Chronicles 21:5](#); [Genesis 46:27](#) and [Deuteronomy 10:22](#) and [Acts 7:14](#)? Are there not different words used by the various Gospel writers in recording the same speech of Christ? Space does not permit the recital of further objections or of the answers to them. The student is referred to Gaussen or other writers who have ably dealt with these problems.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 50.

⁷¹ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

3. Then there are seeming contradictions in the doctrinal teachings of the Bible. How do we explain such things as the Bible commanding circumcision in one place ([Genesis 17:10-14](#)) and pronouncing a curse upon its practice in another ([Galatians 5:2-4](#))? How could eating pork be an abomination ([Isaiah 66:17](#)) if Paul was right in [1 Timothy 4:4](#)? Who is right on the way to have eternal life, Jesus in [Matthew 19:16, 17](#) or Paul in [Ephesians 2:8, 9](#)? Should we follow Jesus in giving no thought to food or clothing for the morrow ([Matthew 6:25-34](#)), or Paul in teaching that one is worse than an infidel who does not make such provision ([1 Timothy 5:8](#))? These and many like problems which have been listed as objections to verbal inspiration, may all be satisfactorily explained by the application of dispensational principles. None of these examples are contradictions but are merely changes in God's orders. Note what a radical change Jesus made in His commands to His disciples in [Luke 22:35-37](#).

8 ILLUMINATION

REVELATION AND ILLUMINATION DISTINGUISHED

Revelation refers to the initial making known of truth previously hidden. Once a truth has been revealed and written in Scripture, there is no need that it be revealed again. But the fact that God has revealed truth does not mean that every one perceives or understands it. In fact, Scripture is very plain that the natural mind of man does not receive and cannot know the things of the Spirit of God ([1 Corinthians 2:14](#)). This same passage teaches that God has given us His Spirit, so that we might know the things which are freely given us of God. This work of the Spirit of God in making known to the individual the things which God has prepared for them that love Him is called Illumination.

Revelation has been given to only a select few through whom God chose to give His Word. Illumination is available to every believer. Revelation has been completed, at least, for this dispensation. Illumination is a continuing process. Revelation has to do with the impartation of truth. Illumination has to do with the understanding of truth.

THE GENERAL NEED FOR ILLUMINATION

Man's need for divine illumination springs from two different areas. The first is due to the infinity of God and the finiteness of man. Although man was created in the image of God, which makes possible communication between God and man, the Scripture declares: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." ([1 Corinthians 2:11](#)) Since the Spirit of God is the only one who knows the mind or thoughts of God, even unfallen man would be unable, apart from revelation and illumination, to know and to understand the mind of God.

The second area is man's nature as the result of the fall. Sin has alienated the mind of man from God and has resulted in a state of spiritual darkness. Note the following statements: "their foolish heart was darkened" (Romans 1:21); "having the understanding darkened" (Ephesians 4:18); "ye were sometimes darkness" (Ephesians 5:8); "to turn them from darkness to light" (Acts 26:18); "a light of them that are in darkness" (Romans 2:19); "the light shined in darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not" (John 1:5); "the rulers of the darkness of this world" (Ephesians 6: 12); "delivered us from the power of darkness" (Colossians 1: 13); "hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9); "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not" (2 Corinthians 4:4); "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Ephesians 4:18).

These and similar passages show the absolute need of fallen man, not only for revelation, but also for illumination, if he is ever to know or understand the Word of God. The last passage quoted above is an especially devastating exposure of the unregenerate heart, mind, and life.

ILLUMINATION NEEDED FOR SALVATION

From the general need of man for divine illumination we go on to consider the specific need for illumination in the matter of receiving God's salvation. If it is true that the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, nor can he know them, how is it possible for such a man to ever receive God's salvation. Does this passage mean that the unsaved man cannot understand what the Bible is saying? To answer these questions we need to look more closely at the words *receive* and *know* in the 1 Corinthians 2:14 passage. The lexicons indicate that the word here used for *receive* (*dechomai*) has in it the connotation of welcoming the reception of a thing. Rotherham translates this phrase: "But a man of the soul doth not welcome the things of the Spirit of God." The reason for man's inability to receive the things of the Spirit of God is not due to any defect in his physical constitution: it is due to the alienation of his mind against God. He does not welcome the things of God anymore than man welcomes things of his human enemies.

"Neither can he know them" does not mean that the unsaved man cannot understand what the Bible is saying. The New Testament in particular was written in the common Greek of the day which all could understand. Even unsaved scholars can make accurate translations from the Greek into other languages. Unsaved men can read and study the Bible and write books stating exactly what the Bible has to say on its various doctrines. The verb *know* (*ginosko*) in this passage does not mean to simply grasp the meaning of a word, but as Vine points out:

In the N. T. ginosko frequently indicates a relation between the person knowing and the object known; in this respect, what is known is of value or importance to the one who knows, and hence the establishment of the relationship, e.g., especially of God's knowledge, 1 Cor. 8:3, "if any man love God, the same is known of him," ... such knowledge is obtained, not by mere intellectual activity, but by operation of the Holy Spirit consequent upon acceptance of Christ.⁷²

As long as man is in his condition of enmity against God he cannot welcome and he cannot enter into a personal relationship with the things of God. But since millions of men have entered into such a relationship the question must be asked: How has this come about? The Arminian supposes that God has bestowed a common grace upon all mankind which makes it possible for him to turn to God and receive God's salvation. The extreme Calvinist supposes that God, entirely apart from the sinner's activity, regenerates the man and gives him His Holy Spirit, and that after that the man believes and receives the things of God. To put it another way, God saves the sinner in order that he might believe, rather than the way the Scripture teaches, man believes the gospel in order that he might be saved. Hodge, in some of his statements, seems to give this impression, but the following quotation indicates that he believes that the sinner is active and responsible before regeneration:

The soul cooperates, or, is active in what precedes and in what follows the change (which occurs in regeneration), but the change itself is something experienced, and not something done. The blind and the lame who came to Christ, may have undergone much labor in getting into his presence, and they joyfully exerted the new power imparted to them, but they were entirely passive in the moment of healing. They in no way cooperated in the production of that effect. The same must be true in regeneration if regeneration be the effect of almighty power as much as the opening the eyes of the blind or the unstopping by a word the ears of the deaf.⁷³

There can be no doubt from the Scripture that the natural man must be enlightened before he will receive the things of God, and that the Holy Spirit is the Enlightener. There can also be no doubt but that the Holy Spirit works through His Word to accomplish this work, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). The Holy Spirit may work through many secondary means, pastors, parents, friends to shine the light into the darkened heart and to take away the enmity, but in and through the whole process the Holy Spirit has been using and empowering the Word to accomplish the end result.

⁷² W.E.Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1952), Vol. II, p. 298.

⁷³ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1940)', Vol. II, p. 688.

Probably the determining Scripture on the work of the Spirit in illuminating the sinner is John 16:8-11. This passage in our judgment is inter-dispensational and applies to the Spirit's work from Acts 2 onward: "And when he (the Holy Spirit) is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."

The work of the Spirit in this passage is not that of regenerating or saving the sinner, but of illuminating the sinner in regard to three things which are essential to the subsequent work of regeneration. Although the law may have done its work of showing the sinner the sinfulness of his sins, and although he may be sorry for them, the Spirit in this work is concerned with only one sin: sin because they believe not on Christ. The Spirit next convicts of righteousness, not the sinner's, for he has none; but the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all that believe ([Romans 3:22](#)). And finally, He convinces of judgment, not a judgment to come, but the judgment for sin which Christ endured upon the cross. Chafer says on this point:

When the Spirit enlightens the Satan-blinded mind regarding sin, righteousness, and judgment, that otherwise blinded mind is at once more than normally enabled to understand the three great foundational truths that sin has been judged, righteousness is available in and through Christ, and the condemning sin is failure to believe that which God now offers the sinner, namely, a perfect salvation in and through Christ the Savior. No soul can be saved apart from this enlightenment, for no other power is sufficient to break through the blindness which Satan has imposed on the minds of those who are lost.⁷⁴

We may conclude that since this is the work of the Holy Spirit man has no part in it. However, Paul's custom was "to warn every one night and day with tears," (Acts 20:31); "to persuade men," and "to beseech men," to be reconciled to God ([2 Corinthians 5:11, 20](#)). The Holy Spirit is sovereign in His working, but He usually accomplishes this work through saved people who are Christ's ambassadors, speaking in Christ's stead.

ILLUMINATION NEEDED FOR THE SAINT

Paul recognized the need of the saint for illumination when he prayed: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know "(Ephesians 1:17, 18)

The determining Scripture on this work of the Spirit in behalf of the believer is 1 Corinthians 2:9-12:

⁷⁴ L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), Vol. III, p. 222.

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God.

Paul uses the word *revealed* here in the secondary sense of the illuminating work of the Spirit. This work of the Spirit is practically synonymous with His teaching ministry. Christ promised His disciples: "Howbeit when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come" (John 16:13).

John states: "But the anointing which ye have received of him (the Holy Spirit) abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." (1 John 2:27).

It would appear from this last verse particularly that the believer should have perfect understanding of the Word of God if he has an infallible Teacher who knows the deep things of God, and especially so, since John also states: "But ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things" (1 John 2:20). But from experience we know that this is not true. While all truly saved people agree on certain fundamental basic doctrines of the faith, there is wide divergence of understanding upon less important ones. And it is evident that John does not mean that the believer is omniscient when he says that he knows all things. He apparently means all things which God has revealed to him. Neither is John ruling out human teachers of the Word when he says that ye need not that any man teach you. John himself wrote this epistle to teach them. We read that the apostles "ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus" (Acts 5:42). Paul "taught everywhere and in every church" (1 Corinthians 4:17). Teaching pastors are God's gift to the Church ([Ephesians 4:11](#)). Here again the Holy Spirit works through human instruments. When the Spirit fills and controls a human teacher, the teaching is not man's teaching but that of the Spirit. But human teachers are not always dominated by the Holy Spirit, and thus may err.

The work of regeneration does not automatically make the illiterate man literate; it does not change the physical constitution of man; it does not impart knowledge about the Bible. It does equip the man with a new nature and with the Holy Spirit, but man learns and progresses in his knowledge and understanding of the things of God only by studying the Word. Hodge's remarks on the perspicuity of the Scriptures is appropriate at this point:

The Bible is a plain book. It is intelligible by the people. And they have the right, and are bound to read and interpret it for themselves; so that their faith may rest upon the testimony of the Scriptures, and not on that of the Church. Such is the doctrine of Protestants on this subject.

It is not denied that the Scriptures contain many things hard to be understood; that they require diligent study; that all men need the guidance of the Holy Spirit in order to right knowledge and true faith. But it is maintained that in all things necessary to salvation they are sufficiently plain to be understood even by the unlearned.⁷⁵

Thus the teaching and illuminating work of the Holy Spirit is involved in every step of the theological discipline: the study of language, the meaning of words, Biblical history and geography, exegesis, and every other means of arriving at the true meaning of Scripture, in conjunction with a humble submission to and reliance upon the Holy Spirit for guidance and enlightenment. And the supreme end of this endeavor must be to glorify God and not simply to attain knowledge, which in and of itself serves only to "puff up" (1 [Corinthians 8:1](#)).

9 BIBLE EVIDENCES

Much has already been said about the claims which the Bible makes for itself. It will be well to reiterate some of these claims before looking at the evidence which substantiates them.

Paul declares that all Scripture is God-breathed (2 [Timothy 3:16](#)). Peter places Paul's epistles on a par with other Scripture (2 [Peter 3:16](#))

Christ had much to say about the Scriptures. He declared that (a) the Scripture cannot be broken ([John 10:34, 35](#)); (b) not one jot or tittle of it shall pass away until all be accomplished ([Matthew 5:18](#)); (c) David and other Old Testament writers spoke by the Holy Spirit ([Mark 12:36](#)); (d) Moses and the prophets and the poetical writers (these three divisions include the entire Old Testament) wrote about Him ([Luke 24:27, 44](#)); (e) what Moses wrote was the Word of God ([Mark 7:9, 10 cf. 13](#)); and (f) further truth would be revealed to the Apostles by the Holy Spirit after His ascension, thus substantiating the New Testament writings ([John 16:12-15](#)).

The Old Testament writers claim to be writing by revelation some four thousand times by using such expressions as, "Thus saith the Lord," "the word of the Lord came," etc., and in many places God is represented as speaking in the first person. In one chapter picked at random, Jeremiah 31, "thus saith the Lord"

⁷⁵ Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 183, 184.

occurs 18 times; the Lord speaks 30 times using the pronoun "I" and 10 times the pronouns "me" and "my" are used of the Lord.

Finally, the power of predictive prophecy is claimed for the Word ([Isaiah 41:21-23](#)).

There is no doubt that the Bible makes exalted claims for itself, but can these claims be substantiated? A popular type book on Philosophy has this to say:

But anyone can write a book, and record in the text that this book contains religious information. The crucial question would be whether this claim is true. And merely by reading the book this could not be ascertained. The fact that the book contains a sentence asserting that it contained religious knowledge can be established; but the *truth-value* of the sentence, the problem at issue, cannot be.⁷⁶

And the authors continue on the same page:

But, even if every historical fact in the Old and New Testaments could be confirmed by careful examination of ancient records, archeological findings, and so on, the question would still remain, how can we tell if the Bible contains any *religious* information.

It must be admitted that accuracy of reporting historical facts would not necessarily prove that a book contained divine revelation, but there would surely be great presumption against a book containing such revelation if it could be proved inaccurate in historical matters. Therefore, historical accuracy would at least be a presumption for trustworthiness in other matters.

Mathematics is really the only exact science. We may repeat an experiment a thousand times of combining hydrogen and oxygen with an electric spark and from the constant results presume that two atoms of hydrogen always unite with one of oxygen to produce water, but we cannot be absolutely sure that at some future time under different circumstances the results might be different. This possibility does not keep scientists from acting upon the knowledge they presently have and of treating such knowledge as factual. The Bible cannot be subjected to tests in the science laboratory. The proofs we offer are not mathematical or physical, and yet they are of great strength. No one proof is in itself conclusive, but a whole series of tests will yield cumulative evidence which becomes very convincing and trustworthy. In presenting both the Internal and the External evidences for substantiating the claims of the Bible we will follow a general outline as suggested by Dr. Leander S. Keyser in his book *A System of Christian Evidence*, Burlington, Iowa: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1945.

⁷⁶ Richard H. Popkin and Avrum Stroll, *Philosophy Made Simple* (New York: Made Simple Books, Inc., 1956), p. 100.

INTERNAL EVIDENCES

The Profound Doctrines of the Bible

1. *The Doctrine of God.* There is no comparison between the character of the God of the Bible and the god or gods of other religions. The gods of the Greek pantheon are depicted as coming down to Mt. Olympus and indulging in all manner of drunken orgies. The gods of the Hindus are cruel and repulsive. Ganesa, the elephant-headed god, the god of the school children, is a great glutton who is fond of drinking beer and eating pancakes. Kali, the goddess of blood, is a horrible creature with four arms, smeared with blood, wearing a necklace of skulls and a girdle made of men's hands.⁷⁷ On the other hand, the God of the Bible is personal, holy, loving, kind, just, provident, all-wise and all-powerful; so gracious that He condescended to take upon Himself human nature that He might taste death for every man.

2. *The Doctrine of Man.* Human life is a cheap commodity to most religions and philosophies, but the Bible teaches that man's soul, created as it was in the image of God as a free, moral, spiritual being, is of more worth than the whole material world. Womanhood, so degraded in other religions, is upheld and honored in the Bible. Although now fallen, man began in an ideal environment in which he had every opportunity to make good. Any inhumanity to be found in the Bible is due to man's disobedience, and not to God or to the teachings of the Bible.

3. *The Doctrine of Salvation.* Although the Bible does not answer the question of why God permitted sin to enter His universe, it leaves no doubt that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and that God is not willing that any should perish. In order to implement His will that man should be saved, He Himself fully provided for man's salvation, so that any one who willed to could be saved. No other book in the world has ever devised such a gracious and at the same time just and righteous plan of salvation.

The Purity of Biblical Ethics

Atheistic writers and lecturers often make the claim that the Bible is an immoral book because it relates the sins of some of its characters. But what they fail to state is that while the Bible does give a true account of these sins, it does so in order to show God's displeasure and to warn others against falling into such sins. Honest-minded people can find no flaw in the ethics of the Bible--in fact, the moral law as stated in the Bible has become the basis for moral ethics of most of the civilized world, although few people live up to its standards. About the only objection which has been voiced by philosophers is that the ethics of the Bible is

⁷⁷ Edward A. Marshall, *Christianity and Non-Christian Religions Compared*, (Chicago: The Institute Colportage Association, 1910), pp. 73, 74.

an acceptable position only if it can be proved that God exists, and that God is good. If God does not exist, then we might as well follow the ethics of Paul's day: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (1 Corinthians 15:32). When we compare this Epicurean philosophy, along with that of the Cynics and the Stoics, with Christian ethics as taught in the Bible, we become aware of the overwhelming superiority of Biblical principles. Some human philosophies did develop some good ethical standards, but they could provide no motivation or power to make people ethical. The Bible supplies the dynamic through regeneration and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit for the realization of its ends.

The Historical Character of the Bible

The Bible was written on the principle that nothing is to be accepted as truth unless it is substantiated by at least two or three competent witnesses. Even Jesus Christ submitted to this dictum. He said: "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true" (John 5:31), and He then proceeded to call in four great witnesses: John the Baptist, whom all considered to be a great prophet of God, His miraculous works, the audible voice of His Father from heaven, and the Scriptures, which He said were written about Him. We do not have mere hearsay evidence. Events recorded in the Bible were not done in a corner ([Acts 26:26](#)). The Bible relates actual historical events, many of which have been substantiated by the findings of archeology. It is not only true to the general facts of history, but its crucial teachings about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are perhaps the best attested facts of ancient history.

The Well-Rounded Biblical World-View

The Bible avoids all of the extreme and lopsided views of life and the world. Idealistic philosophy denies the existence of matter, holding that only mind is a reality. Materialism holds just the opposite extreme view. The Bible teaches the objective reality of both mind and matter, but points out the ephemeral character of the physical and the abiding character of the spiritual ([2 Corinthians 4:18](#)). The pantheist denies the transcendence of God and the deist denies His immanence. The Bible teaches both: God is all in all and God over all ([1 Corinthians 15:28](#); [Romans 9:5](#)). Secularism places all of the emphasis upon the present life; fanaticism ignores the present and concerns itself only with the life to come. Buddhism would suppress all human desire; Hedonism would do nothing but fulfill human desire. Manicheanism held that the human body is evil; Hinduism teaches caste; Confucianism ignores God and the future. The Bible, on the other hand, brings all of these extremes into sharp focus and presents a well-rounded, common-sense world view.

The Bible Meets Man's Deepest Needs

Keyser discusses nine areas of human need where the Bible proves its relevancy: it satisfies man's longing for God; it complements man's conscious

weakness; it gives positive assurance of truth; it affords comfort in trial; it promises the ultimate solution of all problems; it meets the desire to be right with God; it meets the desire for inner purity; it cancels the fear of death and it fits into man's complex psychology.

He asks in conclusion: "Is it probable that a merely human book, and especially one that makes false claims of having come from God, would prove so preeminently germane to all the deepest needs of the human soul? The best explanation, indeed the most reasonable and the only adequate one, is that this wonderful Book is the gift of God."⁷⁸

The Central Character of the Bible

Some writers have stated that it would have been impossible for sinful men to invent such a perfect character as Jesus Christ. Strong quotes Theodore Parken "It would take a Jesus to forge a Jesus."⁷⁹ He also quotes Gore, *Incarnation*, 63 - "The Christ of the gospels, if he be not true to history, presents a combined effort of the creative imagination without parallel in literature. But the literary characteristics of Palestine in the first century make the hypothesis of such an effort morally impossible."⁸⁰ There are doubtless those who would disagree with this conclusion, but, on the other hand, even unbelievers have concurred with this conclusion. John Stewart Mill, the English Utilitarian philosopher is quoted:

Christ is still left, a unique figure, not more unlike all His precursors than all His followers, even those who had the benefit of His personal teaching. But who among His disciples or among their proselytes was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee; certainly not Paul, whose character and idiosyncrasies were of a totally different sort; still less the early Christian writers.⁸¹

If the Biblical record is true concerning the person and character of Jesus Christ, then we must acknowledge the exalted claims which He made for Himself. He claimed to have existed before Abraham ([John 8:56-58](#)); to have come down from heaven ([John 6:33, 38](#)); to have been with the Father before the creation of the world ([John 17:5](#)); to be the Christ, the Son of the living God ([Matthew 16:16](#)); to be the One about whom all of the Old Testament prophets spoke ([Luke 24:27, 44](#)); to have power to forgive sins ([Matthew 9:3-6](#)); to have all authority in heaven and earth ([Matthew 28:18](#)); to be the resurrection and the life ([John 11:25](#)); to be the way, the truth, and the life ([John 14:6](#)); to be the final judge of mankind ([Matthew 25:31, 32](#)); to be equal with God ([John 5:18; 10:30](#)).

⁷⁸ Leander S. Keyser, *A System of Christian Evidences* (Burlington, Iowa: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1945), p. 95.

⁷⁹ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1912), p. 186.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

⁸¹ Keyser, *op. cit.*, pp. 99, 100.

These claims are either true or false. If false, we must conclude that Jesus Christ was either a deluded fanatic or a determined deceiver. It seems impossible to believe that either type of character could have had such a redeeming influence upon humanity for the past nineteen centuries as the knowledge of Christ has produced. If His claims are true, then it is a foregone conclusion that we are dealing with a supernatural character and that the book which records this Person also takes on the same supernatural character, for it is His revelator.

The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus

The conversion of Saul is more significant than that of any other man, since he was the chief antagonist of the early followers of Jesus and therefore the least likely to become a believer himself. Thiessen refers to two Englishmen, Lord Lyttleton and Gilbert West,⁸² who, recognizing that the two strongest evidences for the Bible were the conversion of Saul and the resurrection of Christ, set out as unbelievers to write books disproving both of these events. After a thorough and honest examination of all of the evidence, both men acknowledged the claims of the Bible and became firm believers. They wrote their books, but they were in defense of the truths they had formerly denied. West entitled his book: *Observations on the History and Evidences of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, and Lord Lyttleton stated in his book: *Observations on Saul's Conversion*, "The conversion and apostleship of St. Paul, alone duly considered, is of itself a demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity to be a divine revelation."

Critics have tried to discredit the conversion of Saul by claiming that he suffered sunstroke on the Damascus road and saw hallucinations which he interpreted to be the resurrected Christ. They further argue that the Jesus of Paul was a different Jesus from that of the Gospels. All such attempts to discredit this apparent miracle of Saul's conversion are adequately answered from the Scripture itself. Paul is accused of being an epileptic, but epilepsy was a well-known disorder in Bible times (see [Matthew 4:24](#) and [17:15](#), where "lunatick" should be "epileptic") and surely Dr. Luke was familiar with it. He gives no indication in the book of Acts that Paul had any such affliction. And surely there is no indication in his epistles to substantiate such a charge. Critics who deny that Paul saw the resurrected Christ on the Damascus road, deny this because they deny the resurrection of Christ. But there were over five hundred eye-witnesses to the resurrection of Christ ([1 Corinthians 15:6](#)) and it is impossible that all of these could have suffered sunstroke or could have been given to epileptic fits or were subject to hallucinations.

The charge that Paul invented another Jesus and was antagonistic to the other apostles is also answered by the Bible record. Paul did preach a different dispensation than was committed to Peter, but he did not preach another Jesus. Paul himself condemns any who would preach another Jesus ([2 Corinthians](#)

⁸² Henry C. Thiessen, *Systematic Theology* (Lectures in) (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), p. 332.

11:4). If Peter and Paul were antagonists is it likely that Paul would have stayed with Peter for fifteen days when he visited Jerusalem ([Galatians 1:18](#)), or that there would have been the accord that was manifested in Acts 15, when the Jerusalem apostles sent out a letter to the Gentile churches commending "our beloved Barnabas and Paul," or that the Jerusalem apostles would have glorified God when they heard from Paul what great things God was doing through him ([Acts 21:20](#)), or that Peter would classify all of Paul's epistles as Scripture ([2 Peter 3:16](#))?

What is remarkable is that the destructive critics have sensed the differences between the ministries of the Twelve and Paul, which are, as stated above, dispensational in character, whereas many conservative scholars deny any differences, thinking thereby to protect the unity of the Scripture and to offset the claims of the critics.

Fulfilled Prophecy

This proof is probably the most demonstrable of all of the internal evidences. Again, destructive higher criticism has tried to discredit the prophetic character of the Bible by placing such late dates upon the books of the Old Testament as to have the prophecies written after the events transpired. As an example of this see the introductions to the Old Testament books in the *Short Bible*. Amos is said to be the first book to be written, between 765 and 750 B.C. Daniel, which contains many exact prophecies about Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome, is said to be "clearly a product of the Maccabean age."⁸³ Concerning the first five books of the Bible, which Christ declared to have been written by Moses ([Mark 12:19, 26](#); [Luke 20:28](#); [John 5:46](#); [Luke 24:27](#)), the *Short Bible* states: "It would be difficult to find in ancient or modern literature any parallel to the stupendous scope of the undertaking into which some great Hebrew of the post-Exilic age toward 350 B.C. wrought the literary inheritance of his people."⁸⁴ If we are to believe the critics, the books of Moses were written 1200 years after Moses' death by an unknown Hebrew.

But the attempts of higher criticism to date the writing of the Old Testament between 750 and 150 B.C. have failed to destroy the prophetic character of the Bible, for the most dramatic fulfillments occurred in the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Even if we accepted the late dates set by the critics several hundred years intervened between the utterance and the fulfillment of the prophecies. And Chalet claims that "Upwards of three hundred separate prophecies have been identified which belong to the first advent."⁸⁵ According to the laws of probability the chance would be infinitesimal that a man would appear on the scene who would have this many predictions, uttered over a period of 1500 years or even 600 years, fulfilled in detail upon himself. The only

⁸³ Edgar J. Goodspeed and J. M. Powis Smith, *The Short Bible* (New York: Random House, 1940), p. 241.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁸⁵ L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947) Vol. IV, p. 304.

reasonable explanation is that Jesus Christ was indeed the One of whom all of these prophets wrote. And the Bible itself appeals to fulfilled prophecy as a proof of divine revelation ([Isaiah 41:20-23](#)).

While no proof or series of proofs can compel belief, the cumulative effect of the foregoing evidences upon an honest mind is to convince beyond any reasonable doubt that the claims of the Bible are true.

10 BIBLE EVIDENCES- Continued

EXTERNAL EVIDENCES

The Salutory Influence of the Bible

The Bible, where it has been accepted and obeyed, has produced marked changes for good in every area of life. Note the following examples:

1. *Influence upon Individuals.* Everyone who has accepted by faith the Bible's message of redemption has experienced the change which is called regeneration or the new birth. This change effects a new nature within the believer. In evaluating this change it is essential to understand that it does not eradicate the original sinful nature; the believer still retains the ability of wrong-doing. The new birth does not produce a perfect character, but it does infuse a new principle of spiritual life, which if nurtured will give power over sinful habits and tendencies. Not all believers experience the same degree of change in the manner of life, simply because all do not submit to this new nature in the same degree. Every Christian community can produce examples of conversions of men or women who had formerly been outstanding criminals or addicts of immorality but who are now living decent and helpful lives. The transformation in these lives is attributable directly to the Bible. For the reason already given Christians are far from perfect in many cases, but there can be no doubt concerning the salutory influence of the Bible upon even the most immature believer.

2. *Influence upon Society.* Society is made up of individuals and the greater the number of individuals who accept Biblical standards, the greater the influence for good upon society. A fact not generally taken into account is that the majority of Christian people in a community were reared under the influence of the Bible and are now living decent and helpful lives. But what would have been the moral condition of that community had the influence of the Bible been completely removed from the training of its youth? No doubt large numbers would have fallen into crime and immorality. Those antagonistic to the Bible usually overlook this fact and single out for criticism individual cases of Christian failure.

The Bible's influence upon society stands out in sharpest relief in heathen lands where missionaries have carried the Bible and its saving gospel.

Missionary annals abound with examples of great transformations of society from filth to cleanliness, from immorality to purity, from superstition to reality, from savagery and cannibalism to peaceful existence. Again, it must be pointed out that such changes have been only in the degree to which the people as a whole have accepted the teachings of the Bible. In this respect the Bible is similar to a doctor's prescription; neither the doctor nor the prescription are to be blamed for the patient's illness if the medicine is not taken as prescribed.

3. *Influence upon Physical Well-Being.* Whereas the Bible's primary message is spiritual in nature and shows sinful man how he may be reconciled to God, it is also true that it has considerable to say about health, and wherever it has been accepted care for the sick and helpless has flourished. God gave to His Old Testament people many laws of hygiene, and in His covenant relations with them promised them freedom from disease if they were obedient to His word. Sickness, disease and death are the result of sin, and in the final analysis redemption will remove even these physical effects. The earthly ministry of Christ was largely occupied with healing of diseases, and while the present dispensation does not include the supernatural gift of healing, it is true that the believer's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and is therefore to be kept clean. It is also true that the love of God is shed abroad in the hearts of those who accept the Bible's message, so that Christian people have compassion upon the sick and sorrowing and provide hospitals and houses of mercy for the needy. Missionaries in the past who have gone into lands where the Bible had never before penetrated have never discovered such institutions in so-called heathen cultures. It should be borne in mind that the non-Christian world has adopted many principles which originated with the Bible, simply because these principles have proved beneficial to all concerned.

The above claims are based upon the influence of the Bible and not that of professing Christendom. Atheists often point to the many wrongs which have been done in the name of the Christian religion or of the Church, and it must be admitted that there have been persecutions, bigotry, wars, pogroms, inquisitions, and murder in the name of religion, but it has been a misguided and unscriptural religion. The Bible cannot be held accountable for the evils of the professing Church. In those cases where the Church has appealed to the Bible for its authority to put people to death it has been completely undispensational. It has appealed to Old Testament cases where God in His dealings with national Israel commanded divine judgments to be executed upon individuals or nations, supposing that the Church is now operating under the same dispensation. In this dispensation the people of God have no political powers whatsoever, whereas Israel's dispensation was a church-state. Failure to recognize the dispensational character of the Bible has brought great reproach upon the outward Church and has doubtless turned many people against the Bible.

Evidences From Archeology

Archeology cannot prove that the Bible is a divine revelation but it can prove the historical accuracy of the Bible. It is altogether unreasonable to suppose that a book which is a fraud, which was written hundreds of years after its purported date, should be accurate in its historical details. If the book of Acts, for example, had been written two centuries after the events transpired, as some destructive critics once contended, it would be most unlikely that the writer could have been accurate in his descriptions of Paul's missionary journeys. The critics once claimed that the book of Acts was full of historical and geographical inaccuracies, but the work of W. M. Ramsey in Asia Minor has silenced all such claims. Ramsey began his archeological work apparently to prove a late date for Acts, but the facts which he unearthed convinced him otherwise. He states: "The present writer, starting with the confident assumption that the book was fabricated in the middle of the second century, and studying it to see what light it could throw on the state of society in Asia Minor, was gradually driven to the conclusion that it must have been written in the first century and with admirable knowledge."⁸⁶

Camden M. Cobern presents a wealth of archeological information in his book, *The New Archeological Discoveries and Their Bearing Upon the New Testament*. Keyser states that Dr. Cobern brings out the fact that between 1912 and the time of publication of his book, "over seventy discoveries in archeology go to prove the genuineness of the New Testament."⁸⁷ The well-known Egyptologist, Edouard Naville, who wrote the Introduction to Dr. Cobern's book, makes an interesting comment, both on the value of Dr. Cobern's work and on the methodology of destructive higher criticism.

We have to thank Dr. Cobern for having given us, with a great deal of learning, a vivid account of all these mines of scholarly research, which are still far from having been thoroughly worked. Especially their bearing upon the books of the Bible has not been adequately shown, the reason being that most Biblical scholars are still tied down to the methods of the destructive criticism. A book of Scripture is taken, a minute philological analysis is made of it, with often a great amount of scholarship, but this analysis necessarily leads to the discovery of apparent inconsistencies, of disconnections, of repetitions, which have been interpreted as showing the hands of different writers. The whole process has been one of disintegration of the books, resulting in the creation of a great number of authors, for the existence of whom no historical proofs whatever can be adduced.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ W. M. Ramsay, *Pauline and Other Studies* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Sons, 1906), p. 199.

⁸⁷ Leander S. Keyser, *A System of Christian Evidences* (Burlington, Iowa: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1945), p. 165, quoted from Camden M. Cobern.

⁸⁸ Camden M. Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1928), p. xv.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, one of the more recent and outstanding archeological discoveries, have been dated by Carbon-14 method and by chemical analysis of ink, writing, etc., somewhere between 200 B.C. and the beginning of the Christian era. One of the manuscripts is an almost complete copy of the prophecy of Isaiah. Bruce remarks that no less an authority than Sir Frederic Kenyon had written as late as 1939: "There is, indeed, no probability that we shall ever find manuscripts of the Hebrew text going back to a period before the formation of the text which we know as the Massoretic" (about 1000 A.D.) Bruce continues: "Even before the new evidence came to light Kenyon believed the Massoretic text of the Old Testament to be a trustworthy representation of what the authors had written; he lived long enough to see his belief confirmed by testimony of a kind which had hardly been thought possible."⁸⁹

Archeological proofs are perhaps the most objective type of evidence for the genuineness of the Scriptures. The arguments of the destructive critics have largely been disproved by the results of archeological research. It would seem that God has caused these many evidences to be buried for centuries under desert sands or in caves and tombs, to be brought to light in a scientific and rationalistic age which questions everything and demands objective proofs for everything it accepts.

Space does not permit an examination of individual evidences from the field of archeology. The student is referred to the large and ever growing literature on this subject.⁹⁰

The Survival Of The Bible

⁸⁹ F. F. Bruce, *Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), p. 23.

⁹⁰ G. A. Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*.

C. R. Conder, *The Tell el Amarna Tablets; The Bible and the East; The Hittites and Their Language*.

M. G. Kyle, *The Deciding Voice of the Monuments; Moses and the Monuments; The Problem of the Pentateuch*.

E. Naville, *The Discovery of the Book of the Law Under King Josiah; Archeology and the Old Testament; The Higher Criticism in Relation to the Pentateuch*.

I. M. Price, *The Monuments and the Old Testament*.

A. H. Sayce, *The Higher Criticism and the Monuments; Monument Facts and Higher Critical Theories; The Hittites, or, The Story of a Forgotten Empire; The Time of Isaiah; Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments*.

J. P. Free, *Archeology and Bible History*.

Sir. C. Marston, *The Bible Comes Alive*.

J. C. Muir, *His Truth Endureth*.

W. G. Williams, *Archeology in Biblical Research*.

F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts and Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls*.

M. Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls; The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark 's Monastery; More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls*.

M. Unger, *The Dead Sea Scrolls; Discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Amazing Archeological Discoveries*.

The very fact that the Bible has survived all of the many attempts to destroy and eradicate it during the centuries is thought by many to be a mark of divine protection and authentication of the Scriptures. Even at the time of the writing of some of the books attempts were made to destroy them, as in the case of Jeremiah's prophecy (ch. [36:23-26](#)). A number of the Roman emperors, notably Diocletian, endeavored to exterminate Christianity and the Bible. In speaking of the first three centuries of the Christian era Fisher says: "It was the heroic age in the history of the Church, when, with no aid from an arm of flesh, the whole might of the Roman empire was victoriously encountered by the unarmed and unresisting adherents of the Christian' faith. Imperial Rome, the conqueror of the world, was herself overcome by the bands of Christian disciples, whose meek but dauntless courage was more than a match for all her power."⁹¹

The Roman Church, while claiming to be the producer and protector of the Bible, did everything within its power to keep the Bible from the Christian public. Sir Robert Anderson expressed an English Protestant view when he wrote:

But, it will be said, is it not to the Church that we owe the Bible? Regarded as a book we owe it indeed in a sense to the Church (the Old Testament we owe, of course, to the Jews), just as we owe it to the printer. But in a sense which appeals to us more closely here in England we owe it to noble men who rescued it for us in defiance of the Church. Let not the Protestants of England forget William Tyndale. His life work was to bring the Bible within reach even of the humblest peasant. And for no other offense than this the Church hounded him to his death, never resting till it had strangled him at the stake and flung his body to the flames.⁹²

Fisher in discussing the period between 1073 and 1294 when the Papacy held full sway in Western Europe states: "The reading of the Bible by laymen was subject to so many restraints, especially after the rise of the Waldenses, that, if not absolutely forbidden, it was regarded with gave suspicion."⁹³

Ungodly men have attempted to destroy the Bible in various ways. Political leaders have tried to destroy it by violence. Leaders of the Roman Church have withheld it from the laity by burning translations of it in their own languages, along with the translators. It has been stated by many that Voltaire predicted that the Bible and Christianity would be extinct within one hundred years.⁹⁴ It should be remembered that Voltaire was not an atheist and that his main conflict was with the corrupt Roman Catholic clergy of France. Will Durant quotes from Voltaire's letter to Diderot, a leader of the French Encyclopedists:

⁹¹ George P. Fisher, *History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), pp. 50-51.

⁹² Sir Robert Anderson, *The Silence of God* (London: Pickering and Inglis, Ninth Edition, N.D.), pp. 92-93.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

⁹⁴ Henry C. Thiessen, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951),p. 85.

I confess that I am not at all of the opinion of Saunderson, who denies a God because he was born sightless. I am, perhaps, mistaken; but in his place I should recognize a great Intelligence who had given me so many substitutes for sight; and perceiving, on reflection, the wonderful relations between all things, I should have suspected a Workman infinitely able. If it is very presumptuous to divine what He is, and why He has made everything that exists, so it seems to me very presumptuous to deny that He exists.⁹⁵

Durant says: "He began with a 'higher criticism' of the authenticity and reliability of the Bible; he takes much of his material from Spinoza, more of it from the English Deists, most of it from the *Critical Dictionary* of Bayle (1647-1706); but how brilliant and fiery their material becomes in his hands!"⁹⁶ English Deism, French Encyclopedism and German destructive higher criticism, coupled with the naturalism of the scientific revolution, were all powerful, anti-biblical forces which effectively destroyed the usefulness of the Bible for multitudes of people; and yet, the Bible still stands today as perhaps the most widely circulated book in the world.

Other Evidences

There are other external evidences having to do mainly with the ancient manuscripts of the Bible and with the results of Biblical criticism. Some would include Christian Experience as an external evidence, and while this is indeed a very real evidence to the believer, it is highly subjective in nature, and would bear little weight with the average unbeliever, except as he might see it actually displayed in the life of a personal acquaintance. Some would also include the scientific character of the Bible as an evidence. However, modern science is in conflict with many interpretations of the Bible. For example, the interpretation of the creation story which makes the universe to have been created in 4004 B.C. is surely contrary to the modern scientific view which supposes that the universe is six to ten billion years old. Those who hold that the creation *days* were long ages of hundreds of millions of years try to harmonize these days with the *ages* which geologists have outlined. Interpretations of nature by the scientists are constantly changing, just as there are various interpretations of the creation story, so that it is possible to harmonize some views, but at the same time, other views are thrown into conflict.

CONCLUSION

It is a matter of weighing all of the evidence, both internal and external, and arriving at a considered judgment concerning the validity of the Bible's claims. Preconceived ideas and the blindness of the natural mind to spiritual truth often make this a difficult process. If the unbeliever still has doubts, he may avail

⁹⁵ Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy* (New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1954), p. 240.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

himself of the principle laid down by Christ: "If any man will to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17). In other words, if a man is truly honest in his desire to know and to do the will of God, God will make His truth known to him.

11 BIBLICAL CRITICISM -- TEXTUAL

The word *criticism* may have and usually does have in common usage the connotation of fault-finding or censure. However, in its basic meaning and in the sense in which it is used in Biblical Criticism it means a discriminating judgment, a critical and careful examination. Biblical Criticism is divided into two fields, usually known as Lower and Higher Criticism. Eichhorn is believed to have coined the expression, *Higher Criticism*: higher, not in the sense of being superior to Lower Criticism, but higher in order of procedure, the Lower coming first logically, followed by the Higher. These two fields would be better designated by their respective subject matter: the first being Textual and the second Historical. The purpose of Textual Criticism is to ascertain the exact text of Scripture, as far as possible, as it existed in the original writings. The objective of Historical Criticism is to judge from internal evidence the authorship, date, and historical value of the various books of the Bible. What is here presented is simply a brief survey of these two fields. The student should consult books on Biblical Introduction and encyclopedia articles on the various aspects of Higher Criticism for more detailed information.

THE NEED FOR TEXTUAL CRITICISM

We possess no original manuscripts of any of the books of the Bible. With the exception of the Dead Sea Scrolls copy of Isaiah, we have no Hebrew manuscript copies earlier than the 10th century A.D. Although some New Testament manuscript copies go back as early as 350 A.D., there is still a lapse of almost 300 years between the original writing and the earliest copy which we possess, during which time errors in copying may have crept into the text.

It is a fact that when the many manuscript copies which have come down to us from antiquity are compared there are many variations in reading among them. The question naturally arises, which of these readings is the correct one? How can we answer this question apart from a careful, critical study of these various manuscripts in order to ascertain which one is most closely related to the original? Such a study involves the formulation of principles and criteria by which judgments are to be made, and the science which results is known as Textual Criticism.

CAUSES FOR VARIATIONS IN READINGS

All manuscript copying was done by hand. Handwriting, depending upon the skill of the scribe, is always more difficult to read than modern printing. And add to this the poor quality of the primitive writing implements and materials which were used and it becomes easy to see how copyists could inadvertently misread a word in copying.

Many letters, especially in the Hebrew alphabet, are very similar in form (compare *resh* with *daleth*, *beth* with *caph*, *he* with *cheth*, *gimel* with *nun*, *vau* with *zain*), and could therefore easily be mistaken by the copyist.

Each time a manuscript is copied the possibility of mistakes is multiplied. Over the hundreds of years involved it must be supposed that these manuscripts were copied many, many times. Up until about the fourth century the New Testament manuscripts were made on papyrus, a very fragile material which would quickly be ruined by much handling. This fact would necessitate frequent copying.

There are numerous cases where the mistaking of a single letter in a word changes completely the meaning. In [Luke 2:14](#) the addition of the letter "s" to *eudokia* changes the meaning from "good-will toward men" to "unto men of good-will." A single stroke of the pen through the letter *omicron* changes it to the letter *theta*, and this slight change makes some manuscripts of [1 Timothy 3:16](#) read, "God was manifested in the flesh," instead of "Who was manifested in the flesh."

Ancient manuscripts were written without punctuation or even spacing between words. Add to this the fact that ancient Hebrew was written without any vowels and it becomes almost a miracle that there are not more variations between manuscripts than there are. This problem can be better appreciated trying to read: "FRGDSLVDTHWRLDTHHTHGVHSNLYBGTTNSN," which is the first part of John 3:16 written in this fashion. Alexander Souter's famous example of wrong word division in English is, "Have you seen a *bun dance* on the table?"

In a case where one scribe read and the others copied there could be an occasional failure to understand correctly the word pronounced or one might misspell a word. In other cases one in relying upon his memory might introduce a slight change in the text. Or it might have been difficult for the scribe to judge whether a particular word was part of the text or a note which some previous scribe had inserted.

There may have been changes made by a scribe with the intention of correcting supposed mistakes in spelling or grammar, or to harmonize similar narratives in the Gospel records. Angus and Green mention thirteen causes for variations in the manuscript texts.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Joseph Angus and Samuel G. Green, *The Cyclopedic Handbook to the Bible* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, n.d.), pp. 67-76.

EXTENT OF VARIATIONS

Variations in Old Testament manuscripts are much fewer than in the New Testament, numbering in all around 2,000. The reason for this is two-fold: we have comparatively few Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament, and apparently the Jewish scribes exercised much more care in their work than did those who copied the Greek scriptures. It is estimated that there are about 200,000 variations between the more than 3,000 New Testament manuscripts extant. These variations include differences in spelling, transposition of letters, words, and clauses, order of words, order of sentences, reduplication, etc. By 200,000 variations is not meant that there are that many places where variations occur, for in many cases several variations are counted for one word, depending upon the number of manuscripts that differ at that point. In most cases these variations would not even call for a difference in translation.

According to Miller,⁹⁸ Dr. Ezra Abbot of the Revision Committee said that about 95% of the various readings have so little weight that no one would think of them as rival readings, and that 95% of the remainder are of so little importance that their adoption or rejection would make no appreciable difference in the sense of a passage where they occur. Miller also quotes Schaff⁹⁹ to the effect that of the 150,000 variations only about 400 affect the sense, and of these only about 50 are of real significance, and that not one of those 50 affect an article of faith or a precept of duty which is not abundantly sustained by other and undoubted passages. Many of the variations are of no more importance than failure to dot an "i" or to cross a "t" would be in English.

Angus and Green quote Bishop Westcott:

It cannot be repeated too often that the text of the New Testament surpasses all other Greek texts in antiquity, variety, and fulness of evidence by which it is attested. About seven-eighths of the words are raised above all doubt by a unique combination of authorities; and of the questions which affect the remaining one-eighth, a great part are simply questions of order and form, and such that serious doubt does not appear to touch more than one-sixtieth part of the whole text.¹⁰⁰

How far the evidence for the Biblical text surpasses all other writings of antiquity can be seen when it is remembered that Herodotus is represented by only 15 manuscripts, none of which are older than the 10th century and that there are even fewer for Plato. We do not even possess any original manuscripts of such comparatively recent writers as Shakespeare, Milton, or Bunyan. The following quotation from Dr. Cobern will indicate to what extent Textual Criticism has succeeded in giving us a reliable text:

⁹⁸ H. S. Miller, *General Biblical Introduction* (Houghton, N.Y.: The Word-Bearer Press, 1947), p. 280.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

¹⁰⁰ Angus and Green, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

The writer was working in London University when the first sensational discovery was made of a leaf from a pocket Bible which had been carried by an Egyptian Christian of the third century. This leaf was a hundred years older than any other fragment of Scripture previously known. It was written on poor papyrus in a fairly good hand and well represented the New Testaments which were being used by poor men in the days of the martyrs. The book must originally have been composed of twenty-four or twenty-five sheets of papyrus.

Only those who have come personally into close touch with supremely important discoveries can understand with what eagerness this discolored leaf was examined by everyone interested in the authenticity of the New Testament writings. It had been written generations before the great Council of Constantine--was it the same Biblical text as that which in uninterrupted succession continued to be used from the fourth century onward? The whole tone of modern New Testament criticism was changed for the better when it was found that, with the exception of a slightly different spelling of three proper names, David, Zerach, and Amninadab, and the omission of two articles before proper names, this oldest extant manuscript of the New Testament agreed exactly with the Westcott and Hort Greek text which formed the basis of our Revised Version--having even the same abbreviations and one wrongly placed rough breathing. This fragment confirms the fact that the Church of the martyrs possessed the same New Testament as our fathers revered.¹⁰¹

MANUSCRIPT COPIES

Old Testament

Textual criticism of the Old Testament is very much limited by the paucity of manuscripts. The oldest Hebrew manuscript is the *Codex Babylonicus Petropolitanus* (*codex* is a manuscript in book form, rather than in a roll), which goes back only to 916 A.D. All of the Hebrew manuscripts represent one and the same text, the *Massoretic*. The Massoretes were a guild of Hebrew scholars who sought not only to preserve and transmit to posterity the consonantal text, but by the addition of vowel points to also preserve the proper pronunciation. This work was done somewhere between the 6th and 8th centuries A.D. It is thought that the form in which we now have the Hebrew text was fixed around the beginning of the 2nd century A.D., and that the scribes used the utmost care in copying the manuscripts. The Jewish rabbis believed that every word and letter of the Scripture was of divine authority, and hence they made sure that extremely accurate copying was done. The scarcity of Hebrew manuscripts is due to the practice of destroying worn manuscripts after new copies had been made.

¹⁰¹ Camden M. Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1928), pp. 132, 133.

The other principal sources of Old Testament material besides the Hebrew manuscripts are the Samaritan Pentateuch which has been preserved by the Samaritans since the time of Nehemiah, the Targums (Aramaic paraphrases of the Scripture), the Septuagint (3rd century B.C. translation of the Old Testament into Greek), Greek translations of the Old Testament made by Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotian during the 2nd century A.D., Origen's *Hexapla* (a comparison in six parallel columns of the Hebrew text, the Hebrew transliterated into Greek letters, Aquila's translation), the Old Latin version, Jerome's Latin Vulgate, and the Syriac Versions (the Peshito and the Syro-Hexaplar).

New Testament

New Testament manuscripts are much more abundant and more ancient than those of the Old Testament. There are approximately 4,000 of them, dating from the 4th century to the invention of the printing press, although most of them contain only portions or fragments of the entire New Testament. Angus-Green quote Dr. Eberhard Nestle:

For no literary production of antiquity is there such a wealth of manuscripts as for the New Testament. Our classical scholars would rejoice were they as fortunate with Homer or Sophocles, Plato or Aristotle, Cicero or Tacitus, as Bible students are with their New Testament. The oldest complete manuscripts of Homer that we have date from the thirteenth century A.D., and only separate papyrus fragments go back to the Alexandrian age. All that is extant of Sophocles we owe to a single MS., dating from the eighth or ninth century, in the Laurentian Library at Florence. But of the New Testament, 3,829 MSS. have been catalogued to the present time.¹⁰²

The New Testament manuscripts are usually divided into two groups: the *Uncial*, written in capital (majuscule) letters, and the *Cursive*, written in small, running-hand (minuscule) letters. The Uncial form of writing was used up to about the 10th century and the Cursive form began to be used about the 9th century.

1. *Uncial Manuscripts*: While there are over 150 Uncials which contain fragments of the New Testament, there are only about six which may be classed as first-rate.

Codex Sinaiticus. It is believed that this copy was made around 340 A.D. It contains the Old Testament in Greek, the entire New Testament, and the epistle of Barnabas and part of the Shepherd of Hermas. It consists of 347 leaves of the finest vellum, 13 1/2 by 15 inches. For the thrilling story of Dr. Tischendorf's discovery of the manuscript in the monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai in

¹⁰² Angus and Green, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

1859, see Cobern.¹⁰³ In 1844 Tischendorf obtained 43 leaves of the Old Testament which were deposited in the University Library at Leipsic. Fifteen years later he again visited the monastery and discovered the remainder of the manuscript which was eventually taken to Russia and placed in the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg (Leningrad). In 1933 the Soviet government sold it to the British Museum for 100,000 pounds (\$510,000 at current rate of exchange). The monastery of St. Catherine's was built by Emperor Justinian in 527 and it is possible that he presented this manuscript to the monastery.

Codex Vaticanus. This manuscript also dates from about 350 A.D. It contains the Old Testament Septuagint translation with most of the Apocrypha, and the New Testament. Part of the epistle to the Hebrews, the Pastorals, Philemon, and Revelation are missing. The Codex is written on very fine vellum leaves, 10 by 10 1/2 inches. It consists of 617 leaves in the Old Testament and 142 in the New. Its early history is unknown. It was catalogued in the Vatican Library in 1481. It is generally considered to be the oldest and best manuscript of the New Testament.

Codex Alexandrinus. This Codex is so named because it is supposed to have come from Alexandria around 450 A.D. It contains the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, and the New Testament. Parts of Genesis, 1 Kings, Psalms, Matthew, John, 2 Corinthians are missing. It is on very thin vellum pages 10 1/4 by 12 3/4 inches, having 639 in the Old Testament and 134 in the New. In 1624 it was given to Sir Thomas Roe, English ambassador to Turkey to be presented to King James I, but it arrived too late to be used in making the King James Version and after the death of James. It was presented to Charles I in 1627 and placed in the Royal Library. Then in 1757 George II presented the Royal Library to the British nation and thus this manuscript was placed in the National Library of the British Museum. It was the first Uncial to be used by Biblical scholars.

Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus. This Codex is called a *palimpsest*, the name given to a parchment which has been written on twice by having the first writing erased or partially erased. Originally it was a manuscript of the Old and New Testaments, copied around 450 A.D. In the 12th century the original was erased and the sermons of the Syrian Father Ephraem (around 300 A.D.) were written in its place. In the process many of the pages were lost. It came into the possession of Catherine de Medici about 1553 and at her death it was placed in the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris. It was later discovered that there were traces of writing underneath Ephraem's sermons. Through the application of chemicals the original writing was partially restored. Tischendorf edited and published it in 1845.

Codex Washingtoniensis. This manuscript of the fourth or fifth century contains Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Psalms, the four Gospels, and portions of the Pauline Epistles from 1 Corinthians through Hebrews. This Codex, consisting actually of

¹⁰³ Cobern, *op. cit.*, pp. 133, 134.

four groups of manuscripts, was purchased in Cairo by C. L. Freer of Detroit, and is now in the National Library, Washington, D.C.

Codex Bezae. This manuscript is dated around 550 A.D. It is written in both Latin and Greek. It was found in the monastery at Lyons, France, by the Genevan reformer, Beza in 1562. It is now in the library of the University of Cambridge. It consists of 406 leaves, 8 by 10 inches. Beza also discovered another ancient manuscript in the monastery at Clermont, France, which has been named the *Codex Cleromontanus*. It is also written in Greek and Latin and is dated around 550 A.D. It contains 533 leaves, 7 3/4 by 9 3/4 inches. It is now in the National Library, Paris.

The Chester Beatty Papyri. These manuscripts, purchased by Mr. Chester Beatty from dealers in Egypt in 1931, have been proclaimed as "the greatest discovery of new Biblical manuscripts, at least since the Freer collection, and possibly since the Codex Sinaiticus, was made."¹⁰⁴ The reason for this judgment is the fact that these parchments go back at least one hundred years earlier than any other extant manuscript. They are also in codex form, which proves that the New Testament books were bound together in a collected form at this early date, about 150 years after the Revelation was written.

2. *Cursive Manuscripts.* These are generally of much less importance than the Uncials, since they are copies which were made at a much later date and therefore further removed from the originals. However, it is possible that a Cursive might be the copy of an Uncial which was written much earlier than another Uncial, and it would, in that case, be of more value. There are approximately 2,500 of these in existence, with slightly less than 50 containing the entire New Testament.

3. *Other Sources.* Besides the Uncial and Cursive Manuscripts, Textual critics avail themselves of the Scriptural quotations in the writings of the early Church fathers. Miller, in a footnote,¹⁰⁵ calculates that in the extant writings of Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Eusebius, there are 36,289 quotations from the New Testament.

PRINCIPLES OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM

The textual critic has formulated certain principles or rules by which he forms his judgments as to which of the variant readings is the true one. Price lists 12 rules which he has taken from Schaff's Introduction to the American edition of Westcott and Hort's New Testament in Greek:

¹⁰⁴ Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 200, quoted from Kenyon, *Recent Developments in the Textual Criticism of the Greek Bible*, 1933, p. 51.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

(1) The critic must be a trained scholar having a general knowledge of what must be looked for in order to make a choice of readings. (2) Every kind of evidence, internal and external, concerning a manuscript must be taken into account according to its intrinsic value: the place where and the conditions under which it was found, how it was preserved, character of the writing, materials, etc. (3) The sources of the text must be sifted and classified, and the authorities for the variants must be weighed rather than numbered. A reading must be judged by its value, not by the number of its witnesses. One independent manuscript may be worth a score that were copied from the same original. (4) The restoration of the pure text must be rounded on the history and genealogy of the textual variations. The ancestry of a manuscript must be traced as far back as possible. (5) The reading of an older manuscript is preferable to that of a later, because it is presumably nearer the source. This is not rigid, for sometimes a later copy may represent a more ancient reading. (6) In general, the shorter reading is preferable to the longer, because insertions and additions are more probable than omissions. (7) The more difficult and obscure reading is preferable to the one that is more simple and easy in construction. A difficult reading might trouble a scribe and lead to a change. (8) That reading is preferable which best explains the origin of the other readings or variations. (9) That reading is preferable which best suits the literary style of the author, for copyists usually disregard the idiosyncrasies of the author. (10) That reading which bears the earmarks of doctrinal controversy should be ruled out in favor of one to which no suspicion is attached. (11) The agreement of the most ancient witnesses of all classes decides the true reading against all mediaeval copies and printed editions. (12) The primary uncials, Sinaitic, Vatican, Ephraem, and Alexandrian, especially the first two, if sustained by ancient versions and ante-Nicene citations, outweigh all later authorities, and give us presumably the original text.¹⁰⁶

12 BIBLICAL CRITICISM -- HIGHER

Orr distinguishes thus between Lower and Higher Criticism:

Criticism of Scripture ("Bib. criticism") is usually divided into what is called "lower or textual criticism" and "higher criticism" - the latter a phrase round which many misleading associations gather... "higher criticism" concerns itself with the resultant problems of age, authorship, sources, simple or composite character, historical worth, relation to period of origin, etc "higher criticism" - while invaluable as an aid in the domain of Bib. introduction (date, authorship, genuineness, contents, destination, etc.), manifestly tends to widen out illimitably into regions where exact science cannot follow it, where, often, the critic's imagination is his only law.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 289, 290, quoted from Price, *The Ancestry of Our English Bible*, pp. 201-205.

¹⁰⁷ James Orr, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Chicago: The Howard Severance Company, 1915), II, p. 749.

Preliminary remarks concerning Higher or Historical Criticism were made previously in the chapter on Contemporary Theology. Here we will trace briefly the history of this discipline. Although attacks have been made on the Scriptures from ancient times by such groups as the Gnostics and Ebionites, Higher Criticism is considered to have had its beginnings with a French physician by the name of Astruc in the 18th century who noted the fact that in Genesis different names were used for God (Elohim, Jehovah) and from this fact he developed a theory that Genesis was a composite of several ancient documents. Eichhorn further developed Astruc's theory by pointing out literary differences as well. Then De Wette, at the beginning of the 19th century, assigned the greater portion of Deuteronomy to the 7th century B.C. Hupfeld, fifty years later, believed he had discovered the influence of another document which used the name of Elohim, which he designated as the second Elohist. This documentary theory assigned certain letters to identify the supposed documents (J for the one using Jehovah in Genesis, P and E for the two Elohist sources, and D for the source of the bulk of Deuteronomy). Further refinements have resolved these documents into different strata: P₁, P₂, P₃, J₁, J₂, etc. It was further supposed that Joshua was compounded from these same documents, so that we have a Hexateuch instead of a Pentateuch.

The Documentary Theory was finalized by Graff, Kuenen, and Wellhausen. The J and E documents, they claimed, were composed during the early monarchy and were later combined by a redactor. The bulk of Deuteronomy (D) was composed in the 7th century and published in the 18th year of the reign of Josiah ([2 Kings 22](#)). Later it was combined with J and E by another redactor. The Priestly Code (PC), consisting mainly of Leviticus 17-26, is said to have been composed in the post-exilic period. It was finally joined with the JED documents by a priestly redactor (Rp) to form the Pentateuch, which was brought by Ezra to Jerusalem from Babylon in 458 B.C. ([Ezra 7:6-10](#)).

Burton Scott Easton, writing in defense of the Graf-Wellhausen theory, states: "More specifically, it is contended that evidence can be produced from the OT to show that Israel's religion can be seen in a long period of growth; and in this growth a fixed sacrificial law, with a minutely regulated ritual obligatory on all Israelites, the culmination and not the beginning of the process."¹⁰⁸

Thus, this theory is one of evolution from a simple, primitive religion in the days of Moses to the complex system of Judaism in the post-exilic period. Therefore, it is argued that since the complex system is contained in the Pentateuch, which Jews and Christians have always believed to be the books of Moses, it could not have been written until very late in Israel's history. This view at once negates the whole idea that God spoke to Moses and gave him a system of religion based upon a heavenly pattern (cf. [Hebrews 8:5; 9:23, 24](#)). But it is contended by these critics that the facts contained in the Old Testament make it

¹⁰⁸ Burton Scott Easton, *ibid.*, II, p. 754

impossible to believe that Moses could have written the Pentateuch. Easton, for example, introduces his argument by quoting Jeremiah 7:22, 23: "For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: but this thing I commanded them, saying, Hearken unto my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people."

Easton says he believes this statement of the prophet is correct, and therefore it is impossible to believe that God gave Moses any commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices, as contained in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Therefore Moses could not have written these books, and all of this ritual must have come in at a much later date. Other similar arguments which are beyond the scope of this chapter are used to buttress this theory.

Such objections, as the one posed above, are easily answered. The Bible often compares two things in such way as to produce a contradiction for the sake of emphasis. For example, Christ said: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). Would the higher critics tell us that Jesus is here advocating the breaking of the law of God by commanding hate instead of love, or would they say because a seemingly opposite command of Christ is recorded in the same Gospel (Luke 18:20), that these two chapters in Luke must have been derived from two different documents written many years apart? It should be apparent to even a child that Jesus is not advocating the hating of parents but is simply showing by way of contrast how much more important love for God is than love for even our dearest relations.

Likewise in numerous places God speaks as though He had not commanded animal sacrifices in order to emphasize how much more important moral obedience is as compared with going through an outward ritual. Consider the following:

And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams (1 Samuel 15:22).

I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds.. . Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High (Psalm 50:9, 13, 14).

For thou desireth not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise (Psalm 51:16, 17).

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats... Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow (Isaiah 1:11, 17).

For I desired Mercy, and not sacrifice; and knowledge of God more than burnt offerings (Hosea 6:6).

But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless (Matthew 12:7).

Any one of the above statements, concluding with the words of Christ, could be used to prove that God never commanded sacrifices and burnt offerings, or to prove that the priestly code of the Old Testament must have been written after the Gospels, since Christ stated that God would not have sacrifices. This much space has been taken on just one tenet of the school of higher criticism to show how the theory works and how easily most of its arguments may be answered. The student who desires to look more closely at the ramifications of higher criticism is referred to articles on *Criticism of the Bible* by James Orr, and the *Pentateuch* by Harold M. Wiener in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.

Wiener lists four Fundamental Improbabilities of the Critical Case.¹⁰⁹ The first, he says, is the moral and psychological incredibility. Two great frauds were perpetrated, in each case by men of the loftiest ethical principles. Deuteronomy was deliberately written in the form of Mosaic speeches by some person or persons who knew that their work was not Mosaic. Can it be believed that men who denounced adding aught to the law of God, of prophesying falsely in the name of God, were guilty of the very thing they condemned in perpetrating these gigantic frauds for the purpose of deceiving? The second he calls *the Historical Improbability*, the improbability that these frauds could have been successfully perpetrated. He thinks that Huldah and Jeremiah were better judges of the authenticity of the scrolls which were found in the temple during Josiah's reign than are the modern critics. "Thirdly," he says, "the entire perversion of the true meaning of the laws in post-exilic times makes the critical theory incredible." And his fourth reason is *the Testimony of Tradition*, that the Jews, the Samaritans, and the Christians alike have always held to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. He states: "The national consciousness of a people, the convergent belief of Christendom for 18 centuries are not lightly to be put aside. And what is pitted against them? Theories that vary with each fresh exponent, and that take their start from textual corruption, develop through a confusion between an altar and a house, and end in misdating narratives and laws by 8 or 10 centuries!"

¹⁰⁹ Harold M. Wiener, *ibid.*, IV, p. 2307.

While Higher Criticism began with the Old Testament it has, of course, applied the same critical theories to the New Testament. Strauss (*Life of Jesus*, 1855) developed the mythical theory, subjecting the gospel narratives to a destructive criticism. Baur, founder of the Tübingen school, alleged that the early church was rent by a schism between a Petrine and a Pauline party, as seen in the four epistles which he recognized as genuine epistles of Paul: Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans, and in Revelation. Acts, he held, was written in the second century in an effort to gloss over these differences. The Fourth Gospel was dated about 170 A.D.

The Synoptic Problem also occupied much of the attention of the critics. They developed theories both on the sources from which the Gospel writers obtained their information and on the question of authorship. The critics took as their thesis that it was impossible to account for the large amount of agreement in subject matter, order, and language between the Synoptics except upon the theory of a common source for all three. It seems never to have occurred to these critics that these three men might have been guided and directed by the Holy Spirit to write what they did entirely independent of any other sources, although surely such guidance does not rule out their investigating every available source of information. In fact, Luke tells us that he had had delivered unto him the facts about which he wrote from them who "from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word" (Luke 1:2). Luke was not an eye-witness of the earthly ministry of Christ, but he sought out all of the information so that he could say that he "had perfect understanding of all things from the very first." Some think that the expression, "from the very first," (*anōthen*) should be translated "from above," as it is in [John 3:31](#); [19:11](#); [James 1:17](#); [3:15](#), [17](#), in which case it would indicate that Luke was conscious of divine guidance in what he wrote, even though he obtained it from human sources. Matthew and Mark were, of course, eye-witnesses of most or much of what they wrote. If Mark was the first one to write a gospel account, it is altogether probable that Matthew and Luke had read it and may have been led to follow his general order, adding such other information to fulfill their motive and purpose in writing. The Synoptics present a *problem* to the Higher Critics; to a believer in divine inspiration they present, along with John, a perfect portrayal of the oft prophesied Messiah who was to be the King of Israel, the Servant of Jehovah, the Son of Man, and the Son of God, or under a different figure, the Branch of David, Jehovah's Servant the Branch, the Man whose name is the Branch, and the Branch of Jehovah.

We conclude this brief analysis of the higher criticism of the Bible with a quotation from Orr, showing its culminating effect upon the Jesus of the Bible and upon the message of modern Christendom:

The Jesus of the new "modern" school *is represented thus*. The ground fact is that a young Galilean peasant, son of Joseph and Mary of Nazareth, starting as a disciple of John the Baptist, became, about his thirtieth year, the originator of a remarkable religious movement in Galilee.

This brought Him into collision with the Pharisees and ecclesiastical heads of the nation, and led, after perhaps a year's activity, to His being arrested at Jerusalem at the Passover, and, after trial by the Sanhedrin, and before Pontius Pilate, put to death by crucifixion as a blasphemer. Whether, as the Gospels say, He claimed for Himself the title Messiah is a moot question; whether He spoke the Apocalyptic discourses attributed to Him is held to be even more doubtful. Probably, as most allow, He did both, and to that extent, as in many other particulars of His thinking, was a victim of delusion, or shared the erroneous beliefs of His age. But His soul was one of singular purity--not "sinless," for the modern mind dare not use so absolute a word; His religious and ethical ideals were the most spiritual yet given to mankind; while the filial confidence He exercised in the Father, His perfect love and sympathy with men, and the continual polemic which cost Him His life against the merely outward, ceremonial, and legal in religion, in favor of a spiritual worship, and an inward morality of the heart, made Him, in another sense than the theological, the true founder of the Kingdom of God on earth. He gave up His life on the Cross in fidelity to His convictions, but, it need not be said, according to this new reading, did not rise again. It is allowed that His disciples believed He did, and even that they had seen Him, and that it was by the energetic preaching of a risen Lord that the Christian Church was founded. These dreams, however, we are told, are gone, and the Church of the future will have to content itself with a Jesus on whose grave, as Matthew Arnold said, the Syrian stars still look down.

Such is the picture. What is to be said of it? What can be said of it, except that, professing to be "religious historical," it is *not* historical in real sense of the word? It is a picture to be rejected, not on any *a priori* dogmatic grounds, but simply because it does not fit the facts. It does not explain the Jesus of the Gospels. It does not explain the faith and hope of the early Christian Church, based on the facts which the Gospels record. It does not explain the vast effects which have come from the appearance and work of this Jesus. It does not explain how even such an image of Jesus came to be there - who created it, or could create it, or whence the materials came from which it was composed. It does not explain the edifice of the Christian life, work, hope, and aspiration which has been built on Jesus, and despite of all assaults on it, has endured through the ages. It does not explain Christian experience, Christian character, Christian enthusiasm and enterprise, the consciousness of redemption through Christ which lies at the foundation of all.¹¹⁰

13 THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE

¹¹⁰ James Orr, *Revelation and Inspiration* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), pp. 132-134.

INTRODUCTION

The Greek word *kanon* means a rule or measuring stick. The word occurs five times in the New Testament, being translated *rule* in 2 Corinthians 10:13, 15; Galatians 6:16 and Philippians 3:16, and *line* in 2 Corinthians 10:16. However, in none of these passages is there any reference to the canon of Scriptures. As far as we know the word was first applied to the Scriptures by Athanasius in the fourth century. However, this does not mean that the idea of canonicity was not in existence before that time. In fact, the very word *Scripture*, as it is used in the New Testament, carries the idea of canonicity, or that which measures up to the divine standard, that which is the authoritative word of God. There can be no doubt but that Christ and the Apostles taught that the Old Testament was Scripture, the Word of God, that which could not be broken, that which would never pass away until every jot and tittle was fulfilled.

Also, there can be no doubt but that Peter regarded Paul's epistles as Scripture (2 Peter 3:16), and that the Church universal has from the earliest times recognized the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, with a few exceptions, as being Scripture on a par with the Old Testament. The questions which arise in this area are: How were the various books of the Old and New Testaments brought together and assembled into one book? Upon what basis were these books received as being divinely authoritative? Why were certain books excluded? Why were certain books questioned? Are any books in our Bible which should not be there? Are there any books which should be in the Bible which have either been lost or wrongly excluded?

Again, since this subject is not vitally related to the subject of the dispensational interpretation of theology, it will be dealt with in a very brief manner. The student will find more detailed treatment in books on Bible Introduction and encyclopedia articles on the Canon.

TERMINOLOGY

Certain terminology with which the student should be familiar is used in classifying sacred literature.

1. *Genuine*. A writing is said to be genuine when it can be traced back to the author whose name it bears, or to its reputed author. In the event that the author's name is not known the term would simply mean that the content of the book is the same as when it was written.

2. *Spurious*. A spurious writing is one which has been forged. Apparently in Paul's day false teachers circulated letters purportedly written by Paul, as seen in 2 Thessalonians 2:2: "That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of the Lord is now present."

3. *Authentic*. An authentic book is one whose contents are truthful. Genuineness has to do primarily with authorship, and authenticity with the truthfulness of the contents. It is thus conceivable that a book could have been written by its purported author, and thus be genuine, but that its contents are false, and therefore not authentic. Or the converse might occur, where the writing is spurious but its contents authentic. Of course, it is claimed for the canonical books that they are both genuine and authentic.

4. *Corrupt*. Corruption refers to any change which has occurred in the text from its original writing. Any intentional or unintentional error or change made by a copyist would result in a corrupt text.

5. *Manuscript*. A manuscript is a composition written by hand, as opposed to a printed one. Until the invention of the printing press all copies of the Scripture were in manuscript form. Manuscripts were written either upon papyrus, a kind of paper, or on parchment, a specially prepared skin of sheep or of some other animal. There are no known original manuscripts of any of the books of the Bible now in existence. Two forms of manuscripts were used, the roll and the codex or book form. As noted earlier an Uncial manuscript is one written in capital letters, a form used up until about the tenth century A.D., and the Minuscule, written in small letters, and used from about the ninth to the fifteenth centuries. The latter are also known as Cursives, since the writing was in a running form with the letters joined together.

TESTS FOR CANONICITY

The following are some of the essential requirements for the canonization of a book.

1. It must bear the marks of divine inspiration.
2. It must have been written or edited by a recognized prophet or apostle, or have been endorsed by such.
3. It must be both genuine and authentic.
4. It must have been recognized by some authoritative source as being inspired, such as Peter recognizing Paul's epistles as Scripture, or as Christ recognizing the entire Old Testament as the Word of God ([Luke 24:25-27, 44](#)).

OLD TESTAMENT CANON

The Three-Fold Division of the Old Testament

The Jews very early divided the Old Testament Scriptures into three parts: The Law or the *Torah*, the Prophets or *Nebhiim*, and the Writings or *Kethubhim*. This same division is seen in Luke 24:44 where Christ said "that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." The Psalms were a part of the *Kethubhim*.

The *Torah*, of course, consisted of the first five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The *Nebhiim* consisted on the Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel (considered as one book), and 1 and 2 Kings (one book), and the Latter Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets (considered as one book), Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The *Kethubhim*, called in the Greek the Hagiographa, included eleven writings: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, the five *Meghilloth* or rolls: Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther; Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah (one book), and 1 and 2 Chronicles (one book). This makes a total of 24 books. There were other combinations of the books that reckoned the total to be 22 and 27. This ancient Hebrew canon is identical in content with the Protestant Old Testament, but the order of the books was different. The order was the same from Genesis through 2 Kings. Next in order came Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and these were followed by the Hagiographa: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles. The order of the books in our Old Testament was derived from the Septuagint.

The Septuagint Version

This first translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek was supposedly ordered by Ptolemy Philadelphus in Alexandria somewhere around 285 B.C., although some believe that the work may have begun earlier during the reign of Ptolemy Soter. In the Introduction to Bagster's edition of the Septuagint it is stated: "The fact, however, may be regarded as certain, that prior to the year 285 B.C. the Septuagint version had been commenced, and that in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, either the books in general or at least an important part of them had been completed."¹¹¹

The Septuagint includes, beside the canonical books of the Old Testament, certain Apocryphal books which were written after the close of the canon. Since the earliest manuscript of the Septuagint extant dates around 350 A.D., some 600 years after it was first translated, it is difficult to discover when and how these Apocryphal books crept in. They were all written well after the days of Ptolemy Philadelphus and were never made a part of the Hebrew Canon, although some of them were written originally in Hebrew.

¹¹¹ *The Septuagint Version* (London: S. Bagster and Sons Limited, N.D.), p. ii.

The Septuagint thus supplies evidence that all of the books of the Old Testament were in existence at the time of its production and that these books were considered canonical.

The Testimony of Sirach

About 180 B.C. Jesus ben Sirach of Jerusalem wrote the book of Ecclesiasticus in Hebrew. About 50 years later his grandson, who bore the same name, translated the book into Greek and wrote the Prologue to it. In it he acknowledges the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which he felt had failed to express adequately the full meaning of the original Hebrew, and he twice refers to the canonical Scriptures under the three-fold division, Law, Prophets, and the rest of the books. Here is a translation of the Prologue in full:

Whereas many and great things have been delivered unto us by the law and the prophets, and by others that have followed their steps, for the which things Israel ought to be commended for learning and wisdom; and whereof not only the readers must needs become skillful themselves, but also they that desire to learn be able to profit them which are without, both by speaking and by writing: my grandfather, Jesus, when he had much given himself to the reading of the law, and the prophets, and other books of our fathers, and had gotten therein good judgment, was drawn on also himself to write something pertaining to learning and wisdom; to the intent that those which are desirous to learn, and are addicted to these things, might profit much more in living according to the law.

Wherefore let me intreat you to read it with favor and attention, and to pardon us, wherein we may seem to come short of some words, which we have labored to interpret; for the same things uttered in Hebrew, and translated into another tongue, have not the same force in them. And not only these things, but the law itself, and the prophets, and the rest of the books, have no small difference, when they are spoken in their own language. For in the eight and thirtieth year coming into Egypt, when Euergetes was king, and continuing there some time, I found a book of no small learning: therefore I thought it most necessary for me to bestow some diligence and travail to interpret it: using great watchfulness and skill in that space to bring the book to an end, and to set it forth for them also, which in a strange country are willing to learn, being prepared before in manners to live after the law.¹¹²

Testimony of Josephus

Josephus, the Jewish historian, writing about 100 A.D., stated:

¹¹² *The Apocrypha* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons Limited, N.D.), p. 74.

For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another (as the Greeks have), but only 22 books, which contain the record of all time; which are justly believed to be divine It is true our history has been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but has not been esteemed of like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there has not been an exact succession of prophets since that time. And how firmly we have given credit to those books of our own nation, it is evident by what we do; for, during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them; but it becomes natural to all Jews, immediately and from their very birth, to esteem those books to contain divine doctrines, and to persist in them and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them.¹¹³

The Completion of the Old Testament Canon

Thus far we have presented evidence from the Septuagint, from Sirach, from Josephus, and from Christ and the Apostles that the Canon of the Old Testament was recognized and was in existence at least as early as the middle of the third century B.C. For the Christian who accepts the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, His testimony alone is sufficient grounds for belief in the inspiration of the Old Testament. This does not tell us, however, just how these 39 books were brought together into one volume, and there is very little information available on the subject. There is a tradition about the Great Synagogue, headed by Ezra the Scribe, having collected the books to form the Canon. Some have associated this Great Synagogue with the great convocation described in Nehemiah 8-10, but there is little similarity between the two. The Destructive Critics have denied altogether the existence of the Great Synagogue, since they would try to prove the very late date of the writing of most of the Old Testament. While much of the tradition about the Great Synagogue is no doubt fanciful and contrary to fact, it is altogether reasonable that the last five writers of the Old Testament who were more or less contemporaneous, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, were responsible for not only restoring the political and religious life of Israel after the Captivity, but also for collecting the sacred writings along with the books they were led to write. There were no inspired writers after their time who would have been in a position to do so important a work and thus it seems most reasonable to believe that there is some basic truth associated with the tradition that the Canon was formed under the leadership of Ezra, the founder of the guild of the Scribes.

THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON

It is generally agreed that the New Testament writers did not get together and decide to write a new canon of Scripture. The epistles were written to meet a

¹¹³ Josephus, *Against Apion*, I. 8, quoted by H. S. Miller, *General Biblical Introduction* (Houghton, N.Y.: The Word Bearer Press, 1947), p. 104.

particular local need and were addressed either to a local church or to a person. The Gospels and the Acts, being of an historical nature, were doubtless written, as Luke states: "That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou has been instructed" (Luke 1:4). At the beginning the churches, if they possessed any Scriptures at all, had only the Old Testament. Paul did not write any epistles to the churches which he had established until at least ten years had expired. The truth of the new dispensation was at the first disseminated orally through the preaching of Paul and the other apostles and by means of prophets who were raised up in each of the churches (cf. [1 Corinthians 14:29-33](#)).

There can be no doubt, however, but that the writers of the New Testament books believed that they were writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Christ had told His apostles, "He that heareth you heareth me," (Luke 10:16), and He had promised to give them the Holy Spirit, whose ministry was "to guide them into all truth" (John 16:13). In this context Christ made it clear that He had many things yet to communicate to them which He was not yet free to speak. For one thing, the Holy Spirit had not yet been given to them and further, the offer of the Kingdom which was soon to be made to Israel must first be acted upon before revelation of the new dispensation of the Mystery could be unfolded. As to Paul, there is no doubt but that he was writing under the inspiration of the Spirit. He stated that he was writing words which the Holy Ghost teacheth ([1 Corinthians 2:13](#)); that Christ was speaking in him ([2 Corinthians 13:3](#)); that he was delivering that which he had received from God ([1 Corinthians 15:3](#)); that the Lord had committed authority unto him ([2 Corinthians 10:8](#)); that the gospel he preached was not communicated to him by man but by a special revelation of Jesus Christ personally ([Galatians 1:12](#)); that what he was saying was by the word of the Lord ([1 Thessalonians 4:15](#)); and that he had been divinely appointed as a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles ([2 Timothy 1:11](#)).

The Roman Church has made the claim that it gave the New to the world and decreed its inspiration through its church councils. However, it should be evident that if the New Testament writings are inspired, they were inspired when they were written and not by reason of a church council which met several later. And, of course, no church organization gave any part the New Testament to us, a considerable part having been written there was a church in Rome. Paul's epistles which were from Rome were not written from the church there but from Roman prison. What we are saying thus far is that while the apostles may not have been conscious that they were producing a canon of Scriptures, they were conscious of writing under the and guidance of the Holy Spirit and that their writings were at the time of their writing and therefore met the requirements for being canonical. It is another story of how these twenty-seven books came to be collected into one volume and to be accepted as the authoritative Word of God.

Paul had told churches to exchange epistles with other churches ([Colossians 4:16](#)) and no doubt this is the way his letters and other New Testament writings finally became known universally. This was a process which required a number

of years. But even by the time Peter wrote his second epistle it would seem that Paul's letters were widely known and considered to be on a par with the Old Testament (2 Peter 3:15, 16). Miller quotes the following facts the familiarity of the early Church Fathers with the New Testament books, which indicates that the major part of the New Testament was recognized as Scripture early in the second century:

Clement of Rome (96 A.D.) quotes from Matthew, Luke, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, 1 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews, and 1 John. The Epistle of Barnabas (70-100 A.D.) has two quotations from the New Testament, calling Matthew 22:14 Scripture. Polycarp (69-135 A.D.) quotes from Matthew, Luke, John, Acts, 10 of Paul's epistles, and 1 John. Justin Martyr (100-165 A.D.) quotes copiously from the New Testament and states that the Gospels are read on Sunday interchangeably with the Prophets. Irenaeus (125-192), in his writings which have come down to us, makes 1800 quotations from the New Testament, recognizing the four Gospels, Acts, 13 Pauline epistles, 1 Peter, 1 John, and Revelation as canonical Scripture. The fact that these writers did not quote from all twenty-seven New Testament books is no proof that they did not know them or recognize them as Scripture. It is remarkable that in the comparatively few writings of that age which have come down to us, so many references can be found to the New Testament books.¹¹⁴

In the Second century several translations of the New Testament were made into other languages. The Old Latin version (150 A.D.) contained 26 books, omitting 2 Peter. The Syriac version (150 A.D.) contained 22 books, omitting 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation. *Tatian's Diatessaron* (170 A.D.) made in the Syriac language was a harmony of the four Gospels.

In the third century Origen (185-254 A.D.) divided the writings into three classes: Those received universally (the four Gospels, Acts, 13 Pauline epistles, 1 Peter, 1 John, and Revelation); those doubted by some churches (Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Jude); and finally, certain apocryphal books.

By the fourth century such men as Eusebius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius, Chrysostom, Jerome, and Augustine bear witness to the fact that the 27 books of the New Testament were universally recognized as canonical. Jerome's famous Latin Vulgate translation which has been the New Testament of the Roman Catholic Church contains the same 27 books which comprise the Protestant New Testament.

DISPUTED BOOKS

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 131-137.

Mention has been made that the canonicity of certain books has been disputed from time to time. Books purporting to be Scripture have been divided into four classes:

The Homologoumena (confessed) Books

These are books concerning which there has been little or no dispute. They include 34 Old Testament and 20 New Testament books.

The Antilegomena (spoken against) Books

Certain Jewish teachers of the second century A.D. questioned the canonicity of Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Ezekiel, and Proverbs, either because they were thought to contain contradictory statements to other parts of Scripture, or did not mention the name of God, etc. In the New Testament Hebrews was questioned because of its uncertain authorship. James was disputed because of its seeming contradiction of Paul on the subject of justification. 2 Peter was disputed because of difference in style, language, and character from 1 Peter. Second and Third John were questioned because they were such personal letters and were written by an "elder," but was this elder the Apostle John? Jude was rejected by some because of his reference to Enoch from a Pseudepigraphical book and because of its similarity to 2 Peter 2. Revelation was accepted at first but was later questioned because of its millennial ideas. By the end of the fourth century the doubts associated with these seven books were removed and all were accepted as canonical.

The Apocryphal Books (The word means hidden or secret, but is used in the sense of rejected or non-canonical.)

The Old Testament Apocrypha consists of 14 books: 1 and 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, The Rest of Esther, The Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, with the Epistle of Jeremiah, The Song of the Three Holy Children, The History of Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, The Prayer of Manasses, 1 and 2 Maccabees. The Alexandrian Manuscript adds 3 and 4 Maccabees. Of these fourteen books which Protestants consider apocryphal, the Roman Catholic Church declares eleven to be canonical: Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, 1 and 2 Maccabees (appearing as separate books), and The Rest of Esther (added to canonical Esther) and The Three Holy Children, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon (added to canonical Daniel). These books were written during the gap between the Testaments and while they are valuable for historical reasons they were never considered canonical by the Jews; they are never quoted in the New Testament; they make no claim to inspiration; they contain historical inaccuracies and they are on a much lower moral and spiritual level than the canonical books.

The New Testament Apocrypha consists of gospels and epistles which were written under the name of an apostle or of a well-known leader. Some fifteen of

these extra-canonical books have been listed: The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, The Epistle of Barnabas, The First Epistle of Clement, the Second Epistle of Clement, The Shepherd of Hermas, The Apocalypse of Peter, The Acts of Paul, including Paul and Thecla, The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians, The Seven Epistles of Ignatius, The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, The Protevangelium of James, The Gospel of the Nativity of Mary, The Gospel of Nicodemus, The Gospel of the Saviour's Infancy, and the History of Joseph the Carpenter.

The Pseudepigraphical Books (false writings)

Old Testament Books. The Roman Catholic Church classifies these writings as Apocryphal, since they accept as canonical the books which Protestants call Apocryphal. These books are sometimes referred to as the *Wider Apocrypha* or as *Apocalyptic Literature*. They include books written from 200 B.C. to 200 A.D. which are ascribed to some Old Testament character as author. Some of the better known books are listed below:

a. Apocalyptic Books: The Book of Enoch, The Secrets of Enoch, The Apocalypse of Baruch, The Rest of the Words of Baruch, The Assumption of Moses, The Prophecy of Jeremiah, The Ascension of Isaiah, The Apocalypse of Elijah, The Sibylline Oracles, The Apocalypse of Esdras, The Apocalypse of Zephaniah.

b. Legendary Books: The Testament of Adam, The Book of Jubilees, The Testaments of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, The Testament of Job, The Testament of Solomon, The Life of Asenath, The Penitence of Jannes and Jambres, The Apocalypse of Abraham.

c. Books of Teaching: Magical Books of Moses, The Story of Achiacharus, cup-bearer to Esarhaddon, King of Persia.

d. Poetical Books: Psalms of Solomon and Addition to the Psalter.

New Testament Books. These are books which pretend to have been written by New Testament characters. Not all writers agree on the classification of the great mass of extra-canonical writings which were produced in the early church. Some would classify all of the non-canonical books as Apocryphal, while others would classify as Apocryphal those that were considered to be genuine but uninspired, and as Pseudepigraphal those which were spurious. Miller lists the following under this latter classification: seven gospels, that of Andrew, Bartholomew, Barnabas, Matthias, Thomas, Peter, and Philip; eight Acts, that of John, Paul, Peter, Andrew, Thomas, Matthias, Philip, and Thaddaeus; four Apocalypses, that of Peter, Paul, Thomas, and John; and the Epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans.

These Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphal books have been published in popular editions under such titles as *The Lost Books of the Bible* and *The Forgotten Books of Eden*, although none of them were ever considered as part of the Bible. A few quotations from them should serve to show their true character and why they were never seriously considered to be inspired.

In the Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus Christ, chapter 7 is the story of some sisters whose brother was bewitched by a woman and turned into a mule. The sisters came to the Virgin Mary for help: "Hereupon St. Mary was grieved at their case, and taking the Lord Jesus, put him upon the back of the mule. And said to her son, O Jesus Christ, restore according to thy extraordinary power this mule, and grant him to have again the shape of a man and a rational creature, as he had formerly. This was scarce said by the Lady St. Mary, but the mule immediately passed into a human form, and became a young man without any deformity."¹¹⁵ (7:24-26).

In the Epistle of Barnabas the Levitical dietary laws are discussed. "Neither shall thou eat of the hyena; that is, again, be not an adulterer, nor a corruptor of others; neither be like to such. And wherefore so? - because that creature every year changes its kind, and is sometimes male and sometimes female."¹¹⁶ (9:8).

Gospel of Thomas: "Another time Jesus went forth into the street, and a boy running by, rushed upon his shoulder; at which Jesus being angry, said to him, thou shalt go no farther. And he instantly fell down dead."¹¹⁷ (2:7-9)

14 THE COVENANTS OF SCRIPTURE

INTRODUCTION

The covenants of God are very intimately related to the dispensations of God. In fact, in some cases the covenants give the content to the dispensations. The Noahic Covenant is the basis for the Dispensation of Human Government. The best way to describe the Dispensation of Promise is to define the Abrahamic Covenant. The Dispensation of Law is simply the administration of the Mosaic Covenant. The Kingdom Dispensation will see the fulfillment of all of Israel's covenants of promise.

There are questions, however, regarding the relationship of these covenants to members of the Body of Christ in this dispensation of the mystery - an arrangement which was never before revealed by God, as has already been pointed out in the Prologue to this book. Historical Christendom, especially in its

¹¹⁵ *The Lost Books of the Bible and The Forgotten Books of Eden* (Cleveland, Ohio: The World Publishing Co., 1948), p. 46.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

covenant type of theology, has practically taken these covenants away from the people with whom God made them, and has appropriated them to the Church of this dispensation. On the other hand, some dispensationalists, in an effort to maintain the unique distinctiveness of this dispensation of the mystery, have denied that the present Church has any relationship whatsoever to Israel's covenants. It shall be our purpose to study the covenants to see if either of these positions is true or perhaps to arrive at a mediating position.

Key Scriptures

The following two New Testament Scriptures make it very plain that the covenants belong primarily to Israel:

Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises (Romans 9:4).

That at that time ye (Gentiles) were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise (Ephesians 2:12).

While it is true that the six things mentioned in Romans 9:4 pertain to the nation of Israel as revealed in the Old Testament prophetic program, it cannot be denied that some of these things also pertain to the Body of Christ in this unprophesied dispensation of the mystery. All dispensationalists will agree that if any Scripture applies specifically to the Body of Christ it is the prison epistles of Paul, and in these epistles we find Adoption ([Ephesians 1:5](#)), the Glory ([2 Timothy 2:10](#)), and Promises ([Ephesians 1:13](#); [2 Timothy 1:1](#)). And if all of Paul's epistles be accepted as addressed to the Church of this dispensation, then we have numerous other references to indicate that we today have some kind of relationship to the blessings contained in the covenants of promise besides Adoption and Glory. For example, Paul states concerning the promise made to Abraham:

That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise ([Galatians 3:14, 17, 29](#)).

Paul also relates members of the Body of Christ to the New Covenant, for he delivers the observance of the Lord's Supper with its commemoration of the blood of the New Covenant to the Corinthians ([1 Corinthians 11:25](#)), and further

states that God had made him an able minister of the New Covenant ([2 Corinthians 3:6](#)).

In another passage Paul states that the Gentiles under his ministry "have been made partakers of Israel's spiritual things" ([Romans 15:27](#)). None of these passages state that God has taken the covenants away from Israel or that He has made the Gentiles to become the children of the covenants in place of Israel. The people of Israel were still the children of the covenants even after they had crucified the Lord ([Acts 3:25](#)), and Paul not only states that the covenants still pertain to Israel, but he further states that in a future day the Deliverer will come to Zion in order to fulfill His covenant with that nation which at the present time is an enemy of the gospel ([Romans 11:26-28](#)). It thus seems to be the clear teaching of the Apostle that the covenants were made with Israel, that Israel is not at present enjoying the blessings of the covenants but that they will at a future day, and that at the present time, members of the Body of Christ are, in some sense, partaking of the spiritual blessings of these covenants.

Two Kinds of Covenants

A covenant is a contract or agreement between two parties. It may be either conditional or unconditional in nature. A conditional covenant is one in which the fulfillment of the agreement depends upon both parties faithfully carrying out the terms of the contract. Such a covenant is usually characterized by the word *if* - if the party of the second part (man) keeps the law, then the Party of the first part (God) will grant the blessing. The Mosaic Covenant is an example of such a covenant. It is introduced with an *if* in Exodus 19:5:

"If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people."

An unconditional covenant is one in which the fulfillment depends only upon the faithfulness of God. The New Covenant falls under this heading. The contrast between these two types of covenants is seen in Jeremiah 31:31, 32:

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt."

This covenant is characterized by the words, *I will*, referring to God fulfilling His promise and purpose--I will put my law in their hearts - I will be their God - I will forgive their iniquity - I will remember their sin no more.

Covenant Theology and the Covenants

Covenant Theology recognizes only two basic covenants in Scripture: the supposed Covenant of Works, made with Adam before the fall, promising eternal life in exchange for Adam's obedience, and the Covenant of Grace, providing salvation for fallen man. This latter covenant is made to include all of the covenants of God after the fall. The covenants are thus considered to be entirely redemptive in nature. Dispensationalists, on the other hand, view the covenants as redemptive but also as applying to specific dispensational programs in the plan of God.

Dispensationalists, for example, view the Mosaic Covenant as temporary in character, having its application from the time of Moses to the death of Christ. They classify it as a covenant of works in contrast with the New Covenant, and in keeping with such passages as 2 Corinthians 3:6-18 and Hebrews 8:13, they believe that the Mosaic Covenant has been completely done away through the death of Christ. On the other hand, Berkhof, a Covenant Theologian, states:

It (the covenant of grace) is essentially the same in all dispensations, though its form of administration changes.¹¹⁸

The covenant of Sinai was *essentially* the same as that established with Abraham, though the form differed somewhat.¹¹⁹

Covenant theologians, in regarding the covenants as completely redemptive in character and in holding that the Mosaic covenant is a covenant of grace, cannot but believe that dispensationalists must be teaching salvation by works when they call the Mosaic Covenant a covenant of works. However, Chafer points out the following important fact concerning the Mosaic Covenant:

This covenant had governed Israel's conduct as a redeemed people. It was given to them, however, not as a means of redemption or attainment unto a covenant relation to God, but because they were in a right relation to God as a redeemed nation under God's covenant with that people descended from Abraham.¹²⁰

In other words, Israel was God's elect nation before ever the Mosaic Covenant was entered into by reason of the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant. It should be evident, therefore, that the purpose of the Mosaic Covenant was not to provide a means for redeeming Israel, but to provide a rule of life for a people already upon redemption ground. While Israel was yet in Egypt God said: "I will redeem you with a stretched out arm... I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God" (Exodus 6:6, 7). And after their deliverance from Egypt and before coming to Sinai, Moses sang: "Thou in thy mercy has led forth the people which thou hast redeemed" (Exodus 15:13).

¹¹⁸ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941), p. 279.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

¹²⁰ L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), VII, p. 98.

THE COVENANTS OF SCRIPTURE

We are not here concerned with covenants between man and man, but only with those between God and man. Scofield lists eight such covenants: the Edenic, the Adamic, the Noahic, the Abrahamic, the Mosaic, the Palestinian, the Davidic, and The New Covenant.¹²¹ In addition to these Chafer lists a second New Covenant, holding that one New Covenant has been made with Israel and another with the Church.¹²² Not all of these arrangements are actually called covenants in the Bible, but they do seem to partake of the nature of covenants. Strangely enough, neither Scofield nor Chafer mention the Covenant of Circumcision ([Acts 7:8](#)). While there is a connection between the covenant made with Abram in Genesis 15 and that of Circumcision made in Genesis 17, Paul makes an important distinction between the two in Romans 4. In what follows we shall list all of the arrangements which have been made by God and which have been called covenants, whether or not the Scripture so designates them.

The Covenant of Redemption

Based upon the fact that God promised eternal life before the world began ([Titus 1:2](#)), and therefore before man was created, theologians have surmised that the Persons of the Godhead entered into a covenant to provide salvation for mankind before they were created or had fallen into sin. It may be that this was in the mind of the writer to the Hebrews when he spoke of the blood of the everlasting covenant ([Hebrews 13:20](#)). The Scriptures relate the fact that the Father sent the Son, and that the Son came to do the Father's will, and that the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit, all of which appears to indicate an agreement or compact between the Persons of the Trinity.

The Covenant of Works

This is the supposed covenant that God made with Adam before he fell, promising him eternal life in exchange for his good works. While obedience was no doubt required for Adam to maintain his standing with God, there is no hint in Scripture that Adam was created in a lost condition or in one in which he needed to earn eternal life. The only Scripture which can be marshalled in support of such a covenant is [Hosea 6:7](#) where the word translated men is the generic term for mankind (adam). If *adam* is substituted for *men* the verse would read: "But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant."

The Covenant of Grace

This designation, together with the one immediately above, forms the basis for Covenant Theology. It is supposedly a covenant which God made with the elect

¹²¹ *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 1357.

¹²² Chalet, *op. cit.*, VII, pp. 98, 99.

to provide and to apply to them eternal salvation on the basis of grace. While it is true that God is the God of all grace and that He has made many gracious arrangements with mankind, it is a mistake to single out one covenant as the Covenant of Grace. Such classification blurs the distinctions between the various covenants which God has made and thus results in confusion of God's dispensational purposes.

The Edenic Covenant

Scofield and Chafer designate God's arrangement with Adam before the fall as the Edenic Covenant. It might be called the rule of life for man under the dispensation of Innocence. Scofield outlines it under seven headings:

(1) To replenish the earth with a new order--man; (2) to subdue the earth to human uses; (3) to have dominion over the animal creation; (4) to eat herbs and fruits; (5) to till and keep the garden; (6) to abstain from eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; (7) the penalty--death.¹²³

The Adamic Covenant

Again, this is not called a covenant but it is so considered by Scofield and Chafer. It is the Divine arrangement which conditions man's life after the fall and during the dispensation of Conscience, as given in [Genesis 3:14-19](#). It involves the curse upon the serpent, the promise of the Redeemer, the changed state of the woman, the curse upon the earth, the sorrow of life, toilsome labor, and physical death.

The Noahic Covenant

It is here in Genesis 9:9 that the word *covenant* is first used in Scripture:

And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there be any more a flood to destroy the earth.

While the covenant seems to be primarily a promise never to destroy the earth with a flood, it also includes certain new conditions for man's life on earth. The fear of man is placed upon the animal world, man is permitted to eat animal flesh, but is forbidden to eat blood; and man is given the authority to practice capital punishment. Before this God had forbidden man to execute the death penalty upon the murderer ([Genesis 4:15](#)). The granting of the basic right of man to

¹²³ The Scofield Reference Bible, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

govern the earth for God is the basis for calling this arrangement the dispensation of human government or authority.

The Abrahamic Covenant

Abraham apparently lived shortly after the confusion of tongues at the tower of Babel. In retrospect man had apostatized from God under the three previous dispensations, Innocence, Conscience, and Human Government. Mankind had arrived at the condition described in [Romans 1:21-32](#), where it is thrice stated that God had given man up. At this point God might have left man in this universally lost condition, or He might have destroyed him from off the face of the earth. Instead, He announced His purpose to choose out a man by the name of Abram, who lived in the idolatrous city of [Ur of the Chaldees](#), and to make of him a great nation through which all of the other nations would ultimately be blessed.

The call of Abram and the promised blessing is recorded in Genesis 12. In [Genesis 13:14-18](#) God further promised to give the land of Canaan to him and his descendants for an everlasting possession. Then in Genesis 15:6 occurs the statement upon which Paul based his whole argument of justification by faith apart from works: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3). Immediately after Abraham was declared righteous on account of his faith, God entered into a covenant with him: "In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (Genesis 15:18).

Although God had previously communicated His purpose to thus bless Abram, it was not until he had been declared justified by faith that God actually entered into covenant with him. And it should be noted that as far as the Scripture goes, the covenant concerns only the land described above. The promise of blessing upon all nations appears to be something distinct from the covenant of Genesis 15:18. Since God guaranteed this land to Abram's children for an everlasting possession, it should be evident that if Christians today are children of the covenant they should have the right to lay claim to this real estate. This is a problem which Covenant theologians should face squarely, for they do claim that they are children of the covenant. Paul nowhere states that believers in this dispensation are children of the covenant, but he does say that they are children of Abraham ([Galatians 3:7](#)), and that they are Abraham's seed (Galatians 3: 29). It is all important to understand, however, in what sense he calls them children and the seed. Galatians 3:8 states: "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." O'Hair comments on this verse:

What people were seen when the gospel was preached to Abram 24 years before he was circumcised, and 430 years before the law was added to the gospel (Galatians 3:19)? The heathen (Gentiles) of Paul's

day. What was seen? That the uncircumcised heathen would be declared righteous without circumcision, without the law, without any religious observances; just as Abraham was, by faith without works.¹²⁴

Believers are called children of Abraham simply because they follow Abraham's faith and are justified in the same way that he was, apart from works. They are not his children in the sense of becoming heirs to the specific covenant blessing promised to Abraham, which, as we have seen, was mainly concerned with the promised land. And further, the Apostle makes it plain that we today are Abraham's seed by virtue of our having been baptized into Christ, who, Himself, is Abraham's Seed. Since the land of Canaan was unconditionally guaranteed as the possession of Abraham's natural seed, we must believe that God will yet fulfill that promise in the future millennial kingdom.

The Covenant of Circumcision

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, at least fifteen years after God had entered into covenant with him, God again appeared unto him and gave him the Covenant of Circumcision. Under this covenant Abram's name was changed to Abraham, for he was to become the father of many nations. The promise of the land of Canaan was confirmed and the rite of circumcision was imposed upon all of his male descendants, with the stipulation that an uncircumcised man would be cut off from God's people, for he had broken the covenant ([Genesis 17:14](#)).

In Romans 4 Paul distinguishes between Abram in uncircumcision and Abraham in circumcision. In this two-fold relationship Abraham became the father or leader of two different groups of God's people. He was first of all the father of the uncircumcision, that is, of the Gentiles who were to be saved or justified by faith alone apart from circumcision and the law. For this reason Paul called his gospel the *gospel of the uncircumcision* ([Galatians 2:7](#)). Abraham then became the father of the circumcision, that is, of the natural descendants of Abraham who would inherit the specific blessing of the covenant. For this reason Peter's message is called *the gospel of the circumcision*. The word gospel does not simply mean salvation from sin: it includes salvation unto something. Paul's gospel of the uncircumcision was a salvation unto membership in the Body of Christ. Peter's gospel of the circumcision was salvation unto the promised spiritual and temporal blessings in the Messianic Kingdom. All of God's good news is based upon faith in the work of Christ, so that there is no difference between these two gospels in this respect, but there was a difference between them in regard to nationality, ceremonies, dispensational program, and ultimate destination.

Covenant Theology by its spiritualizing of the Old Testament promises, denies that there will ever be a literal fulfillment of the covenants, and therefore denies that Christ will ever establish a universal kingdom of peace and righteousness

¹²⁴ J. C. O'Hair, *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ* (Chicago: 1941), p. 58.

upon the earth at His second coming. It claims that the present dispensation is the final one and that all of the covenants are being fulfilled now in a spiritual sense. Theologians of this school can hardly deny that Paul teaches a future conversion of Israel: "and so all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26); but how is this to be accomplished? By making this the final dispensation, they are forced to place this conversion of Israel into the present and here they run into insuperable difficulties. Therefore Hodge gives six extended arguments to try to prove that the land of Canaan promised to Abraham will never be restored to Israel and that the salvation of all Israel probably means no more than a revival among the Jews.¹²⁵ But the Scripture teaches the conversion of Israel *after* this present dispensation following the Second Coming of Christ. As James states it, it is: "after this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down" (Acts 15:16), and as Paul has it in Romans 11:26, ungodliness will be turned away from Jacob and all Israel will be saved by the coming of the Deliverer, not before His coming. And Paul is careful to add: "For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."

It should be remarked that the gospel of the circumcision began in Genesis 17 and was proclaimed by Christ in His earthly ministry and was continued by Peter and the other apostles at Pentecost. Some time later God called out a new apostle and committed to him a new, unprophesied dispensation. Whenever that change took place there must have been the cessation of the circumcision dispensation, although outwardly there was a period of transition from one program to the other, as seen in the latter half of the book of Acts. Peter had the gospel of the circumcision committed to him in the beginning, but this does not mean that he continued that ministry indefinitely. It was evidently God's will that Peter conform to Paul's new message, since God sent Paul up to Jerusalem by special revelation to communicate the gospel of the uncircumcision to the other apostles ([Galatians 2:2](#)).

The Mosaic Covenant

This was a temporary and conditional covenant. It is now called the Old Covenant because it has been replaced by a new one. As pointed out in the introduction to this chapter Israel was already a covenant people on redemption ground when they entered into this agreement. The question naturally arises, Why would God place a redeemed people under a legal covenant of works? We believe that Paul answers that question which will be discussed later. Covenant Theology apparently can find no place in its scheme for such a covenant, so it is forced to call this a covenant of grace, in spite of the curse it pronounces upon all who continue not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them, and in spite of the fact it is said: "And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them" (Galatians 3:10-12).

¹²⁵ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1940), II, pp. 808-811.

The Inauguration of the Covenant. [Exodus 24:1-8](#) cf. [Hebrews 9:16-22](#).

A covenant sacrifice was offered which was never to be repeated. As yet there was no priesthood in Israel. Moses, the mediator of the covenant, not Aaron, had young men kill the sacrifices and then he sprinkled the blood on the people after reading the covenant to them, saying: "Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." All of this is highly typical of the Person and work of Christ, as reflected in the book of Hebrews. Christ, as the Mediator of the New Covenant, not as High-priest, offered Himself without spot to God. This aspect of His work made a provision of salvation for all mankind.

Until the blood was sprinkled those who were to be priests had to worship afar off and only Moses, the type of Christ, was to come near to God. Afterwards the priests also were permitted to come near. This teaches us in type that Christ had to shed His blood before His priestly ministry could begin. He was not a priest while He was on earth ([Hebrews 8:4](#)), though doubtless His prayer the night before His death was in anticipation of His priestly work. The ministry of priesthood is only for people who have already been brought into relationship with God. This is why Jesus prayed in John 17: "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." Thus the Levitical sacrifices and ministry, while typifying the redemptive work of Christ, typified only that aspect of it which applies to those who have already been brought into a saving relationship with God.

The Three-fold Content of the Covenant.

1. The Law of the Ten Commandments, [Exodus 20:1-17](#), governing the moral life of Israel in relation to the righteous will of God.
2. The Judgments, [Exodus 21:1 - 24:11](#), governing the social life of the people.
3. The Ordinances, [Exodus 24:12 - 31:18](#), governing the religious life of the people.

The Purpose of the Tabernacle with its Priesthood. The purpose of the tabernacle is stated in Exodus 25:8: "That I may dwell among them." Sin involves both penalty and defilement. In the work of salvation there is a once-for-all remission of the penalty of sin at the time faith is placed in the Savior. In type Israel had been brought into this position by having the blood of the Covenant sacrifice sprinkled upon them. Sins committed after this bring defilement, so that if God is to dwell among such people there must be cleansing. The High-priestly ministry of Christ by virtue of His blood which has been shed is that which cleanses *the believer* from sin, making possible fellowship with the Father and the Son ([1 John 1:7](#)). In type, Israel needed to be cleansed constantly so that God might dwell among them. It was for this reason that the tabernacle worship

with its priesthood was established. In the type, numerous and repeated sacrifices were necessary ([Hebrews 10:11](#)), but in the Antitype the once-for-all sacrifice was of infinite value so that it covered all of the various aspects of the Levitical offerings. Unless the above truth is recognized it will appear that Israel under the Law Covenant was obtaining salvation by the works of the law and not by the hearing of faith.

The sacrificial system of the covenant was a means of grace. The Law is the expression of God's holy character, and the breaking of it results in a curse ([Galatians 3:10](#)). On the basis of pure law the lawbreaker could hope for nothing but condemnation. The Levitical sacrifices provided the way of escape from the curse. Likewise, in this dispensation, the all-sufficiency of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ is the means whereby our relationship with God is kept unbroken in spite of sin and failures which may break in on the Christian life.

The Purpose of the Law.

1. To reveal the knowledge of sin: "I had not known sin, but by the law" (Romans 7:7).
2. To cause sin to become exceeding sinful: "But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (Romans 7:13); "Moreover, the law entered, that the offense might abound" (Romans 5:20).
3. To stop every mouth and bring in the whole world guilty before God (Romans 3:19).

It is evident from such passages as Romans 3:20 and Galatians 2:16 that the law was not given to save man or to deliver him from the dominion of sin. It would thus appear that in the redemptive purposes of God, God placed His people under the Law before He sent His Son into the world to die for sin in order to first fully manifest the sinfulness of sin, so that the need for salvation might be fully realized and so that the magnitude of the worth of Christ's sacrifice might be better understood and appreciated.

What the Law Cannot Do.

1. It cannot justify the sinner: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Romans 3:20).
2. It cannot deliver from the dominion of sin: "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14).
3. It can make nothing perfect: "For the law made nothing perfect" (Hebrews 7:19).

4. The reason for the inability of the law to accomplish the above things is due to the weakness and sinfulness of man's flesh (Romans 8:2), and not to any inherent imperfection in the law (Romans 7:12).

Salvation under the Dispensation of Law. It is the plain teaching of the New Testament that every one who did not continue in all things that are written in the book of the law was under the curse, and it is equally plain that not one Israelite ever continued in all that the law demanded. The conclusion is inescapable that all must have been under the curse of the law. Did this mean, then, that all were lost? No, it could not, for it is equally plain that many of the Old Testament saints were saved. What, then, did the curse of the law mean? The law has a system of penalties, the extreme one being death. Paul teaches that the law has dominion over a man as long as he is alive, but that physical death frees one from the law ([Romans 7:1-6](#)). We have already shown that the Israelites, by virtue of the Abrahamic Covenant, the Passover, and the Covenant sacrifice were on redemption ground and were considered to be God's chosen nation and the people of God before ever the law was imposed upon them. Again, Paul makes it plain that the Law, which was given 430 years after the promise to Abraham, could not disannul the promise ([Galatians 3:17](#)). Therefore it should be clear that salvation under the Dispensation of Law was upon the basis of the promise, and that while breaking of the law might bring physical death, as it did in many cases, it could not result in disannulling of the promise. Physical death is not necessarily synonymous with spiritual death, even when it is visited as a penalty.

In considering Old Testament salvation it must be remembered that the Covenants deal with the people on a collective or nationalistic basis and that there is no statement about what one must do in order to be saved. There were doubtless individuals who were natural descendants of Abraham who were not in reality children of God, even as Paul stated: "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Romans 9:6). But those who were true children of the promise, such as Moses and David, were saved, not by the works of the law, but by the Promise, even though they may have suffered penalties for having broken the law. David broke the law, but he knew the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord would not impute sin ([Romans 4:6-8](#)).

The End of the Law.

1. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth (Romans 10:4).

2. The end does not mean the destruction but the fulfillment of the law. Christ's life perfectly fulfilled its precepts and His death perfectly fulfilled its demands of justice.

3. Ye are not under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14).

4. The Old Testament or Covenant, called the ministration of condemnation and death has been "done away" and "abolished" as a dispensational system ([2 Corinthians 3:6-14](#)).

5. How and why is it true that believers are not under the law but under grace? Christ died under the curse of the law ([Galatians 3:13](#)). Having satisfied all of its righteous claims through death He became free from the law. But Christ did not remain dead: He arose the third day, and we are told that believers arose with Him. All of this is constructively or positionally true of the believer; wherefore he is admonished: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11). The believer's new life is thus a sharing of the resurrection life of Christ and as such it is under grace. It would be disastrous to put sinful flesh under grace. Rather, God puts the flesh to death through Christ so that we may walk in newness of life under grace.

The Palestinian Covenant

This covenant is in reality a confirmation and amplification of the land promise of the Abrahamic Covenant. It is stated in [Deuteronomy 30:1-10](#). Dwight Pentecost has this to say about this covenant:

An analysis of this passage will show that there are seven main features in the program there unfolded: (1) The nation will be plucked off the land for its unfaithfulness (Deut. 28:63-68; 30:1-3); (2) there will be a future repentance of Israel (Deut. 28:63-68; 30:1-3); (3) their Messiah will return (Deut. 30:3-6); (4) Israel will be restored to the land (Deut. 30:5); (5) Israel will be converted as a nation (Deut. 30:4-8; Rom. 11:26, 27); (6) Israel's enemies will be judged (Deut. 30:7); (7) the nation will then receive her full blessing (Deut. 30:9).¹²⁶

The Davidic Covenant

This covenant is recorded in [2 Samuel 7:12-16](#):

And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men: but my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.

¹²⁶ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Dunham Publishing Co., 1958), p. 97.

The Davidic Covenant is confirmed in numerous places in the Old Testament, as in Psalm 89:3, 4, 34-36:

I have made a covenant with my chosen. I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever and build up thy throne to all generations My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.

These words serve to show the absolutely unconditional character of this covenant, which, if it means anything at all, it means that God's oath will someday be carried out in the literal establishment of David's throne and kingdom. That the fulfillment in a spiritual sense is meant and has already occurred, as is claimed by Amillennialists, is clearly contradicted by [Acts 15:16](#), where some twenty years after the death and resurrection of Christ it is clearly stated that David's tabernacle is fallen down and is in ruins. James makes it abundantly clear that the setting up of David's throne and house will come only *after* the return of Christ.

The covenant with David concerns four things: David's seed, David's house, David's throne, and David's kingdom. It is significant that Matthew's gospel, which emphasizes the King and Kingdom aspect of Messiah, begins: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David." And it is also significant that at the Annunciation the angel told Mary: "the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:32, 33). Peter confirms the fact that Christ, the fruit of David's loins according to the flesh, was raised up from the dead to sit on David's throne ([Acts 2:30](#)). We have already referred to James' words in Acts 15:16, where he speaks of David's tabernacle or house, now in ruins, being restored after the return of Christ. Thus, the New Testament confirms the literal fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant in its entirety through the Lord Jesus Christ at His second coming to earth.

The New Covenant

The New Covenant is referred to by name once in the Old Testament ([Jeremiah 31:31](#)) and nine times in the New Testament: four times in reference to the blood of the New Covenant ([Matthew 26:28](#); [Mark 14:24](#), [Luke 22:20](#); and [1 Corinthians 11:25](#)), once in connection with Paul's ministry ([2 Corinthians 3:6](#)), and four times in Hebrews ([8:8, 13](#); [9:15](#); [12:24](#)). As we have already observed it is a covenant made specifically with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It is New in that it fulfills, cancels, and takes the place of the Mosaic Covenant, which in the process became old.

Its Character and Provisions. (1) Unconditional, (2) everlasting, (3) promises a new heart and mind, (4) provides forgiveness of sins, (5) imparts the Holy Spirit as an indwelling presence, (6) guarantees that the seed of Israel will never cease to be a nation before God for ever, (7) provides for the restoration of Jerusalem and of the land to Israel.

The Relation of the New to the Other Covenants. The unconditional covenants are designated as the covenants of promise. The Abrahamic seems to be basic to all of the others. The promise of the land in the Abrahamic is developed in the Palestinian; the promise of redemption, national and universal, in the Abrahamic is the subject especially of the New, and the promise of a great nation in the Abrahamic is guaranteed in the Davidic. The New stands in contrast to the Old. It should be noted that when Paul states that the Law was added ([Galatians 3:19](#)), he did not mean that it became a part of the Abrahamic Covenant, for he had just declared that no one had the right to add anything to a covenant after it had been confirmed. The Law came in along side of the Promise as a temporary arrangement to be replaced by the covenant made in Christ's blood.

The Relation of the New Covenant to the Body of Christ: Covenant Theology or Amillennial View. This view teaches that the Covenant has been taken away from the natural seed of Abraham, literal Israel, and has been given to the Church, spiritual Israel. Hence, according to this view the Church, the Body of Christ, is the one and only party to the New Covenant. Since the New Covenant is fulfilled in and upon the Body of Christ, there remains no future place for its fulfillment, and hence the present dispensation must be the final one in the plan of God, leaving no place for a future dispensation of the Kingdom. This view has already been sufficiently dealt with.

The Two-Covenant Theory. This view is held by Chalet. He believes that the prophesied covenant of Jeremiah 31:31 applies only to the nation of Israel, and that another New Covenant, a heavenly one for the Body of Christ, was made in the blood of Christ. He states:

To suppose that these two covenants--one for Israel and one for the Church--are the same is to assume that there is a latitude of common interest between God's purpose for Israel and His purpose for the Church. Israel's covenant, however, is new only because it replaces the Mosaic, but the Church's covenant is new because it introduces that which is God's mysterious and unrelated purpose. Israel's new covenant rests specifically on the sovereign 'I will' of Jehovah, while the new covenant for the Church is made in Christ's blood.¹²⁷

Chafer no doubt arrived at this view in an effort to maintain the clear distinction which exists between Israel and the Church. However, we believe that there is

¹²⁷ Chafer, *op. cit.*, VI, pp. 98, 99.

some common interest between God's purposes for Israel and the Church, and that is in the area of Redemption. The blood of Christ, which is the blood of the New Covenant, is the only blood that Christ has shed, and it was shed for the remission of sins of the past, the present, and the future. We do not believe that the New Covenant was made with the Church of this dispensation, but we do believe, as will be explained later, that the value of the blood of that covenant accrues to the Church.

Acts 28 Dispensationalism. Those who hold the view that the Body of Christ and the new dispensation began at or after Acts 28 also believe that the New Covenant was being administered during the Acts period, after which it was suspended until the second coming of Christ, and that the Body of Christ which then came into being has no relation whatsoever to the New Covenant. It is upon this basis that they rule out as unscriptural the observance of the Lord's Supper for the Body of Christ.

The Scofield Acts 2 Dispensational View. This is the view generally adopted by dispensationalists. It holds that while the New Covenant was made with Israel and will be literally fulfilled upon Israel in the millennial kingdom, it applies to the Body of Christ as far as it is treated in the New Testament Scriptures. In other words, everything that happened after the death of Christ in God's program concerned the Body of Christ and did not have Israel in view. Some who hold this view do not believe that the Church has been actually placed under Israel's covenant.¹²⁸

The Median Dispensational View. This is the view that falls between the Acts 2 and the Acts 28 position for the beginning of this present dispensation of the mystery. It holds that the blessings of the New Covenant began to be ministered to the nation of Israel on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, and that after Israel's rejection of that ministry Israel was set aside temporarily while God brought into His program the heretofore unprophesied present dispensation of the mystery. This took place in the middle of the book of Acts, and hence the name *Median* for this view. This is the view which is here considered to be the correct one.

The Apostle Paul wrote letters to members of the Body of Christ during the latter half of the book of Acts in which he indicated that a spiritual transition was then taking place from the old to the new order in which some practices were passing away (1 Corinthians 13). He also indicated that as a part of the special revelation given to him for the Body of Christ was the observance of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23) and the fact that in this dispensation God was making the Gentiles to partake of Israel's spiritual things (Romans 15:27). Thus it appears that in sovereign grace God has bestowed upon the Gentiles who had no covenant ties with God (Ephesians 2:12), all of the spiritual blessings in redemption which He had covenanted with Israel and which Israel had rejected. This was done, not in fulfillment of a covenant promise, but in sovereign grace,

¹²⁸ Pentecost, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

and hence, although God has always been gracious, this is called the dispensation of the grace of God ([Ephesians 3:2](#)).

The point here is that when Christ shed His blood it was the blood of the New Covenant. It is by that blood and that blood alone of the New Covenant that any sinner in any dispensation is reconciled to God. Only Israel comes under the actual terms of that covenant, which includes material, physical, and spiritual blessings. But God, who is sovereign, has the right, if He so wills, to do with His own as He sees fit ([Matthew 20:15](#)), and He has seen fit to bestow all of the merits of that precious blood of the New Covenant upon undeserving and uncovenanted Gentiles in this dispensation of the grace of God.

Part Three

Theology Proper

15 THEISM

Theism is the belief in the existence of a God or of gods. Most generally the term is used to denote monotheism, or the belief in one God. However, the word is associated with a variety of beliefs, as seen below.

POLYTHEISM

This is belief in the existence of many gods. The Bible contains over 250 references to polytheism, where the name of god is used in the plural. The Apostle Paul gives the origin of polytheism in [Romans 1:21-23](#) as a result of the apostasy of man from the one true God:

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

Polytheism is still the belief of millions of people. According to Edward A. Marshall,

The Hindu pantheon has 330,000,000 deities. Besides these, trees, rivers, and fields are worshipped. Only a few of their deities are represented in

idol form. Silver, gold, iron, wood and stone are used. Most of their idols are evil gods. Good spirits receive but little attention.¹²⁹

The Evolutionary theory represents mankind emerging from animalism as a fetish worshipper, and then progressing through polytheism to monotheism, and finally to Judaism and Christianity. The Bible, however, teaches that man in the beginning knew the one true God, and for the reasons stated above became a degraded idolater. The Bible goes so far as to say that covetousness is basically idolatry ([Colossians 3:5](#)).

HENOTHEISM

Henotheism is a form of polytheism, although the etymology of the name means *one god*. It is the belief that there is one god for each region, or race, or nation. This type of belief can be seen in I Kings 20:23: "And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their gods are gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they."

PANTHEISM

Pantheism is the doctrine that all (pan) is God (theism). This belief has been accepted by millions both as a religion and as a philosophy. The term *pantheist* was supposedly coined by John Toland in 1705, although, as the Encyclopedia Britannica points out in an article on the subject, pantheism is very old and is international. It traces the belief back to 1000 B.C. in India in connection with Brahmanism, to ancient Egypt in the successive identifications of *Ra*, *Isis*, and *Osiris* with the universe, to Greek philosophers from the 6th century B.C. onwards, including Xenophanes, Parmenides, Heraclitus, and Cleanthes the Stoic, to strains of Neoplatonism in the Middle Ages, to representatives of Christianity in Scotus Erigena (9th century) and David of Dinant (12th century), to representatives of Judaism in its Kabbalists, to Giordano Bruno who perished at the stake in 1600 in the Inquisition, to Spinoza and John Toland, to the better known pantheistic poets, Lessing and Goethe, and to philosophers Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, and theologians Schleiermacher and Strauss. It is not to be supposed that all of these proponents of pantheism advocated exactly the same views, but all in some way expressed the basic principle of identifying the world with God.

Whereas the Bible teaches that God is not only *in all* ([1 Corinthians 15:28](#)) but is also *over all* ([Romans 9:5](#)), Pantheism teaches that God is only *in all*. That is, Christianity holds to both the Immanence and the Transcendence of God, but Pantheism, by making the Universe to be God, must deny that God exists apart from and over the Universe. *Naturalistic Pantheism* teaches that matter, the

¹²⁹ Edward A. Marshall, *Christianity and Non-Christian Religions Compared*, (Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1910), p. 27.

material universe, is God and is therefore eternal and is the cause of all life and mind. *Idealistic Pantheism* denies any real existence to the material universe, identifying God as the sum-total of mind or spirit. Christian Science, as a religion, falls into this category. Space forbids further treatment of the subject, other than to state some of the main objections to this philosophy.

It practically destroys the personality of God. It proves very difficult to pray to the Universe, or to find comfort in the Universe as a heavenly Father. The Bible presents God as an infinite, personal Being, not simply as impersonal mind or principle.

It makes God to be finite. Although it says that God is all, and would claim that God is therefore infinite, yet this all is made up of finite parts. The sum total of all human beings who have ever lived may number in the billions, but that is a far cry from infinity. Infinity is more than a very large number.

It deifies man. Man is a part of God. Therefore if man worships God he is worshipping part of himself. Christ could claim identity with God ([John 14:10; 10:30](#)), because He is one of the Persons of the Godhead, but no other human being can claim oneness with God in this sense.

It denies personal immortality to man. Pantheism would liken man's existence to a ripple on the surface of the ocean produced by the blowing of the wind, which loses its identity when the wind ceases and it again becomes a part of the undifferentiated deep. Another has said that it makes man to be a bottle of the ocean's water in the ocean, temporarily distinguishable by its limitation within the bottle, but lost again in the ocean, so soon as these fragile limits are broken.

It destroys the basis for morality. Schopenhauer said that a Pantheism which "explains every phenomenon as a theophany" must "also be applied to the most terrible and abominable phenomena."¹³⁰

If all is God, then not only all good but all evil is also God. The only way out of this dilemma is simply to deny that evil exists, as the Christian Scientist does. Mary Baker Eddy wrote:

If God, or good, is real, then evil, the unlikeness of God, is unreal We learn in Christian Science that all in harmony of mortal mind or body is illusion, possessing neither reality nor identity though seeming to be real and identical... Man is incapable of sin, sickness, and death.¹³¹

It is a necessitarian doctrine. That is, it teaches that everything exists and acts of necessity. It denies all freedom of second causes. If all things are necessitated,

¹³⁰ "Pantheism," *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1947), XVII, p. 190.

¹³¹ Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, (Boston: The First Church of Christ Scientist, 1932), pp. 470, 472, 475.

then sin is necessitated. But by making sin an activity of God, Pantheism practically precludes the possibility of sin. Sin becomes only limitation or undeveloped good. Water is water, whether in the sewer or the drinking fountain, and God is God, whether in a scoundrel or a saint. Hodge says:

Hegel says that sin is something unspeakably higher than the law-abiding motion of the planets, or the innocence of plants. That is, it is a higher manifestation of the life of God.

And he shows how Spinoza teaches that

... sin is nothing positive. It exists for us but not for God. The same things which appear hateful in men are regarded with admiration in animals.. . It follows then that sin, which only expresses an imperfection, cannot consist in anything which expresses a reality. We speak improperly, applying human language, when we say that we sin against God, or that men offend God.¹³²

After quoting Rosenkranz to the effect that if God be everything, and if there be a Satan, God must be Satan, and that evil is in good and good is in evil, and without evil there can be no good, Hodge quotes a German writer who says that this system should be called *Pandiabolism* instead of *Pantheism*. Hodge gives an extended exposition of Pantheism, devoting some 35 pages to it.

DEISM

Actually the words Deism and Theism mean the same thing, since one is derived from the Latin and the other from the Greek for the name of God. However, Deism has taken on a technical meaning describing belief in the existence of God as the source of infinite existence, with disbelief in revelation and Christianity. Thiessen, in commenting on the rise and history of Deism, states:

English Deism arose as a result of nearly two centuries of controversy about religious questions. The Copernican discoveries and the work of Francis Bacon also contributed somewhat to its rise. Lord Herbert, of Cherbury (1581-1648), is known as the father of deism. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), Charles Blount (1654-1693), Anthony Collins (1676-1729), Matthew Tindal (1657-1733), Lord Bolingbroke (1678-1751), and Thomas Paine (1727-1809) were English deists. In France the deistic movement did not get under way until a century after its rise in England. Voltaire (1694-1778) and Rousseau (1712-1778) may be classed as French deists. Some modern evolutionary theories are deistic in their explanation of the universe.¹³³

¹³² Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1940), I, p. 305.

¹³³ Henry C. Thiessen, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), p. 75.

Deism has been called *the religion of the absentee God*. It holds that God created the universe and endowed it with laws for its continued operation, and that He has never intervened in any way with it since the beginning. Deists argued that if God's creation were perfect, He would not need to intervene, and that any intervention on His part would be a sign of imperfection in His work. Thus they rejected the entire concept of a special revelation from God, such as the Bible, as well as any activity of God either in Preservation or Providence. Prayer or any kind of fellowship with God would be an impossibility in this system. By teaching that God had absented Himself from His creation, Deism became a religion of Nature, based on the inviolability of natural law and a mechanical view of the world. "God made the world so good at the first that the best He can do is to let it alone!"

While few today go under the name of *Deist*, the basic tenets of Deism are doubtless held by many people. If they are not outspoken Deists, they are virtual Deists. One who behaves as though God had never spoken, who disregards the Bible, who never prays, who finds the material world sufficient for all his needs, who thinks that God is billions of light years away and is completely disinterested in how man behaves - such an one does not need to pin the label of Deism upon himself.

In one respect Deism is the opposite extreme of Pantheism. Pantheism says that God is only immanent in creation. Deism says that He is only Transcendent. Strong calls Deism the exaggeration of the truth of God's transcendence. But although the Deist professes to believe in God, He is a God so far removed from man that his belief differs little from atheism.

BIBLICAL THEISM

The only really acceptable meaning of Theism is the belief in one personal God who is both Immanent and Transcendent, but even among those who profess faith in this kind of God we find a division. There are those who hold a unitarian concept of God, avowing that God exists in only one Person. This is the form of monotheism which is held by Jews, Mohammedans, and Unitarians. The other group, representing the historical Christian view, holds that the one God exists in three Persons or personal distinctions: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This Christian view is unique among all of the religious beliefs in the world. No other religion has ever presented this concept. Some have tried to liken or compare the Biblical Trinity with the Triad of Hinduism: Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, but there is no similarity whatsoever. These are three separate and distinct gods among whom there is no unity, but often antagonism.

Although the doctrine of the Trinity is inscrutable, it is not incredible. In fact, it offers the only solution to the problem of conceiving of a God who existed eternally before there was ever a creation. Pantheism, by teaching that the

creation is God, makes the existence of God depend upon the existence of the universe. Unitarianism, with a God of only one Person, has a God who for eternity before He created must have been in a state of absolute inactivity, not expressing Himself in any way. The Christian God, on the other hand, eternally existing in all of His perfections as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, enjoyed full and complete activity within the Godhead in the eternity before He created. His perfections are thus in no way dependent upon the existence of the Universe. The Son referred to this fact when He said that the Father loved Him before the foundation of the world, and when He prayed that the Father would glorify Him with the glory which He had with the Father before the foundation of the world ([John 17:5, 24](#)).

16 PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Since the days of Aristotle philosophers have sought to prove the existence of God by various arguments. These arguments are based, not upon the Bible or any special revelation, but simply upon the facts supplied by nature. Some men believe that these arguments are legitimate and that they do prove what they are designed to prove. Others have found them unconvincing, as we shall see in considering objections to these arguments. All that is claimed here is that they do show a large degree of probability for the existence of God, so that any open-minded person should give them serious attention and study. For the Christian whose belief in God is based upon other reasons, these arguments are unnecessary, but they do serve to substantiate and buttress his faith. It should be said in defense of these arguments that the Apostle Paul in [Romans 1:19, 20](#) does state that what may be known of God has been manifested by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Deity, so that man is without excuse. Paul does not label his argument by any particular title. Perhaps it includes all that is involved in the several arguments which philosophers have put forward on this subject. At least, Paul gives Biblical authority for investigating Nature to discover to what extent God's existence is revealed therein.

THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

This is the argument from cause and effect. It says: Every effect must have had a cause sufficient to produce it. It is a self-evident truth that every caused event must have such a cause, but the cause of one event may have been caused itself. The Cosmological argument, therefore, should be stated thus:

Everything which has had a beginning was produced by a sufficient cause. The Universe has had a beginning, and therefore must have had a cause sufficient to bring it into existence.

This is a valid syllogism if it can be proved that the Universe had a beginning. There are those who claim that the Universe is eternal, either that it existed eternally of and by itself, or that it is co-extensive with the existence of God. For all such the Cosmological logical argument proves nothing.

There are many facts, however, which indicate that the Universe did have a beginning, and if this could be proved the Cosmological argument would become more persuasive. The following evidences are based upon currently accepted scientific theories.

Radioactivity

A number of the heavier elements are radioactive; that is, they are constantly radiating energy at a fixed rate in the form of heat and other electromagnetic emanations. In the process, those atoms which are affected are transmuted into lighter elements. For example, one gram of radium radiates 132 calories of heat per hour. In the process, part of the radium is changed into an isotope of lead, and alpha particles (helium ions), beta and gamma rays are radiated. It has been calculated that this process goes on spontaneously, unaffected by heat, light, pressure, chemical combination, or any other force, at such a rate that one-half of the original radium will have disintegrated at the end of 1,600 years. It has been estimated that the half-life of uranium is about three billion years. Some radioactive elements have an extremely short half-life of only a few seconds. Actually, radioactive elements undergo what is called a disintegration series, in which the parent element, uranium, disintegrates into another radioactive element, and that element into another, and so on until the end of the series, the end product being the element lead.

Now it should be evident that such a process as this could not go on eternally. If one-half of the uranium in the world disintegrates in three billion years, and one-half of the remainder disappears in the next three billion years, the time would have to come when the last uranium atom would disintegrate and there would be no more uranium in existence. But there is in fact a great deal of uranium still in existence, which is proof that the earth is not eternal.

The Second Law of Thermodynamics

Simply stated, the first law of thermodynamics states that it is impossible to create energy, and the second law states that it is impossible for heat energy to flow spontaneously from a cooler body to a warmer body. If a pan of water is found to be warmer than the surrounding air it is a foregone conclusion that the water must have been heated by some source which was hotter than the air. It is also evident that if no further heat energy is applied to the water, the water will in time give up its heat to the air until both water and air have the same

temperature. When this state of equilibrium is reached it is impossible for the water to make the air warmer, or for the air to make the water warmer.

Think of the process on a cosmic scale. The Sun, which supposedly generates its vast heat energy by nuclear fusion, converts 564 million tons of hydrogen every second into 560 million tons of helium and radiates the remaining four million tons each second as heat and light.¹³⁴ The sun is very large, so that the loss of four million tons of its mass every second is rather insignificant, but nevertheless, given sufficient time, the sun must give up all of its heat energy and finally come to equilibrium at near absolute zero. If the Sun were burning like a great ball of coal it would have burned for only a few thousand years and would have turned to cold cinders billions of years ago. The fact that the Sun is still hotter than its surroundings is proof that it has not been here for eternity.

The Expanding Universe Theory

Various astronomers have postulated this theory based upon the spectral analysis of light coming from the stars and from extragalactic nebulae. It is based upon the *Doppler effect*, which is observable with any form of wave propagation when the source of the wave is in motion either toward or away from the observer. If a certain number of waves or cycles exist in a certain space in one second when the source is stationary, it is evident that if the source is moving toward the observer with appreciable speed, more of the waves will reach the observer in one second than normally would. The converse is also true if the source is moving away from the observer. This phenomenon is observable with sound waves, when an observer is standing on a train platform listening to the whistle of the train as it passes at high speed. The person on board the train hears the true pitch of the whistle. The observer on the platform hears a single pitch as the train approaches, and at the instant it passes the pitch drops noticeably. In other words, there is a shift in pitch. The same type of shift occurs with light when the source is in motion. If a star were approaching the earth at a very high rate of speed there would be a shift toward the blue end of the spectrum, or if it were receding the shift would be toward the red end. Spectral analysis indicates a *red shift* in the light from the stars, which indicates that they are all speeding away from each other, just as particles of a bomb when it explodes. In fact, this theory of the Universe has been called the *Big Bang* theory.

Astronomers speculate that about eight to twelve billion years ago all matter was condensed in one huge glob of glowing hydrogen and that creation took place in the form of an explosion which threw matter out into space in all directions, which later congealed into galaxies, stars, and planets. Galaxies have been observed which are retreating from earth at speeds up to 80 percent of the velocity of light and which are estimated to be four billion light years away, which means that what the astronomer sees today represents the appearance of these

¹³⁴ Herbert Friedman, "The Sun" (*National Geographic*, Vol. 128, No. 5, p. 720).

galaxies four billion years ago. More recently there has been speculation that the universe has been going through cycles which last 80 billions of years during which the expanding galaxies lose their momentum, stop, and then fall back by mutual attraction into the primal ball of glowing hydrogen from which they sprang, only to explode again and to keep repeating the process ad infinitum.¹³⁵ This latter addition to the theory has apparently been added to the Big Bang theory to make sure that no one could inject the idea of a Creator being responsible for the first *Bang*, for it postulates an eternal process acting upon eternal matter. Some scientists do not accept this theory and others are non-committal. Readers *Digest*, in the reference above, quotes one authority:

"We have been wrong too many times in the past. We do not have enough measurements of distant galaxies to say anything definite. We're in the kindergarten stage of cosmology."

Everything in Nature is characterized by change and decay.

The whole Universe must possess the same character of its constituent parts. If it is made of finite parts all of which had a beginning, it is difficult to see how all of these parts together could be eternal.

Conclusion

It may be asked, What is the Cosmological argument supposed to prove? It is not intended to prove everything about the existence of a personal God. It simply demonstrates the necessity for the existence of an eternal, self-existent Being or Power that is responsible for the creation of the material universe. What kind of Being or Power this is cannot be inferred from this argument.

The assumption involved in the Cosmological argument is not that every existence must have a cause, for then it would be necessary to find a cause for God. The assumption is that whatever has begun must have a cause, whether it be existence, event, occurrence, or change. Human existence has a cause. Had we complete genealogical tables of the whole human race, it would be possible to trace the cause of every person back through a long chain of secondary causes to the first man. That first man was not eternal. He began to be. The Cosmological argument says that something must have caused him to be, that he could not have come into being out of nothing. Even the atheistic evolutionist who claims that man descended from a protozoan has to admit that that first amoeba-like creature must have had a cause, and he is forced to contradict himself and all of the known facts of science by stating that the cause must have been spontaneous generation. For example, the author of the *Britannica* article on Evolution states:

¹³⁵ Earl Ubell, "The Greatest Explosion of Them All," (*Reader's Digest*, February, 1966), p. 123.

The important principle of biogenesis was thus established, according to which all living organisms are derived from pre-existing living organisms without break. It is one of the chief foundation stones of the modern doctrine of organic evolution.

And yet in the very next sentence this chief cornerstone, the law of biogenesis, is denied:

... there must have been a time when protoplasm first appeared. It must be supposed that long ago, when conditions became favorable, relatively high compounds of various kinds were formed. Others might be stable and merely persist. But still others might tend to reform, to assimilate, as fast as they broke down. Once started on this track such a growing compound or mixture would inevitably tend to perpetuate itself, and might combine with or feed on others less complex than itself.¹³⁶

This appeal to spontaneous generation of life, which has never been observed and which is diametrically opposed to all scientific knowledge, as the cause of all life upon earth, serves to show what a flimsy foundation, if it can be called a foundation, there is for organic evolution. Surely almost infinite credulity is required to accept such a theory.

What the Cosmological argument says about man, it says about everything else which has come into being, organic and inorganic. It says that there must not only be a cause, but a sufficient cause. The only thing this argument tells us about God is that He represents a power sufficient to be the cause of everything that exists in the Universe.

Objections

The Scottish philosopher, David Hume, and the German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, were two of the outstanding critics of the Cosmological argument. Hume voiced his objections in his work, *Dialogues on Natural Religion*, in which he argued like this: Nothing is demonstrable unless the contrary implies a contradiction. Nothing conceivable implies a contradiction. Whatever we conceive as existent we can also conceive as non-existent. There is no being therefore whose non-existence implies a contradiction. It follows then that there is no being whose existence is demonstrable. Hume further argued that we cannot prove that every event must have a cause, claiming that the observable succession of events can be conceived as continuing indefinitely. Finally, he claimed that if there was a first cause it could just as well have been the material world as to have been God. In answer to Hume it would seem to imply a contradiction to conceive of a universe which had no cause, and to say that the universe is the cause of its own existence is in itself contradictory.

¹³⁶ "Evolution," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (Chicago: 1947), Vol 8, p. 918.

Kant, in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, followed in Hume's footsteps and contended further that we cannot legitimately argue from the facts of sense experience to that which transcends sense experience, or in other words, the fact that every event must have a cause applies only to the world of our sense experience: we cannot know whether it applies outside the realm of empirical knowledge. This, of course, is the position of agnosticism. Kant also argued that we have no way of knowing when we have arrived at the first cause. These conclusions of Hume and Kant derive largely from their epistemology, or their theory of knowledge.

It is beyond the scope of this work to give detailed answers to the line of reasoning presented by Hume and Kant, and it is unnecessary since others have ably done this. A suggested text is Robert Flint's book, *Theism*, published by William Blackwood and Sons, London.

THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

This argument is similar to the Cosmological in that it is a *posteriori*, arguing from particulars back to principle, from effect to cause. But whereas the Cosmological has to do primarily with the existence of the universe, the Teleological has to do with the quality or character of the Universe. It is often called the argument from design. The various things and objects which make up the universe appear to have been made to fulfill a purpose, to accomplish a certain end. There seems to be some intelligence or mind behind the creation, so that we are driven one step further than the Cosmological argument took us, from simply a sufficiently powerful Cause for the existence of all things to a Cause which is intelligent and purposeful, and therefore personal.

A person who had never had contact with civilization upon finding a watch which was running might examine it and after some contemplation come to the conclusion that some one must have made it, but why some one made it would be a mystery to him. He might throw it aside or hang it around his neck for an ornament, or he might believe that no one would go to all of the trouble of making such an intricate mechanism for no reason at all and would be led to seek for an answer. It is conceivable that he might be intrigued by the movement of the second-hand, and in time observe that each time it made a revolution the long hand would move one division. At intervals during the day he might notice too that the shorter hand had moved, and then the fact might strike him that the short hand was in the same position each evening when the sun went down. More and more details would fill in the picture until he realized that the watch had been made for keeping track of the time of day and that it must have been made by a very smart person. Although not a philosopher, this poor benighted heathen, unbeknown to himself, was using the Teleological argument.

The question which confronts us is this: Does the Universe appear to have been brought into being by some mighty, but blind, force, so that things are what

they are by pure chance, or are there indications of purpose and design which would lead us to believe that the Author of nature is an intelligent, personal Designer? The Scripture writers give a positive answer. The Psalmist, for example, declares:

"He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?" (Psalm 94:9).

The entire 104th Psalm indicates that God has ordered His creation with the end in view of providing for the needs of His creatures. The Psalmist was overwhelmed with the grandeur of design in nature and cried out:

"O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches."

The apostle Paul makes it plain that God had a purpose in creating animal life as food for man:

"For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving" (1 Timothy 4:4).

The writer of Hebrews states:

"For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God" (Hebrews 3:4). A house is more than a pile of raw materials. It is first conceived as a plan; each room designed for a specific purpose, and various fixtures and furniture are provided to help fulfill those purposes. God is here presented as the Master Architect of the Universe.

We would agree with Hodge that this is a "boundless subject." Many books have been written showing the teleology in both the organic and the inorganic creation. Hodge lists the title of the famous *Bridgewater Treatises* in which some of Great Britain's outstanding scientists set forth the theistic position from their various scientific fields.¹³⁷ A. Cressy Morrison, past president of the New York Academy of Sciences, wrote a book entitled: *Man Does Not Stand Alone*, which was popularized through a condensation in *Readers Digest* for December, 1946. The book was written as an answer to Julian Huxley's book, *Man Stands Alone*, and sets forth many evidences of design in nature. Bernard Ramm deals with the subject in his book, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, pp. 144-156 and also gives a good bibliography on the subject.

Examples of Design in Nature

Individual organs in the bodies of men and animals. Evolutionists in the past have taken great delight in pointing to what they call *vestigial organs*, organs that

¹³⁷ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1940), I, p. 2t7.

are useless and therefore without purpose or design. Among the most commonly mentioned are the appendix, the coccyx, tonsils, and the pituitary gland. For example, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* states:

There is the evidence from vestigial ("rudimentary") organs, which are of no direct use to their possessors, but useful in other animals of the same general construction. It is impossible to account for these on any theory of special creation, but their existence is to be expected on the theory of evolution.¹³⁸

But this same article is forced to admit later on:

Many characters have, however, been asserted to be useless which have subsequently been found to be not only useful, but essential. As our knowledge advances, the functions fulfilled by various organs and parts are daily being discovered. Conspicuous examples are the glands of internal secretion, such as the pituitary gland, formerly supposed to be a useless vestigial structure but now known to be of the greatest importance.¹³⁹

Is it not possible that with the advance of science man may discover that he has no vestigial organs whatsoever, and then what becomes of this boasted proof of evolution? Even today it is not at all agreed among authorities that such organs as the appendix and the tonsils are completely useless to the human bodily functions.

Theists point to such marvellous and intricate mechanisms as the eye as examples of intelligent design. After discussing the various parts and functions of the eye, Hodge states:

This organ was fashioned in the darkness of the womb, with a self-evident reference to the nature and properties of light, of which the creature for whose use it was fashioned had neither knowledge nor experience. If the eye, therefore, does not indicate the intelligent adaptation of means to an end, no such adaptation can be found in any work of human ingenuity.¹⁴⁰

But the writer of the article in the *Britannica* believes that the human eye has developed without purpose or design. He states:

Even such a highly specialized organ as the eye of man may be traced back to the property of response to light distributed over the surface of the body of the lowest animals.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, op. cit., p. 916.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 924.

¹⁴⁰ Charles Hodge, *op. cit.*, I, p. 218.

¹⁴¹ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, op. cit., p. 924.

The anti-teleologist would ask us to believe that the lowest of animals developed in and of themselves a kind of photo-sensitivity and that over millions of years, without design or purpose, apart from any external force or power, this characteristic has developed into the intricate mechanism of the human eye, along with the whole optic nervous system with its connections within the brain and with all of its interrelationships with the other parts of the nervous system. Theistic evolutionists do believe in a kind of teleology, that the lower forms of life felt the need for eyes and somehow over the span of millions of years developed them through some kind of will power, but we are reminded of the words of our Lord: "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" (Matthew 6:27). And is it not strange that these lowest forms of life are still with us today in exactly the same form in which they existed millions of years ago, never having developed one bit of change?

The combined organs which make up the animal organism. Not only can we see purposeful design in the individual organs of the body, but we see further design in the way all of these organs function together for the common good of the individual. Take the cat family for example. The cat's stomach and short intestinal tract are specially suited to the digestion of meat. It would have been too bad for the cat if it had been endowed with a trunk like an elephant, or the teeth of a cow, or the hoofs of a pig. Instead, the cat has claws, sharp teeth, paws and limbs suited to stalking its prey. If birds had the heavy bones of some animals they could never get off the ground. Instead, God designed them with hollow bones. Think of the different kinds of bills which birds possess. Birds that are fitted to live in the water have bills for scooping up fish, as well as some having long legs for wading in shallow water. Birds that live on seeds have strong mandibles for cracking the toughest seed covers; others have long, sharp bills for boring into trees for food; still others have cross-bills for opening pine cones. Volumes could be written to show how each species is equipped with a system of organs which function together to fit it to fulfill its function in life, but perhaps the words of Paul illustrate this truth as well as any we can find.

"But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you... but God hath tempered the body together ... that there should be no division in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another." (1 Corinthians 12:18-25).

Animal instincts. Every animal has been given the kind of bodily organs which makes possible the carrying out of its instincts. Suppose the cow had been given the instinct to gather honey and to store it away in the hive. Could anything more absurd be imagined? The bee is fitted with a special tongue for gathering the nectar, with special digestive mechanism for converting it into honey, waxsecreting cells for making the hive, pollen sacks on its legs for carrying food

to its young. And so it is with all animals. The instincts did not produce the bodily organs, and the organs did not originate the instincts.

Mr. Morrison, referred to earlier, gives a beautiful example of instinct as an indication of design:

The wasp catches the grasshopper, digs a hole in the earth, stings the grasshopper in exactly the right place so that he becomes unconscious but lives as a form of preserved meat. The wasp lays her eggs in exactly the right place, perhaps not knowing that when they hatch, her children can eat without killing the insect on which they feed, which would be fatal to them. The wasp must have done all of this right the first time and every time, or there would be no wasps of this species.¹⁴²

Is it not strange that such words can come from one who professes to believe in evolution? If it took the wasp millions of years to evolve, how could it have done it *the first time*? Before it evolved a stinger how could it have made this provision for its offspring? We think the good scientist is very logical in seeing the design in this case but rather illogical in supposing that this design would have been produced by evolution.

Plant life. Not only is there design and purpose in the various organs in the plant world as we have seen in the animal realm, but we see further provision in the vegetable kingdom for all life in the animal and the human spheres. Animal life would be impossible apart from chlorophyll in plants. This strange substance has the ability to synthesize the energy of sunlight with water to manufacture sugar and starches and to convert these basic foods into a host of more complex substances which not only provide food for the whole animal kingdom, but give to man so many of his other necessities, such as coal, gas, and oil for fuel and wood for building.

Physical phenomena. The inorganic world also manifests design, making possible plant and animal life upon the earth. There has been much speculation about the possibility of life upon the other planets of our solar system where temperatures may range all the way from searing heat sufficient to melt lead to frigid cold where there is no atmosphere or an atmosphere of poisonous gases with little or no water. If life exists under such circumstances it must be vastly different from any kind of life man has known. But here upon earth we find a very delicate balance of many factors which make life possible. Life would be impossible if any one of the following were changed only a few percent: the distance of the earth from the sun, the percentage and kinds of gases in our atmosphere, the freezing point of water, the amount of heat radiated by the sun, the size and distance of the moon, and other factors too numerous to mention. If mountains were more numerous or had much higher elevations, eternal snows

¹⁴² A. Cressy Morrison, *Man Does Not Stand Alone* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, copyright 1944), p. 60.

would pile up until most of the water would exist as ice. If the atmosphere were less dense we would be bombarded daily by millions of meteorites which now burn up in their passage through the air. It is very difficult to believe that blind chance could have produced this intricate balance in all realms of nature. One scientist, commenting upon this point, has said that there would be as much probability of chance producing a universe of order such as we see around us as an explosion in a type-foundry producing *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*.

Objections to Teleology

Hume and Kant have been the chief critics of this argument also. Hume claimed that the Teleological argument, if valid, would not prove that God is either infinite or perfect. We have no proof that the universe is infinite, and therefore it would not require an infinite Creator, and we have no way of knowing that this present universe is the best possible one; in fact, after dealing with the unpleasant features of nature and of human beings, Hume concluded that one would be hard pressed to believe that the world was designed by either a very wise or a very good planner.

But if one should find sand in the crankcase of an engine or water in the fuel tank, this finding would be no argument against the fact that the engine is the product of intelligent design, and it would not necessarily be an argument against the perfection of the design of the engine, even though these foreign elements might have wrought havoc with the machinery. The Scripture indicates that the so-called imperfections of nature and the evils which plague humanity are due to the injection of sin into a universe which was perfect in its inception. And when astronomers speak of galaxies which are hundreds of billions of light years distant, there is little difference in comprehension of the human intellect between this figure and infinity. It appears that atheistic and agnostic philosophers and scientists, upon finding one-hundredth of the evidence for a fact in the physical world that there is for the existence of God, will avidly accept and pursue that evidence. But because of preformed judgments they will reject much greater evidence concerning Deity on the grounds that the evidence is not one hundred percent complete. Surely the words of our Lord to the Pharisees might well apply to these men:

"Ye blind guides, which strain out a gnat, and swallow a camel." (Matthew 23:24).

They swallow in one gulp the whole theory of evolution with all of its incredible tenets, while carefully straining out this or that little objection which they have created in their own minds to the existence of a wise and intelligent God to whom they are ultimately responsible.

THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

The Cosmological argument has shown the necessity for postulating a sufficient Cause for the universe; the Teleological has indicated that that Cause must be intelligent and therefore personal. The Anthropological is based upon both of these arguments, but goes one step further in arguing from the mental and moral constitution of man to an intelligent and moral Author of these human attributes. It is sometimes called the Moral argument, although Strong thinks this is too narrow a designation, as it takes into account only the conscience of man, whereas the argument proceeds from the intellectual and emotional aspects of man's nature as well. Strong states this argument rather lucidly under three parts:

1. Man's intellectual and moral nature must have had for its author an intellectual and moral Being. The elements of the proof are as follows:-(a) Man, as an intellectual and moral being, has had a beginning upon the planet. (b) Material and unconscious forces do not afford a sufficient cause for man's reason, conscience, free will. (c) Man, as an effect, can be referred only to a cause possessing self-consciousness and a moral nature, in other words, personality.

2. Man's moral nature proves the existence of a holy Lawgiver and Judge. The elements of proof are:--(1) Conscience recognizes the existence of a moral law which has supreme authority. (b) Known violations of this moral law, since it is not self-imposed, and these threats of judgment, since they are not self-executing, respectively argue the existence of a holy will that has imposed the law, and of a punitive power that will execute the threats of the moral nature.

3. Man's emotional and voluntary nature proves the existence of a Being who can furnish in Himself a satisfying object of human affection and an end which will call forth man's highest activities and ensure his highest progress.

Only a Being of power, wisdom, holiness, and goodness, and all these indefinitely greater than any that we know upon the earth, can meet this demand of the human soul. Such a Being must exist. Otherwise man's greatest need would be unsupplied, and belief in a lie be more productive of virtue than belief in the truth.¹⁴³

Man is both a material and an immaterial being. Both of these natures must be accounted for. Even though the material nature of man could be satisfactorily explained upon purely naturalistic causes, these could never account for the origin of his immaterial nature. Strong, quoted above, was a theistic evolutionist, who supposed that man's body did evolve from lower animal forms by natural processes, but he was forced to believe that his immaterial nature must have resulted from a special act of creation. It is admitted that God could have used some form of evolution to produce man's body, but it is denied that Scripture

¹⁴³ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1907), pp. 81-83.

teaches this. And there is nothing of immaterial nature in the animal world from which man's immaterial nature could have evolved.

THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

Ontos is the present participle of the Greek verb *to be*. Ontology is the science of real being. Whereas the other arguments previously considered were a *posteriori* in character, arguing from particulars back to principle, from effect to cause, the Ontological is *a priori*, arguing from principle to particulars, from cause to effect. The argument is designed to prove that the real objective existence of God is necessarily involved in the existence of the very idea of God.

The first three arguments are by far the most easily understood and the most generally accepted. The Ontological is difficult to grasp and its validity has been denied by many theologians and metaphysicians. Chafer remarks that Shedd, in his treatment of this one argument, used two-thirds of the whole space given to theistic proofs, while Bishop R. S. Foster declares that he had never caught the meaning or the force of the argument. Anselm (11th century) was supposedly the first to enunciate this argument. It has been a favorite with many metaphysicians, including Descartes and Spinoza. Hodge concludes his treatment of this argument with this remark:

Theism therefore gains nothing from these metaphysical arguments.¹⁴⁴

Orr, on the other hand, states:

I cannot but maintain, therefore, that the ontological argument, in the kernel and essence of it, is a sound one, and that in it the existence of God is really seen to be the first, the most certain, and the most indisputable of all truths.¹⁴⁵

What then is this argument which Anselm enunciated and over which there has been so much disagreement? Flint says that Anselm reasoned thus:

The fool may say in his heart, There is no God; but he only proves thereby that he is a fool, for what he says is self-contradictory. Since he denies that there is a God, he has in his mind the idea of God, and that idea implies the existence of God, for it is the idea of a Being than which a higher cannot be conceived. That than which a higher cannot be conceived cannot exist merely as an idea, because what exists merely as an idea is inferior to what exists in reality as well as in idea. The idea of a highest Being which exists merely in thought, is the idea of a highest

¹⁴⁴ Charles Hodge, *op. cit.*, I, p. 207.

¹⁴⁵ James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897), p. 106.

Being which is not the highest even in thought, but inferior to a highest Being which exists in fact as well as in thought.¹⁴⁶

This argument has been presented in various forms. Hodge gives three other arrangements of it:

Descartes' argument was in this form. We have the idea of an infinitely perfect Being. As we are finite, that idea could not have originated with us. As we are conversant only with the finite, it could not have originated from anything around us. It must, therefore, have come from God, whose existence is thus a necessary assumption.

Dr. Samuel Clarke ... Nothing is necessarily existent, the non-existence of which is conceivable. We can conceive of the non-existence of the world; therefore the world is not necessarily existing and eternal. We cannot, however, conceive of the non-existence of space and duration; therefore space and duration are necessary and infinite. Space and duration, however, are not substances; therefore, there must be an eternal and necessary substance (*i.e.*, God), of which they are accidents.

Cousin, in his 'Elements of Psychology,' repeats continually the same argument in a somewhat different form. The idea of the infinite, he says, is given in that of the finite. We cannot have the one without the other. "These two ideas are logical correlatives; and in the order of their acquisition, that of the finite and imperfect precedes the other; but it scarcely precedes it. It is not possible for the reason, as soon as consciousness furnishes the mind with the idea of the finite and imperfect, not to conceive the idea of the infinite and perfect. Now, the infinite and perfect is God."¹⁴⁷

Objections to this argument run something like this: "This argument confounds the idea of the infinite with an infinite idea." "Man's idea of the infinite is not infinite but finite, and from a finite effect we cannot argue an infinite cause." "If this argument has any validity, it is unimportant. It is only saying that what must be actually is." "There are, doubtless, minds which are affected by this kind of reasoning; but it has no power over the generality of men."

St. Thomas Aquinas objected to Anselm's argument on the basis that it assumed that we could know the nature of God (that He is a perfect Being) before knowing whether He existed. He said that we must first establish His existence by other means, and then we could employ St. Anselm's argument to arrive at a knowledge of God's perfection. Until God's existence is proved the Ontological argument was only an uninteresting hypothetical observation that if

¹⁴⁶ Robert Flint, *Theism* (Edinburg and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1886), p. 278.

¹⁴⁷ Charles Hodge, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 205-207.

God is a perfect (that is, a necessarily existent) Being, then God necessarily exists."

THE ARGUMENT FROM CONGRUITY

Thiessen voices this argument in these words:

This argument is based on the belief that the postulate which best explains the related facts, is probably true. As related to the present discussion it runs as follows: The belief in the existence of God best explains the facts of our mental, moral, and religious nature, as well as the facts of the material universe; therefore God exists.¹⁴⁸

This argument is not a proof. At best it yields that which is probable. And in favor of the argument, it must be said that no anti-theistic doctrine comes anywhere as near to explaining all of the related facts as does the belief in a personal God. In the scientific world the theory which best explains the facts is held to be true until it is proved false. Man has never seen protons and electrons, but scientists believe that such particles exist because the atomic theory satisfactorily explains the behavior of matter.

CONCLUSION

We may ask in conclusion, What is the value of these philosophical arguments for the existence of God? What place or value do they have in the Christian ministry?

First, these arguments substantiate the claim of the Bible that God has been sufficiently revealed in creation to render sinful man inexcusable. If man cannot know that God exists until he learns this from the special revelation contained in the Bible, then it is hard to see on what basis God can judge those who never had the Bible. It is difficult also to see how the Bible can enforce a belief in the existence of God. The Bible is not a book of arguments trying to persuade men that God exists: it assumes the existence of God from the very first verse, "In the beginning God" The Bible says in effect: Since God exists, it is important to know Him in a personal way, to know His will, and to do His will. Herein God has revealed Himself.

Next, after one has come to know God truly through faith in Jesus Christ, he has no real need for these arguments, for he now possesses a higher and an experiential knowledge which far excels anything they can give. On the other hand, these arguments become more realistic and meaningful to one after he has become a partaker of the divine nature. One who has seen only pictures of the Grand Canyon has to rely upon those pictures for his knowledge that such a

¹⁴⁸ Henry C. Thiessen, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Win. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), p. 62.

canyon really exists and for what little information the pictures may convey. But one who has flown over the length of the Canyon, who has traversed both its northern and southern rims, and who has penetrated all the way down to the turbulent Colorado, really does not need the pictures any more, but nevertheless, he still enjoys looking at the pictures and they mean much more to him now that he has an intimate knowledge of this wonder of nature.

Finally, it must be remembered that these arguments cannot compel belief on the part of the unbeliever, and even if they should produce belief in the existence of God, they can never bring about conversion or regeneration. Many people believe in the existence of God, as do the demons, who do not believe in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But a person must first believe that God is before he can believe in and trust himself to the God of the Bible, and therefore God may use such arguments as a step in bringing sinners to Himself.

17 ANTITHEISTIC SYSTEMS

We have discussed already those systems which have the term *theistic* in their names: Pantheistic, Polytheistic, Monotheistic, Henotheistic, and Deistic. These systems may be called religious systems or systems of belief. In this chapter it will be our purpose to consider systems of unbelief, non- or anti-religious systems. Such systems are characterized mainly by their denial of any kind of theistic belief. Of course, from the purely Christian viewpoint, the other so-called theistic beliefs would be considered rather as systems of unbelief. We call them systems of Belief simply because they profess to believe in some kind of god or gods.

There are numerous anti-theistic systems, such as Dialectical Materialism, Mechanism, Naturalism, Phenomenalism, Positivism, Humanism, etc., but they all fall basically under one of the two heads, Atheism or Agnosticism.

ATHEISM

The expression *atheos* occurs but once in the Bible ([Eph. 2:12](#)) and is translated "without God," the reference being to the condition of all humanity apart from saving faith in and through Christ Jesus. One may have the knowledge that God exists, but if he is cut off from relationship with God, if he is without God as his Savior and heavenly Father, if he is under the condemnation of sin, his knowledge of the existence of God is of no use to him. He is as bad off as the man who denies the existence of God; in fact, he is worse off, for his knowledge serves only to contribute to his misery. In the Scriptural use of this term all men are atheists by nature; however, in this discussion we will use the term in its popular meaning as one who denies the existence of God.

Atheist has been in the past a term of reproach, and most men of position in the world who have denied the existence of God have resented being called by that name. More recently, however, with the rapid spread of atheistic communism and the organization of such groups as the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, the name has lost much of its opprobrium. Men who are atheists at heart according to the dictionary definition of the term, disclaim the title by making up their own definition of God. If a man recognizes that there is an active principle in nature, he may call that God. Another might define God as force, or motion, or thought, or natural law. If we are willing to relinquish the definition of God and permit it to mean any of these things, then we would have to say that there are no atheists in the world. However, if we hold to the true meaning of God as a personal, extra-mundane, all-powerful Being, then we will have to call one who denies the existence of such a Being an atheist.

There has been discussion among theologians as to the possibility of atheism. In other words, is it possible for a man deep down in his own heart to be permanently convinced that there is no supreme Being? Hodge answers this question in a two-fold way:

If the question be, Whether a man can emancipate himself from the conviction that there is a personal Being to whom he is responsible for his character and conduct, and who will punish him for his sins; it must be answered in the negative. For that would be to emancipate him from the moral law, which is impossible. If, however, the question means, Whether a man may, by speculation or otherwise, bring himself into such a state as to lose the consciousness of the belief of God as written in his heart, and free himself, for a time, from its power; it must be answered affirmatively. A man may, in this sense, deny his individuality or identity; the real, objective existence of soul or body, mind or matter; the distinction between right and wrong. But this is unnatural and cannot last. It is like deflecting a spring by force. The moment the force is removed, the spring returns to its normal position.¹⁴⁹

On the other hand, it must be admitted that the Scripture teaches that God would send a strong delusion upon those who receive not the love of the truth, so that they should believe the lie ([2 Thess. 2:10-12](#)). It might be argued that the men in that context are the ones who will in the future tribulation believe that the man of sin is God and will worship him as God; but if men can be deceived to that extent there is no reason to doubt that men may also be deceived into really believing that there is no God. We would agree with Hodge that the atheistic position is an unnatural one, and that men have to force themselves to adopt this position, and further that it has been a temporary position with many. But doubtless many have come to the end of life clinging tenaciously to their unbelief. It is certain that there will be no atheists at the Great White Throne when all of the unsaved dead stand before God to give account.

¹⁴⁹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1940), I, p. 242.

Basis for Atheism

Since the advent of the scientific age men have sought an explanation of phenomena upon a purely naturalistic basis which was once attributed to divine intervention. As the knowledge of science has increased men have more and more contended that everything which was once thought to be supernatural can now be explained naturally. The mathematician, Laplace, when explaining to Napoleon how the universe came into being was asked where God fitted into the picture. He is purported to have replied: "I have no need of such an hypothesis." Scientists believe that life itself will soon be created in the science laboratory, so that this supreme power which has always been attributed to Deity, will fall to naturalistic science. Such a feat would supposedly result in the final victory over supernaturalism. Man will have proved that he no longer has any need for a belief in God.

Men have busied themselves in fields other than the physical sciences to rid themselves of the innate conviction of the existence of a supreme Being. Psychologists, such as Nietzsche, Freud, Leuba, and others have developed theories to explain why people believe in God. We are told that the sex instinct is responsible for religious ideas, or that man invented deities because of ignorance, fear and superstition, or because he felt the need for security in the huge, cold, uncertain world, or in order to maintain a certain social class or institution in power over the masses. In other words, atheistic psychologists tell us that God never actually existed, but that man invented God to satisfy certain needs. And, of course, this idea dovetails nicely with the story of evolution: the idea of God evolved with the evolution of man.

Atheistic philosophers have also made their contribution, all the way from Epicurus to modern men like Bertrand Russell. They have tried to show the inconsistencies in the theistic position. They ask such questions as: How can the existence of evil in the universe be reconciled with the existence of a righteous Creator? How could an eternal, unchanging God create a universe which is marked by change and decay? How can finite man know an infinite God? etc.

Brands of Atheism

Thiessen mentions three kinds of atheists.

1. *Dogmatic atheists* are those who openly advocate and propagate atheism. Such people are usually well educated and supposedly have all of the answers against theism. Various philosophers, psychologists and scientists as mentioned above would fit into this group.

2. *Virtual atheists* are those who either hold principles which are inconsistent with a belief in God, or who define God in terms which rob Him of His essential

Being or attributes. One who is an organic evolutionist may never express his opinions about God, but his evolutionary beliefs in effect make him an atheist. Another person may say that God to him is the sum-total of energy in the natural world. Although in appearance he believes in God, yet virtually he is an atheist.

3. *Practical atheists* are to be found chiefly among the uneducated and ill-informed. They are represented by people who have become "fed up" on religion through an unfortunate experience, who perhaps have had their faith shaken through fraudulent faith-healers so-called, or who have grown up in an irreligious environment. Without openly denying the existence of God, they behave in an atheistic fashion. For all practical intents and purposes, they might as well be atheists.

The Fruits of Atheism

A Gospel street-preacher was being heckled by an atheist who challenged him to a debate. The preacher said he would accept upon one condition: the atheist would have to bring one person to the meeting who had been saved from a life of drunkenness and crime and had been restored to a useful place in society as a result of atheistic teachings, and that he would bring ten such witnesses to the power of the Gospel. Needless to say there was no debate. This is not to say that all atheists are drunkards or immoral: it is only to say that there is no moral virtue in the denial of a God of absolute truth, in the denial of man's moral responsibility before God, and in the denial of absolute truth. Truth to the atheist must be a relative matter, perhaps simply what the individual feels is going to benefit him most in any particular situation. He will ask with Pilate: "What is truth?" Every man is free to make his own definition of truth and morality. Atheists may see the need to curb human passions for the good of society, they may see the wisdom of adopting certain ethical principles which originated through Christian influence, they may take a utilitarian point of view, but none of these things in which there may be any virtue can be said to be the result of atheistic philosophy.

AGNOSTICISM

Numerous terms are used rather loosely to describe various stages and degrees of unbelief. The word *skeptic* is often used to describe an agnostic. It might be well to quote from a dictionary for a concise comparison of synonymous terms. A skeptic is:

1. One who questions the fundamental doctrines of religion, especially of the Christian religion.
2. One who refuses concurrence in generally accepted conclusions in science, philosophy, etc

Syn.: agnostic, atheist, deist, disbeliever, freethinker, infidel, unbeliever. The *skeptic* doubts divine revelation; the *disbeliever* and the *unbeliever*

reject it; the *disbeliever* with more intellectual dissent, the *unbeliever* (in the common acception) with indifference or with opposition of heart as well as of intellect. *Infidel* is an opprobrious term that once might almost have been said to be geographical in its range. The crusaders called all Mohammedans *infidels*, and were so called by them in return; the word is commonly applied to any decided opponent of an accepted religion. The atheist denies that there is a God; the *deist* admits the existence of God, but denies that the Christian Scriptures are a revelation from him; the *agnostic* denies either that we do know or that we can know whether there is a God.¹⁵⁰

Thomas Huxley was apparently the first to use the name *agnostic*, applying it to himself and to those who shared his views. According to Berkhof: "The fundamental position (of agnosticism) is that the human mind is incapable of knowing anything which lies beyond and behind natural phenomena, and is therefore necessarily ignorant of supersensible and divine things."¹⁵¹ Some of the better known men who have subscribed to this position are David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Sir William Hamilton, Auguste Comte (founder of Positivism), John Fiske, Herbert Spencer, Dean Mansel.

Claims of Agnosticism and Answers

1. The negative claim has already been stated, that man is incapable of knowing anything outside the realm of natural phenomena. This is in itself a very dogmatic statement about that which is supposed to be beyond man's ability to know. How can agnostics have such sure knowledge that man cannot know? What proofs do they have? Their claim vitiates the whole life and ministry of Jesus Christ and of those who gave us the Bible. We have the record, substantiated by historical facts, that God came down from the supersensible sphere to the sensible, that God was manifested in the flesh, that He was seen, and was handled and observed by many witnesses, many of whom were skeptical and unbelieving until they had had presented to their senses physical and visible evidences. The agnostic must dismiss this whole historical record as simply legend and myth, and to be consistent he must dismiss all history as such. Further the agnostic must deny to God omnipotence, His basic attribute, in denying His ability to reveal Himself to man.

2. Another assumption of agnosticism is that man can know only by analogy. Thus it is claimed that there can be no analogy between the finite and the infinite, and hence no knowledge of God. But the Scripture teaches that man was created in the image and likeness of God; hence there must be much in man which is analogous to that in God. Further, it is not true that man can know only by analogy. He comes to know things largely by differences and contrasts. As has been pointed out previously, we learn dispensational truth largely by

¹⁵⁰ *The Practical Standard Dictionary* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1927), p. 1061.

¹⁵¹ Berkhof, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

"distinguishing the things that differ" (Phil. 1:10, literal). We do not learn what the color red is by analogy, but by the contrast with the remainder of the spectrum.

3. Another assumption is that man really knows only that which he can grasp in its entirety. The idea here is that God, if He exists, is infinite and that man as a finite being cannot encompass infinite knowledge. This objection is based upon a faulty definition of knowledge. Man does not have complete knowledge of anything. He only "knows in part." But partial knowledge can be real knowledge. Hodge says:

While, therefore, it is admitted not only that the infinite God is incomprehensible, and that our knowledge of Him is both partial and imperfect; that there is much in God that we do not know at all, and that what we do know, we know very imperfectly; nevertheless our knowledge, as far as it goes, is true knowledge. God really is what we believe Him to be, so far as our idea of Him is determined by the revelation which He has made of Himself in his works, in the constitution of our nature, in his word, and in the person of His Son.¹⁵²

Results of Agnosticism

James Orr states:

I think, accordingly, I am justified in saying that when the ground of Divine Revelation is once left behind, we have no logical halting-place short of Agnosticism, not because a theistic view of the world is unreasonable, but because a living Theism requires as its complement belief in Revelation.

And he goes on to say:

Agnosticism is not a state in which the mind of an intelligent being can permanently rest. It is essentially a condition of suspense--a confession of ignorance--and abdication of thought on the highest subjects. It is not, in the nature of things, possible for the mind to remain persistently in this neutral, passive attitude. It will press on perforce to one or other of the views which present themselves as alternatives--either to Theism, or to Materialism and dogmatic Atheism. I do not speak, of course, of the individual mind, but the general historical development.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Hodge, *op. cit.*, I, p. 338.

¹⁵³ James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897), p. 51.

18 THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF GOD

Having examined Theism in general and the various systems of belief and unbelief, we turn now to consider the Christian view of God, or more specifically, the Biblical view, which includes the teachings of both the Old and the New Testaments. In this chapter we shall see what the Bible reveals concerning the Nature of God. It is impossible to fully define God or to know fully all that God is. In fact, we cannot fully define and know anything in the physical world, much less the nature of the Infinite. This does not mean that we cannot have positive and accurate knowledge about God or that we cannot know Him in an experiential way. The Bible declares that men in the beginning knew God but did not like to retain God in their knowledge ([Rom. 1:21, 28](#)), and that through Jesus Christ men may come to know God in a saving way ([John 17:3](#)). We cannot conceive God, that is, form a mental image of Him. It is doubtless for this reason that Israel was forbidden to make any image or likeness of God ([Exodus 20:4](#)). God is incomprehensible. Paul stood in awe when confronted with God and His ways: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out." And yet this same apostle declares: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded..." (2 Timothy 1:12).

THE BEING OF GOD

God Is

He has real, substantive existence. The first requisite of faith is that one must believe "that God is" ([Hebrews 11:6](#)).

God is Spirit ([John 4:24](#))

Spirit means that God is immaterial. God does not possess any of the properties of matter. He cannot be divided or extended or compounded. He is invisible ([Colossians 1:15](#); [1 Timothy 1:17](#); [Hebrews 11:27](#)). Since the created universe is material in nature and God is not material, all ideas which would associate or identify God with the universe are ruled out. God is not the universe nor a part of it. As pure Spirit He exists wholly apart from creation.

Spirit means that God has substance. It is inconceivable that there could be action without something acting. Our concept of substance is usually that of material substance, but there is also spiritual substance or reality. Spiritual substance, being invisible, cannot be visualized. Wind is invisible, and yet it is a substance. We can see and feel its effects, but we cannot see it, nor can we form a mental image of what it looks like. The Greek word for spirit is *pneuma*, which also means breath or wind. It is the word used in John 3:8: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it

cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." The wind consists of the movement of invisible material gas molecules. God, as Spirit, is invisible and immaterial, but He has substantial being. This substance or essence is that which underlies all of the outward manifestations of God. The Bible speaks of the substance of God in Hebrews 1:3, where Christ is spoken of as the "express image of His *person*." Vincent has this to say on this expression:

Render the very image (or impress) of his substance. The primary sense of *hypostasis substance* is *something which stands underneath; foundation, ground of hope or confidence*, and so, *assurance* itself. In a philosophical sense, *substantial nature*; the real nature of anything which underlies and supports its outward form and properties.¹⁵⁴

Spirit means personality. The essential attributes of spirit are mind, will and feeling. The spirit in man distinguishes man from the remainder of animal creation. Only spirits are persons. We do not speak of dogs or cats or horses as persons. Animals do not have self-consciousness such as spirits have. Therefore, if God is Spirit He must be a person possessing self-consciousness, intelligence, and will. This truth is so patent upon every page of the Bible that it would seem unnecessary to quote proof texts.

Spirit means morality. Morality may be attributed only to beings having spirit. Morality becomes a possibility only when a being has the power of choice or of will, of self-determination. Man is a moral being because he has a spiritual nature. Satan and the angels are moral beings and are therefore responsible for their choices and actions. God is Spirit, and therefore is a moral Being.

Definition of God

One of the best definitions of God ever formulated is that contained in the Westminster Catechism:

"God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth."

This definition includes both the substance or essence of God's Being and His attributes. Theologians differ in their understanding of what constitutes essence and attributes. Thiessen, for example, states that some of the so-called attributes are not attributes at all, strictly speaking, but are "different aspects of the divine substance."¹⁵⁵ He includes spirituality, self-existence, immensity, and eternity as aspects of the Divine essence. By self-existence is meant that God is not dependent upon anything outside of Himself for His existence. "I am that I am"

¹⁵⁴ Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), IV, p. 382.

¹⁵⁵ Henry C. Thiessen, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Win. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), p. 119.

(Exodus 3:14). By Immensity is meant that God is not limited by space. "Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 23:24). "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" (Psalm 139:7). By eternity, of course, is meant that God is without beginning or end. "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God" (Psalm 90:2). "Abraham... called there upon the name of the Lord, the everlasting God" (Genesis 21:33).

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Numerous classifications of the attributes have been made by theologians. Chafer deals with the subject under two main headings:

A. Personality

1. Omniscience
2. Sensibility: (a) Holiness, (b) Justice, (c) Love, (d) Goodness, (e) Truth.
3. Will: (a) Freedom, (b) Omnipotence.

B. Constitutional Attributes

1. Simplicity
2. Unity
3. Infinity
4. Eternity
5. Immutability
6. Omnipresence or Immensity
7. Sovereignty.¹⁵⁶

Strong gives the following classification:

A. Absolute or Immanent Attributes

1. Spirituality, involving Life and Personality.
2. Infinity, involving Self-existence, Immutability, and Unity.
3. Perfection, involving Truth, Love, and Holiness.

B. Relative or Transitive Attributes

1. Related to Time and Space, Eternity and Immensity.
2. Related to Creation, Omnipresence, Omniscience, and Omnipotence.
3. Related to Moral Beings, Veracity and Faithfulness (transitive Truth); Mercy and Goodness (transitive Love); Justice and Holiness (transitive Holiness).¹⁵⁷

Berkhof makes a different arrangement:

A. Incommunicable Attributes

1. Self-existence
2. Immutability

¹⁵⁶ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), I, pp. 192-222.

¹⁵⁷ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1907), p. 248.

3. Infinity
4. Unity

B. Communicable Attributes

1. Spirituality.
2. Intellectual Attributes: Knowledge, Wisdom, Veracity.
3. Moral Attributes: Goodness, Holiness, Righteousness.
4. Attributes of Sovereignty: Will, Power.¹⁵⁸

Hodge states:

On few subjects have greater thought and labor been expended than on this. Perhaps, however, the benefit has not been commensurate with the labor. The object of classification is order, and the object of order is clearness. So far as this end is secured, it is a good. But the great diversity of the methods which have been proposed, is evidence that no one method of arrangement has such advantages as to secure for it general recognition."¹⁵⁹

One class of attributes has been designated as *Negative, Absolute, Immanent, and Incommunicable*. These terms are used more or less interchangeably and refer to something that is denied concerning God, to something which belongs to God and implies no relation to other beings, to something belonging to the inner being of God independent of His relation to the universe, to something which is not communicated to other beings. The other class of attributes has been designated as *Positive, Relative, Transitive, and Communicable*, referring to something that is affirmed of God, to something which implies a relation to an object, to something which is exercised in consequence of the existence of the world and its dependence upon God, to something in God which has been communicated to His creatures.

It would seem that the most simple and understandable classification is that adopted by Thiessen, which classifies the attributes under two headings, *the Non-moral* and *the Moral*, although even here the Non-moral attributes have moral implications. Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Omniscience, and Immutability are said to be Non-moral; however, nothing more frightful could be imagined than for an immoral or even an amoral person to possess these attributes. There is nothing inherently moral about these attributes, but they might all be exercised for either moral or immoral purposes.

The Non-Moral Attributes

Omnipresence. Omnipresence means that God is present everywhere in the Universe. This attribute has to do with the Immanence of God. The Psalmist

¹⁵⁸ L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941), pp. 52-81.

¹⁵⁹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1940), I, p. 374.

enunciated this attribute when he declared: "Whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in sheol, behold, thou art there" (Psalm 139:7, 8). The knowledge of this attribute was of great comfort to the Psalmist and it should be to all godly people.

Omniscience. This means that God is all-wise; He knows all things possible and actual. He has immediate knowledge of all things past, present, and future. He knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). He is infinite in understanding (Psalm 147:5). All things are open and naked before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do (Hebrews 4:13). "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). God even knows what would have happened under different circumstances. In pronouncing woes upon the cities where His mightiest works were done, Christ declared that Tyre and Sidon would have repented and Sodom would still have been in existence had these same mighty works been done in them (Matthew 11:21-24).

Omnipotence. This means that God is all powerful, that He can do anything which is not inconsistent with His own character, such as lying (Hebrews 6:18), sinning (James 1:13), denying Himself (2 Timothy 2:13). Probably the basic concept in the name of God is that of power and might. Christ said: "with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26), and He also said: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). Job declared: "I know that thou canst do everything" (Job 42:2). Jeremiah began his prayer in chapter 32:17: "Ah Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee." God revealed Himself to Abram as "the Almighty God" (Genesis 17:1).

People often ask such questions as: Wasn't God able to create a world in which there would be no sin? or, Can't God put a stop to war? or, Doesn't God have the power to end poverty and suffering and death? If God has all power, then He has power to do all of these things and more. In dealing with questions like these two things must be remembered. First, omnipotence is not the only attribute of God. God exercises His omnipotence in conformity with His wisdom, knowledge, holiness and justice. Only an infinite Mind could know what is best and what will ultimately bring the most glory to God. Second, omnipotence does not mean that God wills to use all of His power. He is a free Being and not necessitated to use any, little, or all of His power. God has power over His power. He could have created a race of automatons without the power of choice, without minds of their own, without the ability to obey or disobey, without the possibility of loving or hating, creatures without motivation, but He did not choose to do so. He chose rather to create man in His own image, and apparently such a creation involved the self-limitation of God's power in the delegation of certain powers to His creatures. God has provided mankind with the materials and the power to make this world a Utopia, but it is man, not God who has been guilty of malfeasance. However, God does have a Man who some day will return to earth to take the power into His hands and He will put down all unrighteousness and

will rule the earth with justice and equity and peace. At the present we see a mighty demonstration of the power of God in restraining Himself from bringing judgment upon a world that more and more openly defies Him and practically challenges Him to come down and do something about it if He is God.

Immutability. This means that God is unchangeable. This attribute has to do with both His essence and His character. If God is infinite in both His being and His perfections, then any change would make Him less than God, less than infinite.

This attribute is emphasized in Scripture and has become the theme of much of our hymnology. "I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6). "Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail" (Hebrews 1:12). "The Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8). The hymn writer found great comfort in this attribute when he wrote:

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see:
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.

Another has penned these lines:

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou has been Thou forever wilt be.

There are two problems associated with the Immutability of God. The first concerns those Scriptures which represent God as having changed His mind. The Bible states both that God does not repent and that He does repent. "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent" (Numbers 23:19). "And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man that he should repent" (1 Samuel 15:29). "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (Genesis 6:6). "And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people" (Exodus 32:14). In trying to solve this problem it may help to consider the question: "Which changes, the wind or the weather-vane?" or, "Which changes, the temperature or the thermometer?" In one sense they both change, but in a truer sense the weather-vane and the thermometer do not change. The vane always points in the direction of the wind and the thermometer always registers the correct temperature. God said He was going to destroy the great city of **Nineveh** because of their great sin ([Jonah 3:4](#)). But the inhabitants of Nineveh believed the prophet and repented in sackcloth and ashes from the king on down, saying, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his

fierce anger, that we perish not?" And we read that God did repent (vs. 10). This is the kind of repenting which the weather-vane does. Actually God has not changed, for He has declared that this is the unchanging nature of His character: "If that nation, concerning which I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them" (Jeremiah 18:8).

The other problem concerns the Incarnation. Jesus Christ is represented as being the same, yesterday, today, and for ever. And yet, the second Person of the Trinity in time became a man and is now a Man at God's right hand, which He was not at one time. Since Christ is God, does this represent a change in God? It would if some of the heretical views of the Incarnation were true; views like those of Eutychus whose followers were known as Monophysites. They believed that in the Incarnation there was a mingling of the divine and human natures into one, which was neither human nor divine. This view involves a change in the nature of one of the Persons of the Godhead. But Scripture does not teach this. The Incarnation in no way changed the divine nature of the Son of God. The change concerned only the humanity, which change may be considered in the light of dispensational truth. God has and does change His dispensational dealings and the Son of God has changed in His relations to humanity. In fact, dispensationalism is concerned almost wholly with changes which God has made in His dealings with mankind. But these in no way affect His immutability, which has to do solely with His Being and His character.

The Moral Attributes

Holiness. If any order can be placed upon the moral attributes of God, Holiness would doubtless come first. In a sense Holiness encompasses the other attributes of Righteousness, Justice, Goodness, and Truth. They seem to be but different phases or aspects of the Holiness of God. The song of the Seraphim is: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:3). God's word to Israel was: "Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). A concordance will show that the Bible is full of the holiness of God.

The word *holy* as predicated of God refers to His absolute purity, majesty, and glory. As the word basically means separation, God is holy in the sense that He is separated from everything impure, unjust, and untrue. In the New Testament the Father is said to be holy ([John 17:11](#)), the Son is declared to be holy ([Luke 1:35](#); [Acts 3:14](#)), and the Spirit of God is dozens of times called the Holy Spirit. This present dispensation is in a special sense a dispensation of the Holy Spirit, and therefore this attribute is mentioned in relation to the third Person of the Trinity very often in the Pauline epistles.

Righteousness. There are many questions for which we can find no satisfactory answer, such as, why did God allow sin to come into the world? and why are some chosen to salvation and others seemingly are passed by, many never having had opportunity to hear the gospel? In the context of such

questions Paul asks: "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?" And he is quick to answer: "God forbid." (Romans 9:14). When the vials of wrath are poured out in that future day of great tribulation, we hear the voice of the angel saying: "Thou art righteous, O Lord... because thou hast judged thus" (Revelation 16:5). The active righteousness of God is but the upholding of God's holy character: it is the execution of justice upon His subjects in view of His holiness. It is necessary to distinguish between God's attribute of righteousness, and the imputed righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all who believe (Romans 3:22; 4:6, 11, 22). This latter, although called the righteousness of God, is the standing before God which a sinner receives when he is declared righteous or is justified by faith.

Goodness. "There is none good but God," (Matthew 19:17), declared the Lord Jesus. Goodness is a very broad term. It might be used to cover all of the attributes of God, for they are all good. Here it is limited to those aspects of God's character which cause God to communicate Himself to the undeserving sinner: the Love of God, the Mercy of God, and the Grace of God. There was, and is, of course, mutual love between the Persons of the Godhead, so that love is not limited in its operation to sinful creatures. However, it would seem that mercy and grace could only be manifested toward the needy and the undeserving.

1. Love. The Greek word for this attribute is *agape*. It expresses "a deep and constant love and interest of a perfect Being towards entirely unworthy objects, producing and fostering a reverential love in them towards the Giver, and a practical love towards those who are partakers of the same, and a desire to help others to seek the Giver."¹⁶⁰

Agape, unlike *phileo*, does not express tender affection, but rather indicates the exercise of the divine will in deliberate choice.

Cremer points out that *agape* is not found in the secular writers and that it was apparently coined by the Septuagint. It is to be distinguished from *phileo*, which means to manifest affection. While *phileo* is used of God's love for the Son (John 5:20) and for the believer (John 16:27), it is never used as a command for men to love God, or as an act of the will. On the other hand, *agape* is the distinctive word for the attribute of God, and Cremer remarks:

It denotes the love which chooses its object with decision of will... so that it becomes self-denying or compassionate devotion to and for the same In the form of such energetic good-will or self-sacrifice, love appears, indeed, as an isolated trait in profane writers; but it was unknown to them as a ruling principle of life.

¹⁶⁰ W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (London, Oliphants; Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1952), Vol. III, p. 21.

Now, we find *agape* used to designate a love unknown to writers outside of the New Testament... --love in its fullest conceivable form; love as it is the distinguishing attribute, not of humanity, but, in the strictest sense, of Divinity.¹⁶¹

This *agape* love seeks the welfare of all (Romans 15:2) and works ill to none (Romans 13:8-10). Its virtues are fully set forth in 1 Corinthians 13:1-8, 13. And John tells us that God not only loves, but that He is love (1 John 4:8, 16).

2. Mercy. Mercy is that aspect of God's goodness that causes God to show pity and compassion on the needy and unfortunate. It is compassion--a suffering together with. Paul tells us that God is not only merciful, but that He is "rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith he loved us" (Ephesians 2:4). James tells us "that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:11). Peter speaks of "His abundant mercy" (1 Peter 1:3).

God is free to exercise His mercy as He sees fit. He is not obligated to show mercy to anyone. Paul reminds us of this in Romans 9:15, 16: "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

3. Grace. Whereas mercy is God's attitude toward those in distress, grace is His attitude toward those who are ungodly and sinful. It will be noticed that in the apostolic salutations, grace always precedes mercy (1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2, etc.). Trench has this to say on these two words:

In the Divine mind, and in the order of our salvation as conceived therein, the *eleos* (mercy) precedes the *charis* (grace). God so loved the world with a pitying love (herein was the *eleos*), that He gave His only begotten Son (herein was the *charis*), that the world through Him might be saved (cf. Eph. ii. 4; Luke i. 78, 79). But in the order of the manifestation of God's purposes of salvation the grace must go before the mercy, the *charis* must go before and make way for the *eleos*. It is true that the same persons are the subjects of both, being at once guilty and miserable; yet the righteousness of God, which it is quite as necessary should be maintained as His love, demands that the guilt should be done away, before the misery can be assuaged; only the forgiven may be blessed.¹⁶²

There is no conflict in the attributes of God, but it is most surely true that God's love was not free to save the sinner in violation of His righteousness. It was only

¹⁶¹ Herman Cremer, *Biblio-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, reprinted 1954), p. 14.

¹⁶² Richard Chenevix Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Win. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1880, reprint 1948), p. 171.

by the exercise of His free grace in providing the Savior for undeserving sinners, that both His righteousness and love could be satisfied. The Psalmist expressed it this way: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalm 85:10).

4. Truth. In answer to the question: "What is truth considered as divine attribute?" A. A. Hodge answers:

The truth of God in its widest sense is a perfection which qualifies all his intellectual and moral attributes. His knowledge is infinitely true in relation to its objects, and his wisdom unbiased either by prejudice or passion. His justice and his goodness in all their exercises are infinitely true to the perfect standard of his own nature. In all outward manifestations of his perfections to his creatures, God is always true to his nature--always self-consistently divine. This attribute in its more special sense qualifies all God's intercourse with his rational creatures. He is true to us as well as to himself; and thus is laid the foundation of all faith, and therefore of all knowledge. It is the foundation of all confidence, first, in our senses; second, in our intellect and conscience; third, in any authenticated, supernatural revelation.¹⁶³

God is absolute Truth. Paul says: "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4). Jesus Christ could say: "I am the truth" (John 14:6). God not only tells the truth, acts in a right manner, and loves; He is truth; He is righteous; He is love.

It should be pointed out in conclusion that the classifications of the attributes into Moral and Non-moral, while fully comprehending the attributes as found in God, does not relate these attributes to mankind. It is evident that some of the attributes are found only in God, while others may be found, to a limited extent, in man. This distinction is brought out, for example, in the classification which Berkhof favors. The Incommunicable attributes are those which speak of God as Absolute Being: attributes which cannot be communicated to the creature. Self-existence, Immutability, Infinity, Omnipresence, Omniscience, Omnipotence, Sovereignty are attributes which can be predicated of God alone. The Moral and Spiritual attributes, while existing in perfection in God alone, are communicated to mankind. These attributes have been lost or marred in man by sin, but in regeneration they are restored:

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24).

¹⁶³ A.A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1878), p. 161.

God can say to His people: "Be ye holy, for I am holy," because these moral and spiritual attributes can be communicated to man, and of course, the very purpose of redemption is not only to save the sinner from the punishment due to sin, but to transform the sinner into the moral and spiritual image of God.

19 THE NAMES OF GOD

A name is that which distinguishes one person or thing from another. A name also reveals something about a person or thing, at least, in its original designation. Family names, such as Smith, Tanner, Fisher, etc., doubtless indicated at one time the vocation of certain families. Names of cities, such as Grand Rapids, Big Spring, or Sweetwater reveal something distinctive about such locations. Names of scientific instruments, such as microscope, computer, or voltmeter describe their function. Likewise, in the Bible names almost always have a real significance. Nowhere is this more true than in the names of God. Much may be learned of the nature and attributes of God from the names by which He has revealed Himself.

It appears more than accidental that the names of God fall into groupings of threes. In the Old Testament there are three primary names of Deity: *Elohim*, *Jehovah*, and *Adonai*. There are three major compounds with *Jehovah*: *Jehovah Elohim*, *Adonai Jehovah*, and *Jehovah Sabaoth*. And there are three compounds with *Elohim* or *El*: *El Elyon*, *El Olam*, and *El Shaddai*. In the New Testament the full name of Deity is *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*. And the full title of the Second Person of the Trinity is *Lord Jesus Christ*.

Scotfield states:

The Trinity is *suggested* by the three times repeated groups of three. This is not an arbitrary arrangement, but inheres in the O.T. itself.

This revelation of God by His names is invariably made in connection with some particular need of His people, and there can be no need of man to which these names do not answer as showing that man's true resource is in God. Even human failure and sin but evoke new and fuller revelations of the divine fulness.¹⁶⁴

THE PRIMARY NAMES OF GOD

1. **ELOHIM:** This Hebrew word is usually traced to a root which means *strength* or *strong one*.¹⁶⁵ *Elohim* is the plural form of the word which is almost always used as God's name along with singular verbs and adjectives, although

¹⁶⁴ C. I. Scotfield, *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1917), p. 983.

¹⁶⁵ James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1890), Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary, p. 12.

the singular forms, *EI*, and *Eloah* also appear. The question naturally arises, Why did the Old Testament writers use a plural name for the one true God?

Several explanations have been offered of this usage of a pl. term to denote a sing. idea - that it expresses the fulness and manifoldness of the Divine nature, or that it is a plural of majesty used in the manner of royal persons, or even that it is an early intimation of the Trinity; other cognate expressions are found in Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 1 Kings 22:19 f; Isa. 6:8. These theories are, perhaps, too ingenious to have occurred to the early Heb mind, and a more likely explanation is, that they are survivals in language of a polytheistic stage of thought.¹⁶⁶

The above writer's conclusions are evidently based upon an evolutionary idea of Israel's religion. One who believes in the verbal inspiration of the Scripture could hardly believe that God would move all of the Old Testament writers to use a polytheistic concept to be the predominant name for the one true God, especially since the Old Testament everywhere condemns in no uncertain terms polytheism. If God did breathe His Word through these writers, then it is most logical to believe that He led them to use this plural name with singular verbs and adjectives to reveal something of His true nature as a Trinity, a truth which could only be revealed after the Son of God had become incarnate.

Elohim is used, not only for the one true God, but it is sometimes applied to heathen deities and to men. (See, for example, [Exodus 7:1](#); [Judges 5:8](#); [Psalm 82:1](#)). However, in some cases it would appear that this name has been translated in the A.V. as a plural where the one true God is intended. For example, in Genesis 3:5 where Satan told Eve that she and her husband would be as *gods*, knowing good and evil, it would appear that Eve at this time could not have known of any false gods or others who could be called gods, and it would therefore make better sense to make *Elohim* here refer to the one true God. There is nothing in this verse to make the first occurrence of *Elohim* (translated *God*) to be a different person from the *Elohim* at the end of the verse (translated *gods*). Likewise in Psalm 138:1 David declared: "before the gods will I sing praise unto thee." Of course, David could have had in mind praising God before some great ones in the earth, but it is unlikely that he was thinking about standing in an idol temple to praise God. It seems more likely that he was simply reiterating what he had said in the first part of the verse: "I will praise thee with my whole heart: before *Elohim* (God) will I sing praise unto thee."

2. ADON, ADONAI: *Adon* comes from a root meaning *to rule*, and is translated *lord*, *master*, and *owner* (cf. Numbers 11:28; Deuteronomy 23: 15; 1 Kings 16:24). *Adonai* is an emphatic form of *Adon* and is always translated *Lord*, referring to God as Master and Owner. The name *Jehovah* is also translated *Lord*, but to distinguish it from *Adonai* it is printed in small capitals in the A.V.,

¹⁶⁶ T. Rees, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Chicago: The Howard Severance Co., 1915), II, p. 1254.

LORD. Both of these names occur in Exodus 4:10: "And Moses said unto the *LORD* (Jehovah), O my Lord (Adonai), I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." In this context Moses, as a servant, rightly calls Jehovah *Adonai* (Master). But when His Master answers He answers as Jehovah, as the Creator, for He asks: "Who hath made man's mouth? ... have not I Jehovah?" The usage in this passage of these two names for God shows the distinction in meaning of the terms.

2. **JEHOVAH:** This is the distinctive covenant and redemptive name for God in the Old Testament. There is a problem associated with the revelation of this name which appears in Exodus 6:2,3. "And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the *LORD* (Jehovah): and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name *JEHOVAH* was I not known unto them." And yet the name Jehovah appears before this in Genesis some 150 times. This seeming contradiction has been explained in various ways. Some think that while this name was used earlier its meaning was not revealed until it was made known unto Moses. Others think that when Moses wrote the Genesis account he used this name for God, although up until his time no one had known or used it. Williams gives the following explanation of the word *know* in commenting on Psalm 83:18: "That men may know that thou, whose name alone is *JEHOVAH*, art the most high over all the earth."

The significance of the verb "to know" is "to make the experience" that the Kingdom promised in the titles Jehovah and Most High an actuality. A corresponding "know" is found in Exod. vi 3. This verse seems contrary to fact, for Moses' forefathers used the title Jehovah, but they had not experienced the redemption which that title promised; Moses did.¹⁶⁷

Whatever explanation may be given, and this latter one seems preferable, it is a fact that God made known His name as Jehovah to Moses. This is recorded in Exodus 3: 13, 14:

And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, *I AM THAT I AM*: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, *I AM* hath sent me unto you.

The name *Jehovah* appears to be composed of the future of the verb *to be*, plus the preterite form of the same verb with the first letter (*He*) dropped by apheresis, so that the verb *to be* is actually twice repeated in the name, as it is also in Exodus 3:14. Thus the name expresses the eternal, self-existent nature of God's being. He is the One who was, who is, and is to come. The whole context

¹⁶⁷ George Williams, *The Students Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1949), p. 365.

involved in the revelation of this name (see [Exodus 6:3-9](#)) indicates that this is God's name in covenant and redemptive relation to Israel.

The Jews feared to take this holy name upon their lips, either because they believed the name to be incommunicable, too holy to be pronounced, or they did not want to expose themselves to the curse pronounced in Leviticus 24:16: "He that blasphemeth the name of Jehovah, he shall surely be put to death." They therefore substituted, in the pronunciation of it, the consonants of *Adonai*, the vowels being alike in both words. Most lexicons prefer the English transliteration, *Yahweh*, as a more accurate rendering than *Jehovah*.

It appears quite certain that Jesus Christ clearly identified Himself with the Jehovah of the Old Testament. In John 8:58 He said unto the Jews: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, *I AM*." This is exactly the name that God revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14. There are other passages in which the Lord used this expression, but perhaps the most significant is John 18:5, 6, where Jesus answered the throng that came to arrest Him in the garden with the words, "*I AM*." And it is recorded, "As soon then as he had said unto them, *I AM*, they went backward, and fell to the ground." This was surely a supernatural manifestation of His Deity as Jehovah God.

COMPOUND NAMES WITH JEHOVAH

The Old Testament associates three other divine titles with the name of Jehovah.

1. **JEHOVAH ELOHIM**, translated in the A.V. as LORD GOD (*LORD* with small capitals). cf. [Genesis 2:4](#).

2. **ADONAI JEHOVAH**, translated in the A.V. as LORD GOD (*GOD* in small capitals). cf. [Genesis 15:2](#) and the footnote on this verse in the Scofield Reference Bible.

3. **JEHOVAH SABAOTH**, translated in the A.V. as *LORD of Hosts*. The Scofield Reference Bible has an enlightening footnote on this name under 1 Samuel 1:3. The name occurs in the New Testament in [Romans 9:29](#) and [James 5:4](#).

COMPOUND NAMES WITH ELOHIM

Likewise, the Old Testament associates three other names with Elohim, the usual name for God.

1. **EL ELYON**, translated *Most High* or *most high God*. cf. [Genesis 14:18](#), where the most high God is possessor of heaven and earth.

2. **EL OLAM**, translated *the everlasting God*. cf. [Genesis 21:33](#). The name means literally *God of the ages* or *the eternal God*.

3. **EL SHADDAI**, translated *Almighty God*. cf. [Genesis 17:1](#). Scofield thinks that Shaddai is derived from the Hebrew *shad* (breast), and therefore speaks of God as Nourisher and Sustainer. He thinks the name could better be translated *All-sufficient* instead of Almighty. See his footnote on Genesis 17:1. Others derive the word from the Hebrew *Shadad* (powerful).

JEHOVAH TITLES

Seven words are associated with the name Jehovah, forming what are called the Jehovah titles.

1. Jehovah-jireh = Jehovah will see or provide ([Genesis 22: 14](#)).
2. Jehovah-ropheka = Jehovah that healeth thee ([Exodus 15:26](#)).
3. Jehovah-shalom = Jehovah our peace ([Judges 6:24](#)).
4. Jehovah-zidkenu = Jehovah our righteousness ([Jeremiah 23:6](#); [33:16](#)).
5. Jehovah-shammah = Jehovah is there ([Ezekiel 48:35](#)).
6. Jehovah-rah = Jehovah my Shepherd ([Psalm 23:1](#)).
7. Jehovah-nissi = Jehovah our Banner ([Exodus 17:8-15](#)).

OLD TESTAMENT EPITHETS

Besides the above names and titles God is referred to by many epithets, such as Husband, Father, Tower, Rock, Fortress, Deliverer, Savior, Judge, King, etc.

NEW TESTAMENT NAMES FOR GOD

While there are two primary names for God in the New Testament, *Theos* and *Kurios*, several other names should be noted.

1. **GOD** (Greek *theos*). This word is always translated as God.
2. **LORD** (Greek *kurios*). This is the title given consistently to Jesus Christ. Coburn shows that the title attests to His Deity:

The title "Lord" as given to Jesus seems from the papyri to have a deeper meaning than was supposed. The Emperors, when deified (first century and later), were addressed as "God," "Son of God," "Lord," "Savior of the World," etc., and this gives a new point to the use of these titles for Jesus. We now see that the term *Kurios Iesous* ("Lord Jesus") was an ascription of deity to him, and as such might have been accounted an act of antagonism to the Emperor's claim. The exact phrase by which deity was ascribed to Jesus-"Great God and Savior" ([Tit. 2:13](#); [2 Pet. 1:1](#)) --appears

literally in an inscription of 2 B.C., giving the Emperor this title. In the Septuagint *ho Kurios* is constantly used as a title of God It shows that the Church of the first century unequivocally accepted in full measure the deity of Jesus Christ.¹⁶⁸

3. **CREATOR:** This name is used three times in the Old Testament and twice in the New ([Ecclesiastes 12:1](#); [Isaiah 40:28](#); [43:15](#); [Romans 1:25](#); [1 Peter 4:19](#).) Creation is ascribed to Christ in [John 1:3](#) and [Colossians 1:16](#).

4. **FATHER:** This title is used in the Old Testament, but not in an individual sense. God is the Father of the nation of Israel. It was not until God had sent His Son into the world that the Fatherhood of God could be fully revealed. God is represented as the Creator of all mankind, but not as Father of all men. There is a two-fold Father relationship:

a. God is first of all the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ([2 Corinthians 1:3](#); [Ephesians 1:3](#); [Colossians 1:3](#)).

b. God is the Father of all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The "all" in [Ephesians 4:6](#): "One God and Father of all," is not a universal all, but is limited by the context to all believers.

5. **SON:** The Son is represented as God. This truth will be discussed more fully under the doctrine of the Trinity. Suffice it here to say that the title Son does not simply refer to His humanity. True, He is the Son of Man, and this title associates Him dispensationally with Israel and the coming Kingdom, but He is also the eternal Son of God. If God is the eternal Father there must of necessity be an eternal relationship of Son. Sonship and begetting, as they refer to Christ, sometimes have reference to His eternal generation and Sonship ([John 17:1](#) cf. v. 5), sometimes to His generation and Sonship as a man ([Matthew 1:1, 21](#)), and sometimes to His resurrection from among the dead ([Acts 13:33](#); [Colossians 1:18](#)).

6. **HOLY SPIRIT:** The Holy Spirit is represented as God. No name is given to the Spirit. The reason for this may be the fact that the Holy Spirit's ministry is not to speak of Himself, but to reveal the things of Christ and to glorify Him ([John 16:13, 14](#)). The Holy Spirit is called *the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Life, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Adoption, the Spirit of Promise, and the Spirit of Grace*.

CONCLUSION

When all of the names, titles, and epithets of God are combined and the fulness of meaning is derived from each, something of the plentitude of His Being

¹⁶⁸ Camden M. Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1917), p. 127.

and Attributes will be realized. In order to arrive at this knowledge the student needs to do more than read a brief chapter outlining these appellations. He must study these names in their distinctive contexts to grasp exactly what it is that God is trying to communicate about Himself, and to meditate much on the unfathomable riches of His glory and grace.

20 THE UNITY AND TRINITY OF GOD

THE UNITY OF GOD

Very little needs to be said in defense of the Unity of God. Both Old and New Testaments alike consistently affirm that there is but one God. Suffice it to quote a few pertinent passages of Scripture.

Hear, O Israel: The *LORD* our God is one *LORD* (Deuteronomy 6:4). The Lord he is God; there is none else beside Him (Deuteronomy 4:35). I am the *LORD*, and there is none else, there is no God beside me (Isaiah 45:5.) This statement is repeated in 45:6, 14, 18, 21, 22; 46:9; 47:8, 10).

We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many and lords many,) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him (1 Corinthians 8:4-6).

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe and tremble (James 2:19).

One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all (Ephesians 4:6).

Jews, Mohammedans, and certain sects within Christendom believe in one God but deny the tri-personality of the Godhead, as it is clearly revealed in the New Testament. A denial of the essential Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ is a denial of the Trinity. This type of teaching is usually associated with Arius of Alexandria in the early church. He taught that the Son was the first person to be created by God, and being next in rank to God was worthy of worship. His teaching was condemned by the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. In the 16th century Laelius and Faustus Socinus revived Arianism and became leaders of the modern Unitarian movement. Present day Unitarians are very liberal in their theology, usually giving to Jesus no more honor than that accorded to Mohammed or Buddha. Certain sects are also unitarian in their doctrine of God, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and the followers of A.E. Knoch's Concordant Version group.

THE TRINITY OF GOD

That God is both one and three appears to be contradictory at first sight. However, it must be understood at the outset that God is not three in the same sense that He is one. HE is not three persons and one person, nor is He three Gods and one God. He is three persons in one God.

If anything in the universe is to be considered incomprehensible, surely it must be that infinite Being whom we call God. We should expect greater difficulty in understanding the nature of the infinite than in comprehending the nature of the finite. In spite of the rapid advances in science and in spite of the fact that man can examine the world minutely with all of the precision instruments which his intelligence and skill have made possible, he still must confess that he understands precious little of the vast universe about him. Since God is the only one of His kind, since there is no other being with whom He may be compared, since He exists outside of the material universe, and since He is invisible and pure spirit beyond the reach of scientific instruments, He must needs remain unknown and unknowable to man apart from any revelation which He might make of Himself. As has been proved before, the Bible claims to be this revelation. Whatever may be known of the nature and being of God is to be found in this revelation. We shall look first at the New Testament to see if the idea of a Trinity is set forth, then at the Old Testament to see if it sheds any light upon the subject, then at erroneous theories of the doctrine, then at analogies which have been made in order to better understand this truth, and finally at official formulations of the doctrine.

The New Testament Recognizes Three Persons As God

1. *The Father is called God.* One hundred and seventy-five times in the four Gospels God is referred to as the Father. The same is true forty-five times in the Pauline epistles. It is needless to present proof-texts for this point in the face of such abundant evidence and by reason of the fact practically without exception all accept this truth.

2. *Jesus Christ is called God.*

a. The title Lord (kurios) is given to Him consistently. Evidence was presented in the last chapter that this word was the name of Deity as understood by people of the first century, and further, that this word is used by the Septuagint to translate the name Jehovah. Paul refers to Jesus as Lord nineteen times in Romans and twenty-one times in 1 Corinthians, to mention only two of his epistles. Peter ascribes this title to Him eight times in his second epistle. Whereas He was called Lord by all of the New Testament writers, Paul states that in a coming day "every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:11). Paul also states that there is only one Lord (1 [Corinthians 8:6](#); [Ephesians 4:5](#)), and since the Lord is called God

([Matthew 4:7, 10; 11:25; 22:37; Acts 2:39; 2 Corinthians 6:18](#), etc.), the Lord Jesus Christ must be God.

Jesus Himself defended His Lordship in a most interesting situation in [Matthew 22:41-46](#). He asked the Pharisees whose son the Messiah was to be, and they answered correctly, "The Son of David." Jesus then asked, "How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying: The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" The Jews were unable to answer Him. The only answer possible is that Messiah was to be David's son according to the flesh, but at the same time the Lord in His essential nature.

b. The title God (theos) is given to Him.

1) Jesus Christ is the Word, and the Word was God ([John 1:1](#)). Although the order of the Greek is, "God was the Word," the absence of the article from God shows that God is the predicate.

2) He is called "the only begotten God" ([John 1:18](#)). On this verse Vincent remarks: "Several of the principal manuscripts and a great mass of ancient evidence support the reading *monogenes Theos*, "God only begotten."¹⁶⁹ See also the marginal note to the same effect in the A.S.V., the R.S.V., and the N.E.B. Vincent further states: "Whether we read *the only begotten Son*, or *God only begotten*, the sense of the passage is not affected. The latter reading merely combines in one phrase the two attributes of the word already indicated - *God* (ver. 1), *only begotten* (ver. 14); the sense being *one who was both God and only begotten*."

3) Thomas confesses Jesus as "my Lord and my God (Theos)," ([John 20:28](#)). Jesus did not rebuke him, which He should have done, were He any less than God.

4) He is called "The blessed God" ([Romans 9:5](#)). Authorities differ on the punctuation of this verse, some placing a colon and some a comma after the word *flesh*. In the first case the verse would read: "of whom as concerning the flesh the Christ came: God who is over all be blessed for ever." This makes the last part of the verse a doxology. The other reading would be as in the A.V.: "Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever." Alford states five convincing objections to making the last part of the verse a doxology, and concludes by stating:

The rendering given above (Christ.. . who is God over all) is then not only that most agreeable to the usage of the Apostle, *but the only one admissible by the rules of grammar and arrangement*. It also admirably

¹⁶⁹ Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), II, p. 59.

suits the context; for, having enumerated the historic advantages of the Jewish people, he concludes by stating one which ranks far higher than all--that from them sprung, according to the flesh, He who is God over all, blessed for ever.¹⁷⁰

5) He is called our great God and Savior ([Titus 2:13](#)). This is the rendering given in the R.S.V., the N.E.B., and the margin of the A.S.V. The rendering in the A.V., "the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ," makes the great God refer to the Father and our Savior refer to Christ. Vincent states on this passage:

According to A.V. two persons are indicated, God and Christ. Rev. and others rend. *of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus*, thus indicating one person, and asserting the deity of Christ. I adopt the latter, although the arguments and authorities in favor of the two renderings are very evenly balanced.¹⁷¹

Even if we accept the rendering of the A.V. the argument for the Deity of Christ from the passage, although weakened, is not negated: the verse still bears testimony to the equality in glory of Christ with the Father. The Greek conjunction *kai* (and) can be and is often translated *even*, so that the verse may read: "the great God, even our Savior Christ Jesus." For a similar usage see 2 Thessalonians 2:16: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and (*kai*) God, even (*kai*) our Father. To translate both *kai*'s as *and* would make three persons: Christ, God, and the Father.

6) Again, He is called God in Hebrews 1:8: "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." The A.S.V., the R.S.V., and the N.E.B. give an alternate translation in the margin: "God is thy throne," whatever that may mean. Practically all versions, however, retain the vocative form for God.

7) He is called "the true God" in 1 John 5:20. There has been a controversy over whether the "This" in the statement, "this is the true God," refers to the immediate antecedent, "his Son Jesus Christ," or to "God" in the previous verse. The most natural sense is: "This (Christ) is the true God, and eternal life."

8) All the fulness of the Godhead bodily dwells in Him ([Colossians 2:9](#)). While Paul prays for believers in Ephesians 3:19 that they might be filled with all the fulness of God, Christ by nature has this fulness dwelling in Him bodily. The present "dwelleth" denotes an eternal and essential characteristic of Christ's being. The divine fulness has always dwelt in Him. Since the incarnation it has dwelt in Him in a bodily manner.

9) Christ was in the form of God before the incarnation, and thought it not robbery or a thing to be grasped after to be equal with God ([Philippians 2:6](#)). This

¹⁷⁰ Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1877), II, pp. 405,406.

¹⁷¹ Vincent, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 345.

passage not only states the pre-existence of Christ, but the fact that He pre-existed as equal with God. The N.E.B. reads: "For the divine nature was his from the first." Phillips translates: "For he, who always had been God by nature, did not cling to his prerogatives as God's equal." It would be difficult to imagine any clearer statement of the Deity of Christ.

10) Some of the attributes of God are ascribed to Christ. He is omnipotent ([Hebrews 1:3](#); [Revelation 1:8](#); [Matthew 28:18](#)). He is omniscient ([Colossians 2:3](#); [John 16:30](#); [21:17](#)). He is immutable ([Hebrews 13:8](#); [1:12](#)). He is eternal ([John 1:1](#); [8:58](#)). He possesses all of the moral attributes to perfection ([Hebrews 7:26](#); [4:15](#); [Ephesians 3:19](#); [1 Timothy 6:15](#), [16](#)).

11) Only God is to be worshipped; yet Jesus received worship, and men and angels are commanded to worship Him ([Matthew 2:11](#); [8:2](#); [9:18](#); [14:33](#); [15:25](#); [18:26](#); [28:9](#); [17](#); [John 9:38](#); [Hebrews 1:6](#); [Revelation 5:11-15](#)).

12) Jesus Christ exercises the offices of Deity. He is the Creator of all things in heaven and in earth ([John 1:3](#); [Colossians 1:16](#); [Hebrews 1:2](#)). He is the Sustainer of all things ([Colossians 1:17](#)).

13) Jesus Christ exercises powers which belong to God exclusively. He forgives sin ([Matthew 9:2-6](#); [Luke 7:47](#), [48](#); [Acts 13:38](#)). He has life in Himself and has power to impart life ([John 1:4](#); [5:26](#); [10:10](#); [11:25](#); [14:6](#); [Hebrews 7:16](#)). He raises the dead ([John 11:25](#)). He will execute final judgment upon all ([John 5:22](#); [2 Corinthians 5:10](#); [Acts 17:31](#); [Matthew 25:31](#), [32](#); [2 Timothy 4:1](#)).

The above thirteen lines of evidence should be sufficient to show that the writers of the New Testament believed and taught that Jesus Christ, as well as the Father, is God; and yet they taught just as clearly that there is but one God.

3. *The Holy Spirit is called God.* The point to be proved about the Holy Spirit is not His Deity, for that is self-evident, but that He is a separate Person, the same as the Father and the Son are separate Persons. The personality of the Holy Spirit is indicated by the following facts:

a. Personal pronouns are used in referring to Him, in spite of the fact that spirit (pneuma) is a neuter noun ([John 14:17](#); [16:13](#)).

b. He possesses the characteristics of personality. He has capacity to be grieved, vexed, blasphemed, resisted ([Ephesians 4:30](#); [Matthew 12:31](#); [Acts 7:51](#)).

c. He performs acts which can be predicated only of a person. He reveals, testifies, convinces, helps, guides, knows, makes intercession, speaks, gives life, etc. ([1 Corinthians 2:10](#); [John 16:8](#); [Romans 8: 16, 26](#); [Galatians 5:18](#)).

d. His name is associated with other names in such ways as to imply clearly personality. The Father and the Son are persons. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are mentioned together, as in [Matthew 28:19](#) and [2 Corinthians 13:14](#). The Holy Spirit must, therefore, be a person.

e. He is clearly distinguished from the Father and the Son. Christ stated that he would pray the Father "and he shall give you another Comforter" (John 14:16).

We have thus shown from the New Testament that three distinct and separate Persons are recognized as God, and yet these same Scriptures give consistent testimony that there is but one God. The word *Trinity* does not occur in Scripture, but the fact of a triunity is clearly evident.

The Old Testament Contains Intimations of the Trinity

1. *God is called the Father.* "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us; and Israel acknowledge us not: thou *O LORD*, art our Father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting" (Isaiah 63:16). "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth" (Jeremiah 3:4).

2. *God has a Son with divine prerogatives.* "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten, thee Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little" (Psalm 2:7, 12). "Who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?" (Proverbs 30:4).

3. *The Holy Spirit is recognized as a person and as God.* "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2). "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me" (Psalm 51:11). "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me" (2 Samuel 23:2). "The Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me" (Isaiah 48:16).

4. *The plural name Elohim and the plural pronouns used for God clearly suggest a plurality in the Godhead.* "In the beginning God (plural) created (singular) the heavens and the earth And God (plural) said (singular) let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:1, 26).

5. *The trisagion and the Aaronic benediction suggest a three-fold relation in the Godhead.* "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:3). "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace" (Numbers 6:24-26).

When God called Israel out as His chosen nation idolatry had become universal. It was necessary to first establish the worship of the one true God. This

is the fact that is emphasized in the Old Testament. However, the seeds of the Trinity are there which come to maturity in the New Testament.

Erroneous Views of the Trinity

Down through the centuries men have formulated erroneous and unscriptural concepts of the Trinity. These views may be classified under the following heads.

1. *That it is Tri-theism.* This view denies the unity of God and holds to three distinct gods. Hinduism has a triad of gods: Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, but this view has nothing in common with the Bible Trinity.

2. *That it is a Modal Trinity.* This was the view of Sabellius of Ptolemais (AD 250). According to this view the Trinity does not concern the nature of God but involved only the mode in which God has revealed Himself. As Father He is Creator and Lawgiver; as Son He is Redeemer; and as Spirit He is Regenerator and Sanctified. Or to put it another way, God may be considered to be Father in the Old Testament, the Son during the Gospel history, and the Spirit during the present dispensation. In any case, this view holds to only one Person manifested in three modes. This view is also known as an economic trinity: one God manifesting Himself in different offices in the different economies or dispensations. But as has been pointed out, in the Bible all three Persons of the Trinity are manifested together at the same time.

3. *That it is a Created Trinity.* This was the view of Arius. He taught that God the Father was the only divine being who was absolutely without beginning. The Father created the Son and the Holy Spirit out of nothing as the first act of creation. The Son is called God because He is the direct offspring of God and has been endowed with divine power to create. This view is apparently based upon a statement like Colossians 1:15: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." However, the term *firstborn* is a title of inheritance and the context does not permit the interpretation that this One who is called the firstborn was Himself created. Rather, He is before all created things and all of these things were created by Him. This excludes Him from the category of created things.

Analogies to the Trinity

Although the idea of the Trinity is not a contradiction of the Unity of God, it is inscrutable to the human mind. It is natural that men have sought for some kind of analogy which would serve to make the doctrine more understandable. However, God is a unique Being, so it appears very difficult to find an analogy.

Some of the analogies which have been suggested are (a) the union of light, heat, and radiance in one substance of the Sun, (b) the root, stem, and fruit of the one plant, (c) one fountain flowing out in several streams, (d) the soul of man

with intellect, will, and affections, (e) the clover leaf with its three lobes (f) Man as body, soul, and spirit. These analogies not only do not illustrate the Trinity, they tend to distort the truth.

A rather different approach to the Trinity has been made by Nathan R. Wood in his book, *The Secret of the Universe*.¹⁷² He examines the structure of the Universe and then proceeds to see if there is any similarity between it and the way the Bible presents the character of the Creator.

He begins by asking: "Why is the universe what it is?" He proceeds to the basic things which comprise the universe. He finds three things, and only three, which make up the totality of the universe: Space, Matter, and Time. Then he asks: "Is there anything which these three, space, matter, and time, have in common?" And he answers this by showing that each of these elemental things is threefold. There is length, breadth, and height in one Space; energy, motion, and phenomena in one Substance, and past, present, and future in one Time. And strangely enough all Space can be comprehended as length, or breadth, or height; all Matter as either energy, or motion, or phenomena; and all time as having been past, or as being present, or as being future.

He then asks, "Why is the physical universe, in each of its basic elements three things in one?" Is it possible that the threefoldness in the structure of the Universe is the same kind of threefoldness in the Being of God as presented in the Bible? He then proceeds to show that the threefoldness is identical: that there is absolute oneness and absolute threeness in each of these elemental things. He elucidates at length upon each of these points and then draws the following conclusions:

1. The Triunity shown in the Bible manifestly presents a vast and adequate reason for the triune structure of the physical universe

The universe ought to reflect God, its Maker and Ground Such Triunity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in God presents therefore an adequate original and reason for the exactly similar triunity in the fabric of space, matter and time It means that the universe is essentially like its God.

*2. The fabric of space, matter and time presents a universal and exact confirmation of that Triunity in God.*¹⁷³

Wood carries his investigation into the inner universe within man and here finds an absolute likeness which goes far beyond the triunities of space, matter and time. Wood has amassed an amazing series of facts which show what might be called God's reflection in the world, or His creative impress left upon the world, or His visible vesture revealing His moving presence in the world. He has

¹⁷² Nathan R. Wood, *The Secret of the Universe* (Boston: The Warwick Press, 1936).

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

demonstrated that the physical universe is a series of things which are both one and three with the same kind of oneness and threeness which we find in God.

Formulations of the Doctrine of the Trinity

Several early Church Councils were called to deal with differences of teaching which had arisen on the doctrine of the Godhead. These Councils produced statements of belief which have been accepted by orthodox believers down through the centuries. The Council of Nicea met in 325 A.D. and framed the following statement:

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, the maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, only begotten, begotten of the Father, that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten and not made, consubstantial with the Father, by whom all things were made whether in heaven or on earth; who for us men and our salvation came down from heaven; and was incarnate and became man, suffered and rose again on the third day; ascended into heaven, and will come to judge the living and the dead. And we believe in the Holy Ghost. But those who say, that there was a time when He (the Son) was not, that He was not before He was made, or was made out of nothing, or of another or different essence or substance, that He was a creature, or mutable, or susceptible of change, the Holy Catholic Church anathematizes.¹⁷⁴

The Nicene Creed did not adopt any definite statement concerning the Holy Spirit. A second council was called in 375 A.D. to meet in Constantinople. It adopted the so-called Athanasian Creed, which added the following words to the Nicene statement about the Holy Spirit:

We believe in the Holy Ghost who is the Lord and giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.¹⁷⁵

Further consideration of the Person and nature of Christ will be given in the treatment of Soteriology.

21 THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD

Having considered the existence, attributes, and nature of God, we turn next to His eternal purpose. That God does have such a purpose is abundantly clear from Scripture. The Apostle Paul in recording the special revelation which was

¹⁷⁴ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1940), I, pp. 456, 457.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, I, p. 457.

vouchsafed to him declared that it was "according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ our Lord" (Ephesians 3:11). Likewise the Old Testament declares that the history of Israel and of the surrounding nations was according to God's purpose:

"Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand... for the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" (Isaiah 14:24-27).

We will first look at the words which speak of God's purpose and quote the pertinent New Testament passages where they are used.

WORDS WHICH EXPRESS THE PURPOSE OF GOD

Purpose: *Prothesis* - a setting forth

... them who are the called according to his *purpose*... (Romans 8:28).

... that the *purpose* of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth ... (Romans 9:11).

... having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath *purposed* in himself ... (Ephesians 1:9).

... being predestinated according to the *purpose* of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will ... (Ephesians 1:11).

This passage contains three other words associated with God's purpose: counsel, predestinated and will.

... according to the eternal *purpose* which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord ... (Ephesians 3:11).

Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. (2 Timothy 1:9).

Predestination, also translated "determined before" and "ordained" - *Proorizo*: to limit in advance.

Whom he did foreknow, he also did *predestinate* to be conformed to the image of his Son.. . Moreover whom he did *predestinate*, them he also called. (Romans 8:29, 30).

Having *predestinated* us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself... being *predestinated* according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. (Ephesians 1:5, 11).

For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel *determined* before to be done (Acts 4:28).

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden, which God *ordained* before the world unto our glory (1 Corinthians 2:7).

Ordain: *Tasso*--appoint, determine.

... as many as were *ordained* to eternal life believed ... (Acts 13:48).

... the powers that be are *ordained* of God. (Romans 13:1).

Foreknowledge: *Proginosteo* and *Prognosis* - to know beforehand.

Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and *foreknowledge* of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain (Acts 2:23).

For whom he did *foreknow*, he also did predestinate... (Romans 8:29).

God hath not cast away his people which he *foreknew*... (Romans 11:2).

Elect according to the *foreknowledge* of God the Father.. . Who verily was *foreordained* before the foundation of the world. (1 Peter 1:2, 20).

Counsel: *Boule* - volition, will.

... determinate *counsel* ... (Acts 2:23).

... whatsoever ... thy *counsel* determined before ... (Acts 4:28).

I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole *counsel* of God. (Acts 20:27).

... after the *counsel* of his own will ... (Ephesians 1:11).

Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his *counsel*, confirmed it by an oath. (Hebrews 6: 17).

The above Scriptures containing these five words which convey the idea of planning, determining before hand, foreknowing, placing limitations upon, willing, and the setting forth of a plan should be sufficient to show that according to the

Scripture nothing has happened by chance, but that all things are part of a plan which God laid down in the beginning. This plan is called His eternal purpose in Scripture and theologians refer to it as the Divine Decree, or in considering the respective parts of that purpose, the Decrees of God.

THE DECREES OF GOD

Theologians usually break down the overall purpose of God into four or five major decrees: the decree to create, the decree to permit sin, the decree to provide salvation, the decree to elect, and some refer to a decree to reprobate. Since God is a timeless Being, it is inconceivable that these decrees were made in a chronological order. We must believe that God formulated His plan in its entirety in eternity past. He knew the end from the beginning and He knew it because He planned it. He did not decree to create and then later on decree to permit man to fall, and then decide to provide salvation. However, we may conceive of a logical order of the decrees. We may ask, which of the decrees logically came first? Was the primary consideration with God to have a creation, to have a redeemed people, or to have sinners upon whom He could vent His wrath? If the logical order of God's decrees could be ascertained, much could be learned concerning God's motives for having brought His plan into action. It should be pointed out that the order in which the decrees have been executed is not necessarily their logical order.

THE LAPSARIAN CONTROVERSY

Theologians, in attempting to arrive at the correct view on the logical order of the decrees have divided into two main camps, the Calvinistic and the Arminian. Each of these camps has its own subdivisions. The controversy centered around the question of whether the decree of election preceded or followed the decree to permit the lapse, that is, the fall of man, and hence the name, Lapsarian.

Since the doctrine of election will be considered in detail in the study of Soteriology, we will content ourselves at this point to state simply the order of the decrees at which different schools of thought have arrived and the implications of these several views.

Supralapsarian View

This is the extreme or hyper-Calvinistic view. *Supra* is a preposition meaning *above*. This view places the decree of election above that of the fall. It presents God's purpose in the following perspective:

1. The decree to save some and damn others.
2. The decree to create in order to have those beings who are to be saved and damned.
3. The decree to permit the fall of man.

4. The decree to provide salvation for the elect.

The view holds that God not only elected some to be saved, but also elected others to be lost. It asks us to believe that in the mind of God was the concept of a company of people saved and another lost before (in logical order, of course) ever there was the concept of their being created, and that the fall and redemption were simply means of accomplishing that end. And by placing the decree of election ahead of that to provide salvation the inescapable conclusion must be that Christ died only for the elect. Calvin did not hold this extreme view.

Infralapsarian View

This is the moderate Calvinistic view. *Infra* means under, and signifies the placing of the decree of election under or below that of the fall. The order of the decrees then becomes:

1. The decree to create.
2. The decree to permit the fall.
3. The decree to elect some to salvation and to pass by the others.
4. The decree to provide salvation for the elect.

It can be seen that this view does not represent God as decreeing the fall in order that he might have people to save and condemn, as in the *supra* view, but by placing election after the fall God is represented as electing and saving some because of man's plight. The *Infra* and *Supra* views hold in common that election precedes salvation, and therefore both teach a limited atonement.

Sublapsarian View

The word *sub* means under or below, the same as *infra*. Some theologians use these terms interchangeably, while others make the Sub view to be a modification of the *Infra* view. This view places election below the fall, as does the *Infra* view, but it reverses the order of election and salvation as follows:

1. The decree to create.
2. The decree to permit the fall.
3. The decree to provide salvation for all.
4. The decree to elect some to salvation.

Thus, this view differs from the *Infra* view in teaching that a salvation has been provided which is sufficient for all, but which will be applied only to some. This view seems to be most in harmony with the teachings of Scripture.

Calvinism is usually associated with the doctrine of a limited atonement, a view adopted by Calvin in his "Institutes;" but according to Strong, Calvin wrote in his Commentary on 1 John 2:2:

"Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world, and in the goodness of God is offered unto all men without distinction, His blood being shed not for a part of the world only, but for the whole human race."¹⁷⁶

The Arminian View

Arminius was a Dutch theologian whose views conflicted with those of Calvin who lived a generation earlier in the 16th century. His followers became known as Remonstrants, from the name of a petition called a *Remonstrance*, which was presented to the States of Holland and Friesland in 1610. According to Van Gildel their views were set forth in five articles:

- (1) Election is conditioned on divine foreknowledge of faith;
- (2) Redemption was for all men;
- (3) Man is unable to attain saving faith except through regeneration;
- (4) Grace is not wholly efficient nor irresistible;
- (5) Regenerates are able by divine grace to resist all temptation, but may not do so and so may be lost.¹⁷⁷

Arminianism differs from Calvinism, not so much in any order of the decrees, but in the content and meaning of the decrees. It defines election as simply being God's foreknowledge of those who would themselves elect to accept the offer of salvation, rather than God doing the electing. It is a denial of the principle enunciated by Christ when He said to His disciples:

"Ye have not chosen (elected) me, but I have chosen (elected) you" (John 15:16).

Since election is defined as man's act and since man may change his choice, Arminianism must deny the eternal security of the believer, or as some call it, the perseverance of the saints. When one believes in unconditional election on the part of God he must also believe in the eternal security of the elect, for it is impossible to believe that a choice God had made would ever fail of fulfillment.

Whereas Calvinists argued for what some called *irresistible grace*, grace that actually resulted in the salvation of the elect, Arminians held to what they called *common grace*, a grace equally bestowed on all men which enables them, if they so will, to obey God and thus make themselves part of the elect. But since this grace is not efficient nor sufficient to guarantee man's ultimate salvation, Arminians hold that the elect may be overcome by temptation, or that they may decide to remain no longer children of God, and therefore apostasize and be finally lost.

¹⁷⁶ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1907), p. 779.

¹⁷⁷ H. O. VanGlider, *Election And...* (Findlay, Ohio: Dunham Publishing Co., 1956), pp. 15, 16.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD TWO-FOLD

It would seem that from the very first verse of the Bible there is the indication that God's purpose concerns two spheres, the heavens and the earth. The whole Old Testament with its promises and prophecies is concerned with the earth. Israel, the promised land, and the nations of the earth are the significant subjects of those Scriptures. At the Annunciation the word of the angel was: "Peace on earth." And the petition which our Lord taught His disciples to pray was: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," again reminding us of the two spheres of God's activity.

In contrast with Israel's past and her future millennial blessings which are earthly, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14), the Church which is the Body of Christ has as its destination and seat of blessings the heavenly places. We have been raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ ([Ephesians 2:6](#)). We have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ ([Ephesians 1:3](#)). Our warfare is in heavenly places ([Ephesians 6:12](#)). Our citizenship is in heaven ([Philippians 3:20](#)). We share with Paul the prospect of being preserved unto His heavenly kingdom ([2 Timothy 4:18](#)), which is to be distinguished from the kingdom of the heavens, the Messiah's heavenly rule over the earth.

The Apostle Paul points forward to that final dispensation, that of the fulness of the times, when God will "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him" (Ephesians 1:10). At present God has His whole family in heaven and in earth ([Ephesians 3:15](#)), and in that final dispensation, when no doubt many of the dispensational differences which we have known will be dissolved, God's heavenly saints, the Body of Christ, and His earthly saints, Israel and the redeemed nations, will be perfectly united in their one Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

It is our understanding from the teaching of the Scriptures that in eternity past, before creation or time came into being, the Triune God existed in all of His perfections. The Persons of the Godhead formulated a plan which involved the creation of a vast material universe with a host of spirit-beings called angels, and a planet called Earth, upon which this plan would be enacted. For wise purposes which God has not been pleased to reveal He decreed to permit sin to enter His universe, without Himself being responsible for its origin or results. But at the same time, if we can speak of time in eternity, He decreed to manifest His love and grace in providing a salvation for that part of creation which had been created in His own image. In this redemptive program He purposed to people both the heavens and the earth with sinners saved by His grace. In order that this program might be implemented He determined that the Son should come into the

world, take upon Himself humanity, suffer and die a redeeming death. And, in order to secure the redeemed peoples He chose them from before the foundation of the world for Himself. Apart from His election Scripture indicates that none would ever have been saved ([Romans 3:10-12](#)). Why He chose only the ones He did and why He did not choose more or all has not been revealed. It would seem that this is one area in which man must exercise faith in God: belief that God is absolutely righteous in all of His ways, even though His ways are past finding out. Human speculation in this area only leads to doubt and further difficulty. Faith believes that God's purpose and decrees are all just and good and that when the final decree is carried out all of God's creation will unite in giving all honor and glory to God. God's decrees, while they concern man, do not find their end in man, but in God. Whatever He has decreed, He has decreed for His own glory.

"Thou art worthy, *O LORD*, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all these things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11).

Part Four

The Works of God

22 CREATION

IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION

The first fact revealed in the Bible is that the universe was created by God. The doctrine of Creation is the foundation of all subsequent revelations concerning the nature of God and His relationship to the Bible, but the Creatorhood of God is reiterated throughout the Old and New Testaments. The Bible is unique in its doctrine of creation. Ramm states:

In contrast to the Judeo-Christian tradition are the religions of the world with their animism or polytheism and universal idolatry. Only in Sacred Writ is there such a positive, uncompromising, lucid creationism, and it is this strong creationism which caused all the writers of Sacred Writ to condemn idolatry so consistently and in all its forms.¹⁷⁸

As we shall see, students of the Scriptures have developed numerous theories concerning the time and the manner of creation, but all are in full agreement that

¹⁷⁸ Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), p. 85.

the Bible teaches that heaven and earth and all things that are therein were created by God, and that He is the uncreated First Cause and Sustainer of the universe. How important the doctrine of Creation is may be judged from the following points.

The Bible lays great emphasis upon this doctrine. Not only are the first two chapters of the Bible devoted to it, but a rather cursory glance at a concordance reveals the fact that Creation is referred to more than fifty times under the words *create, created, creation, and Creator*, and an equal number of times under the word *made*. At least twelve of the Old Testament books and thirteen of the New refer to the creative work of God. There are doubtless many other allusions to the doctrine under other words.

Aside from the Creation story itself in the first two chapters of Genesis, the more important passages on the subject are [Isaiah 40-42](#); [John 1:1-3](#); [Romans 1:19, 20](#); [Colossians 1:15-17](#); and [Hebrews 1:2; 11:1-3](#). The Psalms also have much to say about the creative work of God. See [Psalms 33:6; 95:5; 96:5; 100:3; 104:24; 115:15; 119:73; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; 136:5, 7; and 146:6](#). The amount of space given to a doctrine in the Scriptures is to some degree indicative of the importance of the subject.

The Doctrine of Creation is important to the proper worship of God. If there is a supreme God who has created everything that exists, then none of these things is a worthy object of worship. Hence it follows that God alone is due all of man's allegiance and worship. Man could never become an idolater as long as he really believed in the Biblical doctrine of creation. Paul approaches idolatry in this light in [Romans 1:19-23](#). He shows that man did not like to retain God in his knowledge, with the result he changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever.

The Doctrine of Creation is important because it reveals the Transcendence of God. As we have already observed, one of the basic errors of many religious systems is Pantheism, which holds that God is identical with Creation. But if God is the Creator, He must have existed prior to and apart from creation. Therefore all Pantheistic systems are false. God is declared to be "above all" throughout the Scriptures. There is "one God and Father, who is above all, and through all" ([Ephesians 4:6](#)). See also [Romans 9:5](#); [Deuteronomy 4:39](#); [Psalm 57:5](#); [97:9](#).

The Sovereignty of God is intimately related to the Doctrine of Creation. Paul illustrates this with the figure of the potter in [Romans 9:21](#). God is the Potter of the universe. He alone has made everything that is, so that He owns everything and has the right to do with everything whatsoever pleases Him, and, of course, everything that pleases Him is consistent with His holy and righteous character. Absolute sovereignty would be a terrible doctrine with a God who acted arbitrarily

or with one who was anything less than absolutely holy and righteous, but with the kind of God revealed in the Bible this doctrine is one of greatest comfort and assurance.

The Doctrine of Creation is important because it is the basis for the unity of the human race. Apart from the truth of Creation we might be led to adopt the doctrine of polygenism. The theory of evolution might well lead to the belief that the differences between the various races of mankind are due to differing origins. If evolution could produce the white race, why could it not have produced the black race from an entirely separate and distinct evolutionary beginning? But the revelation contained in the Bible indicates that every human being who has ever lived could be traced back to one original human pair. This fact established the common natural brotherhood of all mankind. But this natural brotherhood in no way involves the false idea of the universal spiritual Fatherhood of God. God is the Creator of all mankind in their natural state, but He is the spiritual Father only of those who have been born spiritually into the family of God.

Closely coupled with the unity of the human race is the Scriptural doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin to all mankind, which is another reason for the importance of the doctrine of Creation. Paul's whole argument in [Romans 5:12-21](#) is based upon the truth of creation. Adam is declared to be the first man, and, as such, the head of the human race. His one act of sin brought condemnation and death to all mankind. Paul argues along the same line in I Corinthians 15:21, 22, 45-50: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." If the creation story is not factual, then the basic Christian doctrine of the universal sinfulness of humanity is without foundation.

The Doctrine of Creation is important because it reveals both the unity of the marriage relationship as well as the headship of the husband. Human beings are not merely sophisticated animals. Marriage is not simply a cultural expedient. Man was the direct creation of God and the woman was made from the Man ([Genesis 2:21-24](#)). Christ reminded the Pharisees of the unity of man and wife: "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:3-9). Paul teaches the headship of the husband from the fact and order of creation: "But I would have you to know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man... for the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man" (1 Corinthians 11:3, 8, 9).

The Doctrine of Creation is important because it answers the age-old question: Where did we come from? Apart from revelation it would be impossible ever to arrive at any absolute knowledge on this point. Man shut up to scientific

reasoning can only speculate that the universe has always been here and that man is simply a biological accident. Such an approach destroys the dignity of man, leaves no basis for moral truth, gives man a false view of the universe, and renders worship of God meaningless.

Finally, the Doctrine of Creation is important to the trustworthiness of the Scriptures. If creation is not a fact then the Scriptures are proved to be false. Not only would the trustworthiness of the Old and New Testaments be overthrown, but Christ Himself would be discredited, since He testified to the truth of the creation account.

THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT OF CREATION

It will be our purpose in this section to examine exactly what the Bible says about creation. The Bible has been made to say many different and even contradictory things about this doctrine, all of which have served to discredit the Biblical account in the eyes of the scientific world. Ussher's dating of the creation in 4004 B.C. is one such example. Applying various kinds of *a priori* reasoning to the Biblical account, such as stating that everything that God does is perfect, therefore God must have created everything instantaneously in its completed form, is adding something to what God has said. God may or may not have created everything instantaneously. In the case of man, for example, we know that God created man's body from pre-existing matter which was part of the original creation of matter.

In examining the creation account we shall not at this point consider the various theories or interpretations which have been placed upon these verses by scholars, such as, is there a long gap between the first two verses of Genesis? or, Are the creation days literal twenty-four days or long geologic ages? It should be remembered that this account of creation has been in the possession of God's people for at least thirty-five hundred years, and that their understanding of it could not have been upon the basis of modern scientific theories. What then does the Bible account have to say to one who holds no particular scientific theory? How must the Israelites of Moses' or David's day have understood it?

The Creation

There was a beginning before which God existed. This beginning could not have been the beginning of God, but the beginning of the heavens and the earth. There is no intimation as to when this beginning was. Bishop Ussher was quite explicit, setting the date for Creation at 9:00 A.M., October 23, 4004 B.C. Modern scientific people often ridicule the Bible, supposing that the Bible actually teaches this. Some scientists speculate that the earth came into being about four billion years ago.

God created the heavens and the earth in the beginning. There is no mention of any creative act after this until [Genesis 1:21 and 27](#), where creation of animal and human life is stated. It is evident from [Genesis 2:7](#) that the material part of man was made from pre-existing materials; hence it follows that all matter, as such, must have been created in the beginning, so that what follows after Genesis 1:1 describes what God did with the matter which He had created in the beginning. This would mean that the so-called days of creation of Genesis 1 are not descriptive of bringing matter into being, but of what God did with the matter, as it concerned the earth, as a place of abode for the man He was going to create.

If there was a beginning of the heavens and the earth, there must have been a condition before the beginning when the heavens and the earth did not exist. This fact would provide a very strong presumption that the creation was *ex nihilo*, for it would be rather difficult to suppose that all of the matter in the universe existed before there were any heavens and earth. Lindsay states:

The OT and NT, in their doctrine of creation, recognize no eternal matter before creation The NT seems to favor the derivation of matter from the non-existent -- that is to say, the time worlds were due to the effluent Divine Word or originative Will, rather than to being built out of God's own invisible essence. So the best exegesis interprets He 11:3.¹⁷⁹

After God created the heavens and the earth the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep (Genesis 1:2). Whether this condition was due to the method by which creation was effected, or whether it resulted from a judgment of God is not stated in the book of Genesis. It has been pointed out that Isaiah 45:18 states: "He created it not in vain" (the same Hebrew word, *tohu*, translated *without form* in Genesis 1:2), from which text it is argued that God originally created the earth as a habitable place and that it later *became* a waste, without form and void. This theory will be considered in detail later: if it is true it is evident that there was no revelation of the fact during the eight hundred years between Moses and Isaiah. All that Genesis tells us is that the earth was a waste before the work of the six days began.

Since the entire material universe was created prior to the work of the six days, and since the earth was in a state of desolation before these days began, it is only in a limited sense that the six days can be called days of creation. As stated previously, the only things created during the six days were animal and human life. Whatever view is taken of Genesis 1:2, it is evident that the work of the six days was mainly that of making the earth a suitable place for vegetable, animal, and human life and the creation of such life upon it.

The work of the six days.

¹⁷⁹ James Lindsay, *Creation, The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, (Chicago: The Howard Severance Co., 1915), p. 738.

1. The calling forth of Light (1:3-5). Much ado has been made of trying to explain the fact that light appeared on the first day, and yet the sun, moon, and stars are not said to appear until the fourth day. From what we know of the nature of light it seems certain that there must have been light in the original creation. The record here concerns the earth as described in verse 2, shrouded in total darkness. As far as the earth was concerned there was no light until the thick vapor clouds were dissipated, and that event is related to the fourth day. But light itself must have come into being with the creation of matter.

2. On the second day God made an expanse between the waters on the earth and the waters above the earth in the clouds. The word *firmament*, reflects the mistaken scientific ideas of the days when the King James version was made. Men used to think of the sky as a sort of firm or solid shell in which the stars were embedded for their support, but the Hebrew word used here simply means an expanse.

3. On the third day the dry land appeared, and the earth brought forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself. It would seem evident that plant life would need sunlight, which does not appear until the next day. There is no problem here if these are twenty-four hour days, but if the days are supposed to represent geologic ages of several hundred thousand years, this would pose a very big problem.

4. The fourth day is marked by the appearing of the sun, moon, and stars. These heavenly bodies were created in the beginning, but they now become visible upon the surface of the earth.

5. On the fifth day God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind.

6. On the sixth day land animals were created, and last of all God created man in His own image and after His likeness.

Thus the work of God with the heavens and the earth was finished, and He is said to have rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. But certain details are added to the above account in chapter two. It is recorded that when God made every plant of the field before it was in the earth, that He had not caused it to rain upon the earth, but that there went up a mist from the earth that watered the face of the ground. We are not told how long this rainless condition prevailed and whether it was restricted to the locality where man was placed or was worldwide.

It is also recorded that in the creation of man his body was made out of the fine dust of the ground, after which God breathed into his nostrils the breath of

life and he became a living soul. There is also the additional information in this chapter that God formed every beast of the field and fowl of the air from the ground and brought them to Adam to see what he would name them (2:19) This gives the impression that Adam was created before the beasts and birds; however chapter one makes it plain that they were all created before Adam.

The final detail given is the fact that Adam and Eve were not two distinct creations, but that Adam was first formed and then a part of his body was used by God to form the body of Eve. Thus it could be said that Adam and Eve were one flesh (2:24). The making of Eve is said to have occurred after Adam was placed in the garden and after he had named all of the animals, among which there was not found a helper of his own kind (2:20).

The Creator

In the Old Testament account of creation God (Elohim) is said to have created (Genesis 1:1; 1:21, 27; 2:3; 5:1; Deuteronomy 4:32; Malachi 2:10). In Genesis 2 where a more detailed account of man's creation and his relationship to God is given the name changes to LORD God (Jehovah Elohim). This change of names is not due to this chapter being the work of another writer, as Higher Critics would contend, but to bring man into relation with God as Lord. The identity of Jesus Christ with Jehovah, and the mention of the Spirit of God brooding upon the face of the deep suggest that all three Persons of the Godhead were active in the work of creation.

In the New Testament there are distinctive statements in Paul's epistles which declare that the creation was accomplished by Jesus Christ: "...God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:9). "For by him (Christ) were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him" (Colossians 1:16).

John declares the same thing about Christ: "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3).

23 INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CREATION ACCOUNT

Bible-believing Christians hold varied views concerning the time and the method of creation as revealed in the opening chapters of the Bible. The advancement of scientific knowledge has created many problems in the understanding of the creation story. In the pre-scientific era, especially before the development of Geology, it was natural to believe that man was created just six days after the creation of the material universe, and, reckoned by the geneological tables of Genesis, that this all took place about 4000 B.C. But as science developed it became apparent that the earth is much older than 6000

years. Even a few thousand years extra might have been accounted for, but when science tells us that the earth has been here for several billion years it would appear that there could be no reconciling of the Bible account with that of science.

There has been an effort on the part of some Bible-believers to try to reconcile the Biblical account with that of the scientific world. These efforts have been directed in two different directions. Some have endeavored to interpret the findings of geology on the basis of the Noahic flood, thus postulating a very young age for the earth. Others have accepted the very great age of the earth and have sought means to inject this added time into the Biblical record.

It should be understood at the outset that all of these theories, both those of Christian as well as those of naturalistic scientists, are based partly upon facts and partly upon speculation. Christians read many of their preconceived ideas into the Bible, and scientists fill in the gaps in knowledge with their own speculations. There is one basic fact upon which there can hardly be any disagreement among those who profess to believe the Bible: everything that exists in the universe was created out of nothing by Almighty God--but there the agreement ends. The *how* and the *when* of creation are matters of considerable disagreement.

It has been pointed out by many writers that the language of the Bible is not that of a science textbook, but rather that of the popular usage of the age in which it was written. The language is phenomenal in character, even as popular usage is today. The Bible as well as modern writers speak of the sun's rising and setting, for this is what appears to happen. The astronauts who first circled the earth spoke of seeing the sun rise and set sixteen times every twenty-four hours; yet they understood that it was not the motion of the sun but the combined motion of the earth and their space-ship that produced this effect. The Bible does not explain the fact that the earth rotates on its axis every twenty-four hours, bringing the sun into view for approximately half that time, and exposing us to the moon and stars for the remainder of the day. It speaks of the new moon, but it does not explain why the moon goes through its various phases. Had God written the Bible in scientific terms, men in the pre-scientific age could not have understood it, and it is doubtful if modern man could have understood very much of it, for God would have written in the terms of ultimate and final science and man is as yet far removed from that goal. Although the Bible is written in popular, prescientific terminology, it is not unscientific. And further, if God is the Author of both the book of Nature and the book we call the Bible, it is evident that the two must be in perfect agreement.

INTERPRETATIONS BASED UPON A RECENT DATE FOR CREATION

By *recent date* is meant several thousand years before Christ as compared with the several billion years of the other class of interpretations. Based upon the

genealogical tables of the book of Genesis, Bishop Ussher figured that the creation of the heavens and the earth occurred in 4004 B.C., and unfortunately this date has been placed in many editions of the Bible with the result that many suppose that the Bible teaches this as the date of creation.

The Traditional View

As noted previously, apart from any scientific knowledge, it would be quite natural to understand the Biblical account of creation to mean that the creation of the earth took place only six days before the creation of man and that man was created only as long ago as the recorded chronology of the Bible indicates. This was the prevailing view before the dawn of the scientific age.

Flood Geology View

This view seeks to explain all of the geological data, fossils, and other signs of the great antiquity of the earth by a universal flood in the days of Noah. Perhaps the most influential advocate of the view has been Seventh Day Adventist writer, George McCready Price, author of *The New Geology* (1923).

While there are many ramifications of this view, the basic idea is that the Deluge sent great tidal waves racing across the earth at speeds up to a thousand miles an hour, smashing and dashing to pieces all life upon the face of the earth, and burying these broken carcasses under immense deposits of mud, which later turned to rock under the terrific pressure to which they were subjected. Thus, all of the fossils, from the lowly trilobite to the awesome dinosaurs, may be accounted for by the Noahic flood. The first waves of the flood supposedly deposited the lower stratum of rocks which would contain the plants and animals at lower elevations, and the upper stratum would contain the remains of man who fled to the highest elevations to try to escape the flood waters. Besides accounting for the fossils and rock strata, the flood is said to have laid down vast deposits of vegetation which have produced the coal beds, as well as trapping fish and other forms of life to produce the oil fields.

It is generally contended by those who hold this view that before the flood a rather temperate climate existed over the whole earth which was produced either by a canopy of ice which surrounded the earth and which fell or melted to help produce the flood waters,¹⁸⁰ or by supposing that the axis of the earth was vertical before the flood and that the present tilt of 23 1/2° was caused by the flood.¹⁸¹ Some contend also that all of the continents were originally joined, so that animals could gather from all parts of the earth to enter the ark without having to cross any oceans. They base their argument upon Genesis 10:25: "And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg; for in his days was

¹⁸⁰ C. T. Schwarze, *The Harmony of Science and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1952), p. 71.

¹⁸¹ A. M. Rehwinkel, *The Flood* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951), pp. 12, 13.

the earth divided ..." The dividing of the earth is made to mean the splitting up of the original land mass into continents.

Rehwinkel argues that before the flood "there were no arctics and no deserts in that world, no high mountain barriers to separate one region from another, and this uniform climate also made possible a more uniform distribution of animals over the entire face of the earth."¹⁸²

It should be observed that much that is involved in this theory is pure speculation. There is nothing in the Bible to suggest a canopy of ice surrounding the earth before the flood. Had there been such a canopy the stars would have been invisible and the sun and moon would have appeared simply as diffused spots of light. If the flood produced thousand-mile-an-hour waves that smashed everything to pieces, it is hard to understand how the ark survived such a beating. And how does Rehwinkel maintain that there were no high mountains before the flood, when [Genesis 7:19, 20](#) states that all of the high hills (the same word is translated *mountains* in vs. 20) were covered by the flood waters?

Vital to this interpretation, of course, is the universality of the flood. In favor of a worldwide flood are the following arguments:

1. The language of Genesis supports this view. "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and creeping things, and the fowls of the air" (6:7). "I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and everything that is in the earth shall die" (6:17). "And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the water prevail; and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth ... and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark" (7:18-23).

2. There are flood traditions in many nations of antiquity. If the whole world was repopulated by Noah's three sons, it would be natural that all of these people would possess some knowledge of the flood.

3. The claim is made that there are worldwide deposits which indicate a universal flood, although others deny this fact.

4. There are many species of now extinct animal life found in fossil beds. It is argued that a universal flood best explains why so many animals have become extinct. However, it is difficult to see the validity of this argument, for the Scripture indicates that a pair of every species of animal life was taken into the ark for the express purpose of perpetuating the species.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 74.

It should be pointed out that belief in a universal flood does not necessarily commit one to the theory that the flood is responsible for all fossil formations, but belief that the flood is responsible for all fossil formations and geologic rock strata demands also belief in a universal flood.

There are Christian scholars who do not believe that the Bible teaches that the entire earth was necessarily inundated. W. H. Griffith Thomas makes allowance for a flood limited to the regions inhabited by mankind.¹⁸³ Marcus Dods also argues for a local flood.¹⁸⁴ G. F. Wright answers the question, Was the flood universal? with these words:

"In answer, it is sufficient to suggest that since the purpose of the judgment was the destruction of the human race, all the universality which it is necessary to infer from the language would be only such as was sufficient to accomplish that object."¹⁸⁵

Ramm is very dogmatic in denouncing the idea of a universal flood.¹⁸⁶ He contends that the entire record of the flood must be interpreted phenomenally. He says it is not a question of what God *can do*, but what He *did do*. He quotes such passages as Psalm 22:17; John 4:39 and Matthew 3:5 to prove that *all* does not always mean every one without exception. The *all* in the flood account is limited to the vantage point of the observer of the flood. He believes there is good evidence for the existence of man in America for the past ten to fifteen thousand years, and surely Noah did not preach to people in America. He argues that the fact that other nations have flood traditions does not necessarily prove a connection with the Noahic flood. He claims that there are no known geological data to support a universal flood. There are many problems connected with a universal flood, unless it is made a stupendous miracle. But Ramm says the Bible attributes it to two natural causes: rain and the fountains of the deep. There is the problem of enough water to cover the highest mountains – approximately eight times the amount of water which actually exists on earth. And there is the problem of draining off all of this water which was supposedly six miles deep with nowhere for it to drain. Besides this the tremendous pressure of the water and the mixing of the salt with the fresh water would have been destructive of practically all plant and marine life, practically necessitating a recreation of these forms of life.

While a universal flood would doubtless lay down many fossils, the claims of flood geology hardly seems tenable in the light of modern radioactive dating methods. Carbon-14 dating has proved very accurate in dating objects of known

¹⁸³ W. H. Griffith Thomas, *A Devotional Commentary -- Genesis I-XXV 10* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1908), p. 91.

¹⁸⁴ Marcus Dods, *The Expositors Bible -- Genesis* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 189B), pp. 55, 56.

¹⁸⁵ G. F. Wright, *Deluge of Noah, International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, (Chicago: The Howard Severance Co., 1915), II, p. 824.

¹⁸⁶ Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), pp. 229-249.

age up to 3,000 years or more. It is conceivable that cosmic ray activity was vastly lower before the flood. This would make Carbon dating inaccurate, but it seems inconceivable that a flood could have affected radiation from Uranium ores, which indicates that the oldest rocks on earth are several billion years old. It is hard to believe that the flood caused a change in the decay rate of this radioactive element by some 300,000%.

The Ideal Time Theory

This theory is based upon the fact that at the moment of creation things must have appeared to have had a certain age that was not their actual age. If God created a great oak tree it might have appeared to be 100 years old, when in fact it was only one second old. Adam probably appeared to be a man of mature age at the moment he was created. Hence, it is argued, the universe has the appearance of being very ancient: its ideal age may be billions of years, but its actual age may be only a few thousand.

This was the view expounded by Philip Henry Gosse in *Omphalos: An Attempt to Untie the Geological Knot*. *Omphalos* is the Greek work for *navel*, and Gosse asked: "Did Adam have a navel?" And his answer is: "Of course he did." Trees in the garden no doubt had annual rings at the moment they were created. Now it must be admitted that this argument contains an element of truth. Astronomers tell us that there are galaxies so distant that their light has taken a billion years to reach us. It is conceivable that God could have created these remote universes with their light already dispersed throughout space, so that Adam, equipped with modern astronomical gear, might have supposed such galaxies were at least a billion years old, when in fact they were only a few days old.

The fallacy in this argument comes from not distinguishing that which is necessary of ideal time in creation and that which is not necessary, which if true would prove deceptive to man. To create a tree necessitates apparent age, but it is not necessary for God to disperse the light from all of the galaxies throughout space instantaneously. The fallacy is apparent especially in the field of fossils. According to this view fossils must have been created as fossils. The stratum of rock in which the fossil is found may appear to have been laid down by sedimentation of a million years ago, but if the world is only a few thousand years old in actual age, then actually there was no sedimentation that formed the rocks and there was never an actual animal in existence to form the fossil. Not only would it have been unnecessary for God to create such rocks and fossils: it would have been deceptive on His part to do so. Such rocks and fossils would have been a lie, and it is impossible for God to lie.

In conclusion, it would appear that the view that the earth was created only a few thousand years ago can only be held by repudiating practically all of the findings of geology and astronomy. Scientists have been wrong in the past, but so have Christians. The Church held for centuries the Ptolemaic theory as divine

truth and substantiated it by the Bible. It severely persecuted scientists who dared to teach that the earth was a sphere which revolved around the sun instead of the sun going around the earth. Scriptures may be produced to uphold the idea that the earth is a flat, square surface ([Isaiah 11:12](#) and [Revelation 7:1](#)), and doubtless many in time past believed it to be so; but the space age has dispelled any such mistaken ideas and we have learned that it is not necessary to thus interpret these passages.

INTERPRETATIONS BASED UPON A VERY ANCIENT DATE OF CREATION

The Long Day Theory

Ramm describes this theory thus:

This theory has been called the *age-day* theory because it considers the days of Genesis as being periods of time; it has been called the geologic-day theory for similar reasons; it has been called the *Divine-day* theory after Augustine who said they were God-divided days, not sun-divided days. It is called *concordism* because it seeks a harmony of the geologic record and the days of Genesis interpreted as long periods of time briefly summarizing geological history.¹⁸⁷

For an exposition of this view see Edwin K. Gedney, *Modern Science and Christian Faith*, Chapter III. This view has been held by such men as James Dana, J. W. Dawson, and Hugh Miller, outstanding geologists of the past century, and by a number of present day evangelical scientists and theologians.

Gedney thinks that Genesis 1:1-5 describes the Cosmic and Azoic Eras of Geology, when matter first came into being, when Earth and other planets were formed, and when as yet all oceans were in the atmosphere in the form of mists. The second day, Genesis 1:6-8, is still the Azoic Era, when the waters began to collect forming clouds and oceans. These two days represent about one billion years. The third and fourth days, Genesis 1:9-13 and 14-19, cover the Archaeozoic Era of about 800 million years when the continental shields were formed, and the Proterozoic Era of about 700 million years when algae and other plant forms were created and the cloud envelope broke up permitting light to shine on the earth. The fifth day, Genesis 1:20-23, covers the Paleozoic Era of about 300 million years when invertebrate life of all kinds, fish, amphibia, insects, and reptiles were created. The sixth day, Genesis 1:24-31, covers the Mesozoic Era of about 140 million years (although he does not mention this era by name but does include the creation of mammals which geologists place in the Mesozoic) and the Cenozoic Era of about 60 million years, during which higher forms of animal life were created, and finally man.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

Dr. W. B. Riley, a well-known Fundamentalist of the past generation, held this view. In 1929 he held a debate with Dr. Harry Rimmer, in which it was resolved that the creative days of Genesis were aeons and not solar days. The debate was published by Research Science Bureau, Inc., 5141 Crenshaw Blvd., Los Angeles. Although Rimmer expressed dogmatically in the debate that the days of Genesis could only be solar days, he wrote in another pamphlet the same year:

ARE THE DAYS OF GENESIS LITERAL DAYS OF TWENTY-FOUR HOURS EACH, OR ARE THEY PERIODS OF TIME? To that question we can only reply, "we do not know:" and then set forth evidence that shows why we CANNOT KNOW It thus becomes impossible to dogmatize as to the meaning of the Creative days in the Genesis account of creation. If the student desires to accept the era theory, and say that these days were vast periods of time, there is room enough in the Hebrew meanings to allow for this interpretation.¹⁸⁸

The Gap Theory

This is also known as the Restitution or Restoration Theory. It holds that there was an original creation, Genesis 1:1, which occurred in the dateless past and that for some reason this creation became without form and void (desolate and empty), Genesis 1:2. Then in historic times God restored this earth to a habitable condition in six days, Genesis 1:3-31. Necessary to this theory is the rendering of Genesis 1:2: "And the earth *became* without form and void," not simply that it was in this condition as being one step in the original creative process.

Pember, an early advocate of this view, wrote:

It is thus clear that the second verse of Genesis describes the earth as a ruin; but there is no hint of the time which elapsed between creation and this ruin. Age after age may have rolled away, and it was probably during their course that the strata of the earth's crust were gradually developed There is room for any length of time between the first and second verses of the Bible The whole process took place in preadamite times, in conjunction, perhaps, with another race of beings, and, consequently, does not at present concern us.¹⁸⁹

Most advocates of this view simply state, as Pember did, that the gap between Genesis 1:1 and 2 allows plenty of time for all of the geologic ages, without giving much thought to how the ages of geology fit into the gap. It would appear that the prevalent idea is that all of the laying down of fossils took place during the millions of years that the earth lay in a state of desolation. But it should be evident that if all life had been destroyed from off the earth and the earth was

¹⁸⁸ Harry Rimmer, *Modern Science and the First Day of Creation* (Glendale: Glendale Printers, 1929), pp. 2 and 6.

¹⁸⁹ G. H. Pember, *Earth's Earliest Ages* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., N.D.), p. 28.

covered with water and darkness there could have been no animals to produce fossils. If the theory is true the geologic ages during which fossils were laid down must have taken place in the original creation before the judgment which caused the earth to become waste and empty. Thus if the earth has seen four billion years of history, almost all of this must have transpired before the so-called gap of Genesis 1:2. Geologists claim that there is no indication that the earth lay in this ruined state for millions of years, but properly understood the theory does not necessitate any such long period. The former creation could have come to an end in a sudden stroke of judgment and God could have begun almost immediately the days of restoration, so that the condition of Genesis 1:2 might not have lasted even a year. Since many of the fossil forms are almost identical with those of the present, this theory must postulate that the original creation was very similar to the recreation in Genesis 1:3-27.

Gap advocates appeal to [Isaiah 45:18](#) and [Jeremiah 4:23](#) for proof that the earth was not without form and void when God first created it. They appeal to Isaiah 14:12-17 and Ezekiel 28 for proof that the judgment which fell in Genesis 1:2 was due to the fall of Lucifer or Satan. Bullinger claims that the word *katabole*, translated *foundation*, really means a throwing down or overthrow and refers to the disruption of the original creation and not to its establishment.¹⁹⁰

Ramm gives a historical background of this view and states his opposition to it:

As early as 1791 Dathe (Pentateuch) had argued that the was of Gen. 1:2 should be translated by *became*. Other men who gave it standing and prestige were Buckland (*Bridgewater Treatises*), Sedgwick (*Discourses on the Studies of the University of Cambridge*), and Pratt (*Scripture and Science Not at Variance*). If it was Chalmers who first vigorously advocated it in modern times, it was the work of G. H. Pember (*Earth's Earliest Ages*, first edition, 1876; frequently republished) which canonized it The gap theory was adopted by Scofield in his *Reference Bible* and so accumulated to itself all the veneration and publicity of that edition of the Bible As a result the gap theory has become the standard interpretation throughout Fundamentalism, appearing in an endless stream of books, booklets, Bible studies, and periodical articles. In fact, it has become so sacrosanct with some that to question it is equivalent to tampering with Sacred Scripture or to manifest modernistic leanings.¹⁹¹

Creation Revealed In Six Days Theory

This theory claims that the days in Genesis are days during which God revealed to Adam the story of how He created the universe. P. J. Wiseman, author of this view, states:

¹⁹⁰ E. W. Bullinger, *The Companion Bible* (London: Oxford University Press, N.D.), Appendix 146, p. 171.

¹⁹¹ Ramm, *op. cit.*, pp. 196, 197.

(1) The six days, divided from each other by an evening and morning, cannot possibly refer to the time occupied by God in His acts and processes of creation.

(2) The six days refer to the time occupied in revealing to man the account of creation.

(3) God rested (lit.: ceased) on the seventh day not for His own sake but for man's sake, and because the revelation about creation was finished on the sixth day, not because on that day (or period) the creation of the world was finished.

(4) The narrative of creation was probably written on six tablets. Later it appears to have become the custom in Babylonia to write the story of creation on six tablets.

(5) There is good and sufficient evidence to show that the first page of the Bible is the oldest document which has come down to us.¹⁹²

Wiseman points out that each of the six days is introduced by the phrase: "And God said," indicating that God was speaking to Adam, revealing His Creatorhood. He vigorously argues that the days must be taken as literal days. He states that the Long Day theory and the Gap Theory were invented to reconcile the Bible with science but that neither is implied in the Bible, nor would they have been proposed had not science conflicted with the traditional view of Genesis. He claims that the traditional view is not in harmony with the remainder of Scripture.

Commentators have noted the problems in connection with God resting on the seventh day. Why did God need to rest? If He rested was it for a twenty-four hour day or for a geologic or mythical day? Wiseman points out the fact that our Lord stated that the sabbath was made for man (Mark 2:27), not for God. The omnipotent God did not need to rest for a day (cf. Isaiah 40:28), but man did. He says:

It should have been obvious to us by the very mention of the "evening and morning" in those six days, and of the cessation of the seventh day, that *God was doing something with MAN during each of the six days*. It is clear, therefore, that *He was not creating the heavens and the earth* Those six nightly periods of rest, as well as the seventh day's rest were introduced after man had been created.¹⁹³

Wiseman also claims that Genesis 2:1-4 is a colophon, which is an inscription placed at the end of a manuscript stating such things as the title, date, printer's name, etc. As an archeologist, he claims that these verses are in the form used in ancient Babylonia. The title is "The heavens and the earth." The date is expressed in the words: "When they were created in the day that the Lord God did the earth and the heavens." The date thus refers to the day when the

¹⁹² P. J. Wiseman, *Creation Revealed in Six Days* (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, Ltd., 1949), p. 8.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

histories or records were finished, not to the time that the earth was created. The word "Finished" was always placed on the last tablet of a series. "And were finished the heaven and the earth" means then that the recording of the story of creation was finished. Verse 3 in the Hebrew ends: "which God created and made." The Septuagint reads: "which at first God made this written account (or book) of the genesis (or origin) of the heavens and the earth." This most ancient Old Testament translation thus makes it clear that this is a *history* or *account* of creation. Wiseman translates this colophon:

And were finished "the heavens and the earth" and all their series, and on the seventh day God finished His business which He had done, and He desisted on the seventh day from all His business which He had done. And God blessed the seventh day, and set it apart, for in it He ceased from all His business which God created in reference to making these histories of "the heavens and the earth" in their being created, in the day when Jehovah God did "earth and heavens."¹⁹⁴

Comment should be made on the wording of the Fourth Commandment, since the six work days and one of rest are mentioned in the Bible only in connection with the giving of the sabbath. Our A. V. reads: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:11). This verse seems to say that God created the heavens and earth in six days, but Wiseman says that the word *made* (Hebrew *asah*) is translated *do* or *did* over 1,500 of the 2,500 times it is used in the Old Testament and that it contains no intimation of *creating*. It simply states that God *did* the heavens and earth. He also refers to such passages as Genesis 19:19; 24:14; 32:10; Judges 6:17 where *asah* is translated *show*, so that Exodus 20:11 might be translated: "For in six days the Lord showed the heavens and the earth and all that in them is and rested on the seventh day."

Thus, according to Wiseman the Genesis account says nothing about when God created or how long it took Him to finish. Whatever geologists may find about the antiquity of the earth cannot conflict with the record of Genesis. (We shall later consider the problem of pushing the date of Adam's creation back several hundred thousand years, for even if Wiseman's theory is true and the Bible says nothing about when the heavens and earth were created, it does say something about the approximate date of Adam's creation).

Pictorial Day and Moderate Concordism

This is how Ramm describes his view of the creation story. His view is almost identical with that of Wiseman, but whereas Wiseman says that God told the story to Adam in six literal days, Ramm believes that "the six days are *pictorial-*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 51, 52.

revelatory days, not literal days nor age days."¹⁹⁵ He follows J. H. Kurtz (*Bible and Astronomy*) in believing that the story of creation was revealed through visions, much as the prophets were given visions of future events. This explains the *pictorial-day* idea. The Long Day Theory holds to strict Concordism, which means that the order of the six days agrees exactly with the order in which God created. Moderate Concordism insists that the days are not completely chronological in order but are in part topical or logical. Ramm believes in Progressive Creation, which means that the completed product is at the end of the process, not at the beginning. In other words, God created the earth and put it through millions of our years of geologic history, during which vast forests grew and decayed, producing coal; sea life perished, producing oil; surface rocks weathered, producing forests and valleys; and from time to time great creative acts of God took place.

Finally, when every river had cut its intended course, when every mountain was in its purposed place, when every animal was on earth according to blueprint, then he whom all creation anticipated is made, *MAN*, in whom alone is the breath of God.¹⁹⁶

Ramm argues strongly that his view is not to be confused with theistic evolution which calls for creation from within with no acts *de novo*, and he contends that the Bible nowhere states that all of God's works must be instantaneous. Omission of the means God used in creation, he says, more effectively brings out the magnificence of God's power.

God says and it comes to pass! Expositors have been mistaken in assuming (i) this cannot involve time, and (ii) this cannot involve process Only by the ponderous methods of science followed through centuries of time do we commence to unravel the *how* of the universe. From science we learn (i) any time element and (ii) any process involved.¹⁹⁷

Local Creation Theory

This view was proposed by John Pye Smith a century ago in his book, *On the Relation Between the Holy Scriptures and Certain Parts of Geological Science*. He suggested that there were two creation accounts in Genesis, one of which was universal and has a history such as described by geologists, and the other which was local and comparatively recent and concerned only the land of the Jews. This view never became popular.

Successive Catastrophic Theories

¹⁹⁵ Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 219

Cuvier, a French naturalist at the beginning of the nineteenth century and Agassiz, a Swiss naturalist who later became associated with Harvard, believed that in the past there had been a series of catastrophic events, each followed by the creation of new forms of life and a long period of uniform geologic activity. They were creationists, but their theories produced no harmony between science and the Genesis account.

Theological Interpretation of Genesis

This view contends that the Bible is concerned only with spiritual truth and was never intended to teach scientific truth. Hence the writer is not telling when or how God created, but only that God is the Originator of all things. This theory is based upon a very unsatisfactory view of Inspiration, that spiritual truth may be stated in language which is false scientifically.

CONCLUSION

The fact that Bible-believing Christians have such varied ideas on the time and the method of creation indicates that this is not an area for dogmatism. Objections can be made against each of the foregoing theories: one may seem more tenable than all the others in light of our present knowledge. Scientific theories are in a constant state of flux, so that an interpretation of Genesis which accords with science today may have to be changed tomorrow. The all-important truth is that God as Creator is Sovereign Lord of the Universe.

24 THEORIES OPPOSED TO BIBLICAL CREATION

As previously stated the Biblical doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* by God is unique among the religious philosophies of the world. And as Hodge states: "That the mutable cannot be eternal, would seem to be self-evident."¹⁹⁸ Therefore men almost universally have supposed that the earth must have had a beginning. But how did it begin and from whence came the material from which it is made? Science can only speculate and can never give any final answers on these questions. But whether the answers come from science or from the world religions, the speculations usually involve the preexistence of matter: the earth was made from some kind of primordial stuff, either by a divinity or by blind forces of nature. These speculations concerning the beginning of the universe may be classified under the following heads:

MATERIALISM

Materialism, which denies the existence of aught but matter, must of necessity postulate the eternity of matter, since it is a universally accepted maxim that "out

¹⁹⁸ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprint 1940), I, p. 550.

of nothing, nothing comes" (*ex nihilo nihil fit*). Atomic scientists have discovered that there are three basic building blocks in the universe, protons, neutrons, and electrons, out of which every element in existence may be formed. One proton united with one electron makes hydrogen, the lightest of all substances. Eighty-two protons, one hundred twenty-one neutrons and eighty-two electrons combined make lead. It is natural to assume that at one time all matter in the universe existed as simply a huge cloud of these particles as yet uncombined. Where these atomic particles came from science cannot tell. Scientists who are theistic in their thinking would probably say that God created them; those who are atheistic would be forced to say that these particles have always existed. That the universe was at one time such a collection of particles is the basic concept of the *Big Bang Theory*, currently popular with many astronomers. This theory states that this super-heated cloud of atomic particles exploded about 10 billion years ago, throwing matter in all directions, which upon cooling formed into planets, stars, and galaxies. Those who hold this view along with the eternity of matter are forced to go further and suppose that when this big bang has expended all of its energy, the expanding universe will begin to shrink and in time come back to its original condition, only to explode again, and then to continue indefinitely through these 10 billion year cycles, even as it has from eternity past.

Various theories have been proposed to explain the origin of the earth and of the solar system. These theories are not necessarily atheistic, since it is possible to hold that while God created all matter in the beginning, He used natural means to form this matter into its present condition. This is the distinction which theologians make between immediate and mediate creation: the former referring to the instantaneous creation of matter out of nothing, and the latter the using of material already created to form a new thing, such as God using the dust of the earth to form man's body.

The Nebular Hypothesis

This theory was proposed by Immanuel Kant and Laplace. They reasoned that the solar system was formed by a large saucer-shaped cloud of gas slowly rotating and constantly contracting by gravitation between its particles. As it shrank its speed of rotation steadily increased until centrifugal force of the outer particles overcame gravitation, causing one ring of gas after another to separate and each ring condensing to form a planet. For over a century scientists held to this explanation, until it was discovered the sun was rotating much too slowly to agree with the theory.

The Close-Encounter Hypothesis

This is sometimes called the Tidal, Collision, or Planetesimal Theory. It supposes that in the distant past another star came very close to our Sun but was travelling fast enough to avoid a collision (a variation of the theory supposes a partial collision did occur), causing great tidal bulges on the Sun which were

torn loose to form a ribbon of incandescent material between the two stars. The ribbon cooled and condensed into liquid masses forming the planets. The Planetesimal variation supposes that the matter torn from the sun cooled and condensed into small solid bodies (planetesimals) which in turn grew into planets by repeated collisions. Neither the Tidal nor the Planetesimal theories could explain the rotation of the planets or why the larger planets were farthest from the Sun. The Collision theory seemed to account for the rotation of the planets but left unexplained the fact that the larger planets are the more distant ones.

Modern Nebular Theory

More recently scientists have returned to a revision of the Nebular Hypothesis. One suggestion is that the planets were formed by the growth of nuclei in the nebula rather than by the separation of gaseous rings. Another suggestion is that the Sun passed through a cloud of dust and gas and picked up enough material to form the planets.

A college-level science textbook states:

Some recent hypotheses meet this challenge (of producing a solar system like the one we know) more successfully than did the nebular hypothesis, but no one of them has been able to answer all objections. At present we simply do not know how the solar system was formed, but astronomers and physicists never tire of making guesses.¹⁹⁹

DUALISM

Dualism teaches that there are two distinct, irreducible, self-existent substances or principles, God and matter, or that there are two eternally existing antagonistic spirits or gods, one good and the other evil. Of the former type Dr. Strong states:

Dualism seeks to show how the One becomes many, how the Absolute gives birth to the relative, how the good can consist with the evil. The *hyle* (matter) of Plato seems to have meant nothing but empty space, whose not-being, or merely negative existence, prevented the full realization of the divine ideas. Aristotle regarded the *hyle* as a more positive cause of imperfection,-it was like the hard material which hampers the sculptor in expressing his thought. The real problem for both Plato and Aristotle was to explain the passage from pure spiritual existence to that which is phenomenal and imperfect, from the absolute and unlimited to that which exists in space and time. Finiteness, instead of being created, was regarded as having eternal existence and as limiting all divine manifestations. The *hyle*, from being a mere abstraction, became either a

¹⁹⁹ Konrad Krauskopf, *Fundamentals of Physical Science* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1953), p. 98.

negative or a positive source of evil. The Alexandrian Jews, under the influence of Hellenic culture, sought to make this dualism explain the doctrine of creation.²⁰⁰

The other form of Dualism which holds to the existence of two equally powerful antagonistic spirits does not teach the eternity of matter, but rather that the evil spirit is the creator of matter. Manicheanism, a blending of Oriental dualism with Christianity, is perhaps the outstanding example of this teaching. From time immemorial man has sought to reconcile the existence of a finite, changing, and evil world with that of an infinite, holy God. Dualism tries to find the solution in postulating either the existence of an evil god who has created the world or has made it his instrument, or the eternity of matter along with the eternity of God.

This view is not to be confused with the Biblical teaching concerning Satan. While Satan is called the god of this age, Scripture represents him as a created being, of great power, whom God for reasons best known to Himself permits to usurp power for the present time. This evil spirit was created good and holy, so that in the original creation there was no evil. Satan fell and became evil through an act of his own volition.

EMANATIONISM

The view just considered was basic to Alexandrian gnosticism, even as this view is basic to Syrian gnosticism. This teaching states that the universe has been produced by successive emanations from the substance of God. These emanations were called Aeons. The idea involved may be symbolized by the rays of the Sun which are very intense at its surface but which decrease in intensity with distance until at last they disappear in darkness in the far reaches of space. So it was thought that the emanations from God's substance, being separated from Him by greater and greater distances produce a world of spirit, the intensity of which varied inversely with its distance from the source until at length it vanished in matter. The theory of the Aeons was an attempt to build a bridge over the gulf between the divine and the human, between spirit and matter. In more recent times the doctrine of emanation has been held by Swedenborg. Strong quotes him: "Every one who thinks from clear reason sees that the universe is not created from nothing All things were created out of a substance As God alone is substance in itself and therefore the real essence, it is evident that the existence of things is from no other source."²⁰¹

CREATION FROM ETERNITY

The argument for this view goes something like this: If God is eternal He must have been eternally manifesting His power which is seen in creation. If He is immutable, He must always have had a creation, since to think otherwise would

²⁰⁰ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1907), p. 378.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

show change in Him. If He is love, He must always have had creatures upon which to bestow His love. This was somewhat the way in which Origen reasoned, and others in modern times have followed his line of reasoning. Creation from eternity is a contradiction in terms. Creation is an act which brings something into being, but since eternity had no beginning an eternal creation could have had no beginning. Besides making matter eternal this view says that the universe is necessary to God's existence. Any necessitarian view of creation is contrary to Scriptural teaching.

SPONTANEOUS GENERATION

The unscriptural theories thus far considered have concerned chiefly the material universe. Spontaneous generation has reference to the beginning of life. Many biologists before Pasteur believed that matter had the power under proper circumstances to develop living substance, but since Pasteur's experiments, along with those of other biologists, proved beyond doubt the falsity of the theory, only uneducated and superstitious people hold to this belief. Fuller and Tippo state: "The generally accepted belief at present, then, is that living organisms develop only as offspring of other living beings, never as products of nonliving substances."²⁰² They show the anomaly of the scientist who rejects Divine Creation, for "he must reverse his explanation of the origin of the *first* protoplasm to explain the origin of all subsequent living protoplasm from the first protoplast. In other words, spontaneous generation, according to these opponents of the idea of Divine Creation, worked when the first living substance was formed, but probably hasn't worked since."²⁰³ These writers are very fair in stating that those who place their faith in Divine Creation have just as much justification for their belief as do the scientists who believe that spontaneous generation worked once in the beginning.

LIFE FROM OUTER SPACE

Since the advent of the Space Age new interest has been generated in this theory. The view had been propounded that life on the earth may have originated from bacteria carried to earth by a meteorite from outer space, but in the absence of any credible evidence the theory had lost many of its adherents. Since man has learned to navigate in space, new speculations have arisen as to the origin of life. According to a press report in 1960, Prof. Thomas Gold, director of the Cornell University Center for Radiophysics and Space Research, thinks that bacteria, viruses or other lower forms of life might have been in garbage left on earth by spacemen who visited the earth a billion years ago, and that these bacteria have evolved into all of the present forms of life. Even if this theory could be proved true it would explain, not the origin of life itself, but only how life originated on the planet Earth. It is strange that reputable scientists allow themselves to promote such speculations for which there is not a shred of

²⁰² Harry J. Fuller and Oswald Tippo, *College Botany* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1949), p. 24.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

evidence, and at the same time brand as unscientific the belief that a Man once did come to earth from another world Who was the Creator of life.

The authors of *College Botany*, quoted above, are correct when they say: "It is possible that the problem of life's beginning on our planet will always remain insoluble, a philosophical question rather than a subject capable of experimental investigation and solution."²⁰⁴ Divine Creation is the subject of faith. The origin of matter or of life can never be determined by scientific experiment.

EVOLUTION

Sir Robert Anderson prefaces one of his chapters in his book, *A Doubter's Doubts About Science and Religion*, with this quotation:

It's lovely to live on a raft. We had the sky up there all speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our backs and look up at them and discuss about whether they were made, or only just happened. Jim he allowed they was made, but I allowed they happened; I judged it would have took too long to make so many. Jim said the moon could, a laid them; well, that looked kind of reasonable, so I didn't say nothing against it, because I've seen a frog lay most as many, so of course it could be done. We used to watch the stars that fell, too, and see them struck down. Jim allowed they'd got spoiled and was hove out of the nest.

Anderson goes on to say:

In this charming piece of fooling, Mark Twain states the problems admirably. The question is whether things were made, or "only just happened." But Jim, being a philosopher, suggested evolution as a compromise, and Huck Finn's deism was not intelligent enough or vigorous enough to resist it.²⁰⁵

Actually the theory of Evolution has nothing whatsoever to say about the origin of life itself: it has to do with the development of organisms after life came into being. Evolutionists do, however, have a theory on the origin of life: most of them suppose that life "just happened" through some kind of spontaneous generation.

Definitions

The general meaning of evolution, according to the dictionary, is development or growth. The Bible clearly teaches this kind of evolution. There is evolution from the egg to the mature plant or animal. Variations between individuals of the same

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

²⁰⁵ Sir Robert Anderson, *A Doubter's Doubts About Science and Religion*, (New York: Gospel Publishing House, 1909), p. 22.

kind appear to be limited only by the number of individuals. But this is not what scientists mean by evolution.

Evolution is an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion, during which the matter passes from an indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity, and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation.

This is Herbert Spencer's definition as quoted by Sir R. Anderson. Anderson remarks on this definition:

If this cacophonous sentence be translated into English, it will be found to contain some element of truth. Herbert Spencer does not here pretend, as the careless reader of his philosophy might suppose, that matter itself is capable of producing any such results. Every change is due to motion, and behind motion is the power which causes it. What and where that power is, Herbert Spencer cannot tell. He calls it Force, but he might just as well term it Jupiter or Baal. Were he to assert that it is unknown, no one could object, however much he differed from him. But with the aggressive insolence of unbelief he declares it to be "unknowable," thus shutting the door for ever against all religion.²⁰⁶

Fuller and Tipppo state:

The concept of organic evolution... holds that the first living organisms on the earth were very simple in structure, that all plants and animals which have appeared on the earth are descendants of the simple, primordial organisms, and that during the main course of evolutionary change, there has occurred an ever-increasing structural complexity and diversification.²⁰⁷

History

Although some of the ancient Greek philosophers held views which may be classified as evolutionary, it was not until Darwin published his *Origin of Species* in 1859 that the doctrine was given a scientific basis and became foundational to the biological sciences. While Darwin, having studied for the ministry at Edinburgh, was not an atheist, his theory has become one of the most powerful weapons of atheism and anti-christianity.

Other men before Darwin had speculated about the transformation of the species, notably Lamarck, a French naturalist. He had observed, as every thoughtful person has, that no two individuals are exactly alike. He developed the doctrine that acquired characteristics are inherited. If a certain animal had to

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

²⁰⁷ Fuller and Tipppo, *op. cit.*, p. 860.

reach up into the trees for its food it would have to stretch its neck. Each succeeding generation would thus inherit a little longer neck. This would explain the evolution of the giraffe. On the other hand he believed that if animals stopped using a certain part of their body, that organ would atrophy. Thus when a certain band of apes decided to move out of the trees and live on the ground they stopped using their tails. Gradually their tails grew smaller and smaller through disuse, and that would explain why man has no tail. Of course, he claimed that man does have a vestigial tail, the coccyx, which is the end of the spine. The coccyx, however, does not have any of the characteristics of being a separate appendage; it is simply the end of the spine, and as another has said, "After all, it does have to have an end." Lamarck's theory has since been disproved. There has been no proof that acquired characteristics have ever been inherited. Since the true mechanism of inheritance has been discovered to be in the chromosomes of the germ cells, it is evident that nothing which an individual acquires during his lifetime could be passed on to his offspring, for the germ cells are present at birth and maintain the same characteristics throughout life.

Darwin's main thesis was that of *natural selection*. He observed the competition in nature, the struggle for existence, and from that framed the doctrine of *the survival of the fittest*. He reasoned that the weak and diseased forms of life die off and become extinct, causing all living things to evolve into stronger, more virulent forms. Even though this principle is seen to be at work in nature, it can explain only the survival of the stronger: it cannot explain the evolution of one species into another. But the fact of the matter is that the fittest do not always survive. Take the case of the protozoa. Scientists agree that these single-celled animals have been in existence ever since life appeared on the earth. Evolution tells us that all higher plants and animals descended from these protozoa. Darwin taught that the weaker die off and the stronger survive and change into higher forms. If this be true we should expect to find that these weak, microscopic animals would have become extinct millions of years ago and that they would have been supplanted by a stronger progeny. But the fact is that these very same forms are still with us today, apparently doing as well in surviving as they did at the dawn of time. Many of the supposedly superior descendants of the protozoa have become extinct, but the weaker parents have survived.

More recently Hugo de Vries has tried to explain Evolution on the basis of mutations. As stated above, it is now well known that all plants and animals have reproductive cells containing chromosomes which carry all of the inherited characteristics. Lamarck and Darwin were ignorant of this fact. It has been observed that infrequently when fertilization takes place an accident may occur, so that the companion chromosomes do not mate properly, or a chromosome may break and part of it may join the wrong chromosome. This produces a change or mutation in the offspring. Very often the mutation is lethal: the offspring is born dead. When the change is not so drastic the offspring may be sterile, so that it is not capable of reproducing itself, or it may be deformed.

Mutations in the fruit fly, which is used extensively in laboratory experiments, have produced families without eyes or without wings. These handicapped individuals would no doubt perish if man did not breed them in the laboratory.

Modern biologists in general claim that the combined forces of natural selection and mutations over many millions of years are sufficient to explain the evolution of all living things. There are, however, several serious objections to this view. As already noted, geologists state that the first real traces of fossil life are to be found in the Cambrian strata which was laid down about 500 million years ago. Now if sufficient mutations have taken place during these 500 millions of years to produce the multitudinous forms of life now present on earth it would be only logical to suppose that during that vast period of time such changes would have occurred so that no living thing today would very closely resemble the very early forms of life. But what are the facts?

According to Geologist A. H. Clark,

The Fauna of the Cambrian period were singularly similar to the animals of the present day ... the facts are that all of the fossils, even the very earliest of them, fall into existing major groups. This is indisputable.²⁰⁸

Gedney also quotes Zoologist W. K. Brooks on Cambrian life:

Far from showing us the simple unspecialized ancestors of modern animals, they are most intensely modern themselves in the zoological sense, and they belong to the same order of nature as that which prevails at the present day.

According to the mutation theory, it would seem highly improbable that so many species of plant and animal life would have remained true to type and would be identical with modern species after so many millions of years.

It should be observed also that mutations work mainly against the theory of evolution. Most mutations are detrimental, if not lethal. And not only so, but mutations which have produced a new species have never been observed. Fruit flies may be bombarded with x-rays to produce mutations artificially. Such experiments have produced flies with slit eyes, white eyes, no eyes, with smooth or spiny thorax, with straight or curly wings, with black or light bodies, with normal or deformed legs, but after all of the variations have been produced we still have fruit flies and not some different species. Even given millions of years for the process to work it is unproved and inconceivable that chance mutations could have brought about such purposeful and intricate mechanisms as the human eye, to say nothing of the millions of other useful organs and organisms in the world. Mutations may be the explanation of why we observe so many variations within species, but not of why we see so many species.

²⁰⁸ Edwin K. Gedney, *Modern Science and Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1948), p. 33.

Evidences for Evolution

Fuller and Tipppo list eight chief evidences which are supposed to demonstrate the fact of organic evolution.²⁰⁹

1. *Evidence from the study of fossils.* It is customary to give the impression that the ascending layers of rocks contain fossils which show a gradual ascending complexity of organisms. Evidence has already been presented which indicates that several thousand species appear suddenly and contemporaneously in the Cambrian and that evidence is wholly lacking for intermediate forms between the various major groups or phyla.

2. *Evidence from the study of comparative morphology.* Evolutionists work on the theory that structural similarity proves relationship. Thus every animal that has a backbone must be related to a common ancestor. That is much like saying that every vehicle that has four wheels must be related to a common prototype, or that a boy with red hair is more closely related to all of those parents both of whom have red hair, than he is to his own parents of whom only one has that color hair. Similarity may show relationship, but in many cases it does not.

3. *Evidence from a study of comparative development or ontogeny.* This argument is sometimes called the Biogenic Hypothesis: "Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny," that is, the individual in developing from the egg cell reduplicates the history of the development of its species. The foetus of the human species begins as a single-celled organism. It is said to be recapitulating the first stage in its evolution, when it was an amoeba perhaps 500 million years ago. Since there are many similarities between the human embryo and that of other animals all of these are said to show that the human was once fish, fowl, and mammal. It would seem that evolutionists would be somewhat embarrassed in pushing this type of argument. They seem to have the impression that Special Creation means that God would have to make every species completely different with no similarities whatsoever. This type of reasoning is as unfounded as supposing that an architect can have no common designs in different buildings which he plans. It is only to be expected that if the same person designed all of the plants and animals there would be many similarities. Lack of similarity would indicate chance or multi-design.

4. *Evidence from the study of comparative physiology.* This argument is similar to the last two above. For example, it is stated that the ability of green plants to carry on photosynthesis indicates a common ancestry. This argument is sufficiently answered above.

5. *Evidence from the study of inheritance.* Cross-breeding of plants and animals is supposed to show evidence of evolution. In order to approach this

²⁰⁹ Fuller and Tipppo, *op. cit.*, p. 884.

argument intelligently it is necessary to ask what is the meaning of a species and does it have the same meaning as the word "kind" in Genesis 1:11. Taxonomists have developed a system of classification beginning with the largest group, *Kingdom*, and progressing down to the smallest, *Species*, through *Phylum*, *Class*, *Order*, *Family*, and *Genus*. Organisms of the same species are those that are most alike and which freely interbreed. For example the cat Family is *Felidae*; one genus of the cat family is *Felis*, which includes the house cat, mountain lion, jaguar, and tiger. The house cat belongs to the species *domestica* and the lion to *leo*. Now it is generally supposed that the word "kind" in the Bible is synonymous with the modern term *species*. But we are sure that Moses was unacquainted with modern taxonomy. When God created cats it is possible that this *kind* of animal corresponded to the modern classification of Family, or at least Genus, so that all of the various species and genera of cats have come from that original "kind" of cat that God created. Almost all anthropologists believe in monogenism, and yet, consider the differences between races, nationalities, and individuals! If all of the differences between human beings who descended from a common ancestor could develop, it is surely possible that the word "kind" is a much broader classification than species. The crossing of an ass with a horse to produce a mule is the making of a new species in modern scientific parlance, but it is not necessarily the production of a different "kind" in Bible language.

6. *Evidence from the study of domestication.* This argument is almost identical to that on inheritance, and no further comment is needed.

7. *Evidence from the study of geographical distribution.* The fact that certain isolated regions, such as the Hawaiian Islands, have floras consisting largely of plants found in no other parts of the world, is stated as proof that evolution has produced these peculiar plants and because of natural barriers they have not been able to spread to other regions of the earth. This could be an explanation, but there are surely other possible explanations. Many plants and animals have in the past inhabited other parts of the earth but have become extinct in those regions due to change in climatic or other conditions.

8. *Evidence from the study of intergrading species.* College Botany states:

In some genera of plants (e.g., in asters, oaks, roses, willows, and hawthorns), the identification and separation of various species is difficult because of intergrading plants. In these genera most of the individuals of one species may be distinct from most of the individuals of another, related species, but the presence in both of variable plants with more or less transitional or intermediate characters, that is, with characters of both species, renders impossible the erection of a sharp line of demarcation between the two supposed species. If all species were specially created, immutable entities, such intergrading plants could not reasonably be expected to exist. Biologists apply the concept of evolution to these genera which contain intergrading species and regard them as groups in

which evolution is actively progressing and in which continuous variation and alteration are occurring.²¹⁰

A sufficient answer to this has already been given under No. 5 above. This textbook is simply making the mistake of reading the biologist's definition of *species* into the Bible word *kind*.

Kinds of Evolution

Up to this point we have considered Organic Evolution from the naturalistic or atheistic standpoint. God or supernatural interventions find no place in this scheme. On the other hand there have been a few Evangelical and many more Liberal theologians who have adopted a view called Theistic Evolution. They adopt evolution as the method by which God worked to populate the earth with all of the various forms of life. They admit that God created the first speck of protoplasm, or that He endowed matter with the supernatural ability to produce living substance out of inorganic chemicals. Evolution is said to be teleological or purposive. Instead of creating a seed for every kind of life, as the Bible teaches, they claim that God created a seed capable of producing every kind of life. Theistic Evolutionists usually take the view that God used evolution to produce an animal with all of the bodily features of man, and that when that stage was reached God breathed into this animal body the Divine Spirit, thus giving to it the Divine image and making man more than a mere animal.

Various evangelical theologians have been classified as Theistic Evolutionists, such as James Orr and A. H. Strong. The latter holds to what he calls the *pictorial-summary interpretation* of the Genesis account, although he states "... we do not hold this or any future scheme of reconciling Genesis and geology to be a finality."²¹¹ He tells us:

If science should render it certain that all the present species of living creatures were derived by natural descent from a few original germs, and that these germs were themselves an evolution of inorganic forces and materials, we should not therefore regard the Mosaic account as proved untrue. We should only be required to revise our interpretation of the word *bara* in Gen. 1:21, 27, and to give it there the meaning of mediate creation, or creation by law.²¹²

He also states: "Evolution is only the method of God. It has to do with the *how*, not with the *why*, of phenomena, and therefore is not inconsistent with design, but rather is a new and higher illustration of design." And he quotes Henry Ward Beecher: "Design by wholesale is greater than design by retail." He also quotes

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 866.

²¹¹ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 395.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 392.

Cobbe: "It is a singular fact that, whenever we find out *how* a thing is done, our first conclusion seems to be that *God* did not do it."²¹³

While we do not agree with Theistic Evolution, in all fairness to those who hold the view it must be admitted that they do not deny that God could have created each species immediately, but they believe that He created matter and placed within it certain laws and powers of development which would result in all of the living forms which He purposed to inhabit the earth. From their viewpoint evolution is not a chance process, but one which is guided by God's design. Just as the Bible plainly states that God used material which He had already created with which to form man's body, much as a man uses raw materials with which to build a house, so, they say, God used materials and processes with which to bring into existence all living things. We do not deny that God could have used such methods of mediate creation, even as the Theistic Evolutionist does not deny that God could have created immediately, but we believe that the Bible teaches that the various *kinds* of life were created directly by God, and we do not believe that the facts of science disprove this fact. Some evolutionists would have us believe that a cross-section of the rocks show a gradual development from simple one-celled animals in the lowest to the most complex, highly developed animals in the highest stratum, but this is not the record of geology. The first undisputed traces of fossil animal life occur in the Cambrian strata and of these Gedney states:

About two thousand species of life have been found in the Cambrian strata in which all the phyla of animal life except the chordates or vertebrates, and most of the great classes, are represented. This constitutes a *third great geological fact*, that all the invertebrate phyla appear contemporaneously with marked suddenness in the Cambrian differentiated into phyla, classes, and orders, and with no clear indication as to how they developed into this condition if they did develop at all.²¹⁴

He quotes A. H. Clark (Smithsonian Institute):

So we see that the fossil record, the actual history of the animal life on the earth, bears out the assumption that at its very first appearance animal life in its broader features was in essentially the same form as that in which we now know it Thus, so far as concerns the major groups of animals, the creationists seem to have the better of the argument. There is not the slightest evidence that any of the major groups arose from any other.

If all of these hundreds of species of invertebrate life appear suddenly in the same strata of rocks, it is evident that they did not gradually develop through a process of evolution over millions of years, and it is therefore evident that

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

²¹⁴ Gedney, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

Theistic Evolution is just as contrary to fact as is Atheistic or any other kind of evolution.

25 THE MAGNITUDE OF CREATION

In order to fully appreciate the work of God in creation the student of Theology should understand something about the magnitude of the universe. God's greatness is to be seen both in the realm of matter and in that of spirit. Christians are prone to de-emphasize the material world, supposing that to do otherwise would tend toward materialism. However, materialism is the denial of any existence or power apart from matter, and it is as great an error to deny any existence apart from spirit. The Christian view embraces both worlds, while recognizing the pre-eminence of the spiritual, for it is eternal and unchanging, whereas the material is ephemeral and changing.

Why, we may inquire, did God create so vast a universe? If He made the stars about two thousand of which can be seen with the naked eye, simply as a decoration of the night skies, why did He create the billions which no man knew existed until the invention of the telescope? While not pretending to answer that question at this point, it should be evident from the magnitude of the material creation that God has placed great emphasis upon His works in the physical universe. We have no intimation that God revealed any scientific truth about the galaxies to the Psalmist, but under the influence of the Holy Spirit he was moved to write: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork Of old thou hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands" (Ps. 8:3; 19:1; 102:25). The Psalmist, though lacking in the scientific knowledge which man today possesses, could see sufficient of the greatness of God revealed through His creation to humble man and cause him to ask: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?"

THE EARTH

It is very doubtful whether any of the Bible writers understood that the earth was a sphere or that they had any comprehension of the actual size of the earth. It is true that Isa. 40:22 speaks of the "circle of the earth," that Job 22:14 speaks of God walking "in the circuit of heaven," and that Ps. 19:6 speaks of the "circuit of the sun," and while these statements do not prove the sphericity of the earth they are in harmony with it. The Lord asked Job many questions about the physical universe which he could not answer (see ch. 38, 39), and through Isaiah He asked: "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?" (ch. 40:12). Since Isaiah's day man has learned how to weigh the earth and other heavenly

bodies. Isaac Newton discovered the law of Universal Gravitation and Henry Cavendish succeeded in measuring the force of gravitation, and from the resulting formula it is an easy matter to measure the mass of the earth, which turns out to be 66×10^{20} tons (66 followed by 20 zeros). One of Solomon's proverbs was that "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honor of kings is to search out a matter" (Prov. 25:2). Man's success in sending space probes to the moon and the planets of the solar system is sufficient evidence of the accuracy of his *searchings*.

THE SOLAR SYSTEM

There is little indication in Scripture that the writers made any distinction between the planets and the stars, although some of them were probably aware that there were certain heavenly bodies which did not maintain a fixed position but wandered about among the stars. The Greeks called these wanderers planets, from *planao*, to wander, to go astray. Jude likens apostates to *wandering stars* (vs. 13), for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever, but his allusion is probably to so-called shooting-stars or perhaps comets. There are several references to falling stars ([Isa. 34:4](#); [Dan. 8:10](#); [Matt. 24:29](#); [Mk. 13:25](#); [Rev. 6:13](#)), which refer to meteoric showers and not to the fixed stars which are many thousands of times larger than the earth. The Bible also refers to the *morning stars* ([Job 38:7](#); [Rev. 2:28](#); [22:16](#)) and to the *day star* ([2 Pet. 1:19](#)), where the allusion is no doubt to the brighter planets, Venus and Jupiter.

The major references to the solar system are to the two great lights, the Sun and the Moon. The Sun is mentioned 165 times and the Moon 61 times in the Bible. Eclipses of both of these bodies are doubtless referred to by such expressions as "the moon became as blood" ([Rev. 6:12](#)) and the "sun shall be turned into darkness" ([Acts 2:20](#)). The Sun and the Moon are used metaphorically in various places in Scripture ([Gen. 37:9](#); [Ps. 84:11](#); [Mal. 4:2](#); [John 1:9](#); [Jas. 1:17](#)).

In the creation account we read: "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years" ([Gen. 1:14](#)). We thus see that from the very beginning the Sun and Moon were the basis for reckoning the day, the month and the year. For a discussion of the Jewish religious year and the method of correcting the calendar for the discrepancies between the solar and lunar year, see article on Astronomy in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*.

THE GALAXIES

Although not more than 2,000 separate stars can be distinguished by the naked eye, the ancient Hebrews must have understood that the granular band of light which surrounds the heavens, which we call the Milky Way (which is the

meaning of *galaxy*), was composed of myriads of stars, too faint and too distant to be individually distinguished. The number of the stars is likened to the number of the grains of sand of the sea: "As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured" (Jer. 33:22). Probably the earliest writing in the Bible states: "Is not God in the height of heaven? and behold the height of the stars, how high they are!" (Job 22:12), and the Psalmist states: "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him" (103:11). Paul refers to the stars in illustrating the truth of the resurrection: "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory" (1 Cor. 15:41).

The purpose of the Bible in reference to the starry creation is not to set forth a system of stellar mechanics, to explain the how and the why of the motions of the heavenly bodies. Rather, the seeming infinitude of the creation is presented as an evidence of the almighty power and greatness of our God. Had God so willed He could have created only the earth, or perhaps only the solar system, but as the Infinite One He seemingly threw out into space a numberless host of great burning orbs. A further purpose of God in creation is to show His great faithfulness: "Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night,.. . If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever." (Jer. 31:35, 36). The regularity of the motions of the heavenly bodies taught Israel the immutability and faithfulness of God. If Israel could learn these lessons with only their unaided eye to behold the greatness and regularity of the universe, how much more should we who have the aid of telescopic eyes which surpass the human eye by over 100,000 times in seeing ability, so that we know not only the magnitude of our Milky Way galaxy, which is approximately 100,000 light years in diameter (a light year is 5,865,906,000,000 miles), but the fact that millions of other like galaxies exist, spread out at inconceivable distances from each other as far as man has been able to probe into space. Truly, as the Scripture says: "the host of heaven cannot be numbered."

Since astronomical distances are so inconceivable and incomprehensible to the human mind, it is perhaps helpful to scale down the universe to a size we can take in. If we could shrink our galaxy 100,000 billion times, its diameter would be approximately 5,865 miles. On that same scale the entire solar system would occupy an orbit 4.6 inches in diameter. The sun would be only about one-fourth the size of the period at the end of this sentence, the smallest of the planets would be smaller than the smallest bacterium, about two millionths of an inch, and the largest would be about 70 millionths of an inch. The sun and its eight planets would thus be represented by a hardly visible speck plus eight various sized bacteria in a circle 4.6 inches in diameter. And to reach the nearest star we would have to go a quarter of a mile to find another speck the size of the sun. And in this disc shaped galaxy 5,865 miles in diameter and about 600 miles thick

we would scatter 100 billion other stars, the largest of which would be sixteen hundredths of an inch (representing an actual diameter of 300 million miles).

It would have seemed sufficient for God to create one such galaxy, but photographic plates reveal the existence of perhaps 100 million such island universes. The nearest one to our galaxy is estimated to be 900,000 light years distant, which means that on our scaled down model we would have to go over 50,000 miles to reach it. The most distant nebulae which have been photographed have been estimated to be 1,000 million light years distant, which would mean almost 60 million miles on the model.

Our effort to make a model of the universe which can be comprehended has resulted in seeing some two billion people living on a globe the size of a bacterium, with space spreading out at least 60 million miles in all directions, containing 100 billion island universes, each containing from 100 million to 100 billion stars. However we look at God's creation, whether in its actual dimensions or in a model, we cannot comprehend its magnitude.

The size of the universe has something to say about its age. If there are objects visible which are one billion light years distant, then it has taken light one billion years to reach the earth. It must be admitted that astronomers can only roughly estimate such great distances, but allowing for a large margin of error it would appear that the universe must be many, many times the six thousand year age which many of the flood geologists hold.

The knowledge of the magnitude of the universe may have one of two effects upon man. As an unbeliever he may feel that the earth is just a speck of dust in the universe and that man is of little importance. On the other hand, as a believer he sees not merely the magnitude of the universe, but the greatness of the God who called it into being out of nothing, and as one created in the image of God and recreated in Christ Jesus, he sees redeemed man in a place of greatest importance, as a fellow-worker with God.

26 GOD'S PURPOSE IN CREATION

The question may be asked: Why did God create the universe? What purpose did He have in creation, and has that purpose been realized? Various answers have been given depending upon the attitude toward God and the Bible.

THE NATURALISTIC ATTITUDE

The naturalistic or materialistic attitude recognizes no design in creation. Life is simply an accident which happened when certain atoms combined under chance circumstances and evolution has carried that chance process on to the present state of affairs. Man, through the evolutionary process, has developed a

mentality, which makes him to some extent a master of nature and a controller of the process of evolution. Since man has evolved there has come into this process a kind of purpose, a purpose which is determined by the will and action of mankind. If mankind decides to become civilized, do away with war, conquer disease, end poverty through social programs, the materialist has hopes that the world will improve and that the design which man has put into it will some day be realized. If, on the other hand, man decides to use atomic power for selfish ends, humanity along with all other living things may be destroyed from the face of the earth. Thus naturalism which denies the existence of God recognizes only a conditional kind of purpose based upon the will of man.

EMERGENT EVOLUTION POSITION

Emergentists hold that the eternal and basic material of existence is Space-Time, out of which all else has emerged. First in the process matter emerges from Space-Time and after a long period of evolution life emerges from matter. After life has developed for many long ages mind emerges. This is the highest form of existence yet produced. The future will see yet higher and higher levels of existence emerge, but man has no knowledge of just what that development will be. Some emergentists suppose that evolution is occurring in a purely spontaneous manner, while others hold that the process is being guided by a cosmic force. Henri Bergson calls this force *elan vital*. Warren C. Young makes the following observation:

It is interesting to observe in this development that the scientific mind had great difficulty in ridding itself of God. No sooner had the naturalistic emergentists thrown Him out of the picture in favor of Space-Time, than others found it necessary to bring Him back in the form of a vitalistic force. The process of development and emergence, to which the modern mind has committed itself, cannot be accounted for spontaneously, so that God must be brought back in some unsatisfactory and half-hearted fashion in an effort to account for the facts. It must be remembered, however, that the "God" of the vitalism is *within* the natural order, that "he" is little more than an impersonal, striving principle, rather than a Being Who stands outside of the process of existence as eternal, personal, creative will.²¹⁵

NON-CHRISTIAN THEISTIC POSITION

Those who admit the existence of an intelligent extramundane God without accepting the Bible as the revelation of that God, have speculated various ends for which God created the world. Some suppose that God desired to have a field in which to develop moral excellence in rational creatures, in order to exalt His own attribute of holiness. Others think that since God is love and the very nature of love is to communicate itself, God created in order to have subjects upon

²¹⁵ Warren G. Young, *A Christian Approach to Philosophy* (Wheaton, Ill.: Van Kampen Press, 1954), p. 88.

which to bestow His love. Others, such as Leibnitz in his *Theodicee*, make the end in creation to be the production of happiness. The existence of sin and suffering in the world has always been a stumbling stone for philosophers and theologians. If God created in order to produce happiness, how can we explain the existence of so much of the opposite in actual experience? Leibnitz reasoned that since God is infinite and since His end in creation is to produce happiness this world is necessarily the best possible world for the production of happiness. Durant relates an incident of a man who held this view and had attacked Voltaire in print, to whom Voltaire wrote:

I am pleased to hear, sir, that you have written a little book against me. You do me too much honor When you have shown, in verse or otherwise, why so many men cut their throats in the best of all possible worlds, I shall be exceedingly obliged to you. I await your arguments, your verses, and your abuse; and assure you from the bottom of my heart that neither of us knows anything about the matter.²¹⁶

Hodge shows that Leibnitz's view necessarily minimizes the sinfulness of sin, if not denying it altogether; for what we call sin is only a means under the government of God to produce a greater amount of happiness, and whatever promotes happiness is right. He states: "Few principles, therefore, have been so productive of false doctrine and immorality as the principle that all virtue consists in benevolence, that happiness is the highest good, and that whatever promotes happiness is right."²¹⁷

THE BIBLICAL POSITION

Whereas we may find a number of secondary ends in creation, the Bible clearly reveals the fact that the chief end of all creation is to bring glory to God. The idea of glory involves having a good opinion of one, which results in the giving of praise and honor. The Greek word *doxa*, as a translation of the Hebrew *kabowd*, takes on the further meaning of splendor and brightness, as when Paul speaks of one star differing from another star in glory (1 Cor. 15:41), or of the glory of Moses' countenance (2 Cor. 3:7).

"The heavens declare the glory of God" (Ps. 19:1). "O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens" (Ps. 8: 1). "His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise" (Hab. 3:3). Not only does the material creation manifest the glory of God, but all living creatures were created for God's glory. God says of the redeemed of Israel: "Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him" (Isa. 43:7). He declares concerning the members of the Body of Christ in this present dispensation: "That we should be

²¹⁶ Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy* (New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1954), p. 225.

²¹⁷ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprint 1940), I, p. 567.

to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ" (Eph. 1:12). And finally in the consummation God in the person of Christ will receive universal glory: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every creature that is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:12, 13).

The great sin of mankind in the beginning is stated to be that "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things" (Rom. 1:21-23).

Finally, God commands His creatures to glorify Him. "Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Ps. 29:1, 2). "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains" (Jer. 13:16). "That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 15:6). "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:20). "Fear God, and give glory to him" (Rev. 14:7).

It is claimed by some that it would be wrong for God to seek His own glory, since this would be selfishness on His part, and this would be opposed to the love of God. However, a little reflection will reveal the following facts.

1. Selfishness on the part of the creature is sinful, and it is sinful chiefly because it robs God of what is due to him.

2. Since God is the Creator of all things, all belongs to Him, and therefore all of the honor and glory associated with creation also belong to Him.

3. If the chief end in creation consisted in anything related to man or to the creature, then God is dependent upon the creature for the realization of His end. But God is independent of His creation and dependent only upon Himself; therefore God must find His chief end in Himself.

4. The good of the creature depends ultimately upon God's glory. A father loves his child, but he should recognize the fact that it is only as he thinks and provides for his own welfare that he is enabled to manifest that love. A father who thinks only of bestowing gifts upon his child and gives no thought of getting for

himself will not long be able to realize that which he has made his chief end. The analogy fails because there is none to whom we can compare God, but the principle remains that the lesser is blessed of the greater ([Heb. 7:7](#)), and that the greater is due more honor than the lesser.

5. If the chief end were the happiness of man, then man should pursue happiness. But the paradox of hedonism has been apparent since the days of Epicurus. Experience has shown that man is most blessed when he is acting selflessly for the glory of God.

6. The Lord Jesus Christ in His incarnation and humiliation operated upon the principle that all glory was due to God. He said: "I seek not mine own glory" (John 8:50), and, "He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory, but He that seeketh His glory that sent Him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him" (John 7:18). To do God's will is to glorify God. It is written of Christ: "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7).

It would be difficult to improve upon the Westminster Catechism statement that the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. It might be thought that man is due a great deal of honor and glory for his almost unbelievable scientific discoveries and accomplishments, and on a purely human level he is, but a thoughtful student will consider that it is God who has put all of the wonders in nature that man has discovered and it is God who has created the human mind with all of its capabilities. Therefore, the greater the accomplishments of one of God's creatures, the more the glory that is due to the Creator.

27 THE AGE OF MAN

Of all of the subjects related to Creation the origin and age of man are probably the most important theologically. While the Christian believes that all lower forms of life were originally created by God, he is especially committed to the fact that man came into being as a special act of creation. This fact is being challenged more and more by the scientific world, so that the student of the Bible is confronted by a very real problem in defending his faith. There are evangelical men of science, but by and large the great bulk of the scientific world have accepted the evolutionary hypothesis as fact. And the evolutionary timetable places the origin of man in the dim past reckoned in terms of millions of years. There appears to be no possible means of reconciling the Biblical view of man with such an extreme age, even for the creation of man.

Possibly the most recent and most significant geological discoveries related to the supposed age of man are those by Louis S. B. Leakey at Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania, at Fort Ternan in Kenya, and on Rusinga Island in Lake Victoria.

These findings have been reported in the *National Geographic Magazine*.²¹⁸ Datings of the various findings were made by the potassium-argon process on samples of the overlying deposits. At Olduvai a fossil skull, named *Zinjanthropus*, was unearthed, dating back 1,750,000 years. Dr. Leakey thinks that this creature might be described as a man, since its remains were found among stone tools. Rusinga Island gave up the skull of an apelike creature, *Proconsul africanus*, 25 million years old. This creature is believed by many scientists to be the common stock leading to both men and apes. Then at Fort Ternan *Kenyapithecus* was discovered, dating back 14 million years. Dr. Leakey states that this creature emphatically was not a man but he claims that the skull exhibits at least two features found in man which are not found in fossil or living apes or monkeys. Although this creature was not a man Dr. Leakey thinks that it was leading straight in man's direction.

Of course, there are other fossil remains which have been linked with early man. *Pithecanthropus Erectus*, or the Java man, was discovered by Prof. Eugene Dubois in Java in 1894. Dubois regarded this fossil as a transitional form between man and ape which lived about one million years ago. *Eoanthropus*, or the Piltdown man, reported in the 1947 edition of the *Britannica* as the second most important discovery in this field²¹⁹ has since been proved a hoax. *Neanderthal Man* fossils were first found in Dusseldorf, Germany in 1857. Other similar remains have been found elsewhere in Europe. Estimates of age have been made anywhere from 20,000 to 100,000 years. *Cro-Magnon Man* is supposed to have displaced Neanderthal men in Europe, but Wistar points out that there is no evidence that Cro-Magnon man developed from any of the earlier types which inhabited Europe.²²⁰

What position should the student of the Bible take in regard to these modern tenets of paleontology? Is there any hope of reconciling the Biblical account with these ideas that man has existed upon the earth for a half million years or more? There are really two questions involved here. In the field of natural science it is taken for granted that man evolved from some lower form of life, so that it cannot be said that man came into being at a given point in time. Rather, he gradually developed from the brute over millions of years of evolution. This view, of course, can never be reconciled with the Bible. Theistic evolution may hold that God created the original germ of life and then used evolution as the means of bringing into being all of the present forms, but it cannot derive any such teaching from the Bible. On the other hand, those who hold that the creation days were actually geologic ages may logically contend that the sixth day on which man was created began a half-million years ago, and therefore may believe that the fossil-men mentioned above were our actual ancestors who lived that long ago. This view

²¹⁸ *National Geographic Magazine*, September, 1960; October, 1961, January, 1963, February, 1965; November, 1966.

²¹⁹ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1947, Vol 14, p. 763.

²²⁰ Richard Wistar, *Man and His Physical Universe* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1953), p. 238.

was presented in a series of articles in *Christian Life Magazine* in 1958. Here are two statements:

By geology and by induction, it is neither unreasonable nor unscriptural to presume that man has been on the earth longer than 100,000 years.

This would indicate that the age of man could be in terms of 200,000 or 300,000 years.²²¹

While it is to be admitted that it might be reasonable and scriptural to presume such an age for man purely upon the basis of interpreting the creation days as geologic ages, it appears to be very unreasonable to inject 300,000 years into the first eleven chapters of Genesis.

This theory interprets the early genealogies in Genesis as containing names, not of individuals, but of dynasties or tribes, so that each name may represent many generations. It is to be admitted, of course, that there are gaps in the genealogies. Matthew, for example, gives only fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the captivity, and fourteen from the captivity to Christ. The names of Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah, Jehoiakim, and Jechoniah are omitted by Matthew, so that actually there are more than forty-two generations from Abraham to Christ. It is conceivable that gaps in the genealogies from Adam to Abraham might account for several thousand extra years, but surely not for as much as two or three hundred thousand years. Hence it is necessary to make the names represent dynasties which lasted for much longer periods than generations. Let us see how such a theory fits in with other facts of Scripture.

Genesis 5 indicates that there were ten generations between Adam and Noah and Genesis 11:10-26 shows that there were ten generations between Noah and Abraham. If we make these generations to be dynasties and place Adam's date at 200,000 B.C., then each dynasty would have to last for 10,000 years. This would make one dynasty last longer than all of known historic time. If we were to admit that nine out of every ten dynasties had been dropped out of the record, it would still mean that each dynasty lasted 1,000 years, and even this figure is too great a stretch upon the imagination to be credible.

Jude states that Enoch was the seventh from Adam, apparently for the purpose of showing how near to the beginning of human history prophetic utterances were made concerning the second coming of Christ. But on the dynasty theory this would place Enoch 70,000 years after Adam. Apparently Jude did not interpret Scripture under the dynasty idea.

In Genesis 4 we learn that Lamech was the seventh in Cain's line from Adam. Civilization was quite advanced in his day: Various musical instruments had been

²²¹ *Christian Life Magazine*, May, 1958.

invented and men had become artificers of all kinds in iron and brass. Now according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* it is generally believed that bronze was first used about 2,000 B.C. or perhaps a little earlier. But the dynasty theory asks us to believe that men were in the bronze age at 130,000 B.C.

There is another little problem in connection with Lamech. The Scripture seems to present him as the second man-slayer in history. Can we believe that there were no murders committed over a period of 70,000 years? And it is a little difficult to believe that a dawn-age man who lived 130,000 years ago would have had knowledge of another man who lived 70,000 years earlier, and make his appeal for mercy on the basis: "If Cain shall be avenged seven-fold, truly Lamech seventy and seven fold" (Gen. 4: 24).

Luke, in giving the genealogy of our Lord, traces the line all the way back to Adam. Is it reasonable to suppose that he traces the actual generations back to Abraham, and then jumps over to dynasties covering some 10,000 years each? Surely it must be concluded that Luke considered the records before Abraham to be the same kind of genealogies as those that followed after.

It is Paul who tells us that in the fulness of time God sent forth His Son. In another reference he divides all time before Christ into two periods: from Adam to Moses and from Moses to Christ. We know that from Moses to Christ was approximately 1,500 years, but if we say that from Adam to Moses was perhaps 298,500 years, it would seem that the two periods are a little out of balance. Likewise to have man wait for almost 300,000 years for the coming of the Redeemer hardly seems reasonable. Is this what Paul meant by "the fulness of time?"

It would thus seem that those who have advocated such an early date for the first man have not given sufficient attention to the other factors which are involved. As pointed out in a previous chapter the fact that Adam was the first man and that every human being who has ever lived in the world is related to him as the head of the race is of vast doctrinal importance. We cannot countenance any theory which would remove Adam from that place. To make the story of Adam a myth, or to deny its historicity is to undercut one of the doctrinal foundations of the New Testament. If we contend that Adam was a historical character, then the only way possible to place him at 300,000 B.C. is to insert all of those years between him and Abraham, and that is not tenable.

Many of those who hold the view that there was a gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 believe that there was a creation of life upon the earth in the original creation which was destroyed by a judgment of God. Thus, if the paleontologists are anywhere near correct in their datings of so-called fossil man, these fossils would belong to the original creation and not to the present order of things. The Bible does not give any revelation of the character of that creation, other than to state that God created it, but there are strong inferences that life did exist upon

the earth before the six days of restoration in Genesis 1. (This is the view presented in the Scofield Reference Bible.)

It is by no means necessary to suppose that the life-germ of seeds perished in the catastrophic judgment which overthrew the primitive order. With the restoration of dry land and light the earth would "bring forth" as described. It was animal life which perished, and traces of which remain as fossils. Relegate fossils to the primitive creation, and no conflict of science with the Genesis cosmogony remains.²²²

Those who oppose this view argue that there is no indication in the geologic record of so recent a worldwide catastrophe and that there seems to be a continuous fossil record from the distant past up to the present. It is evident that we do not have sufficient facts or knowledge to answer satisfactorily all of the questions which confront us in this area. The Christian who has discovered the trustworthiness of the Scripture in every other area will not doubt the statements of the Bible on this subject, even though he may not be able to reconcile its every statement with the findings of science.

On the other hand it should be pointed out that paleontology is not as exact a science as is sometimes supposed. There is a great deal of guess work involved in interpreting the facts. For example, the *Britannica* puts Neanderthal man as late as 20,000 B.C.²²³ while Wistar states that Neanderthal man lived at least 100,000 years ago.²²⁴ Many of the fossils are very fragmentary. The Java man fossils consisted of a skull cap, a left thigh bone and three teeth, found some twenty paces apart. Dr. Leakey's findings have been confined to a few fragments of skulls. From one or two such bone fragments anthropologists reconstruct an entire man. Such reconstructions are 90% or more pure imagination. Further it is impossible to be absolutely certain just how some of these fossils became deposited in the particular layers of rock or in the washes in which they are found. Even Ramm, who castigates those he calls the hyperorthodox for not accepting all that the scientists say about the antiquity of man is forced to admit:

We must await more information from science and exegesis before we can propound a pointed theory of the harmony of Genesis and anthropology

We have now surveyed Genesis and anthropology and found the problems more severe than Genesis and geology. The most uncomfortable problem is the relationship of the antiquity of man, the Fall of man, to the advanced state of culture in Genesis 4. Although this is a serious problem, it is not a hopeless nor discouraging problem. Again, we assert that a man may be a Christian without the sacrifice of his

²²² *Scofield Reference Bible*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1917), footnote on Genesis 1:11, p. 4.

²²³ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, op. cit., Vol. 14, p. 763.

²²⁴ Wistar, op. cit., p. 238.

intelligence. To the contrary, we feel the Christian interpretation of man is the one which best accounts for the most facts. If we were to reject all views with serious problems, then no view could be held. The emergence of *mind, conscience, consciousness* and *will* on naturalistic and materialistic premises constitutes to this writer a far greater problem in anthropology than those problems he faces as a Christian believer in the inspiration of the Genesis record.²²⁵

Part Five

Angelology

28 THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

The existence of heaven as a place and of its angelic inhabitants is denied by many liberal theologians, who attribute the mention of angels in Scripture to the superstitions prevalent in those days or to a poetical personification of the forces of nature. However, the Bible contains so many explicit statements regarding the existence of angels that the fact cannot be denied without denying the authority of the Scriptures altogether. The fact that they are mentioned almost three hundred times in the Bible, and the further fact that about one hundred and eighty of these references are in the New Testament, is undeniable evidence that the Bible does teach their existence. Those who would spiritualize the angels into a mode of poetic expression would be hard put to explain such passages as: "Know ye not that we shall judge angels" (1 Corinthians 6:3); "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels" (2 Thessalonians 1:7); "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels" (Hebrews 2:9); "God spared not the angels that sinned" (2 Peter 2:4).

If angels have a real substantial existence, as the Scriptures affirm, they must have a location or sphere which they inhabit. The Scriptures speak of certain angels which left their own habitation ([Jude 6](#)). The habitation of angels is heaven. We read such expressions as "in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father (Matthew 18:10); "the angels of heaven" (Matthew 24:36); "are as the angels which are in heaven" (Mark 12:25; 13:32); "Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18); "there appeared unto him an angel from heaven" (Luke 22:43); "we, or an angel from heaven" (Galatians 1:8); "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels" (2 Thessalonians 1:7); "an angel came down from heaven" (Revelation 10:1); "there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels." (Revelation 12:7).

²²⁵ Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), pp. 328, 342, 343.

Heaven is also the dwelling place of God: "hear thou from thy dwelling place even from heaven" (2 Chronicles 6:21); "art thou not God in heaven" (2 Chronicles 20:6); "the Lord God of heaven" (2 Chronicles 36:23); "Is not God in the height of heaven?" (Job 22:12); "Our Father which art in heaven" (Matthew 6:9); "I came down from heaven" (John 6:38); "the temple of God was opened in heaven" (Revelation 11:19).

The Scriptures speak of at least three heavens. Paul was "caught up into the third heaven" (2 Corinthians 12:2). Solomon said: "Behold, heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee" (2 Chronicles 6:18). When God created, He created the heavens (plural) and the earth. Because there are several heavens it is necessary to make distinctions when speaking of the dwelling place of angels. While the Bible writers speak of the birds of heaven ([Jeremiah 4:25](#)) and the stars of heaven ([Genesis 22:17](#)), which we would define as the atmospheric and the stellar heavens, it seems that the Bible never uses any such definitive terms. Everything above the earth is heaven, whether it involved material things or spiritual beings. The context must determine what aspect of heaven is meant in any particular passage.

The Scriptures speak of the dwelling place of God where the angels minister as the heavenly sanctuary: "We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Hebrews 8:1, 2). This heavenly sanctuary is set in contrast to the earthly sanctuary which Moses built for the children of Israel ([Hebrews 9:1](#)). While it is in contrast, it is important to observe that the earthly sanctuary was built after the pattern of the heavenly one:

Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us ([Hebrews 8:5; 9:23, 24](#)).

A glimpse into this heavenly sanctuary is given in Revelation 4 and 5. In this passage the Apostle John is caught up in spirit to heaven and sees a throne with One sitting upon it, around which there are twenty-four elders and four living creatures (cherubim) who cease not praising and worshipping God. The A.V. makes the twenty-four elders to be redeemed men:

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and

nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Actually, the Cherubim and the Elders sing this song together. It is evident that the Cherubim cannot sing the song of redemption, for they have never sinned nor been redeemed. Most of the revised versions correct the A.V. on Ch. 5:9, 10. For example, the A.S.V. reads:

And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth.

Thus the twenty-four Elders are a heavenly priesthood. A reference to [1 Chronicles 24:5-19](#) and [28:19](#) will indicate that the twenty-four orders of priesthood in Israel were patterned after the twenty-four orders in heaven. Thus it is seen that the religion of ancient Israel, far from being a human invention or an imitation of heathen religions round about, was patterned after the heavenly sanctuary ministered by angels.

Just as there is a heavenly counterpart in the matter of the worship of God, so there seems to be a counterpart in government. There are various references to kings and princes which, while identified with names of human governments, are evidently not human beings but angels. For example, in Isaiah 14 there is a prophecy against the king of Babylon, who is later on called Lucifer, the son of the morning, the one who had fallen from his position in heaven. Satan thus seems to be so closely related to the control of the government of ancient Babylon that he can be called king of Babylon. In Ezekiel 28 it is said of the king of Tyrus that he had been in the garden of Eden, that he was the anointed cherub, that he was full of wisdom and perfect in beauty; that he was perfect in his ways from the day that he was created until iniquity was found in him. None of these things could have been said of the earthly king of Tyrus, but they could be said of Satan. Perhaps the clearest reference to this heavenly counterpart of human governments is found in Daniel 10. Three weeks after Daniel had made request of God an angel appeared unto him and said:

Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I am come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come (vs. 12, 13, 20).

There can be no doubt but that the messenger who came to Daniel, as well as Michael and the princes of Persia and of Grecia, were all angels. But why is Michael called Israel's prince, and why are other angels called princes or kings of Babylon, of Persia, of Grecia, of Tyrus, if not to indicate that in some manner they exercise power over or influence upon the governments of these various nations?

In the New Testament Satan is called the god of this world ([2 Corinthians 4:4](#)) and the prince of this world ([John 12:31](#); [14:30](#); [16:11](#)). In the temptation of our Lord it is recorded that Satan said to Christ after taking Him up into a high mountain and showing Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time: "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine" (Luke 4:6, 7). If Satan, in fact, did not possess the power which he claimed had been delivered unto him, the temptation of Jesus would have been a farce.

If the Scriptural facts presented indicate that angelic principalities and powers do have an influence over the earthly governments, one's philosophy of history will be considerably affected. We may well ask why there has been so much bloodshed, strife, and sin in the world, and why all of man's efforts for a lasting peace fail. We may lay all of the blame on man's depravity, but it is significant that before the millennial reign of peace begins upon the earth Satan and his angels are cast out of heaven and are shut up in the abyss, and that as soon as Satan is loosed from his prison he goes about his old task of deceiving the nations in order to gather them to battle against the saints and the beloved city.

It may appear upon the surface that Satanic influence and control over the nations of the earth is contradicted by the truth of Romans 13:1-6:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves condemnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

This passage raises many questions. If all rulers and governments are ordained of God, is it not wrong to oppose any government, even that of godless communism? How could there be godless rulers, when all rulers are ministers of

God? When rulers persecute and kill God's saints, are they a terror to good works or to the evil?

The Pharaoh of Moses' day was a wicked king, but God was the One who raised him up: "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth" (Romans 9:17). Nebuchadnezzar was a wicked king, but God calls him "my servant." Speaking to Israel God says:

Because ye have not heard my words, Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and a hissing, and perpetual desolations And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations (Jeremiah 25:8, 9, 12).

Such passages as those above indicate that God may ordain wicked rulers and governments in order to punish or chasten mankind for their sin and disobedience to God's Word, but such wicked rulers will themselves be punished by God in due time. Pilate was the ruler who delivered Christ to be crucified, but when Pilate stated that he had power to crucify Christ or to let Him go, Christ replied: "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above" (John 19:11). In like manner it may be said that neither Satan nor any wicked ruler could have any power except it were given or permitted by God.

An outstanding passage on this aspect of angelic intervention in the affairs of man is Ephesians 6:12, which translated very literally reads as follows:

For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against the authorities, against the world rulers (cosmocrats) of this darkness, against spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places.

The *kosmocrats* are not flesh and blood men but angelic spirits. Whatever opposition comes to the gospel or to God's servants from mankind, in reality has its origin in the angelic sphere from the kosmocrats of this darkness, from wicked spirits in the heavenly realm.

It may appear strange why God permits these unseen beings to fight against His saints, or why He permits evil angels to hinder the holy angels, as is evident from the passages in Ephesians and Daniel, and also from Jude 9 where Michael the archangel fought with the Devil over the body of Moses, but the facts of revelation are clear. Paul recognized the danger of Satan gaining the advantage

over God's people if they are ignorant of his devices ([2 Corinthians 2:11](#)), but for those who are instructed in the Word and who utilize the armor which God has provided, there is deliverance and victory.

Thus the Scripture teaches that there is an unseen realm called heaven which is populated by spirit beings called angels, some of whom are holy creatures who serve God continually and others of whom are fallen creatures who oppose God and His servants. The Scripture further teaches that the omnipresent God has His throne in heaven and in a sense different from His omnipresence He has His dwelling place in heaven. Further, the Scripture teaches that there is a very close interrelation between heaven and earth, and that angelic beings do have influence upon mankind. And finally, it should be pointed out that angelic visitations, which were common in Bible times when God was dealing especially with Israel, along with signs, and wonders, and miracles, are significant by their absence in this present dispensation. This does not mean that angels have ceased their ministries but only that they do not now make visible appearances.

29 CREATION, NATURE, AND ORDERS OF ANGELS

THE CREATION OF THE ANGELS

There is no specific account in the Bible of the creation of the angels. The Biblical account of creation is concerned mainly with the earth and with mankind, although the heavens are mentioned without any details as to the content of the heavenly creation. The fact of the creation of the angels is perhaps most clearly set forth in [Colossians 1:16](#): "For by him (Christ) were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him." While the word *angel* does not appear in this passage, it is evident that Paul is referring to them under the title of principalities and powers (see [Romans 8:38](#); [Ephesians 3:10](#); [6:12](#); [Colossians 2:15](#)), since angels are heavenly beings and he includes all things in heaven.

The Manner of their Creation. Although it is not stated in Scripture, it has been generally assumed that all of the angels were created at one time, which means that each angel is the direct creation of God and that the number of the angels has neither increased nor decreased since their creation. This type of creation is in sharp contrast to the type of creation upon the earth, where God created directly only the parents of each species, and then through a process of procreation brought into being all of the other members of the multitudinous forms of life upon the earth. Thus, every creature upon the earth today is only an indirect creation of God, whereas every angel was a direct creation. Another way of saying this is that all present forms of earth life are mediate creations of God, whereas angels are immediate creations.

The Time of their Creation. The inference from the Scripture is that angels were created at the time of the creation of the heavens. It is evident that Satan, who is a fallen angel, had been created and had fallen before the creation of man. Those who hold the Gap Theory of Genesis 1:2 and who also associate the fall of Satan and his angels with the chaos of that verse, would have to make the creation of angels a part of the original creation. Any view, however, to square with the facts, would have to make the creation of angels antedate that of man.

It may be asked how long the angels continued in existence before Satan and his angels fell into sin. When this question is asked concerning man, it is evident that the test involved only the first man, and that before any offspring were produced. We cannot imagine what the conditions might have been had God allowed unfallen progeny from Adam before Adam fell. However, this problem does not surround the fall of the angels. Since angels are not born and do not die, time must have a much different relation to them than it does to man. And since no angel is the offspring of another angel the sin of one could not affect another either representatively or seminally. And whereas the whole human race has fallen, only a part of the angels were involved in rebellion against God.

If the basic tenets of the Gap Theory are correct and the chaos came immediately as a result of Satan's fall, then geological data would indicate that the fall of angels occurred not long before the creation of man, since there is no evidence that the earth continued in the state of Genesis 1:2 for an extended period immediately prior to historic times. But it is possible and even probable that Satan sinned much earlier than this and that God permitted that original creation to go on for long ages before destroying it, even as He has permitted the present creation to continue in sin until the day of God arrives when it will be destroyed by fire ([2 Peter 3:12](#)). We can only speculate in trying to answer this question.

THE NATURE OF ANGELS

Angels possess personality. They are not mere automatons, although the description of the cherubim in Ezekiel 1 might seem to suggest this. The fact that angels can express emotions, such as praising God; that they can exercise will, as Satan did in declaring: "I will be like the most High;" that they can be held accountable for their actions, as is evident from their future condemnation, and that they can reason and carry on intelligent communication, as Satan did in the temptation of our Lord, are all evidences of personality.

Angels are spirits. "Who maketh his angels spirits" (Psalm 104:4). "Are they not all ministering spirits" (Hebrews 1:14). Christ said: "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39), when the disciples saw Him in His resurrection body and supposed they had seen a spirit. It is quite evident, therefore, that angels, being spirit, do not have a body of flesh and bones. Hodge

states: "The Scriptures do not attribute bodies of any kind to them."²²⁶ Strong states: "That their being characteristically 'spirits' forbids us to regard angels as having bodily organism, seems implied in Eph. 6:12."²²⁷ Chafer agrees that angels may be said to be incorporeal as compared with human and animal existence, but he believes that angels do have some kind of spiritual body.²²⁸

The cherubim, which are a particular class of angels, are carefully described in [Ezekiel 1:5-14](#) as having faces, wings, hands, feet, and the appearance of a flash of lightning. The seraphim, another class of angels, are also carefully described as having bodily parts in Isaiah 6:2. Scripture abounds in cases of angelic appearances. The fact that some have entertained angels unawares ([Hebrews 13:2](#)) is evidence that angels have appeared in such human-like form that they were not distinguishable from man. An interesting account is found in 2 Kings 6 where the prophet Elisha prayed that his servant's eyes might be opened to see the hosts of the Lord, "And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." There is no doubt that angels are spirit beings, but from the above array of facts we can hardly agree with Hodge that they do not have bodies of any kind. Angelic forms are not normally visible to the human eye, but when that eye is opened to the spiritual realm, these invisible beings do become visible. Therefore it would seem more correct to say that while angels do not have physical bodies, they do have real bodies which are of a type of organization of which we are completely ignorant, bodies which may either materialize or become visible through a miraculous enlarging of the powers of human vision. Their bodies may in some sense be similar to the spiritual bodies which the saints will have in resurrection ([1 Corinthians 15:44](#)).

Angels possess super-human power. Man was made *lower* than the angels ([Hebrews 2:7](#)). Peter points out the fact that angels are "greater in power and might" than men ([2 Peter 2:11](#)). Paul speaks of Christ coming with His mighty angels. ([2 Thessalonians 1:7](#)). The fact that Christ was made a little lower than the angels in His incarnation ([Hebrews 2:9](#)), also points to the superiority of angels over humanity. In His resurrection and ascension, however, Christ was made very much better than the angels ([Hebrews 1:4](#)).

Angels are sexless. This is evident from the fact that they neither marry nor are given in marriage ([Matthew 22:30](#)), and from the fact that there is no procreation among them. However, angels are always represented in the form of a man whenever their appearance is described. Contrary to the imaginations of artists, angels are never represented as females in Scripture.

²²⁶ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprint 1940), Vol. I, p. 637.

²²⁷ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1912), p. 445.

²²⁸ L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), Vol. II, pp. 12, 13.

THE ORDER OF THE UNFALLEN ANGELS

There is a great host of angels.

Hebrews 12:22 speaks of "an innumerable company of angels." The same expression occurs in Jude 14 where it is translated *ten thousands*. In the Old Testament one of the titles of Jehovah is the *Lord of hosts* (Jehovah Sabaoth, mentioned in Romans 9:29 and James 5:4). This expression depicts the Lord as the Leader of the great, innumerable armies of heaven. In some references the hosts of heaven may refer to the stars, as in Deuteronomy 4:19, but the usual reference is to angels, as in 2 Chronicles 18:18; Luke 2:13.

Some angels are mentioned by name.

Of the unfallen angels only two are mentioned by name in the Bible: Michael ([Daniel 10:13, 21](#); [12:1](#); [Jude 9](#); [Revelation 12:7](#)), and Gabriel ([Daniel 8:16](#); [9:21](#); [Luke 1:19, 26](#)). The apocryphal book of Enoch names five others: Uriel, Raphael, Zariel, and Remiel (ch. 20:1-7), who along with Michael and Gabriel are called "angels of power."

There are various classifications of angels.

The Cherubim. Cherub is mentioned 27 times and cherubim 64 times in the Bible, most of the references being to the furniture and curtains of the tabernacle and the temple. They are mentioned by name only once in the New Testament ([Hebrews 9:5](#)). The clearest description of them is found in Ezekiel 10. Comparing this passage with chapter 1 it is seen that the cherubim are called "living creatures" and they are said to be four in number. These four living creatures are seen in heaven in [Revelation 4:6-9](#); [5:8](#) and [14](#).

The cherubim are first mentioned in Genesis 3:24: "So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." Figures of the cherubim overshadowed the mercy seat in the tabernacle ([Exodus 25:18-22](#)), which in turn covered the ark containing the Ten Commandments. From these references we may draw the inference that the cherubim are especially concerned with safeguarding and upholding the holiness of God. In Revelation 4:8 it is stated that "they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

The Seraphim. These are mentioned only once ([Isaiah 6:2, 6](#)), in connection with Isaiah's vision of the Lord. They resemble the cherubim in many respects and are likewise concerned with the holiness of God. Their ministry in this passage was to cleanse Isaiah's defilement by touching his lips with a live coal from off the altar. The word seraph means burning and it is interesting to note that it is three times translated fiery serpent ([Numbers 21:8](#); [Isaiah 14:29](#); [30:6](#)).

The brazen or fiery serpent which Moses made and lifted up on a pole for the dying Israelites to look at was a type of Christ lifted up upon the cross (John 3:14). It would appear from these facts that the Seraphim are especially representative of the maintaining of the holiness of God in the cleansing and salvation of the sinner. Scofield states: "The Cherubim may be said to have to do with the altar, the Seraphim with the laver."²²⁹

The Archangel. Michael is called the archangel in Jude 9. The only other reference to the archangel in the Bible is 1 Thessalonians 4:16, where the voice of the archangel is heard at the coming of Christ for members of His Body, the Church. Michael is called "one of the chief princes" in the angelic realm (Daniel 10:13), and "your (Israel's) prince" (Daniel 10:21).

The Elect Angels. This expression is found only once in the Bible in [1 Timothy 5:21](#), where Paul charges Timothy before God and the angels to observe his instructions. The elect angels are not a special group of the unfallen angels, but apparently all of the angels. Just as God had a purpose in election as far as human are concerned ([Romans 9:11](#)), He doubtless had a purpose regarding the angels. Whereas the whole human race fell and God elected certain ones to be saved, only a portion of the angels fell and the remainder were elected not to fall.

Governmental Orders. Paul's epistles are unique in their references to "principalities and powers" in the angelic realm. In [Titus 3:1](#) this expression refers to earthly rulers, but in all other occurrences to heavenly rulers. In referring to the dispensation of the mystery Paul states the divine intention "that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by (or be made known by) the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10).

The Angel of the Lord. This Angel is a unique Person. He is not one of the created angels but is a pre-incarnate manifestation of the second Person of the Trinity. He is called an angel because He appears as a Messenger of Jehovah, even as Christ is called an Apostle and a High Priest ([Hebrews 3:1](#)). The following references should be consulted: [Genesis 16:7; 18:1; 22:11, 12; 31:11-13; 32:24-32; 48: 15, 16; Exodus 3:2, 14; Joshua 5:13, 14; Judges 6:11-24; 2 Kings 19:35; 1 Chronicles 21:15, 16; Psalm 34:7; Zechariah 3:1-4](#). Chafer quotes Richard Watson:

It has now therefore been established that the Angel Jehovah, and Jesus Christ our Lord, are the same person; and this is the first great argument by which his Divinity is established We trace the manifestations of the same person from Adam to Abraham; from Abraham to Moses; from Moses to the prophets; from the prophets to Jesus. Under every manifestation he has appeared in the form of God, never thinking it robbery to be equal with God. Dressed in the appropriate robes of God's state, wearing God's crown, and wielding God's sceptre, he has ever

²²⁹ C. I. Scofield, *Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 718.

received Divine homage and honor. No name is given to the Angel Jehovah, which is not given to Jehovah Jesus; no attribute is ascribed to the one, which is not ascribed to the other; the worship which was paid to the one by the patriarchs and prophets, was paid to the other by evangelists and apostles; and the Scriptures declare them to be the same august person,--the image of the Invisible, whom no man can see and live; - *the Redeeming Angel, the Redeeming Kinsman, and the Redeeming God.*²³⁰

THE MINISTRY OF THE UNFALLEN ANGELS

1. They are engaged in the constant worship of God (Psalm 148:1, 2; Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8).

2. They ministered in various ways to the patriarchs and to the nation of Israel (Genesis 18:1, 2; Numbers 20:16; 1 Kings 19:5; 1 Chronicles 21:15; Zechariah 1:9).

3. Angels were especially active at the time of the Incarnation. (Luke 1:11, 13, 18, 19, 26, 28, 30, 34, 35, 38; 2:9, 10, 13, 21; 22:43).

4. There were numerous angelic visitations in the early Acts period while God was yet dealing with the nation of Israel under the gospel of the kingdom (Acts 5:19; 8:26; 10:3, 7, 22; 12:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 23).

5. Christ will come the second time with His mighty angels to judge and to establish His kingdom (Matthew 13:39, 41, 49; 24:31; 25:31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Revelation 7:1; 8:2; 9:14; 12:7; 14:10; 15:1-7; 16:1; 17:1; 21:12).

6. As noted earlier, angelic visitations are not part of the program of this present dispensation. Chafer remarks on this fact:

In the plan of God, the present age is evidently void of angelic manifestations. This could easily be due to the fact that, as in no other age, the saints of God are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and are subject to His leading, which leading is more constant, vital, and exalting than angelic visitations could possibly be.²³¹

Chafer's explanation may contain an element of truth, but it should be observed that the apostles also had the indwelling Holy Spirit to guide them, and yet they experienced angelic visitations. It would appear that the reason for the lack of such visitations today is the fact that whereas God's dealings with the Jews were always by outward signs and wonders, His dealings in this present dispensation are purely spiritual apart from such outward manifestations.

²³⁰ Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 331, (quoting Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes*, I, 504).

²³¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 23, 24.

30 SATAN AND THE FALLEN ANGELS

SATAN

The Origin of Satan

This paragraph has been entitled, The Origin of Satan, rather than The Creation of Satan, for a very definite reason. The important question is, Was Satan created as Satan? or, Was the one who is now called Satan created as a holy angel? The answer to this question has very far reaching implications in one's theology. An affirmative answer to the first question asserts that God is the author of sin and that it is a matter of justice that He finally save all who have committed sin, including Satan himself. This teaching is one of the basic tenets of Universal Reconciliationism.

One of the key passages on the origin of Satan is John 8:44: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

A. E. Knoch in his *Concordant Version of the Sacred Scriptures*, makes this note on John 8:44:

All sin, in the Scriptures, seems to be traced back to the Slanderer or Satan. Adam sinned at his suggestion. He is the father of all that is false. Being a creature of God, it has been a perplexing problem to account for him without incriminating God Himself. It is usual to insist that he was created perfect and, at a later stage, fell into sin. But this is no real relief. The impulse to sin, in that case, came from without instead of within, and it, in turn, demands an explanation. The Slanderer sinned from the beginning. He was a murderer from the beginning. The Scriptures plainly teach that he was created a Slanderer and a Satan.²³²

Knoch endeavors in his further comments to clear God from the charge of originating sin by having been the Creator of the arch-sinner in saying that "sin is essentially a mistake," and "With this definition in mind, it is easy to see how God could create a creature to sin, if that were necessary to the fulfillment of His purpose."

Sin is defined in the Bible as *lawlessness* (1 John 3:4); it is far more serious a matter than simply a mistake. But regardless of the definition of sin, if God created Satan with the express purpose that he commit sin, so that Satan could

²³² A. E. Knoch, *Concordant Version of The Sacred Scriptures* (Los Angeles: The Concordant Publishing Concern, 1926), pages not numbered.

do nothing but sin, then surely no amount of reasoning can absolve God from being the One who brought sin into being. If one takes the light view of sin which Knoch does, then Satan is not such a bad character after all, and God is not as holy as we had supposed; in fact, it is difficult to see how there can be much difference between the character of God and that of Satan, according to this view. The only difference would be that Satan had no choice in becoming a sinner, whereas God did have a choice in creating him.

Knoch's view of Satan is not only contrary to the almost universally accepted Christian position; it is in conflict with the very Scripture upon which it is based. The Lord in John 8:44 clearly defines what is meant by *the beginning*, from which Satan was a murderer. The word *murderer* is *anthropoktonos*, or manslayer. Adam was the first man. Satan could not have been a manslayer before there was a man to slay; therefore, the beginning was not the moment of the creation of this angelic being, but the beginning of human sin. How much earlier than this Satan rebelled against God is not stated in the Bible, but it is evident that he could not have been a manslayer until man was created.

Other passages of Scripture clearly point to the fact that Satan was not created as Satan or as an evil being. As stated earlier, the one who is called the king of Tyrus in [Ezekiel 28:12-19](#), could not be simply a man, for it is said of this one that he was perfect in beauty; he had been in the garden of Eden; he was the anointed cherub that covereth; and he was perfect in his ways from the day he was created until iniquity was found in him. Although some expositors try to make this passage refer only to the then king of Tyrus, Chafer devotes five full pages to prove that it refers to Satan and calls it *the central passage* bearing upon Satan's creation, original state, and fall.²³³ If this passage does refer to Satan, then it is plainly stated that he was perfect from the day he was created until iniquity was found in him.

Another important passage which indicates that God did not create Satan as a devil is Isaiah 14:12-14. Here Satan is called *Lucifer, son of the morning*. Lucifer means *light-bearer*, and is the name given to the planet Venus, the morning star. Again, some expositors claim that Lucifer is only the King of Babylon and has nothing to do with Satan, but Scofield states:

"Lucifer, 'day-star,' can be none other than Satan. This tremendous passage marks the beginning of sin in the universe. When Lucifer said, 'I will,' sin began."²³⁴

Angels are often referred to as stars ([Job 38:7](#); [Jude 13](#); [Revelation 1:20](#); [8:10](#), [11](#); [9:1](#)), even as in this passage: "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God." No one doubts that the Bible teaches that Satan was the one who tempted Adam, and yet the tempter is called a serpent in the context. He is called *Belial* in

²³³ L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), II, p. 39-44.

²³⁴ C. I. Scofield, *Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 726.

[2 Corinthians 6:15](#) and *Beelzebub* in [Matthew 12:24-28](#). There is nothing, therefore, exceedingly strange that he should be identified as the king of Tyrus or of Babylon or as Lucifer.

The sin of Satan is identified by Paul as that of pride, where he instructs regarding the choice of bishops: "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:6). The seven "I wills" of Lucifer in [Isaiah 14:12-14](#) describe the proud self-exaltation of this angelic prince, climaxed by the final boast: "I will be like the most High."

Satan's Names

1. **SATAN:** This name is applied to this fallen angelic creature 19 times in the Old Testament and 36 times in the New. Satan is a Hebrew word which means *accuser* or *opponent*. It is also translated *adversary* and *withstand*.

2. **DEVIL:** This name occurs 35 times in the New Testament. It is a translation of a Greek word, *diabolos*, meaning *slanderer* or *traducer*. The word is also translated *false accuser* and *slanderer* in the A.V. The A.V. also translates *daimonion* as devil or devils, but the word should be translated demon or demons. There is only one Devil.

3. **THE GREAT DRAGON AND THE OLD SERPENT:** Two passages in Revelation bring together several of the names of this wicked spirit, so that there is no mistaking the identity of these several names: "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan " ([Revelation 12:9](#) and [20:2](#)). It is as the serpent that he is first introduced in the Bible in the temptation of Adam and Eve. Aside from the two passages in Revelation he is referred to as the serpent only in Genesis 3:1, 2, 4, 13, 14 and 2 Corinthians 11:3.

4. **GOD OF THIS AGE:** Paul once uses this expression to identify Satan ([2 Corinthians 4:4](#)). The reference here is to this age (aion), not to the world (kosmos).

5. **PRINCE OF THIS WORLD:** Christ thrice referred to Satan by this title ([John 12:31](#); [14:30](#); [16:11](#)). The reference here is to the world (kosmos), not to the age (aion). The kosmos in John is either the world-system which is anti-God, or to the people who are caught up in this evil system. God does not love the system and neither are we to love it ([1 John 2:15](#)), but God so loved the people of the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Satan is the prince of this evil world-system.

6. **BEELZEBUB:** Christ identified Satan as Beelzebub in [Luke 11:18](#). He is called the prince of demons. Reference is made to him in [Matthew 10:25](#); [12:24](#), [27](#); [Mark 3:22](#); [Luke 11:15](#), [18](#), [19](#). The name is of Chaldean origin and means, *lord of flies*. It appears four times in the Old Testament as Baal-zebub ([2 Kings 1:2](#), [3](#), [6](#), [16](#)), and is identified as the god of Ekron. Baal worship was common in

Canaan and was recognized as Satanic, and therefore Satan is called Baal-zebub.

7. THE KING OF TYRUS: As noted earlier, [Ezekiel 28:12-19](#) refers both to an earthly king and to the angelic ruler who had control over him. The first ten verses of the chapter are addressed to the *Prince* of Tyrus. By comparing this passage with [2 Thessalonians 2:3-10](#), it will be seen that just as the Prince of Tyrus claims to be God and sits as God, who receives his power from the King of Tyrus, just so the coming Man of Sin will claim to be God and will sit as God, who will receive his power from Satan. This parallel gives added weight to the argument that the Ezekiel passage goes beyond mere human beings.

8. LUCIFER: This Hebrew word (*heylel*) is rendered in most revised versions as *Day Star*. Satan, of course, is an imposter; he is the false-Christ. Christ is the Light of the world, but Paul says that Satan appears as an angel of light and his ministers as ministers of righteousness ([2 Corinthians 11:14, 15](#)). Christ is the bright and morning Star, the true Day Star ([Numbers 24:17](#); [2 Peter 1:19](#); [Revelation 1:20](#); [22:16](#)). As originally created Satan no doubt was a lucifer, a light-bearer.

Satan's Fall

Satan's fall has already been alluded to, as having taken place, of necessity, before the fall of man. Christ said: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18). It is not clear whether Christ was here speaking of Satan's original fall, or whether He was looking forward to the time when he would be cast out of heaven ([Revelation 12:9](#)). Reference has already been made to the fact that Satan's sin was self-exaltation. He wanted to be independent of God, to be like God, to exalt himself above God.

One of the stickiest problems of philosophy is that of the origin of evil. Evil originated with Satan, and the question arises: How could a sinless creature originate sin? With man the case was different, for the temptation came to him from without, but how could sin evolve within the heart of one who was sinless? The Scripture does not answer this question. It simply gives us the fact that sin did originate in the angelic realm. But since there was no outside source of temptation in the case of the angels who sinned, this may account for the fact that no provision has been made for their salvation; whereas in man's case, having been tempted and trapped by another, his sin is of such character that God could provide for his salvation. Besides this, it is difficult to imagine what work would be necessary to effect the salvation of angels. Since they do not have flesh and blood, the shedding of Christ's blood could seemingly have no value for them. And angels, being individual creations of God and not a race, could hardly have a work done for them similar to that which has been done for the human race.

Satan's Work

He opposes God and all that is called God, making himself to be God. This is said to be the work of the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition, whose coming is after the working of Satan ([2 Thessalonians 2:3-10](#)).

He has endeavored to thwart the purpose of God with mankind, especially in regard to man's redemption. He first caused man to fall into sin and condemnation, and then after God promised to send the Seed of the woman to bruise Satan ([Genesis 3:15](#)), he did everything possible to thwart that plan. He corrupted the race ([Genesis 6](#)), so that Noah and his family were the only ones left who were righteous before God. He made many attempts to corrupt the chosen line in Israel through mixture and idolatry. He incited violence to destroy the line through which Messiah was to come, as in [2 Kings 11:1](#), when Athaliah, the mother of king Ahaziah, had all of the seed royal slain, but in the providence of God the youngest son was hidden for six years to save the Messianic line from extinction. He doubtless caused the situation which brought a curse upon the kingly line, so that "no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah" ([Jeremiah 22:30](#)). But God through the virgin birth overcame this obstacle, for Mary came through the kingly line from David through Nathan, upon which line there was no curse. When Jesus was finally born Satan attempted through Herod to destroy Him by having all of the infants slain ([Matthew 2:16-18](#)). He severely tempted Jesus in His weakened condition after forty days of fasting to accept the rulership of the nations if He would only fall down and worship Satan ([Matthew 4:8, 9](#)). It would seem that he attempted to crush the life out of Jesus in the garden before He was able to go to the cross ([Luke 22:42-44](#)), but an angel was sent to strengthen Him. And finally [Revelation 12:2-6](#) pictures Satan's war against Israel and the Christ-child.

Since Satan's work is so closely associated with what he does through his own ministers, ([2 Corinthians 11:13-15](#)), it is logical at this point to consider these who are thus designated, the great host of fallen angels and demon spirits.

THE FALLEN ANGELS

Their Designations

1. The Devil's angels ([Matthew 25:41](#); [Revelation 12:9](#)).
2. Angels which kept not their first estate ([Jude 6](#)). Peter in a parallel passage speaks of the angels that sinned ([2 Peter 2:4](#)).
3. Familiar spirits ([Deuteronomy 18:11](#); [Isaiah 8:19](#); [19:3](#)).
4. Unclean spirits ([Matthew 10:1](#); [Mark 1:27](#); [3:11](#); [5:13](#); [Acts 5:16](#); [8:7](#); [Revelation 16:13](#)).

5. Evil spirits (Luke 7:21; Acts 19:12, 13).
6. Seducing spirits (1 Timothy 4:1).
7. Wicked spirits (Luke 11:26).
8. Demon spirits (Revelation 16:14).

The Demons

There are seventy-six references to demons in the New Testament. The A.V. always renders this word *devil* or *devils*. It is not clear from Scripture whether demons are simply fallen angels, or a special class of fallen angels, or disembodied spirits of a former creation, as some speculate. The fact that they seek embodiment and always accomplish their ministry by possessing human bodies ([Matthew 12:43-45](#)), or even animal bodies ([Matthew 8:31](#)), has led some to believe that demons are the disembodied spirits of a pre-Adamite race, or perhaps the spirits of the giants (nephelim) of Genesis 6:4 who were destroyed in the flood.

Demon activity has been more prominent at certain periods of history than at others. There was a great outbreak of it during the earthly ministry of Christ, and the Scriptures predict another outbreak at the end of the age, especially during the great tribulation ([1 Timothy 4:1](#); [Revelation 9:11, 20](#); [Matthew 24:24](#) cf. [2 Thessalonians 2:8-10](#)).

Demon Possession. The Scripture speaks of those who were possessed by demons ([Matthew 4:24](#); [8:16, 28, 33](#); [9:32](#); [12:22](#); [Mark 1:32](#); [5:15, 16, 18](#); [Luke 8:36](#); [Acts 8:7](#); [16:16](#)). Except for the last two references the word used is *daimonizomai*, to be demonized, to be controlled by and possessed by a demon or demons. The last two references simply use the word have; those that have a demon. There are several questions which need to be considered about demonism.

What are the effects of demon possession ? Scripture indicates that demons caused the following effects upon men and animals:

Dumbness ([Matthew 9:32, 33](#)).

Blindness ([Matthew 12:22](#)).

Lunacy ([Matthew 17:15](#)).

Super-human strength ([Mark 5:1-4](#)).

Sickness ([Luke 13:12, 16](#)).

Divination ([Acts 16:16](#)). This damsel at Philippi had a spirit of Python. In Greek mythology Python was the serpent that guarded Delphi, where the famous oracle was located. The name was used to denote a prophetic demon or a soothsayer who practiced ventriloquism, which means, speaking from the belly.

Immorality - uncleanness ([Matthew 10:1](#)); nudity ([Luke 8:27](#)); free-love ([1 Timothy 4:3](#)).

Maniac behavior ([Mark 5:2-5](#)).

Self-destruction in animals ([Luke 8:33](#)).

It should be pointed out that the above disorders cannot always be attributed to demon possession. Many diseases are purely physical or psychosomatic in character, and unless one is skilled in diagnosis it would be very dangerous to claim that a particular case was caused by demon possession. But from the above list it may be seen that demonism may affect man physically, emotionally, and mentally.

What is meant by "doctrines of demons?" Paul warns against this in I Timothy 4:1. It is not doctrines about demons, but doctrines which demons propagate. There is no doubt but that Satan and his ministers are involved in sponsoring any and every teaching that is contrary to sound doctrine. However, according to 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, "Satan is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as ministers of righteousness." Thus, Satanic doctrine may have the appearance of morality and rectitude, just as any counterfeit may appear to be genuine. Demon doctrine may be very religious; it may even have much to say about Jesus as a moralist. One thing seems to be very evident and that is that demon activity varies according to the culture and surroundings of peoples. In areas where the gospel has never penetrated demonism may manifest itself in all manner of uncleanness, immorality, superstition, and cruelty. In civilized and christianized cultures the approach may be entirely different. In the one case Satan endeavors to hold his subjects in ignorance and darkness; in the other, he counterfeits and deceives.

Is demon possession possible today? Demonism was prevalent 'during apostolic times and there is no indication that it may not occur in this present dispensation. However, in apostolic times there were special gifts or abilities given by the Holy Spirit, both of discerning of spirits ([1 Corinthians 12:10](#)), and of exorcism of demons ([Mark 16:17](#)). These miraculous sign-gifts, according to Paul, were to cease or pass away in the development of this present dispensation.

Paul was given the power to manifest all of the signs of an apostle (2 Corinthians 12:12), and hence to cast out demons. However, in the epistles written to the members of the Body of Christ there is no mention of the gift of casting out demons or any instruction how this is to be done. To be sure, the believer in this dispensation is engaged in a warfare in which he wrestles against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12), but again, nothing is said about casting out Satan or demons. The believer is told to take to himself the whole armor of God and having done all to stand. It would seem strange, if believers are supposed to engage in this ministry of casting out demons, that not one word of instruction on the subject should be found in the Church epistles. On the other hand, no doubt certain Satanic powers are overcome every time a sinner believes the gospel and is saved. People who were once demon possessed may experience salvation, and surely if they do the demon must be ejected in the process. But this, it would seem, is a sovereign act of God and not the exercising of a gift or power possessed by a man.

Is it possible for truly saved people to be demon possessed? This is a question which has provoked much discussion. While there is no simple yes-or-no answer given in Scripture, the following facts give strong support to the impossibility of a saint of God being demon possessed.

The believer is described as one who *in times past* was energized by the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2). The clear implication is that this condition no longer exists. Instead, it is God who now energizes in the believer to will and to do of His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).

The believer's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). Paul asks, "What concord hath Christ with Belial? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" (2 Corinthians 6:15,16). The clear implication is that God does not inhabit a temple which is also inhabited by Satan; and the reverse is equally true, that Satan cannot inhabit and possess the temple of God. An Old Testament illustration of this is seen when the Philistines tried to set up the captured ark of Jehovah in the temple of their god Dagon (1 Samuel 5:1-4).

The believer is said to be God's peculiar possession (Titus 2:14). Vincent states that the word *periousios*, translated *peculiar* means: "*possessed over and above, that is, specially selected for one's own; exempt from ordinary laws of distribution.*"²³⁵ If the believer is God's own peculiar and private possession, it is impossible that he could also be Satan's possession.

Of the forty-six references to demons under the title of *spirit* and of the seventy-nine times the word *demon* is used in the New Testament, not one speaks about a truly saved person being possessed.

²³⁵ Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), IV, p.346.

Is it possible for truly saved people to be influenced by demons? There are a number of references indicating that Satan may exert an influence upon believers.

1. Satan may tempt the believer ([1 Corinthians 7:5](#)).
2. Satan may get the advantage of the believer ([2 Corinthians 2:11](#)).
3. The believer may be beguiled by Satan ([2 Corinthians 11:3](#)).
4. Satan is able to buffet the believer, as he did Paul with his thorn in the flesh ([2 Corinthians 12:7](#)).
5. Satan may hinder the ministry of the believer, as he hindered Paul ([1 Thessalonians 2:18](#)).
6. Satan may sift the believer, as he did Peter ([Luke 22:31](#)).
7. Paul, with his apostolic power, would have delivered a Christian who was guilty of gross immorality to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit might be saved in the day of Jesus Christ ([1 Corinthians 5:5](#)).
8. Believers are warned not to give place to the Devil and to stand against his wiles ([Ephesians 4:27](#); [6:11](#)).
9. It might be supposed that Judas is an example of a believer who became possessed of the Devil (John 13:27: "And after the sop Satan entered into him."). However, it is evident that although Judas was one of the disciples of Christ, he was never a saved man. Jesus stated very early in His ministry: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John 6:70). Christ prayed for His own (Peter) that his faith fail not ([Luke 22:31](#)), but there is no record that He prayed for Judas. In His prayer of intercession He said, "those that thou gavest me have I kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition (is lost)." (John 17:12).

THE JUDGMENT OF SATAN AND HIS ANGELS

1. Satan and his angels will be cast into the lake of fire, which has been prepared for them ([Matthew 25:41](#)).
2. Certain of the fallen angels have been cast down into hell (Tartarus) and have been delivered into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment ([2 Peter 2:4](#)).

3. Satan and his angels will be cast out of heaven and confined to earth during the time of the great tribulation ([Revelation 12:7-9](#)).

4. Satan will be destroyed (not annihilated, but rendered powerless) at the second coming of Christ ([Hebrews 2:14](#) cf. [Revelation 20:1-3](#)). He will be bound in the abyss for a thousand years of the earthly reign of Christ, after which he will be released for a short season and will again deceive the nations and cause them to rebel against Christ. Fire will then be rained down from heaven to devour them, and at that time Satan will be cast into the lake of fire, and shall be tormented for ever and ever (Revelation 20:7-10).

5. Although there is no record elsewhere, Paul states: "Know ye not that we shall judge angels" (1 Corinthians 6:3). There is nothing in the context to indicate whether fallen or unfallen angels are involved or when or where this will take place, but it is evidently in connection with our reigning with Christ ([2 Timothy 2:12](#)).

31 WORKS OF GOD IN PRESERVATION AND PROVIDENCE

It would seem logical, after having considered the works of God in Creation, material, human, and angelic, to look next at His works in upholding and supplying the needs of that which He has created. The upholding or continuing in existence of Creation is usually referred to as the doctrine of Preservation, and the care and control which God exercises over His creation is called Providence. These two doctrines are rounded upon the sovereignty of God, just as in the doctrine of Creation. God is separate and distinct from the universe. He existed in all of His perfections before the universe was called into being, and now that the universe has been called into being, Scripture teaches that He exercises a continuous and sovereign control over it.

THE WORKS OF GOD IN PRESERVATION

Definition of Preservation

Strong defines it thus: "Preservation is that continuous agency of God by which he maintains in existence the things he has created, together with the properties and powers with which he has endowed them."²³⁶

Hodge states the doctrine in these words: "By preservation is meant that all things out of God owe the continuance of their existence, with all their properties and powers, to the will of God."²³⁷

²³⁶ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1907), p. 410.

²³⁷ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1940), I, p. 575.

The Nature of Preservation

We might suppose that once things were created they would naturally continue in existence without any further activity on the part of God. However, Scripture opposes this deistical idea and indicates that God is continually active in maintaining creation, and even modern science attests the fact that there is some kind of force which is active in holding the atoms of matter together.

The testimony of Scripture. "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all" (Nehemiah 9:6).

"O thou preserver of men" (Job 7:20).

"O Lord, thou preservest man and beast" (Psalm 36:6).

"And he is before all things, and by him all things consist (cohere or hold together)" (Colossians 1:17).

"Upholding all things by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:3).

God not only upholds and preserves the physical universe, He is the Preserver of life:

"O bless our God ... which holdeth our soul in life" (Psalm 66:8,9).

"I charge thee in the sight of God, who preserveth all things alive" (1 Timothy 6:13 --A.S.V. margin).

"Preserve me, O God, for in thee do I put my trust" (Psalm 16:1. See also the entire [104th Psalm](#)).

The testimony of science. One of the basic laws of physics is that like electrical charges repel and unlike charges attract each other. But nuclear physicists have discovered that sub-atomic particles do not seem to obey that law. The nucleus of the atoms of all of the elements heavier than hydrogen contain anywhere from two for helium to ninety-four for plutonium of positively charged protons, and for some unknown reason they are bound together and do not fly apart as like charges are supposed to do. One proton is estimated to have a mass of only one gram divided by 600,000,000,000,000,000,000, and yet a force of ten to fifty pounds is required to hold two of these protons together in the atom. An atomic explosion is simply the release of this fantastic force from billions of protons. But what is this binding force that keeps every atom from flying to bits? Some have called it "atomic glue" for want of a better name. Karl K. Darrow of the Bell

Telephone Laboratories has this to say about this force:

You grasp what this implies. It implies that all of the massive nuclei have no right to be alive at all. Indeed, they should never have been created, and, if created, they should have blown up instantly. Yet here they all are, and the rocks of the earth are full of these little high-explosive clusters all of them ready to separate into halves with transformation of rest mass into kinetic energy and other forms of energy. And, yet, they never do sunder themselves. Some inflexible inhibition is holding them relentlessly together. The nature of the inhibition is also a secret; but here I suspect it is neither a military secret nor a quantum-mechanical secret, but one thus far reserved by Nature for herself.²³⁸

Thus, all matter is, as it were, like huge, powerful springs held under terrific tension. Man has found a way to release some of that tension in the atomic bomb and reactor, but as Darrow states, what power it is that holds matter together is a secret. The Bible states that Jesus Christ, the One by whom all things were created, is also the One who holds all things together. Paul, who penned these words, was no doubt ignorant of the atomic structure of matter, but his statement is nevertheless true to the physical laws which man has since discovered. Christ is the Sustainer, the Upholder, or what the scientists call, the Atomic Glue of the universe. Were He to release His sustaining power over the universe, all matter to the farthest galaxy would explode in one huge atomic holocaust. Matter is not self-sustaining, and neither is life. The Greek poet, Aratus, expressed the truth admirably, even as Paul quoted him, "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

Preservation has place also in the New Creation. The New Creation is what might be called the New Humanity of which Christ is the risen Head, even as Adam was the head of the Old Creation or Humanity. Paul was certain that Christ "will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:18), and he prayed for the Thessalonians that they might be "preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Jude addresses his epistle to "them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ" (vs. 1). Peter states that the saints are "kept by the power of God" (1 Peter 1:5). Thus, in the spiritual realm God is continuously active in preserving all of those who have become His children through faith in Jesus Christ.

PROVIDENCE

Definition

The word providence means etymologically to see beforehand. However, the doctrine includes more than this. Strong defines it as

²³⁸ D. Lee Chestnut, *The Atom Speaks* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), pp. 66, 67.

... that continuous agency of God by which He makes all the events of the physical and moral universe fulfill the original design with which He created it.²³⁹

Hodge makes Providence to consist of two activities: Preservation and Government, and by Government he means approximately what Strong does by Providence.²⁴⁰ Thiessen calls both Preservation and Providence God's Sovereign Rule. Hodge states:

If God governs the universe He has some great end, including an indefinite number of subordinate ends, towards which it is directed, and He must control the sequence of all events, so as to render certain the accomplishment of all his purpose.²⁴¹

Hodge points out that this government or providence is universal, powerful, wise, and holy.

Objections to Providence

It is objected that God's absolute control over the world cannot be reconciled with the freedom of His rational creatures.

It is objected that the presence of war, crime, poverty, sickness, and other like maladies are proof that there is no such thing as providence, at least, no such thing as God's care and provision for all things.

The answer to the first objection is simply that finite man is not able to comprehend or explain the "how" of God's providence. The second question is more difficult of solution, but a proper understanding of the sin question and of the nature of man's freedom will go far in explaining how God can and does have sovereign control over the universe.

Some Areas Over Which God Exercises His Providence

Over all things. "His kingdom ruleth over all" (Psalm 103:19). "He worketh all things after the counsel of His will" (Ephesians 1:11).

Over the physical earth. "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man" (Psalm 104:14). "Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field "(Matthew 6:30).

²³⁹ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 419.

²⁴⁰ Henry G. Thiessen, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), p. 173.

²⁴¹ Hodge, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 581,582.

Over the animal world. "The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God That thou mayest give them their meat in due season" (Psalm 104:21, 27). "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them" (Matthew 6:26 cf. 10:29).

Over nations. "He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: He enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again" (Job 12:23). "For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He is the Governor among the nations" (Psalm 22:28).

Over insignificant things. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered... not one (sparrow) shall fall on the ground without your Father" (Matthew 10:29, 30).

Over man and his actions. In the case of some men, as Jeremiah (1:5) and Paul (Galatians 1:15, 16), God knew them before they were formed in the womb and separated them to their appointed tasks. There is no reason to suppose that God's providence does not thus affect all who are born into God's family. 1 Samuel 2:6-8 states that the Lord kills and makes alive; He makes poor and He makes rich; He brings low and also lifts up, etc. We are not to suppose that He does all of this arbitrarily, although the reason He so acts is a secret which He keeps to Himself.

Whereas God providentially cares for mankind's needs, so that He makes the sun to shine and the rain to fall upon the just and the unjust alike (Matthew 5:45), He especially provides for His own, to the extent that He makes all things work together for good to them that love Him, to them who are the called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). He has promised to supply their every need (Philippians 4:19).

God also rules and overrules in man's actions. Were this not so it would be useless to pray for others. Why pray for the unsaved, or for those in authority, or for the sick if God does not intervene? Men may intend evil by their actions, but God can use it for good (Genesis 50:20). God can even put it into the heart of wicked men to accomplish His will (Revelation 17:17). If He can and does do this with the ungodly without usurping their freedom, how much more can He energize in His own people both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that God does not violate man's freedom of will in His providential dealings. No compulsion is laid upon man to act contrary to his own will. Unless man acts freely he is not responsible for his actions, and God holds man responsible. None of the sins of Joseph's brothers could be laid to God's account, nor did the fact that God worked through their evil scheme for good in any way minimize the enormity of their hatred and malice. Men would probably find no fault with the teaching that God works in His people

to produce good works, but how shall we explain His control over the evil acts of men? Thiessen suggests a three-fold answer.

He says that *God permits some sin to fully manifest itself*. In other words, God lets some people alone and permits them to go the limit, as in [Hosea 4:17](#); [2 Chronicles 32:31](#); [Acts 14:16](#); [Romans 1:24, 26, 28](#). Secondly, *God prevents some sins*. He can thwart the enemies of His people from carrying out their evil designs and He can keep His own from falling, as in [Genesis 20:6](#); [31:24](#); [Psalm 19:13](#); [Jude 24](#). Lastly, Thiessen says that *God determines the limits to which evil and its effects may go*, as in [Job 1:12](#); [2:6](#); [Psalm 124:2](#); [1 Corinthians 10:13](#); [2 Thessalonians 2:7](#).²⁴²

Strong adds to the above three ideas of Permissive, Preventive, and Determinative Providence that of Directive or Overruling Providence.²⁴³ This aspect of the subject has already been referred to above.

But these four sorts of Providence, while revealing the fact that God exercises control over the evil, do not tell us how He does it. Strong quotes Pepper to the effect that the union of God's will and Man's will is

... such that, while in one view all can be ascribed to God, in another all can be ascribed to the creature. But how God and the creature are united in operation is doubtless known and knowable only to God. A very dim analogy is furnished in the union of soul and body in men. The hand retains its own physical laws, yet is obedient to the human will. This theory recognizes the veracity of consciousness in its witness to personal freedom, and yet the completeness of God's control of both the bad and the good. Free beings are ruled, but are ruled as free and in their freedom. The freedom is not sacrificed to the control. The two coexist, each in its integrity. Any doctrine which does not allow this is false to Scripture and destructive of religion.²⁴⁴

This type of explanation is sometimes called the doctrine of Concursus, which states that while men retain their natural powers, God concurs with their evil acts only as they are natural acts, and not as they are evil. Thiessen and Strong accept this theory as true, but Hodge objects to it, not because it destroys the free agency of man or makes God the author of sin, but for the following three reasons.

First, he says, "it is founded on an arbitrary and false assumption in denying that any creature can originate action." Concursus works on the principle that no second cause can act until acted upon. Hodge states:

²⁴² Thiessen, *op cit.*, p. 182.

²⁴³ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 424.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 425, (Pepper, *Outlines of Systematic Theology*, p. 76).

Concursus, therefore assumed, (1) That God gives to second causes the power of acting. (2) That He preserves them in being and vigour. (3) That He excites and determines second causes to act. (4) That He directs and governs them to the predetermined end.²⁴⁵

He says that to say that no creature (second cause) can originate action contradicts the consciousness of man. If man is a free agent he has the power to act freely, which means originating his actions.

His second objection is "that it is an attempt to explain the inexplicable." He goes on to say:

Not content with the simple and certain declaration of the Bible that God does govern all his creatures and all their actions, it undertakes to explain how this is done. From the nature of the case this is impossible The fact is plain, and the fact alone is important; but the mode of God's action we cannot possibly understand.²⁴⁶

He objects finally

that this doctrine multiplies difficulties. By attempting to teach how God governs free agents, that He first excites them to act; sustains them in action; determines them to act so, and not otherwise; that he effectually concurs in the entity, but not necessarily in the moral quality of the act, we raise at every step the most subtle and perplexing metaphysical questions, which no man is able to solve.²⁴⁷

It would thus seem that Providence is a doctrine which must be received by faith. We can neither understand nor explain just how God works in His saints to produce good works-just where and what the nexus is between the Holy Spirit and man's spirit, or even between man's spirit and his body-nor how He governs and controls the evil works of the ungodly without compromising His holiness or man's freedom and responsibility.

Special Problems Associated With Providence

Besides the general problem of trying to reconcile the cooperating of God with or through the sinful acts of His creatures, there are two special problems to be considered, one having to do with the answer to prayer, and the other with God's role in human government.

Prayer. How can the answer to prayer be reconciled with the fixity of natural law and the eternal decree and foreknowledge of God? If God had decreed or

²⁴⁵ Hodge, *op. cit.*, I, p. 600.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, I, p. 606.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, I, p. 606.

foreknew that a sickness would result in death, or that any other event would occur, how could man's prayer in any way alter the outcome? It is abundantly clear from Scripture that God not only instructs us to make our requests known unto God ([Philippians 4:6](#)), but that He gives assurance that He hears and answers our requests ([Psalm 34:6](#); [138:3](#); [1 Kings 18:24](#); [James 5:17, 18](#); cf. [1:5-7](#)). It would appear that the most satisfactory explanation of the problem is to understand that prayer is a part of the decree of God. God has decreed that men pray and His providence is based upon that fact. If God had decreed that a man pray for a certain outcome of events and had decreed that that outcome should occur in answer to the prayer, then there remains no problem to be reconciled.

No doubt many so-called prayers do not get God's attention simply because the requests are contrary to His will ([1 John 5:14](#)), or because they are sinfully selfish ([James 4:3](#)). But if one is led by the Holy Spirit in his prayers he will doubtless pray for those things which it is the will of God to grant. God is not a huge machine which has been computerized to produce certain predetermined results: He is a Person, and in our interpersonal relationships with Him we have the consciousness that in spite of fixity of the laws of nature and the eternal decree of God He is able to relate to us as a person, to understand our needs, to have compassion, and to grant our requests.

It should be remembered that prayer, like almost every other subject in the Bible, is dispensationally oriented. God's promises have not been the same in every dispensation. God promised many earthly, material blessings to Israel for their obedience ([Deuteronomy 28:1-14](#)) which He does not promise in this present dispensation. Prayer underwent changes during the earthly ministry of Christ ([John 16:23, 24](#)). Prayer must always be qualified by the will of God, for it is true, as Paul stated, that we know not what things we should pray for as we ought ([Romans 8:26](#)).

Human Government. This subject has already been alluded to in discussing the relationship of angelic principalities and powers to human government. There we discovered that Satan and his cosmocrats are said to be controlling the nations ([Luke 4:6](#); [Ephesians 6:12](#)), and we know from history that many human governments have been and are anti-God and suppressive of human freedom. How then do we reconcile these facts with Paul's statements that these governmental powers are ordained of God; that rulers are the ministers of God; and that we must therefore be subject to the powers that be? ([Romans 13:1-7](#)).

God has ordained human government. This does not mean that He places His stamp of approval upon every form of human government or upon every act of such government. He has also ordained the Church, but this does not mean that He approves everything the Church has done in its long history. Beginning with what we call the Dispensation of Human Government, God ordained that man should be granted the power to rule by giving him authority over human life ([Genesis 9:6](#)). No government has been perfect and many have been bad, but

any form of government is better than no government at all, where every man is a law unto himself, where anarchy and lawlessness reign supreme. Human government, although ordained of God for the good of mankind, is no better than man himself. Even in Israel, a nation which God set apart for Himself in a unique and remarkable manner, there were many wicked kings. It would seem that God permits nations to have the kind of rulers they are deserving of (cf. [Judges 9:8-15](#)). Satan may have great influence over human governments, more over some than others, but Nebuchadnezzar was taught a lesson in Daniel 4:17 "to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men."

Scripture teaches that Christians should submit to constituted governmental authority, except in such cases as when government would force one to do that which is contrary to the law of God. Peter expressed this principle when he stated to the rulers of his day: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Yet Peter in his first epistle admonished his readers:

"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God..." (2:13-15).

Paul never organized protest movements against the Roman government, but instructed his converts to be subject and to pay taxes, even as Christ had taught His disciples ([Matthew 22:17-21](#)). Paul valued his Roman citizenship and took advantage of the protection it afforded him ([Acts 16:35-39](#); [22:25-29](#); [25:10, 11, 16](#)). God's providence in saving Paul's life from those who would have murdered him is seen in the way He worked through the Roman government, although it was that government which eventually had him beheaded.

Just as in all other human affairs, God exercises a sovereign control over human governments, so that He can cause the insomnia of a king to save the Jewish race from extermination (Esther 6), or use a few snow flakes to defeat a Napoleon. Infinite wisdom and foreknowledge is able and does work all things together to accomplish God's purposes without implicating Him with man's evil or without interfering in any way with man's freedom and responsibility.

Doctrines Opposed to Providence

Casualism. Casualism is the belief that everything happens by chance. The popular expression for this idea is *good or bad luck*. Whereas few people would deny the existence of any and all causal connections in the phenomena of nature, many people do operate on the principle that the minor, every-day happenings are just that: things that occur without any purpose or design. However, as we quoted Hodge earlier, God must have control over the sequence

of all events however minor, if He is to render certain the accomplishment of all of His purposes.

The word *chance* does not always mean the absence of all causal connections. The Bible uses this word a number of times. For example, in the story of the good Samaritan it is stated: "And by chance there came down a certain priest that way" (Luke 10:31). Chance did not cause the priest to come that way at that time; he no doubt had planned his journey well, but he had not planned it so as to meet this wounded man. He had planned his trip for another purpose. God caused in His providence his trip to coincide with the experience of the man left wounded by the robbers. In usages such as this one, *chance* describes an event the reason for which we are ignorant.

Fatalism. This is just the opposite of Casualism. Fatalism says that all events have been pre-determined and will of necessity inevitably happen. The Greeks and Romans had their three Fates: Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, who supposedly controlled the destinies of men, just as the Mohammedans believe that Allah has inexorably decreed all of the events of men's lives. This belief, while magnifying the omnipotence of God, denies both man's freedom and God's wisdom, holiness, and love.

Part Six

Anthropology

32 THE NATURE OF MAN

INTRODUCTION

In dealing with the doctrine of Creation in general we have already established certain facts from Scripture concerning the place of man in creation. Man was a direct creation of God. He did not evolve from lower forms of animal life, but came into being at a point in time as a complete, mature, responsible human being. Whereas there is very good evidence for the great antiquity of the physical universe, and Scripture can be so interpreted to allow for this, Scripture cannot be interpreted to allow for the age of man as claimed by evolutionary scientists. Man came into being as the last of God's creative acts. Ussher, on the basis of the genealogies of the Hebrew Scriptures, placed that date at 4004 B.C. Hales set the date at 5411 B.C. on the basis of the Septuagint Version. There could possibly be a range of several thousand years for these dates, since the genealogical tables may have omitted numerous generations, but by no stretch of the imagination can the first eleven chapters of Genesis be made to include the hundreds of thousands of years demanded by the evolutionary hypothesis. Evolution may seem to be a very plausible theory with many supporting facts,

even as the Ptolemaic theory appeared to be very plausible, insomuch that it could predict the positions of the planets and forecast the eclipses of the sun and moon, and yet further advances in man's knowledge have relegated this theory to the limbo of outmoded ideas. Further advances in knowledge may do the same for the evolutionary theory.

Monogeny, or the unity of the human race, has also been established from Scripture. The Bible lends no support for polygenism, whether it be from the evolutionary idea that man evolved in several distinct locations, or from the theory of a pre-Adamite race which was in existence at the time of Adam's creation. All mankind has descended from one original human pair, according to Scripture. Therefore, this study of Anthropology is undertaken on the basis of the Scriptural teaching of the unity of the human race and the fact that the first man was a direct creation of God.

MAN CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

Scripture takes but three verses to describe the creation of man:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (Genesis 1:26, 27).

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (Genesis 2:7).

Three basic facts are here stated. First, man was created in the image and likeness of God. Second, his body was formed from pre-existing matter, the dust of the ground. Third, God's breath in his nostrils made him a living soul. Let us look at these three things in order.

The Image and Likeness of God

The words, image and likeness, have been variously understood. Some have understood these words to be synonymous, while others have made a distinction. Some of the early church fathers believed that image had to do with the body and likeness with the spiritual part of man: Others supposed that image denoted characteristics of man as man, and that likeness referred to qualities not essential to human nature which could be cultivated or lost. Among the Scholastics the image represented the intellectual powers of reason and freedom, and likeness represented the original righteousness. The Reformers rejected these distinctions. Others, such as the Socinians, held lower views of

the image of God. Schleiermacher rejected the idea of original righteousness and held that the image consisted in a certain capacity that was given man for attaining righteousness.

It would appear from the usage in Genesis and elsewhere that these two terms are used interchangeably. Genesis 1:26 uses both words in stating God's intention to create man, whereas vs. 27 uses only image to describe the actual creation, thus indicating that this one word fulfills the meaning of the two in the previous verse. And in Genesis 5:1 the word likeness is used to express the same meaning. Again, in Genesis 9:6 only image is used. The New Testament makes no distinction apparently, for in 1 Corinthians 11:7 man is called the image and glory of God, and in James 3:9 men are said to be made after the similitude or likeness of God. Paul describes the *new man* by saying he is "after the image of Him who created him (Colossians 3:9). What then is meant by the image or likeness of God?

First of all, the image of God is a personal likeness. God is a Person. Man is a person. This personal likeness is something beyond the physical or material nature of man, for God is spirit and not matter. Therefore personality must be of a spiritual nature. Man's body was made very similar to that of the higher animals, but animals were not made in the image of God. Therefore the image of God could not be a physical likeness. This personal likeness is that which makes man a man; apart from it he would cease to be a man. Therefore man can never lose this aspect of God-likeness. Paul recognized man, even though in a fallen state, as the image of God (1 Corinthians 11:7). It is this which gives value to human life. Destroying human life is destroying the image of God. Therefore God says:

"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Genesis 9:6).

And it is this fact of God-likeness which makes man worth saving: worth the ransom price which God's Son paid when He gave His life a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:6).

What does it mean that man has personality? Strong answers in this way:

Personality: self-consciousness + self-determination. *Self-consciousness* and *self-determination*, as distinguished from the consciousness and determination of the brute, involve all the higher mental and moral powers which constitute us men Notice that the term "image" does not, in man, imply *perfect* representation. Only Christ is the "very image" of God.²⁴⁸

Hodge puts it this way:

²⁴⁸ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1907), p. 515.

... a person is an intelligent subject who can say I, who can be addressed as Thou, and who can act and be the object of action.²⁴⁹

Next, the image of God was a moral likeness. The fact that man has a moral nature is involved in the personal likeness mentioned above, even though man is now a fallen creature. Man did not lose his moral nature through the fall, but he did lose his original righteousness. As created Adam was like God in the sense that he was morally righteous. It has been argued by Pelagians and Arminians that Adam was morally neutral as created and that righteousness could be gained only by works of righteousness. However, actions do not produce character: right actions spring from a righteous character. Good fruit does not produce a good tree but just the opposite ([Matthew 7:17-19](#) and [12:33](#)).

The fact that Adam had a concreated holiness is borne out by several lines of evidence. The image of God in Ephesians 4:24 in which the new man is created is said to be in righteousness and true holiness. If the sinner restored to God is said to be created in true holiness, then surely the first man as created could have been and should have been created in holiness. Also, it appears from the creation account that God pronounced man *very good*, and this goodness must refer to more than the perfection of the physical body. And the further fact that Adam enjoyed fellowship with God indicates that he must have been righteous to enter into and to enjoy such a relationship.

One's view of the original moral state of man will determine to some extent one's view of the effect of the fall upon man's nature. For example, Roman Catholic theologians have distinguished between the image and likeness of God, claiming that the image alone belonged to man's nature when he was created. The image might be described as man's natural capacity for religion. The likeness was not Adam's by creation but it had to be produced by Adam's own obedience. As created, Adam had sensuous impulses, unpremeditated evil desire, or concupiscence, and to help him overcome these tendencies and to become more God-like, God gave him a gift of special grace. This special grace (*superadditum*) is all that Adam lost in the fall. Strong sets forth the Catholic view in these words:

The Roman Catholic doctrine may be roughly and pictorially stated as follows: As created, man was morally naked, or devoid of positive righteousness (*pura naturalia*, or *in puris naturalibus*). By obedience he obtained as a reward from God (*donum supernaturale*, or *superadditum*) a suit of clothes or robe of righteousness to protect him, so that he became clothed (*vestitus*). This suit of clothes, however, was a sort of magic spell of which he could be divested. The adversary attacked him and stripped him of his suit. After his sin he was one despoiled (*spoliatus*). But his condition after differed from his condition before this attack, only as a

²⁴⁹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Win. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprint 1940), I, p. 444.

stripped man differs from a naked man (*spoliatus a nudo*). He was now only in the same state in which he was created, with the single exception of the weakness he might feel as the result of losing his customary clothing. He could still earn himself another suit,—in fact, he could earn two or more, so as to sell, or give away, what he did not need for himself. The phrase *in puris naturalibus* describes the original state, as the phrase *spoliatus a nudo* describes the difference resulting from man's sin.²⁵⁰

Thus the basic difference between the Roman Catholic doctrine and that which Protestants believe the Bible teaches about the original nature of man is in the definition of original righteousness. Protestants believe that original righteousness was part of the image of God in which man was created. Rome's view is based upon the belief that there was a natural conflict between flesh and spirit in Adam as he was created which was therefore not sinful. Protestants believe that Adam had no such concupiscence before the fall, and that concupiscence is sin, and that the fall so corrupted man's nature that he cannot of himself do anything that is pleasing to God. Man's basic problem is not simply that he has been influenced by a bad example, or that he is weak or sick, but that he is spiritually dead and alienated from the life of God. Paul expresses man's condition in these words:

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:7, 8).

The Image of God is a Social Likeness. Thiessen suggests this third aspect of man's God-likeness.²⁵¹ God does have a social nature which is grounded in his affections. The fellowship of the Persons within the Godhead is based upon this social nature. Man was created to have fellowship with God. God recognized that it was not good for man to be alone because he was created with a social nature, and therefore God made woman to be his companion. Sin is that which disrupts fellowship both with God and with man. Salvation is a restoration of fellowship, even as John says:

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

Man, even though fallen, still retains his social nature, although it is often distorted and corrupted. Being separated from God in his fallen state he knows nothing of a social relationship with God; nevertheless he is capable of being restored to that relationship through regeneration.

²⁵⁰ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 521.

²⁵¹ Henry C. Thiessen, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), p. 222-

The Body of Man

It has already been stated that the body of Man did not comprise the image of God. God is not composed of material substance and therefore material substance cannot be the image of God. Man's body was formed from pre-existing matter. When it was first formed it had no life or soul. It was only after God had breathed into it the breath of life that man became a living soul. Therefore the Scripture makes a clear distinction between the body and the soul.

It has been argued by some that since the Bible states: "Dust thou art," man is simply dust, or to state it another way, man is simply body, and when the body disintegrates, man in his totality dissolves, so that the only existence he has after death is that of the chemical elements which return to the soil. However, since it was only the body that was made of dust, it is only the body that can return to dust. Ecclesiastes 12:7 states: "Then shall the dust return to earth as it was; and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." Body and spirit are separate and distinct entities. Again, some would try to make the spirit to be simply the air breathed into man's nostrils, but according to Scripture man's spirit is more than simply the physical breath. Paul, for example, asks: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?" (1 Corinthians 2:11). Here man's spirit is his knowing faculty. Our Lord made a clear distinction between body and soul in Matthew 10:28: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to *kill* the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (*gehenna*)." Notice that Christ did not say that the soul could be killed. He used another word (*apollumi*), which means ruin, loss, not of being but of well-being. The Bible from beginning to end consistently makes distinction between the body and the soul or spirit. In the New Testament the body is represented as a tent or house in which man dwells (2 Corinthians 5:1-4; 2 Peter 1:13, 14). Man may be in the body or exist out of the body. He may be absent from the body and at home with the Lord. In one of Paul's experiences he was caught up into heaven in a conscious state, but he did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body. If man were simply a body, or if the body and the conscious spirit could not exist separately, the inspired apostle should have known that he could not have been out of the body in 2 Corinthians 12:2.

Man a Living Soul

"And the Lord formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." The word soul (*nephesh*) is used some 754 times in the Old Testament and is translated by about 45 different English words. In about two-thirds of its occurrences it is translated *soul*, and less frequently by such words as creature, life, self, person, mind, heart, will, desire, pleasure, etc. Soul is employed of animal life as well as human life (Genesis 1:21, 24; 2:19; 9:10, 12), since the word primarily denotes life which is sustained by breath. The New Testament equivalent for *nephesh* is

psuche. It is used 105 times and is translated *soul* 58 times, *life* 40 times, *mind* 3 times, and *heart*, *heartily*, *us*, and *you*, once each.

It might appear from Genesis 2:7 that man is a soul, but does not have a soul, and some do hold this position. The argument is that there was no soul until God breathed into man's nostrils, so that when the breath leaves man's body there is no soul left. This view logically results in a non-conscious or non-existent state of the dead. But other passages of Scripture seem to clearly state that man does have a soul. In fact, soul is so closely identified with self that it is difficult to distinguish between them. The Psalmist called upon his soul to glorify the Lord ([Psalm 103:1, 2](#)). Christ made reference to His soul. Men may lose their souls ([Matthew 16:26](#)). The soul of the widow's dead son came into his body again ([1 Kings 17:21, 22](#)). Christ's soul did not disintegrate when He died. His soul went to Hades, but it was not left in Hades ([Acts 2:27, 31](#)). The rejoinder usually made to this point is that Hades is simply the grave, but granting this for the moment, it is difficult to see how a soul could be buried, unless the person were buried alive. By definition a dead body is not a soul, and therefore Christ's soul was not buried. It departed from His body several hours before His body was put in the grave. And finally, Christ plainly stated, as quoted earlier, that the body could be killed without killing the soul, which word should sufficiently answer the contention that the soul ceases to exist at death.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ELEMENTS OF HUMAN NATURE

Christians, almost without exception, agree that man has a physical and a spiritual nature; a corporeal and an incorporeal nature. The differences arise in defining the spiritual aspect of his nature. Is man a three-part being, composed of body, soul, and spirit, or is he only a two part being, composed of body and soul or spirit? There seems to be Scripture to support both views.

The Dichotomous View

Dichotomists contend that soul and spirit are one indivisible essence, and are but different ways of viewing the same thing. Hodge calls this view Realistic Dualism. He states:

... it asserts the existence of two distinct *res*, entities, or substances; the one extended, tangible, and divisible, the object of the senses; the other unextended and indivisible, the thinking, feeling, and willing subject in man. This doctrine stands opposed to materialism and idealism, which although antagonist systems in other respects, agree in denying any dualism of substance. The one makes the mind a function of the body; the other makes the body a form of the mind. But according to the Scriptures and all sound philosophy, neither is the body, as Delitzsch says, a precipitate of the mind, nor is the mind a sublimate of matter.²⁵²

²⁵² Hodge, *op. cit.*, II, p. 46.

The Trichotomous View

This view prevailed more in the Eastern or Greek Catholic Church, whereas Dichotomy has been prevalent in the Western Church. It asserts that man is composed of three distinct and separable substances: body, soul, and spirit. There are three Scripture passages which seem to maintain these distinctions:

1. 1 Thessalonians 5:23: "and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

3. 1 Corinthians 15:44: "It is sown a natural (psychical) body: it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."

Pember sets forth the tripartite view in the following quotations:

Man was thus made up of only two independent elements, the corporeal and the spiritual: but when God placed the spirit within the casing of earth, the combination of these produced a third part, and man became a living soul. (Hence, possibly, the meaning of the plural in the expression "breath of lives." The inbreathing of God became the spirit, and at the same time, by its action upon the body, produced the soul. It was thus the cause both of the spiritual and sensual life.) For direct communication between spirit and flesh is impossible: their intercourse can be carried on only by means of a medium, and the instant production of one was the result of their contact in Adam

Now the body we may term the sense-consciousness, the soul the self-consciousness, and the spirit the God-consciousness. For the body gives us the use of the five senses; the soul comprises the intellect which aids us in the present state of existence, and the emotions which proceed from the senses; while the spirit is our noblest part, which came directly from God, and by which alone we are able to apprehend and worship him.²⁵³

Numerous arguments have been advanced against Trichotomy. Hodge cites four:

1. In the creation account there is no intimation of anything more than the material body and the living principle derived from God.

²⁵³ G. H. Pember, *Earth's Earliest Ages* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., N.D.), pp. 105, 106.

2. In the Bible everything that is said of the soul is also said of the spirit. The two words are constantly interchanged.

3. Both soul and spirit are used in Scripture indiscriminately of men and of irrational animals. Soul and spirit in brute creation are irrational and mortal; in man they are rational and immortal.

4. Man is conscious of his body and of his immaterial nature, but he is not conscious of having two distinct and separate immaterial parts.²⁵⁴

Strong adds several further objections:

5. Psuche or soul is ascribed to Jehovah ([Amos 6:8](#); [Isaiah 42:1](#); [Jeremiah 9:9](#); [Hebrews 10:38](#)).

6. The disembodied are called psuchoi (souls) ([Revelation 6:9](#)).

7. The highest exercises of religion are attributed to the soul ([Mark 12:30](#); [Luke 1:46](#); [Hebrews 6:18, 19](#); [James 1:21](#)).

8. To lose the soul is to lose all ([Mark 8:36, 37](#)).²⁵⁵

There have been a number of different doctrinal systems which have been based on Trichotomy. Annihilationists hold that man at his creation was given besides body and soul, a divine element, the spirit, which he lost by sin and can recover only by regeneration. When the spirit is thus restored he becomes immortal, but if the spirit is not restored he perishes at death the same as any brute beast. The Gnostics held that the spirit of man was part of the divine essence and therefore incapable of sin. Apollinaris taught that Christ's humanity consisted only of body and soul, and that the divine nature took the place of His spirit. No doubt other false doctrines have been built upon the foundation of a strict Trichotomy, but in all fairness it must be said that not all trichotomists are guilty of such doctrinal aberrations.

Modified Trichotomy

Strict Trichotomy states that spirit and soul are distinct substances which can be separated and exist separately. We might well ask, Which is myself, my soul or my spirit? If both are myself, do I have two selves? Could my spirit be in one locality and my soul in another? Trichotomy would force us to give an affirmative answer to these questions. It would appear contrary to Scripture and to consciousness that every individual has two distinct selves. On the other hand it does seem that Scripture makes more distinctions between soul and spirit than most dichotomists are willing to recognize. This fact has led some men to take a

²⁵⁴ Hodge, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 48, 49.

²⁵⁵ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 485.

sort of in-between ground and adopt what we have called a modified form of trichotomy. Alford, for example, states on Hebrews 4:12:

I have regarded them as follows: *psuches* and *pneumatōs* (soul and spirit), not coupled by *te kai*, but only by *kai*, denote two separate departments of man's being, each subordinate to the process indicated by *merismou* (dividing). The logos pierces to the dividing, not of the *psuche* from the *pneuma*, but of the *psuche* itself and of the *pneuma* itself: the former being the lower portion of man's indivisible part, which he has in common with the brutes ...; the latter the higher portion, receptive of the Spirit of God ...; *both which* are pierced and divided by the sword of the Spirit, the word of God.²⁵⁶

We understand Alford to be saying that man's immaterial nature is an indivisible unity, and yet it consists of two distinct parts or portions. Thiessen says of this view:

This variation from the traditional trichotomous view makes it possible to conserve the arguments for the dichotomous view, and yet explain how some Christians are "carnal" and others "spiritual." It also agrees with the teaching that the present body is a "soul-body" and that the resurrection body will be a "spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44). In other words, man's immaterial nature is looked upon as one nature, but composed of two parts.²⁵⁷

If one insists that soul and spirit are two separable substances on the basis of 1 Thessalonians 5:23, another could insist that man is a four-part being on the basis of Mark 12:30: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." And if spirit is something different from mind, we would have a five-part nature.

Strong concludes his discussion of this aspect of the subject:

We conclude that the immaterial part of man, viewed as an individual and conscious life, capable of possession and animating a physical organism, is called *psuche*; viewed as a rational and moral agent, susceptible of divine influence and indwelling, this same immaterial part is called *pneuma*. The *pneuma* then, is man's nature looking Godward, and capable of receiving and manifesting the *Pneuma Agion* (Holy Spirit); the *psuche* is man's nature looking earthward, and touching the world of sense. The *pneuma* is man's higher part, as related to the body, or as capable of such relation. Man's being is therefore not trichotomous but

²⁵⁶ Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1870) IV, pp. 84, 85.

²⁵⁷ Thiessen, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

dichotomous, and his immaterial part, while possessing duality of powers, has unity of substance.²⁵⁸

THE ORIGIN OF MAN'S NATURE

There can be little difference of opinion as to the origin of man's body since the creation of the first man. The human body is reproduced according to the well established laws of genetics by the process of procreation. The origin of the immaterial part of man, whether considered as one or two distinct substances, is not so evident. Several theories have been advanced:

Pre-Existence

This theory holds that souls have had a previous existence, and that at birth the soul is incarnated in a new human body. This idea is basic to the belief in reincarnation. Certain philosophers have held this view to try to account for the ideas which the soul seems to possess which have not been derived from sense experiences, and also to account for the disparity of conditions under which men come into the world. The Scripture lends no support whatever to this theory. Besides the fact that man has no recollection of a former existence, which he should have if the theory is true, this concept is inimical to the Scriptural teaching of man's creation and of the imputation of Adam's sin to the race.

Creation

This view holds that man's soul is the immediate creation of God; that is, that somewhere between conception and birth, God creates a new soul and places it within the body. Thus the body alone comes from the parents. Trichotomists who hold this view might say that the animal soul is also propagated from the parents and that the spirit is the direct creation of God. In any event, this theory must deny the inheritance of any psychological or spiritual characteristics from the parents. This view has been held by most Roman Catholic and Reformed theologians.

The most evident objection to Creationism of the soul is that it represents God as creating sinful souls, for it is evident that all are born as sinners. This objection has been answered in one of three ways, either by saying that children as born into the world are pure and uncontaminated with sin and only become sinners when at maturity they commit acts of sin, or by saying the pure, newly created soul becomes contaminated with sin as soon as it is joined to the sinful body, or by adopting the basic tenet of Covenant Theology. Coccejus developed the theory that God made a covenant with Adam before he fell, to the effect that Adam was appointed as the representative of the human race, so that if he obeyed God his obedience would be put to the account of all of his descendants, but if he disobeyed, then his sin would be imputed to his offspring. On the basis

²⁵⁸ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 486.

then of Adam as the Federal Head of the race, God is represented as creating each new soul pure and righteous, but immediately imputing Adam's sin to it in accordance with the covenant. Since there is no Scriptural basis for such a covenant of works ever having been made, creationism of the soul and covenant theology are here rejected as unscriptural.

Traducianism

This view holds that the whole person, body, soul and spirit, is transmitted from parents to child. It involves the idea that the whole human race was created potentially in Adam, so that Adam's sin was a race sin, and that we all actually sinned in Adam, and not simply that Adam acted as our representative when he sinned. We take this view to be the teaching of the Scripture for the following reasons:

1. It is in accord with the general principle inherent in all of God's creative work: each species reproducing after its own kind. God does not create every plant and animal that comes into existence today. They are propagated by seed, and so is man. For this reason Traducianism makes Adam to be the *seminal head* of the human race.

2. It is recorded only once that God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, but according to Creationism God is constantly engaged in this activity as thousands of children are born each day. The Bible teaches that God ceased from His creative work, but Creationism has Him continuing at an ever increasing rate.

3. This theory is in accord with the principle set forth in [Hebrews 7:5-10](#). It is there stated that Levi, the great-grandson of Abraham, paid tithes to Melchisedec in the person of Abraham, "for he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him." This implies that there was more than Levi's potential body in Abraham.

4. Traducianism is more in accord with Paul's teaching in [Romans 5:12](#). Adam's sin was actually our sin. Traducianism gives a much better explanation of man's sin nature and of imputed sin than does Creationism. It frees God from the supposed responsibility of creating sinful souls, or of corrupting sinless souls as soon as they are put into human bodies.

5. Creationists argue that Traducianism cannot explain the differences between children and parents, which differences they think are better explained by having the soul of each child to be a special creation. However, Traducianism allows for a superintending Providence in the generation of a new child which may account for the birth of a prodigy. And further, when one considers the almost infinite number of genes which comprise the inheritance mechanism of man, and the fact that these have come from hundreds of generations, there is

room for almost infinite variations of human traits. The main problem for Traducianism is to explain how physical genes can determine or control the immaterial nature of man. However, no one has yet been able to explain satisfactorily how mind can control matter and matter affect mind. Creationists have the same basic problem.

MAN'S MORAL FACULTIES

Thus far we have considered the meaning of man's creation in the image of God, of the psychological elements of his nature, of the origin of those elements, and finally we will consider the faculties of his moral nature, those powers which fit him for right and wrong action. These faculties, it is generally agreed, are intellect, sensibility, and will, along with an activity in which all three faculties concur, that of conscience. We will here treat only the moral activities of these faculties which concern chiefly the conscience and the will. Thiessen states rather succinctly the interrelation of these faculties:

Intellect enables man to discern between what is right and wrong; sensibility appeals to him to do the one or the other; and will decides the issue. But in connection with these powers is another which involves them all, and without which there can be no moral action. This is conscience. It applies the moral law to us in particular cases and urges compliance with it.²⁵⁹

Conscience

Definition. Conscience is a *knowing with* or an *accompanying knowledge*. It is a knowing or judging of our moral acts and states in the light of a given standard or law. The word is used 32 times in the New Testament and not at all in the Old. Conscience is expressed in other ways in the Old Testament. For example, after David had sinned in numbering the children of Israel, we read: "And David's heart smote him" (2 Samuel 24:10).

The Dispensation of Conscience. Dispensationalists usually designate the second dispensation by this name, even though the word conscience is not even mentioned in Genesis. It would seem that conscience was dormant in man until he had committed the first act of sin. The law had been given by God not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but while man remained in a state of innocence he had no experiential knowledge of evil. When he sinned, his conscience condemned his action and he hid himself from God. The end of the dispensation of Conscience does not mean that conscience no longer functioned in man, but that God placed man under different ruling principles.

Kinds of Conscience

²⁵⁹ Thiessen, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

1. "... hearts sprinkled from an *evil conscience*..." (Hebrews 10:22).
2. "... even their mind and conscience is *defiled*..." (Titus 1:15).
3. "... wound their *weak conscience* ..." (1 Corinthians 8:7, 12).
4. "I have lived in all *good conscience* before God" (Acts 23:1; cf. 1 Timothy 1:5, 19; Hebrews 13:18; 1 Peter 3:16, 21).
5. "Holding the mystery of the faith in a *pure conscience*" (1 Timothy 3:9).

The Work of Conscience

1. Convicting: "... convicted by their own conscience.. ." (John 8:9).
2. Bearing witness: "... their conscience also bearing witness ..." (Romans 2:15); "I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness." (Romans 9:1).

Conscience Under the Law

1. Imperfect: The ministration of the Old Covenant "... could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience ..." (Hebrews 9:9).
2. A Conscience of Sins: The fact that Israel's sacrifices were not able to take away sins, and therefore had to be repeated continually, is stated as proof that the people still had the conscience of sins, "... because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.. ." (Hebrews 10:2, 3).

The Change of Conscience in Salvation. "How much more shall the blood of Christ... purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Hebrews 9:14). "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience..." (Hebrews 10:22). Christ's once for all sacrifice for sins actually put away sins, and faith in that work therefore takes away the conscience of sins. This does not mean that the believer no longer experiences the consciousness of sin when he commits it, but that the entire sin question has been forever settled by the death of Christ, so that the believer can now stand in the presence of God completely cleared of all implication in sin.

Weak and Strong Conscience. See 1 Corinthians 8:7-12 and 10:25-28. A believer may not be fully established in the true liberty he has in Christ and may therefore have scruples about certain practices which are not immoral in themselves. His conscience is said to be weak. Paul gives as an example of this the eating of meat which had been sacrificed to idols. Most of the meat that was sold in the shambles (public market) had in that day been offered in sacrifice to

some idol. Paul knew that the idol was nothing and that the meat itself had not been harmed by this heathen practice. Therefore he could with a good conscience eat it. But not all men had that knowledge, and for them to eat such meat meant the defiling of their conscience. For them to see another Christian eating such meat meant the wounding of their weak conscience, and even an encouraging of them to worship in the idol's temple. Under such circumstances Paul declared that he would eat no meat for conscience sake, not for his own conscience, but for the conscience of the other man, lest he cause him to stumble. But in a case where Paul was invited to dine with an unbeliever and he felt disposed to go, he ate whatsoever was set before him, asking no questions for conscience sake. But if another pointed out the fact that the meat had been offered to idols, he would refuse to eat it, lest he cause that one to stumble. To follow Paul's example often calls for the sacrificing of one's own personal liberty for the sake of another's weak conscience. Paul anticipates the natural reaction of the man who understands the liberty he has in Christ, and has him asking: "What, shall my freedom be called into question by another man's conscience? If I give thanks for the meat, is it not sanctified by the word of God and prayer? And Paul's reply is: Whether you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God, and give none offense to the Jews or the Greeks or the Church of God (1 Corinthians 10:30-33).

The Conscience of the Unsaved. As noted earlier the conscience of the unsaved is evil and defiled. However, as the conscience is continually sinned against it becomes more and more insensitive. In the words of Paul they "have their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Timothy 4:2). It seems that some men have sinned against the light so long that their conscience no longer bothers them. This is probably what is meant in Isaiah's prophecy concerning Israel, that their heart has waxed gross, their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed (Acts 28:27). Sin against conscience has a way of inflicting penalty, even as a disease can progressively destroy the physical organism. On the other hand, the conscience of the believer grows more sensitive as he studies the Word of God and makes it his standard of practice.

Will

Definition. Strong states: "Will is the soul's power to choose between motives and to direct its subsequent activity according to the motive thus chosen, in other words, the soul's power to choose both an end and the means to attain it."²⁶⁰

The Funk & Wagnalls dictionary definition is quite similar: "The faculty by which the rational mind makes choice of its ends of actions, and directs the energies in carrying out its determinations."²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 504.

²⁶¹ *The Practical Standard Dictionary* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1927), p. 1275.

But as the dictionary points out, this word has a wide range of meanings and has been the subject of many and various theories. Two theories will be considered here, those of Determinism and of Free Will.

Determinism. Determinism denies freedom of will to man. It says that all of his choices and decisions have been predetermined for him. In spite of the fact that man seems to be under no coercion and seems to choose freely his course of action, determinists argue from several different viewpoints that man's choices are not free.

1. The Theological Argument. If we say that God knows beforehand everything that will ever take place, then we are saying that everything that will ever happen has been determined beforehand, and regardless of how free a man may feel, his choices must be those that agree with God's foreknowledge. It may be argued that God in no way influences man's choices, but simply foreknew what he would do, but in such case it is difficult to see how God could have had any plan or purpose, since everything that happens would be the carrying out of the creature will, with little, if any, place being left for God's will.

2. The Metaphysical Argument. This is based upon the maxim: Every event must have a cause. This means that when one makes a choice, there was something else that caused him or determined him to make the choice. The fact that the person is unconscious of the cause does not lessen the fact that his choice was determined and not free. The further fact that trained scientists can predict with a fair degree of accuracy the choices people will make under a certain set of circumstances lends weight to this argument.

3. Conditioning Argument. There is the conditioning which comes about from our environment, our parents, our teachers, our peer group, so that while we feel we are acting voluntarily, we may be making choices which our environment forces us to make.

The influence of other personalities often determines choices. Parents are aware of the bad influence certain companions may have on their children. Paul warns us: "Do not be deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners," (1 Corinthians 15:33). And this influence is not limited to human personalities, for the Scripture states that the prince of the power of the air is the spirit who energizes in the children of disobedience ([Ephesians 2:2](#)). Christ told the people of His day who thought that they were free that they were the slaves of sin ([John 8:32-36](#)). Hypnotism is but an extreme form of control of the will by others, which may occur to a lesser degree unnoticed. And, of course, Scripture testifies that God energizes in those who are saved, both to will and to do of His good pleasure ([Philippians 2:13](#)).

4. Scientific Argument. There is a great deal of evidence that comes from modern discoveries in the realm of psychology, neurology, psychiatry,

pharmacology, and kindred branches of science that man's thoughts and feelings and actions may be controlled, predicted, and determined.

Free Will. Advocates of free will appeal to the following arguments:

1. The most evident proof of free will is that everyone is conscious of being able to make free choices. Even if there are external circumstances which influence decisions of the will, the fact remains that we are not conscious of any compulsion which forces us to choose against our will.

2. When people express regret for having made a certain choice they are acting as though they might have made a different choice. But if their choice was predetermined and they could not have done otherwise, then why should anyone ever feel remorse?

3. Our whole legal system is built upon the foundation that men are free to choose. To condemn or punish a person for what he has done makes no sense at all if the person could not have done otherwise.

4. It is argued that the determinist, if he really believes in determinism would never argue with one who disagrees with him, since he must believe that the one who believes in free will was predetermined by some influence over which he had no power to believe in free will.

5. Finally, from the Christian viewpoint it is argued that the whole drama of salvation is just a puppet show in which man is trapped if determinism is true, and that there is nothing man can do either to improve or worsen the situation.

Conclusion

There is a certain amount of confusion concerning the will because of a failure to define clearly the terms which are used. Liberty or freedom is used in a confusing manner by equating freedom of the will with freedom of the individual. A man may be free but his will may be in bondage to sin and to bad habits. Hodge states: "We maintain that man is free; but we deny that the will is free in the sense of being independent of reason, conscience, and feeling. In other words, a man cannot be independent of himself, or any one of his faculties independent of all the rest."²⁶²

A distinction also needs to be made between freedom and ability. God is free but He is not able to sin. Adam before the fall was free and was able both to sin and not to sin. Man since the fall is free but he is no longer able not to sin. Hodge states the distinction between these two things in this way: "Free agency is the

²⁶² Hodge, *op. cit.*, II, p. 281.

power to decide according to our character; ability is the power to change our character by a volition.²⁶³

It should be evident that man can will to do many things which he is not able to perform. He may will to fly to the moon by his own strength, or to be sinless, or never to die, and he is perfectly free to will such things, but he is not able to execute his will. Paul puts it in these words: "... for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.. ." (Romans 7:18).

Also, it should be evident that man's freedom as well as his ability is circumscribed. Man is not free to do anything he wills. He is not free to appropriate that which belongs to another. The fact that he may steal proves that he has the ability, but it does not grant him the liberty. Liberty may be misused, even as Paul declares: "... ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh.. ." (Galatians 5:13).

Peter recognized the same danger: "As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as servants of God ..." (1 Peter 2:16).

The following facts seem to be self-evident:

1. As far as man's consciousness is concerned, he feels that he is free to make any choices he so desires.

2. His will is often influenced, consciously or unconsciously, by things and persons outside of himself.

3. He may act contrary to his will. He may say, "I am doing this against my will, ..." but he does this freely.

4. He does not always have the ability to carry out his will, but this inability is not a limitation of his freedom.

5. Will is determined by permanent states of character. If one bears deep enmity toward another, he is free to do either good or bad to him, but his will is influenced by his emotional state, so that he chooses to "do the bad. Thus, when we speak of the natural man's inability to please God, the inability is not of a physical or constitutional nature, but consists of a bent of the will which is at enmity with God and therefore not subject to the will of God.

6. If there is such a thing as foreknowledge with God, then man cannot carry out any volition of his own which is contrary to that which God foreknew would come to pass.

²⁶³ *ibid.*, II, p. 293.

Beyond these facts it seems impossible for the finite mind to penetrate. The problem remains unresolved of explaining *how* a Sovereign will can co-exist with millions of human wills, so that the Sovereign will is perfectly carried out without making mere automatons out of the human race. Chafer quotes Dr. John Dick, whose words bring our discussion of the will to a conclusion:

Those actions are free which are the effect of volition. In whatever manner the state of mind which gave rise to the volition has been produced, the liberty of the agent is neither greater nor less. It is his will alone which is to be considered, and not the means by which it has been determined. If God foreordained certain actions, and placed men in such circumstances that the actions would certainly take place agreeably to the laws of the mind, men are nevertheless moral agents, because they act voluntarily, and are responsible for the actions which consent has made their own. Liberty does not consist in the power of acting or not acting, but in acting from choice. The choice is determined by something in the mind itself, or by something external influencing the mind; but whatever is the cause, the choice makes the action free, and the agent accountable. If this definition of liberty be admitted, you will perceive that it is possible to reconcile the freedom of the will with absolute decrees; but we have not got rid of every difficulty. By this theory, human actions appear to be as necessary as the motions of matter according to the laws of gravitation and attraction; and man seems to be a machine, conscious of his movements, and consenting to them, but impelled by something different from himself.

Upon such a subject, no man should be ashamed to acknowledge his ignorance. We are not required to reconcile the divine decrees and human liberty. It is enough to know that God has decreed all things which come to pass, and that men are answerable for their actions. Of both these truths we are assured by the Scriptures; and the latter is confirmed by the testimony of conscience.²⁶⁴

And Chafer remarks: "If this seems to be taking things out of the hands of men and committing them into the hands of God, it will at least be conceded that, when thus committed to God, things are in better hands and this, after all, is God's own universe in which He has Sovereign right to do after the dictates of His own will."²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), I, p. 243.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

33 THE NATURE OF LAW

INTRODUCTION

Having considered the nature of man it remains to consider the nature of sin and its effect upon man. However, before sin can be fully understood it is necessary to understand the principle of law. The following statements of Paul indicate the relation of the law to sin:

"The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." (1 Corinthians 15:56).

".. . by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:20).

"I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." (Romans 7:7).

There have been two opposite tendencies among Christians in their relation to law: one towards antinomianism and the other toward legalism. Those who place great emphasis upon the fact that believers in this dispensation are not under law but under grace are apt to feel that the law is worthless because of its inability to save and that all rules for behavior should be discarded. However, the same apostle who tells us that we are not under the law also tells us:

"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." (Romans 3:31).

"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:" (Romans 7:22).

It is true that the law has no ability to help the sinner ([Romans 8:3](#)), but can only condemn him and put him to death, but this does not mean that the law is bad. "... the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." (Romans 7:12): it is the sinner who is bad.

On the other hand there is the tendency on the part of covenant theologians to become legalistic by confusing law and grace. Berkhof, for example, states:

The covenant of Sinai (that is, the law of Moses) was essentially the same as that established with Abraham, though the form differed somewhat. This is not always recognized, and is not recognized by present day dispensationalists

If the Sinaitic covenant was indeed a covenant of works, in which legal obedience was the way of salvation, then it certainly was a curse for

Israel, for it was imposed on a people that could not possibly obtain salvation by works.²⁶⁶

Berkhof is thus contending that the law was not a curse to Israel, but rather a gracious blessing, and before he finishes he has the believer in this dispensation half under the law. But what did Peter say about the law?

"Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the (Gentile) disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts 15:10).

The yoke was the law of Moses, cf. vs. 5. And what did Paul say? "... Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Galatians 3:10).

Paul further calls the law a ministration of condemnation and of death ([2 Corinthians 3:7, 9](#)). The day the law was given about three thousand Israelites experienced the curse of the law in death ([Exodus 32:28](#)).

DEFINITION OF LAW

The word law is used in various ways in the Bible, as shall be pointed out later. However, in the great majority of cases the word has reference to the moral law of God, especially as codified in the Ten Commandments, or as set forth in the covenant which God made with Israel at Mt. Sinai.

Theologians generally distinguish between elemental law and published commandments. Elemental law is law which is inwrought both in material nature (physical law), and in rational creatures (moral law). In either case the law is considered to be an expression of the divine will. Strong says of elemental law:

The expression of the divine will in the constitution of rational and free agents, -- this we call moral law. This elemental law of our moral nature with which only we are now concerned, has all the characteristics mentioned as belonging to law in general. It implies (a) a divine Lawgiver, or ordaining will. (b) Subjects, or moral beings upon whom the law terminates. (c) General command, or expression of this will in the moral constitution of the subjects. (d) Power, enforcing the command (e) Duty, or obligation to obey. (f) Sanctions, or pains and penalties for disobedience.²⁶⁷

Published commands, such as the Ten Commandments and the ceremonies of the Mosaic system, are what may be called either partial or temporary expressions of God's will. Ten words could not exhaust the will of God. Strong quotes C.H.M.: "Law is the transcript of the mind of God as to what man ought to

²⁶⁶ L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941), p. 297.

²⁶⁷ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1907), p. 537.

be. But God is not merely law, but love. There is more in his heart than could be wrapped up in the 'ten words.' Not the law, but only Christ, is the perfect image of God."²⁶⁸

One of the Ten Commandments, that concerning the observance of the sabbath day, applied only to Israel as a distinctive feature of God's covenant with that nation: "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever" (Exodus 31:16, 17).

Thus the sabbath and the ceremonial laws related only to God's will for the nation of Israel and have no application to the Gentiles or to members of the Body of Christ in this dispensation.

PROOF OF ELEMENTAL MORAL LAW

There are those who would deny the existence of elemental moral law, since they deny the existence of the Lawgiver. However, entirely apart from the Bible men universally act as though there is some kind of moral standard. When A says to B: "You ought not to do that," he is appealing to some kind of standard of conduct which B should know about. We are not here speaking about social conventions but simply the principle of right and wrong. If one is willing to admit that even one thing can be called right and another thing wrong, then one is admitting to a moral standard. This is not to say that all men agree on the same moral standard, for the world has seen a number of moral philosophies: Hedonism, Stoicism, Cynicism, Utilitarianism, etc. They all differ on what is the supreme good, but they all recognize that there is a good and a bad, a right and a wrong. Ethics is that branch of philosophy which seeks to determine which of these moral systems is the best. But when we ask, which is the best, we are apparently measuring each of these systems with a standard which is external to and above them all.

Those who deny the existence of a moral standard try to explain our feelings of guilt or of the violation of the rights of others on the basis that society sets its own standards which vary from place to place and from time to time. In answer to these claims we need to distinguish between social conventions and moral principles. For example, a law limiting the speed of a vehicle to 30 miles per hour is a social convention which may vary from one locality to another. But whatever the limit, there is the moral principle that it is wrong to violate the law. There is no society whose code of ethics states that it is good to violate constitutionally established laws, unless it be to incite revolution and overthrow the existing order.

If there is no moral standard which is elemental to our nature, then we may say that we prefer one system of ethics to another, but there would be no basis

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 548.

for saying that one is better or more nearly right than another. We therefore conclude that not only does the Bible teach that there is a moral standard which is the expression of the will of God for mankind, but that man's nature and man's actions confirm this fact. And if there is a moral standard it is inconceivable that it could have been set up by a non-moral force or principle. Perhaps the clearest statement of the existence of elemental law in human nature is found in Romans 2:14, 15.: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law (that is, the law of Moses), do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness."

THE USE OF LAW IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The word *law* is used 209 times in the New Testament

Major emphasis is found in Romans, where it is used 77 times and in Galatians, where it occurs 30 times. These two epistles constantly contrast the doctrines of law and grace. It is interesting to note that Paul associates two other words with law: works and flesh; and two other words with grace: faith and spirit. He states that the law is not of faith ([Galatians 3:12](#)), and that if it is by grace it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace, but if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work ([Romans 11:6](#)).

Different Laws Referred to in the New Testament

1. of works, [Romans 3:27](#).
2. of faith, [Romans 3:17](#).
3. of God, [Romans 7:22, 25](#); [8:7](#).
4. of mind, [Romans 7:23](#).
5. of sin, [Romans 7:23, 25](#); [8:2](#).
6. of Spirit, [Romans 8:2](#).
7. of death, [Romans 8:2](#).
8. of righteousness, [Romans 9:31](#).
9. of Moses, [1 Corinthians 9:9](#); [Luke 2:22](#); [24:44](#); [John 7:23](#); [Acts 13:39](#); [15:5](#); [28:23](#).
10. of Christ, [Galatians 6:2](#).

11. of liberty, [James 1: 25; 2:12](#).

12. of the Lord, [Luke 2:23, 24, 39](#).

13. of the Jews, [Acts 25:8](#).

Different Usages of the Word, "LAW"

1. In the majority of passages in the New Testament the word *law* refers to the Mosaic Covenant in whole or in part. The entire legal system consisted of three parts: the commandments (moral), the judgments (social), and the ordinances (religious). This law system was imposed upon Israel during the dispensation of Law, which was in force from Moses until the revelation given to Paul. Israel during that time was said to be under the law. Christ was born and lived under the law ([Galatians 4:4](#)). Believers in this present dispensation are specifically described as being "... not under the law, but under grace." (Romans 6:14, 15).

2. The word is also used to describe what C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* calls the *Law of Human Nature*, or that which we have referred to as elemental moral law. This law has been in force in all dispensations, as it is a part of human nature. When Paul speaks of a time before Moses when there was no law ([Romans 4:15; 5:13](#)), he is referring to written enactment of law.

3. Law sometimes refers to civil law as enacted by man ([Daniel 6:8, 12](#)).

4. Law sometimes refers to the whole revealed will of God. When the Psalmist cried: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." (119:18), he was no doubt referring to the whole revealed word of God.

5. Law sometimes means simply a principle of operation, as when Paul says: "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." (Romans 7:21). The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus and the law of sin and death ([Romans 8:2](#)) would come under the same heading.

6. Paul describes the relation of the believer to Christ as under the law to Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21). His usual expression for under law is *hupo nomon*, but there it is *ennomous christou*, which Alford renders as "a subject of the law of Christ," which is referred to in [Galatians 6:2](#). *Ennomos christou* could almost be translated *inlawed to Christ*.

7. Men speak of the laws of nature, such as the law of gravitation or the law of the conservation of energy, although it is doubtful whether the Bible ever uses the word in that sense. Actually the laws of nature are simply descriptions of the manner in which matter behaves. Such laws cannot be broken but they can be overcome by a superior law. The law of life which is in a tree can overcome the law of gravity and lift many gallons of water to considerable heights every day. In

like manner the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus overcomes the law of sin and death.

LAW AS A PRINCIPLE AND LAW AS A DISPENSATION

Much confusion has come about by a failure to distinguish between the principle of law and the dispensation of law. Paul makes a number of statements about the passing away of the law, such as:

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. (Romans 10:4).

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ;... (Romans 7:4).

... for ye are not under the law, but under grace. (Romans 6:14).

And in [2 Corinthians 3:7, 11, 13](#) he speaks of the law which was written and engraven in stones as having been done away and abolished. What does Paul mean by these statements? In what sense has the law been done away? The law forbade murder, theft, and adultery. Does Paul mean that under grace the law against such behavior has been rescinded? Assuredly not, since Paul speaks out very strongly against such practices. Neither is he saying that the elemental law of human nature has come to an end, for Christians above all others have become sensitized to sin. He must, then, be speaking about the dispensation or administration of law, which was introduced by Moses, as having come to an end.

Earlier it was pointed out that Paul always associates the law with the flesh and that he contends that the law is not of faith. When the law was dispensed at Mt. Sinai it was given to a people who, while under the promise of God and in that sense the people of God, were as yet in actual experience in the flesh. The dispensation of the Spirit had not yet come. They were not indwelt by the Holy Spirit. They had not yet experienced personal regeneration. The writer to the Hebrews describes these pre-Christian saints: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (11:13).

Before fulfilling these promises to His people Israel, God purposed to place them under the dispensation of law in order to manifest fully and completely the true character of sin and the complete inability of the fleshly nature of man to please God.

Paul states very clearly God's purpose in giving the law:

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified: for by the law is the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:19, 20).

Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound (Romans 5:20).

... But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. (Romans 7: 13).

Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made;.. . (Galatians 3:19).

Paul likewise shows the inability of the law to produce that which it demanded from man. It could produce neither righteousness nor life.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh (Romans 8:3).

... for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. (Galatians 3:21).

For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect (Hebrews 7:18, 19).

Now the principle upon which law operates is not one of faith, as Paul plainly declares in Galatians 3:12, but "The man that doeth them shall live in them." Law demands doing or works. This is why Paul constantly speaks of the works or deeds of the law. God as a righteous Judge must justify any person who perfectly fulfills His holy law ([Romans 2:13](#)). But the law was placed over sinful flesh and no flesh was ever able to fulfil the demands of the law. Therefore God has proven through the dispensation of law the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the absolute inability of the natural man to please God ([Romans 8:7, 8](#)).

Objections

Covenant theologians are anti-dispensational and therefore do not accept the above explanation. By making the Old Covenant a covenant of works the dispensationalist is accused of teaching salvation by works, in the Old Testament. Buswell, for example, brings this criticism against the Scofield Reference Bible. But he states that some of the great Reformed theologians

have also made statements which have given ground to the dispensationalists. He quotes Hodge and Calvin in particular. Hodge, in speaking of the Mosaic covenant called it a legal covenant, and quoted Christ, "do this and live." He stated that we no longer need to render perfect obedience to the law as the condition of salvation. He quotes Calvin to the effect that Paul discriminates between law and the gospel and the fact that the law attributes righteousness to works, whereas the gospel bestows it freely without works. Buswell concludes by saying:

We who adhere to "covenant theology" or "reformed theology," we who strongly emphasize the unity of the covenant of grace, should approach our brethren who teach, "dispensationally," that there was an age of divinely ordained meritorious soteriology before Christ, and that "legal obedience" was ever "the condition of salvation"--we should approach them with greater persuasiveness if we humbly remembered that this "dispensational" idea of eternal life offered by means of legal obedience is inadvertently found in the writings of some of our greatest reformed theologians.²⁶⁹

We agree perfectly with Dr. Buswell and other reformed theologians that no man ever attained or could ever attain eternal life by legal obedience, but we do contend that the Bible states that perfect legal obedience would be rewarded by justification. The point that Buswell and others do not seem to understand about the dispensational view is that dispensationalists do not contend that God ordained the law dispensation to the end that Israelites might be saved by legal obedience, but rather to prove once and for all the impossibility of sinful flesh ever being able to do anything to please God. The law-flesh-works combination, having been proved a failure, God introduces His method, the grace-faith-spirit combination, which fulfills all of the righteous requirements of His holy law. Just as Israel had to go through Egypt and the wilderness to learn many valuable lessons, so they had to go through the dispensation of law before they inherited the promises.

34 THE NATURE OF SIN

In this chapter it shall be our purpose to answer such questions as: How did sin originate? How does the Bible define sin? How do theologians define it? Are there degrees of sin? What effect did Adam's sin have upon his posterity? What effect does sin have in the life of a Christian? What is the penalty for sin? And what is the remedy for sin?

This section of Theology is known as *Hamartiology* from the Greek word for sin, *hamartano*. Although sin occurs in both the angelic as well as the human'

²⁶⁹ James Oliver Buswell, Jr., *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), I, pp. 318, 319.

sphere, Hamartiology is usually placed under the general heading of Anthropology.

THE ORIGIN OF SIN

It has already been pointed out under Angelology that sin first originated with Satan and his angels. We shall confine our discussion here to the origin of sin in the human realm. [Genesis 3:1-13](#) relates the historic account of the beginning of sin with the first human beings. In the face of modern liberal views which would deny the historicity of the Genesis account, we must insist that the Biblical account of Adam and Eve is factual and not mythological, since Christ and the New Testament writers interpret it in a literal manner. If evolution, which is basic to all modern, liberal views is true, then, of course, there were no first human beings. An animal over millions of years gradually turned into what we call a human being today. Where in such a process is there place for speaking of the first human being? But the Biblical account tells us that God created the first human pair and that subsequently they fell into sin.

Jesus in [Matthew 19:4 and 8](#) confirms the fact of the creation of Adam and Eve and of the change that came about through the entrance of sin into the world, and Paul, in Romans 5:12, gives perhaps the clearest statement in the New Testament on this fact: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." While the Scripture does not answer such philosophical questions as why God permitted sin, or how sin could originate in a being who was the direct creation of God, it does plainly state the fact that sin entered into the world by Adam's sin. It would seem inevitable if God were to create a responsible being with the power of moral choice that there must be the possibility of sin, and apparently for wise purposes known only to God, God permitted that being to sin.

Although Eve was apparently the first to eat of the forbidden fruit, the responsibility for the sin is placed upon Adam. Paul states that "... the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety,..." (2 Corinthians 11:3), and in 1 Timothy 2:13, 14 he states: "For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." Since Adam was the head, having been created first, and since he was not deceived but disobeyed God knowing fully that he was doing so, the main responsibility for the sin lay upon his shoulders. Eve, of course, was in the transgression and suffered the consequences along with Adam. Thus we may say that sin in the human realm originated in the free choice of Adam. It did not originate from any compulsion or any act on the part of God. Adam was fully and completely responsible for the first human sin.

DEFINITIONS OF SIN

The Scriptural concept of sin may be discovered from statements about sin and from words used to define sin in the Bible. From these sources theologians have coined their definitions.

Statements of Scripture

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law (more correctly, sin is lawlessness) (1 John 3:4).

All unrighteousness is sin: ... (1 John 5:17).

... whatsoever is not of faith is sin. (Romans 14:23).

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death. (James 1:14,15).

But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. (James 2:9, 10).

Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. (James 4:17).

Words for sin

The Hebrew word most frequently used is *chata*, and the Greek word is *hamartano*. Both mean to miss the mark, to stumble, to fall, to err.

Sin is described by other words. It is *transgression*, a breaking over of the bounds of God's law. It is *iniquity*, a deviation from that which is right. It is *trespass*, the intrusion of self-will into the realm of divine authority. It is *unbelief*, an insult to divine veracity. It is *lawlessness*, or spiritual anarchy. It is a *coming short* of the mark, a failure to measure up to the divine standard.

Theological definitions

Sin is lack of conformity to the moral law of God, either in act, disposition, or state.²⁷⁰

Sin is a transgression of, or want of conformity to the divine law.²⁷¹

²⁷⁰ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1907.), p. 549.

²⁷¹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprint 1940), Vol. II, p. 180.

Sin may be defined ultimately as *anything in the creature which does not express, or which is contrary to, the holy character of the Creator.*²⁷²

Three-fold character of sin

Strong's definition above points out that sin is not limited to acts, but includes also dispositions and states. Scofield states: "Sin may be summarized as threefold: An *act*, the violation of, or want of obedience to the revealed will of God; a *state*, absence of righteousness; a *nature*, enmity toward God."²⁷³

When Scripture speaks of not doing a thing as sin, it is evident that sin cannot be limited to an act. Jeremiah testified: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (17:9). Christ said: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man" (Matthew 15:19). Here the state of man's heart is sinful. Often in Paul's usage of sin in the singular he refers to the nature of fallen man. Sin is represented as existing in the nature before man becomes conscious of it: "when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (Romans 7:9). If sin revived, it must have been in the soul prior to being awakened by the law. Again, in this same context Paul makes several other references to his sin nature: "But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." The fact that sin is not only an act but a nature is borne out by the use of certain figures of speech. Christ spoke of the impossibility of a good tree bringing forth evil fruit, and of a corrupt tree bringing forth good fruit ([Matthew 7:18](#)). Sinful acts are the fruit of a sinful nature. James brings out the same truth when he asks: "Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh" (James 3:12). If man has a sin nature the question naturally arises, from whence did he receive this nature? And this brings us to our next topic.

THE TRANSMITTED SIN NATURE OR THE EFFECT OF ADAM'S SIN ON HIS POSTERITY

Adam by nature when he was created was sinless and holy, but his nature underwent a change when he sinned. His nature became corrupted ([Ephesians 4:22](#)). His understanding was darkened and he became alienated from the life of God ([Ephesians 4:18](#)). His will became at enmity against God ([Romans 8:7](#)). Scripture plainly teaches that Adam transmitted this fallen, sinful nature to all of his posterity. This fact explains why sin is universal. Men since Adam's day are born sinners. They do not become sinners by sinning, as did Adam: they sin

²⁷² James Oliver Buswell, Jr., *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), Vol. I, p. 264.

²⁷³ C. I. Scofield, *Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 1194.

because they have a nature of sin. This sin nature is variously referred to as the Adamic nature, original sin, inborn sin, or the old man.

The question may be asked: How is this sin nature communicated from one generation to the next? David declared: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). Christ said: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). Man's nature is received at birth. Scripture does not reveal the mechanism whereby the moral nature is passed on from parent to child. We believe that the Traducian view is in accord with Scripture, that not only the physical body is passed on by procreation, but the entire man. This is why we have referred to the *transmitted* sin nature. Those who hold the Creation view of the soul believe that each new soul is directly created by God and that God immediately imputes Adam's sin to it, which causes its nature to become corrupted. According to this view the sin nature and imputed sin are synonymous. The question thus arises, what is the difference between the sin nature which is received from Adam and the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity?

IMPUTED SIN OF ADAM

Two Greek words are translated *impute* in the New Testament, *logizomai* and *ellogao*. The former occurs 41 times and is variously translated: reasoned, numbered with, reckoned among, think, counted, accounted, esteemeth, laid to their charge, and imputed. The latter word occurs but twice, Romans 5:13, *imputed*, and Philemon 18, *put that on mine account*. There are three major imputations mentioned in Scripture, the imputation of Adam's sin to all mankind, the imputation of man's sin to Christ, and the imputation of God's righteousness to the believer. Imputation may be real or it may be judicial. A real imputation is the placing to one's account of that for which he is responsible, such as charging a man for a crime which he has committed. A judicial imputation is the reckoning to one's account that for which another is responsible, as in the case of Paul when he told Philemon to charge him with any indebtedness which Onesimus had incurred. The imputation of our sin to Christ and of God's righteousness to us are definitely judicial imputations. It might appear that the imputation of Adam's sin to us is also judicial, since we were seemingly not present nor had any part in Adam's first sin, but such is not the case. The natural man opposes this doctrine on the very basis that Adam's sin was his own doing and that no other individual can be held accountable for what he did. But whether we like it or not, the Scripture represents Adam as the seminal head of the whole human race. Every human being is said to have been in Adam, so that Paul could say: "As in Adam all die" (1 Corinthians 15:22). In that same chapter God sees the whole human race in one of two men: the first Adam or the last Adam, the first man who is of the earth or the second Man, who is the Lord from heaven. Just as Levi was in the loins of his great grandfather and paid tithes to Melchisedec years before he was born ([Hebrews 7:9, 10](#)), so the whole human race was in Adam and partook of his first sin.

The central passage on the imputation of Adam's sin is [Romans 5:12-21](#). The passage explains how sin and death came into the world. It is important to understand what kind of death is here in view. The Bible speaks of physical death, spiritual death, and finally the second death. Unsaved people experience or will experience all three of these deaths. However in the present context the subject is physical death. This death has passed upon all men, for that all sinned. But how did all sin? It is true that all people who are morally accountable commit sinful acts, but this is not what Paul is talking about, for in such an event death would have come through many men and many transgressions. Paul says that death came by one man and by one specific sin. He explains in verses 13, 14 that the sin in view was not against the Mosaic law. Sin is imputed only when there is law, and there was no Mosaic law from Adam to Moses; and yet death reigned universally during that period over those who did not commit a sin resembling the sin that brought death upon all men. A sin resembling Adam's sin would have been an act of transgression against a positive command, but this kind of sin these persons did not commit. And yet they all died, including infants who had not committed any sinful acts. But death is the penalty of sin, so that all of these who died must have been guilty of sin. Plainly, the sin which Paul has in mind is the first sin of Adam. Their sin was not one simply that resembled Adam's sin: it was identical with his sin; they sinned in him and fell *with* him in that first transgression.

The fact that Paul means that all sinned in that one sin of Adam is further brought out in vs. 18: "So then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life" (A.S.V.).

Paul is here comparing two acts of two men: the one act of Adam in sinning which has brought death to all men, and the one righteous act of Christ in giving His life as a sacrifice for sin, which has made available the free gift of life unto all men. Thus, the fact could not be stated more plainly that physical death which comes to infant and adult, saved and unsaved alike, is due to Adam's first sin which has been imputed to all alike. It would surely not be justice on the part of God to impute sin to people who were not guilty of that sin. Therefore, there is but one conclusion, and that is that all were in Adam and all partook of that race sin.

It will be seen from the above that there is a difference between the sin nature which we all have received from Adam and the imputation of Adam's sin to us all. The sin nature has come down to us mediately, that is, from father to son through all of the generations which have intervened from Adam's day. The imputation of Adam's sin, on the other hand, has come to us immediately, directly from Adam to us, without any intervening generations. The sin nature has to do with *corruption* and involves *spiritual death*. The imputation has to do with *guilt* and involves physical death.

Strong lists six different theories of imputation which have been held in the church at large.²⁷⁴ Three of these theories contend that no guilt or condemnation has come to the race on account of Adam's sin: the Pelagian, the Arminian, and the New School. The other three, the Federal, the Placean, and the Augustinian, confess that Adam's sin has brought guilt and condemnation upon the whole of mankind. In answer to the question, How did all sin? The Pelagian says, "By following Adam's example." The Arminian says: "By consciously ratifying Adam's own deed, in spite of the Spirit's aid." The New School says, "By voluntary transgression of known law." The Federal says: "By being accounted sinners in Adam's sin." The Placean says: "By possessing a depraved nature." And the Augustinian, which is almost identical with the position which we have taken, says: "By having part in the sin of Adam, as seminal head of the race." In answer to the question, What is imputed? the Pelagian says: "Every man's own sins." The Arminian says, "Only man's own sins and ratifying of this nature." The New School says: "Man's individual acts of transgression." The Federal says: "Adam's sin, man's own corruption, and man's own sins." The Placean says: "Only depraved nature and man's own sins." And the Augustinian says: "Adam's sin, our depravity, and our own sins."

Having demonstrated the fact that Scripture teaches that Man is born into this world with a corrupt, sinful nature and with the guilt of Adam's sin imputed to him, we next ask, How serious is man's condition in sin? Does he have ability in himself to free himself from sin and to save himself, or is his case completely hopeless apart from the grace of God? This brings us to our next topic:

MAN'S DEPRAVITY UNDER SIN

The first question which arises is, Is man's depravity partial or total? Is man partially incapacitated by sin, or is he completely unable in and of himself to please God? The following statements of Scripture should leave us in no doubt about the answer from God's Word.

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one (Romans 3:10-12).

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (Romans 5:6).

For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. (Romans 6:20).

²⁷⁴ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 628.

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: ... (Romans 7: 18).

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:7, 8).

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. (Ephesians 4:17-19).

When we say that unregenerate man is totally depraved we must explain that we do not mean either that he is devoid of all moral qualities or that he is guilty of every conceivable sin. Judged by human standards the natural man may be highly moral and even religious. However, the doctrine of total depravity is related to the Divine standard, and judged by that measure man in his state of sin is totally incapable of pleasing God. Man's will is in a state of enmity against God, so that regardless of what he does he cannot please God. The first and all-inclusive demand of God's law is love for God and the natural man is supremely determined by a preference of self to God. And without faith it is impossible to please God, and the natural man does not believe God.

At this point it is fitting to ask, Are there degrees of sin? Are some sins more deadly than others, or is all sin the same before God? There is a sense in which all sin, because it is against an infinite God, is of an infinite character. However, since every man will be judged according to his works, and since some shall be beaten with few stripes and others with many ([Luke 12:47, 48](#)), it appears that God must judge some sins worse than others. On the other hand, Scripture does not make a graded catalog of sins. The sinfulness of a particular sin can be judged only by God. See [John 19:11](#) and [Hebrews 10:28, 29](#) for degrees of guilt.

The Church of Rome distinguishes between venial and mortal sins and claims to be able to determine the precise malignity of every offense and assign its proper penance at the confessional. Venial sins are acts which are inconsistent with perfect righteousness, but which, because of want of deliberation or of the minuteness of the matter, do not take away sanctifying grace. Strong quotes J. Spencer Kennard:

Roman Catholicism in Italy presents the spectacle of the authoritative representatives and teachers of morals and religion themselves living in all forms of deceit, corruption, and tyranny; and, on the other hand, discriminating between venial and mortal sin, classing as venial sins lying, fraud, fornication, marital infidelity, and even murder, all of which may be

atoned for and forgiven or even permitted by the mere payment of money; and at the same time classing as mortal sins disrespect and disobedience to the church.²⁷⁵

Strong states that the following distinctions are indicated in Scripture as involving different degrees of guilt.²⁷⁶

1. The sin of nature, or original sin, as contrasted with personal transgression. The relative innocence of childhood is contrasted with personal sins ([Matthew 19:14](#) cf. [23:32](#)). We believe, however, that original sin is condemnable and that apart from God's grace through the death of Christ all, including those who die in infancy, would have been lost.

2. Sins of ignorance are contrasted with the sins of knowledge. (Luke 12:47, 48 has already been quoted.) Christ prayed for Israel's forgiveness in condemning Him to death upon the basis of their ignorance ([Luke 23:34](#)), which resulted in extended mercy to that nation and the offer of the kingdom in the early chapters of the Acts, (cf. [Acts 3:17-21](#)). Paul claims to have obtained mercy because he "did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Timothy 1:13).

3. Sins of infirmity are contrasted with sins of presumption. The Psalmist prayed: "Cleanse thou me from *secret faults*. Keep back thy servant also from *presumptuous* sins" (Psalm 19:12, 13). Human law also makes a difference between premeditated and unpremeditated crimes.

4. The sin of incomplete obduracy is contrasted with the sin of final obduracy. Strong identifies the sin of final obduracy with the sin against the Holy Spirit. And he makes the sin against the Holy Spirit to be that of the culmination of a long course of self-hardening and self-depraving. It is no doubt true that men may sin against the conscience until it becomes scared, but this is sin against self and not sin against the Holy Spirit, except in the sense that all sin is sin against God and therefore sin against the Holy Spirit. But in [Matthew 12:31, 32](#) Christ is contrasting all other kinds of sin with the specific sin against the Holy Spirit. Strong sees nothing dispensational about this sin, but he comes very near to the truth at the end of his discussion when he states:

"Jesus warns the Jews against it, - he does not say they had already committed it. They would seem to have committed it when, after Pentecost, they added to their rejection of Christ the rejection of the Holy Spirit's witness to Christ's resurrection."²⁷⁷ Israel's sin against Christ was forgiven when Christ prayed: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." The Holy Spirit was not yet given while Christ was upon the earth. Hence they could not have sinned against Him until the day of Pentecost when He was poured out upon

²⁷⁵ Strong, *Ibid.*, p. 648.

²⁷⁶ Strong, *Ibid.*, pp. 648-652.

²⁷⁷ Strong, *Ibid.*, p. 652.

Israel. When Israel sinned against Christ in the flesh they were sinning in ignorance, but at Pentecost and thereafter they were sinning in the full light of the Holy Spirit. Israel had come to a great crisis point, similar to that of Kadesh-barnea. Israel at Kadesh was confronted with the decision to go in and possess the land of Canaan, but they turned back in unbelief and even though they tried to change their minds later and presumed to go, they were smitten by their enemies and wandered for forty years in the desert until that whole generation of adults had perished. Just so at Pentecost, Israel had come to the place where God was ready to restore the kingdom to them and to send back Jesus Christ if they would only repent, but they sinned against the Holy Spirit and this sin was not forgiven the nation. The kingdom was rejected by Israel and Israel was rejected by God, and then God called out a new apostle and revealed through him the previously unprophesied dispensation of the mystery. Thus the sin against the Holy Spirit is distinctly dispensational and could have been committed only by national Israel during the Pentecostal era.

The Nazarene hymn, *Have You Counted the Cost?* begins: "There's a line that is drawn by rejecting our Lord, Where the call of His Spirit is lost." This was true in relation to Israel at Pentecost, but it is not true of individual sinners today. God does not close the door on any one today, but it is true that sinners close the door upon themselves and through continual hardening of their hearts bring themselves to the place of what Strong calls *final obduracy*.

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

The forgiveness of sins is not to be equated with Salvation. Forgiveness is but a small part of Salvation. Salvation includes all that God does in giving eternal life to the one who believes. Chafer mentions thirty-three distinct works which God does in Salvation,²⁷⁸ and forgiveness is one of them. There are two kinds of forgiveness which must be differentiated. Judicial forgiveness is the forgiving of the penalty of sin. At the moment of salvation God judicially forgives the sinner of all of his sins ([Colossians 2:13](#)). This means that he will never be brought into judgment in order to pay the penalty for his sins, for the simple reason that Christ has already borne that penalty in His own body on the tree. After one has been thus judicially forgiven and has become a member of the family of God he still retains a sinful nature, which means that as a child of God there is still the possibility and the probability of committing sinful acts. The committing of such acts does not undo the other thirty-two or more things that God wrought in his salvation and thus bring him back into an unsaved condition. The once-for-all forgiveness of all of his sins guarantees against such a thing ever happening. But such sin within the family of God is still sin and needs to be dealt with. God deals with His child, not as a judge would deal with a criminal, but as a father would deal with his child. We have therefore chosen to call the forgiveness which the heavenly Father bestows upon His child, *parental forgiveness*. It is based upon

²⁷⁸ L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), Vol. II, pp. 326-329.

the efficacy of Christ's death, as is judicial forgiveness, but it relates only to those who have come into a saving relationship through faith in Christ.

Sin in the life of a Christian is not to be taken lightly because it does not forfeit one's salvation. It is indeed a very serious matter. Sin always brings a loss of some kind. For the Christian who sins there is the loss of experiential fellowship with God, the loss of the joy of salvation, the loss of confidence in prayer, and the loss of peace of mind and heart. Besides the personal loss, reproach is brought upon other believers and upon Christ Himself.

John warns the believer against supposing that he has no sin or that he has not sinned, and he tells him what to do and what Christ has to do in the event that he does sin. He must confess his sin, not to a priest but to God, for the Father's forgiveness. Paul says almost the same thing in 1 Corinthians 11:31, only he calls it "judging ourselves" instead of confessing. Confessing is the result of self-judgment. But what happens if the believer does not judge himself? Paul goes on to say that the Lord will then take matters into His own hands and administer discipline to the end that he should not be condemned with the world.

Not only is the believer involved when he commits sin, but John goes on to say (1 John 2:1): "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Christ as the believer's Attorney in heaven must handle the believer's case in order that the believer not be condemned. Paul refers to the same work in Romans 8:34, where he asks: "Who is he that condemneth; It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

CONCLUSION

Sin is hardly a dispensational subject since it has run through all of the dispensations, but it should be pointed out that sin is most fully revealed in this dispensation of the grace of God. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). Man's depravity and the universality of sin is revealed in the Pauline revelation as nowhere else in Scripture. Paul portrays mankind as completely helpless and hopeless apart from Christ and then reveals the unmerited grace of God which can eternally save the most undeserving sinner.

Part Seven

Soteriology

35 INTRODUCTION

Soteriology is the doctrine of salvation. The term is derived from the Greek word for salvation, *soteria*. This Greek word is used forty-five times in the New Testament, being translated *salvation* forty times, *health* once, *saving* once, *deliver* once, and *saved* twice. The Greek word *soter* occurs twenty-four times and is always translated *savior*. The Greek word *soterion* occurs five times and is always translated *salvation*. The verb form, *sozo*, to save, is used one hundred and eight times, being translated *save* or *saved* ninety-two times, *be* or *made whole* eleven times, *be* or *was healed* three times, *do well* once, *preserve* once. The word *salvation* occurs one hundred and eighteen times in the Old Testament, being the translation of four different Hebrew words, *yeshooaw* (also translated *deliverance*, *health*, *help*, *save*, *welfare*), *yehshah* (translated *avenging*, *defend*, *deliver*, *help*, *preserve*, *rescue*, *be safe*, *get victory*), *mowshawaw* (translated *salvation* and derived from *yehshah*), and *teshooaw* (translated *deliverance*, *help*, *safety*, *victory*). The words *save*, *saved*, *savest*, *saveth*, and *saving* occur a total of two hundred and seven times in the Old Testament, and the words *savior* and *saviors* occur fifteen times. Thus the words which concern this doctrine occur over five hundred times in the Bible.

In studying the subject of salvation one must always inquire what it is that one is being saved from and what it is he is being saved to. Oftentimes *being saved* refers to being saved alive from physical death, as in [Gen. 12:12](#); [50:20](#); [Ex. 1:22](#); [Deut. 20:4](#); [Ezek. 13:18](#); [Matt. 8:25](#); [14:30](#). Many times in the Bible salvation refers to being saved from physical enemies and ensuing servitude, as in [Judg. 6:14](#); [1 Sam. 4:3](#); [2 Kgs. 16:7](#); [19:19](#); [Ps. 59:2](#); [Lk. 1:74](#). Many other references to salvation concern God's protection of the nation of Israel, as in [Ex. 14:30](#): "Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians." Other scriptures refer to God's special promises to Israel to save them from sickness and disease, as in [Ps. 103:3](#); [42:11](#); [67:2](#); [Deut. 28:1-14](#); [Mk. 16:16-18](#). A number of times the English word *save* is used in the sense of *except*, as in [2 Sam. 22:32](#): "For who is God, save the Lord? and who is a rock, save our God?"

It would seem that salvation in the Old Testament is almost always primarily a physical deliverance of some kind. When Moses said unto the people of Israel: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord," ([Ex. 14:13](#)), he was speaking of the physical deliverance of Israel from the Egyptians. When Saul declared: "Today the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel" ([1 Sam. 11:13](#) cf. vs. 3), he was speaking of victory over the Ammonites. David's great song of deliverance ([2 Sam. 22](#)), which four times speaks of God's salvation, was composed when "the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul." The same is true of the salvation of the Lord in [2 Chron. 20:17](#). When the Psalmist cried out: "Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion" ([53:6](#)), he was speaking of the regathering of Israel into their own land. When Jonah declared: "Salvation is of the Lord" ([2:10](#)), he was speaking of deliverance from the belly of the fish. When the father of John the Baptist praised God for raising up a horn of salvation in the house of His servant David ([Luke 1:67-75](#)) he was referring to being saved from their enemies. While

doubtless some of the Old Testament references to salvation include the idea of forgiveness of sins, this aspect of salvation does not come into prominence until the Savior is born into the world. Zacharias makes reference to it in the above passage when he states: "To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins" and, of course, the word of the angel to Joseph declared the same fact: "thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

Salvation in the coming millennial kingdom will involve universal political peace. (Isa. 60:1-5; 62:1, 2; Zech. 8:23; 14:16), the restoration of all things which God promised by the prophets (Acts 3:21), the removal of the curse from creation (Isa. 65:17-25); in short, it will mean a reign of complete physical and material prosperity and blessing, coupled, of course, with spiritual righteousness. It is most important, therefore, in studying the doctrine of salvation to study it dispensationally, since in the present dispensation these physical and material blessings are not concomitants of salvation. Present-day salvation is wholly spiritual in nature. It is entirely the mercy and grace of God when He is pleased to grant any of these material blessings. It is abundantly clear from Rom. 8:18-25 that the believer in the present dispensation is a part of a groaning creation, and even though he has received the first-fruits of the Spirit he will go the way of all flesh until the coming of the Lord. This does not mean, however, that those who experience salvation in this dispensation will never enjoy any bodily blessings. The believer of this dispensation is waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of his body, which will transpire at the coming of Christ for the Church which is His body. Paul refers to this future day of redemption of the body also in Eph. 1:14 and 4:30. And he makes it clear that the redemption of the body is a vital part of our salvation in Rom. 13:11: "for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Failure to recognize these dispensational distinctions has wrought a great deal of confusion in Christian teaching and thinking. Undispensational teachers have endeavored to bring over these many promises of physical and material aspects of kingdom salvation into the present dispensation, giving hope of material prosperity and physical health, as well as political peace. Failure to realize these promised goals has caused many to lose faith and to become bitter toward God Himself. The failure, of course, is not of God, but of teachers who have refused to rightly divide the word of truth.

Regardless of what aspect of Biblical salvation we may consider, it must be said that Salvation is of the Lord. Man's efforts in overcoming the effects of the curse which sin has brought upon the physical creation have been remarkable in certain limited areas, but in the main they have been very insignificant. Longevity has been increased by a few years, but for many they are but a few more years of suffering. Man will never be able by himself to save himself from the physical effects of sin. He will never be able to overcome all disease and death. There is no indication, either, that he will be able to bring about lasting world peace. And from the spiritual aspect of salvation, surely no one can forgive his own sins, or impart eternal life unto himself, or produce a perfect righteousness which is

acceptable unto God, or transport himself to God's heaven. If any of these things are ever accomplished it must be the work of God. Hence, Salvation is of the Lord. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:1-2).

Salvation is not only entirely of the Lord, it is also entirely through the grace and goodness of God. Some might suppose that since God created all things, He is responsible for all that happens, and that therefore as a matter of justice God owes it to His creatures to save them. This type of reasoning might agree that salvation is entirely of the Lord, but deny that it is provided by grace. But the Scriptures make it abundantly plain that the natural man is not only without ability to save himself: he is also completely undeserving of salvation. He deserves only condemnation and judgment, and therefore God is under no obligation to save him. There may be something in God which necessitates His providing salvation for lost mankind, His infinite love which must find expression, but this is vastly different from finding something in man which would necessitate such action on the part of God, and it must be remembered that the love of God found perfect exercise and satisfaction between the Father and Son in eternity past before there ever was a creature for God to love ([John 17:24](#)).

One further general observation about salvation is that whereas God's provision of salvation in every dispensation has been gracious in character and has always been received by man through faith, the means by which that faith has been manifested has varied during the course of the dispensations. There could be no proclamation of a crucified and risen Christ for faith to lay hold upon until, in fact, Christ had been manifested in time, had died, and had been raised from the dead. Therefore it is evident that for the several thousand years of human history before the advent of Christ, faith must have been exercised in a message different from that in the present dispensation. Some have supposed that because there are types and shadows of Christ's redeeming work in the Old Testament, the people of pre-cross dispensations had to place their faith in a coming Messiah who would die for their sins. A careful searching of the Old Testament Scriptures, however, will reveal no statement that God required people in past dispensations to place their faith in the work of a Messiah who was yet to come. No doubt many Jewish people believed that God would one day send them a Messiah who would deliver them from their enemies and establish them in their kingdom, but His coming death and resurrection were never predicated as the basis for faith. It is extremely doubtful whether any of the ancient Israelites even understood the prophecies concerning the sufferings of the Messiah and the glory that was to follow. It is evident from [Luke 18:31-34](#) that the Twelve Apostles had no understanding of these truths even after three years under the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because faith required the believer in Old Testament times to do certain things, such as offer animal sacrifices, it is easy to fall into the error of supposing these people were saved by works. The works, however, were an expression of

their faith, and it was their faith that saved them. Faith ever has as its object the person of God and as its basis the revealed Word of God. If God told Cain and Abel to offer animal sacrifices, faith offered animal sacrifices. Abel's sacrifice attested to his faith, whereas Cain's vegetable sacrifice attested to his unbelief. If God said to build an ark, faith proceeded to build an ark. If God commanded water baptism for the remission of sins, faith submitted to water baptism. In every case it was the faith in God which brought these men of past dispensations into a saving relationship with God, and the works which they wrought were the works of faith, and not simply works of the flesh, as was Cain's. But the question arises, what would have happened had Abel refused to offer the kind of sacrifice which God had commanded, or had Noah refused to build an ark, or had the three thousand souls at Pentecost refused to be baptized? In the words of James, "Could that kind of faith save them?" In what sense could refusal to obey God be called faith? Surely such refusal would mean only one thing: unbelief.

Faith and the works of faith are thus so closely identified that we may say that men in the past dispensations could not have been saved apart from the works which God commanded, since the works were the manifestations of their faith; yet it was not the works by themselves which saved them, but their faith in God.

[Romans 3:21, 22](#) shows the distinction between the obtaining of righteousness in this dispensation as compared to the former dispensation. In the Old Testament there was the righteousness of God in association with the law, but Paul states, *NOW* the righteousness of God *apart from the law* is manifested, even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe. In this dispensation God does not say, Believe and offer sacrifices, Believe and be baptized, Believe and be circumcised, Believe and do anything else in order to be saved. Faith now is in the finished work of Christ. Faith accepts the fact that Christ has done all of the work necessary for salvation, and therefore it simply rests in a completed work. We are here talking about that which justifies the sinner before God, and not about the good works unto which the sinner has been saved. The believer's life should abound in good works, but these are the result of salvation and not the cause of it.

The Person of the Savior

36 PROPHECIES OF THE COMING SAVIOR

INTRODUCTION

The Lord Jesus Christ, in giving witness to His Deity in John 5:32-47, made two remarkable statements concerning the Scriptures:

"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

"For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me."

After His resurrection from the dead He gave similar testimony concerning the Scriptures, as recorded in Luke 24. He said to His disciples:

"O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."

These statements should be sufficient evidence for the unique claims of Christ that the Old Testament Scriptures were written about Him. In addition to these direct claims, the Gospel writers mention numerous prophecies which were fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah into the world. There are doubtless many references to Christ in the Old Testament which are not specifically mentioned in the New Testament. No doubt the chief purpose in these prophetic utterances is to give evidential value both to the Scriptures and to Christ Himself. Fulfilled prophecy, especially when it contains many details, as is true in the case of those dealing with Christ, becomes one of the strongest evidences of divine inspiration, since the chances of actual fulfillment become almost infinitesimal. And for us, these prophecies have become His credentials. It shall be our purpose, therefore, to note the outstanding predictions concerning His first coming into the world, excluding those that refer to His second coming which is yet future.

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES IN THE PENTATEUCH

Genesis 3:15 - The Protevangelium

"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

This prophecy which was uttered immediately after the fall of man has been almost universally recognized as the first prediction concerning the Savior. Three things are indicated. The Savior is to be the seed of the woman; hence a human being, and without pressing the wording to an extreme it would appear that the virgin birth of the Savior is implied. This savior is to win the victory over the Serpent, but in doing so He Himself is to suffer.

Genesis 12:3; 17:19; 24:60; 28:14 - The Seed of Abraham

While it is true that the ultimate blessing of the world will be channelled through the multiplied seed of Abraham, the Apostle Paul states that these promises relate particularly to the one seed, which is Christ, [Galatians 3:16](#). These promises limit the Messiah, the Seed of the woman, to being a descendant of Abraham.

Genesis 49:10 - Shiloh

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

This prediction, uttered by Jacob on his death-bed, further limits the line of descent of the Messiah to the tribe of Judah. The ancient rabbis almost without exception taught that Shiloh was a title of the coming Messiah, although there is no reference to this prediction in the New Testament. It may be that it has reference more to His second coming, when He shall take up His office as Lawgiver and King, and for this reason the apostles in writing of His first coming made no reference to it.

Deuteronomy 18:15 - Prophet

"The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken."

That this prophecy of Moses refers to the Messiah is well substantiated by the New Testament. When Jesus had miraculously fed the five thousand the people said: "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world," John 6:14. This is proof that the Jewish people had been taught to expect the coming of that Prophet. It is possible that the people were looking for both the Messiah and the promised Prophet, for in John 7:40, 41 it is recorded that the people said: "Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ." When John began his ministry the Jews asked him: "Art thou that prophet?" John 1:21. Regardless of the Jews' understanding of the identity of that Prophet, both Peter and Stephen in [Acts 3:22](#) and [7:37](#), make it abundantly clear that that Prophet is the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Numbers 24:17-19

"I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city."

This prophecy is not quoted in the New Testament, doubtless because it refers especially to the Second Coming of the Messiah and, as such, has not yet been

fulfilled. However, there are references to the Messiah under the figure of a star. The Magi followed the star to the infant Jesus ([Matthew 2:2](#)), and the Messiah speaking in Revelation 22:16 states: "I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star." Peter refers to Messiah as "the day star" (2 Peter 1:19).

Efforts have been made to refer this prophecy to one of the Old Testament kings of Israel, but history does not provide any information which would justify this claim. A. J. Kligerman states that this prophecy was regarded as Messianic by the Jewish Targums Onkelos and Jonathan and by Mammonides and Rashi.²⁷⁹ It has also been so recognized by most conservative expositors.

Here again the Messiah is to arise out of Jacob. The *Sceptre*, of course, refers to Messiah's kingly reign in the coming Millennial Kingdom, just as it did in the prophecy uttered by Jacob in [Genesis 49:10](#). There is nothing in the prophecy which refers to the first coming of the Messiah into the world.

MESSIANIC PROPHECY IN THE HISTORICAL BOOKS

2 Samuel 7:12, 13

"And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever." These words are a part of the great Davidic Covenant and extend far beyond King Solomon, David's son, to Messiah, David's greater Son.

Gabriel, in his annunciation to Mary, stated: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32, 33).

Not only was Jesus Christ born to sit upon David's throne, He was also raised from the dead for this same purpose, according to Peter's words: "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption" (Acts 2:30, 31). It is most significant that Peter quoted this prophecy on the day of Pentecost, for it is another indication that the burden of the message on that day was not the rounding of the unprophesied Body of Christ but the presentation of King-Messiah to Israel in fulfillment of the Davidic covenant.

²⁷⁹ A. J. Kligerman, *Messianic Prophecy in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957), p. 26.

MESSIANIC PROPHECY IN THE PSALMS

The Psalms are especially rich in prophecies concerning the coming of and the work of the Messiah. Limited space will permit only the mention of the main features of His career.

The Purpose of His First Advent

Psalm 40:6-8 -- "... Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God" This prophecy is referred to the Messiah in [Hebrews 10:5-9](#).

Psalm 69:7-9 -- "... For the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproach thee are fallen upon me." The disciples recalled that this was written of the Christ when He drove the money-changers out of the Temple ([John 2:17](#)). Paul also applied this prophecy to Christ in [Romans 15:3](#).

His Sonship and Birth

Psalm 2:7: "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." The Messiah is here declared to be the Son of God. It would appear that Caiaphas, the high priest, understood that the Messiah was to be the Son of God, for he asked Jesus: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God" (Matt. 26:63). Likewise Nathanael, upon recognizing Jesus as Messiah, said: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel" (John 1:49). The Apostle Paul quoted this second Psalm, applying it to the Lord Jesus Christ in [Acts 13:33](#). It is not clear from the context what is intended by the expression: "This day have I begotten thee." Theologians speak of the eternal generation of the Son, that is, that He had no beginning but was eternally begotten. Some passages refer the begetting to the incarnation, when His humanity was begotten by the act of the Holy Spirit, while other passages speak of His resurrection from the dead ([Colossians 1:18](#); [Revelation 1:5](#)). The writer to the Hebrews also refers this passage to the Messiah ([Hebrews 1:5](#); [5:5](#)).

His Deity

Psalm 45:6: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Again the writer to the Hebrews refers this quotation to the Messiah: "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (Hebrews 1:8). It seems abundantly clear that the inspired writer is here ascribing Deity to the Messiah.

Psalm 110:1: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." This statement is quoted in [Matthew 22:41-45](#); [Mark 12:35-37](#); [Luke 20:41-44](#); [Acts 2:34, 35](#); [Hebrews 1:13](#); [10:12, 13](#). Of

special interest is the reference in the Gospels, for there the Lord Jesus Christ Himself applies this passage to Himself and uses it to silence the Pharisees. When He asked whose son the Messiah would be they answered, The son of David. Jesus then asked a question which they could not answer without admitting His Deity: "How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then calls him Lord, how is he his son?" Clearly David called his Son, the Messiah, his Lord.

His Priesthood

Ps. 110:4: "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." This enigmatic character who met Abraham a thousand years before David wrote these words, is never mentioned again in Scripture for another thousand years until the writer to the Hebrews applies this title to the Messiah ([Hebrews 7:1-28](#)). This person without recorded beginning or ending of life is thus a fitting type of the everlasting priesthood of Jesus Christ.

His Betrayal and Crucifixion

Psalm 41:9: "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." Jesus Himself quoted this prophecy as referring to His betrayal by Judas ([John 13:18, 19](#)).

Psalm 22: This entire Psalm, beginning with the cry from the Cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is a vivid portrayal of the crucifixion of the Messiah. References in [Matthew 27:46-50](#) and [John 19:23, 24](#) indicate that the Gospel writers regarded this Psalm as prophetic of the crucifixion.

His Resurrection

Psalm 16:9, 10: "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Both Peter and Paul in their sermons recorded in Acts quote this prophecy in support of the resurrection of Christ ([Acts 2:22-28](#) and [13:34, 35](#)).

His Second Coming and Millennial Reign

Allusions to this event are so numerous in the Psalms as to be beyond the scope of this treatment of the subject. However, Psalm 2 and 72 are representative. "Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed" (Psalm 72:11, 17). These ascriptions go far beyond any accomplishment of Solomon to whom the Psalm is inscribed and doubtless point to David's greater

Son, when He comes to set things right in this world which has been misruled by man since the Fall.

MESSIANIC PROPHECY IN THE PROPHETS

In a true sense of the word all of the writings of the prophets refer to the coming and the work of the Messiah, and it would therefore require volumes to deal adequately with every facet of this subject. However, the majority of the references deal with the second coming of the Messiah and with Millennial times, which are outside our present purpose. We shall, therefore, mention briefly the outstanding prophecies concerning His first coming, although, of necessity, some must be mentioned in which both comings are inextricably combined.

1. *Isaiah 7:14*: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Regardless of the controversies which have raged over the word "virgin" in this passage, the New Testament makes it abundantly clear that the prophecy was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ and the fact that the word "parthenos" is used in *Matthew 1:23*, settles once and for all, as far as Scripture is concerned, the fact that Jesus was born of a virgin.

2. *Isaiah 9:6*: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." The next verse concerns Millennial times when he shall sit upon the throne of David. There is doubtless an allusion to this prophecy in [Luke 1:32, 33](#).

3. *Isaiah 28:16*: "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." The Apostle Peter quotes this prophecy as having been fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ ([1 Peter 2:6-8](#)).

4. *Isaiah 42:1-3*: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment into truth." [Matthew 12:15-21](#) indicates that Isaiah was speaking about Jesus Christ in this reference.

5. *Isaiah 52:13-53:12*: A New Testament reference is hardly needed to ascribe this remarkable prophecy to the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. This passage perhaps comes the nearest of any in the Old Testament to setting forth the substitutionary aspect of the death of Christ. Philip preached Christ from this passage ([Acts 8:27-35](#)).

6. *Isaiah 61:1, 2*: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn." Jesus Himself quoted these words in the synagogue at Nazareth and then declared: "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." (Luke 4:17-21). It is dispensationally significant that Jesus broke off the reading in the middle of verse 2. He did not mention the day of vengeance, for that will not be fulfilled until His second coming.

7. *Prophecies of Christ as the Branch: Isaiah 4:2; Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15; Zechariah 3:8; 6:12, 13*. In these passages Christ is called the Branch of Jehovah, the Branch of David, My Servant, the Branch, and the Man whose name is the Branch.

8. *Daniel 9:25, 26*: "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and three score and two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself "This is the only prophecy which indicates specifically the time of the Messiah's advent into the world, or to be more exact, the time of His death. Sir Robert Anderson gives his reckoning of the time involved: "THE INTERVAL CONTAINED EXACTLY AND TO THE VERY DAY 173,880 DAYS, OR SEVEN TIMES SIXTY-NINE PROPHETIC YEARS OF 360 DAYS, the first sixty-nine weeks of Gabriel's prophecy."²⁸⁰

9. *Micah 5:2*: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Cf. [Matthew 2:5-12](#).

10. *Zechariah 9:9*: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." Cf. [Matthew 21:1-10](#).

11. *Zechariah 11:12*: "So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver." Cf. [Matthew 26:15; 27:9, 10](#).

There is no doubt but that the writers of the New Testament believed that these many prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled in the coming and in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, and if we believe in the divine inspiration of

²⁸⁰ Sir Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince* (London: Pickering and Inglis Limited, Thirteenth Edition), p. 128.

the Scripture we must believe, even as Jesus Himself testified of the Scriptures: "these are they which testify of me."

37 THE INCARNATION

THE PRE-INCARNATE STATE OF THE SAVIOR

There are two important facts concerning the preincarnate state of the Savior. The first is His pre-existence. The second is His pre-existence as God. It is possible to hold to the first fact while denying the second, as did Arius in the fourth century and as do the Jehovah Witnesses of today. There are those who believe in the pre-existent state of all souls, which involves the doctrine of reincarnation, but this view finds no support from the Bible. The Bible is the story of one unique Person who pre-existed as God and who in time became incarnate as man. No other member of the human family had any personal pre-existence before he was born into this life. Jesus Christ is unique in this respect.

There are those who hold defective views of the inspiration of the Scriptures who would argue that although Scripture writers claimed pre-existence and Deity for the Person of Christ, Jesus Himself made no such claims. It should be evident, however, that we are dependent upon the Scripture writers not only for their own views but for the claims which Jesus Himself made. If the Scriptures are not infallible, what guarantee do we have that their reporting of the words of Christ is true or accurate? However, in this instance we have both the testimony of the Scripture writers and the words of Jesus Himself.

The Claims of Christ Himself

1. "For I came down from heaven The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven I am the living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:38, 41, 51). It is clear from the murmuring of the Jews that they understood that Jesus was claiming pre-existence for Himself, and Jesus makes this doubly clear when He answered them: "Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before" (vs. 61, 62).

2. On another occasion Jesus astonished the Jews by declaring: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:56-58). Again, it is clear that the Jews not only understood that He was claiming to have personally existed before Abraham two thousand years earlier, but that He was claiming pre-existence as Deity, for they took up stones to stone him, even as they did when He claimed identity with the Father ([John 10:30, 31](#)).

3. Finally, in the great high-priestly prayer of John 17, Jesus uttered these words to the Father: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self; with the glory which I had with thee before the world was... they have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me" (vs. 5, 8.) Jesus possessed intimate knowledge of His pre-existent state in glory with the Father before the cosmos was called into being. If we are to accept the testimony of Jesus concerning Himself then we must believe that He personally pre-existed with the Father before the original act of creation.

The Claims of the Scripture Writers:

1. *Isaiah 9:6*: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:... and his name shall be called... The mighty God, The everlasting Father." These two titles of the coming Messiah express not only Deity but His eternal existence. The word Father here is not to be confused with the first Person of the Trinity. The Son is not the Father in the Trinity of the Godhead, but He is the Father of Ages (Heb., *Olam*), or the Father of Eternity. The thought is similar to that expressed in Hebrews 1:2, where God is said to have made the eons (the equivalent of *olam*) through His Son. The creation is said to have been mediated through the agency of the Son. He therefore must have existed eternally before anything came into being.

2. *Micah 5:2*: "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." This Messianic prophecy clearly states that the Child that was to be born in Bethlehem had, as the Son, been in existence from everlasting.

3. *John 1:1-3*: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." If this were the only passage in the Bible to set forth the pre-existence and Deity of Jesus Christ, some question might be raised whether another meaning might be derived from a careful exegesis of the words. But John is here telling us the same thing that other writers as well as Jesus Himself have told us. The Only difference is that Jesus is here presented as the Word, the Logos, the Divine Reason, the Instrument of Communication of the infinite, incomprehensible God to a finite creation.

4. *Philippians 2:5, 6*: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." This is probably the central passage in Paul's writings on the pre-incarnate state of the Savior. This passage clearly states that Christ existed (*huparchon*, without any thought of coming into existence) in the form of God and that He was then made (*genomenos*, became that which was not before) in the likeness of men. Equality with God was not a thing that He had to grasp after, for He was God.

5. *Colossians 1:15-17*: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." The title which is here ascribed to Christ, *The Firstborn of All Creation*, does not signify that He was the first creature to be born, for the remainder of the passage states that He existed before all created things and that all things were created by Him. Hence, if He were a created being He could not have existed before creation. As Lightfoot points out, the title Firstborn here means: "Sovereign Lord over all creation by virtue of primogeniture."²⁸¹ It is a title of priority and headship. It is used as a Messianic title in Psalm 89:27: "Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth." This verse is not a statement of when the Messiah is to come into being: rather, it is a statement that God is going to place Him in a position as the firstborn, far above all others. God said in Jeremiah 31:9: "I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn." This statement could in no sense apply to Ephraim personally, for he was not even the firstborn son of Joseph ([Genesis 41:51, 52](#)). Ephraim is often used as a name for the nation of Israel, as it is in this passage. But Israel was surely not the first nation to be born. In what sense then was Israel Jehovah's firstborn? Surely in the sense that the context bears out, that God will some day regather that nation and give it sovereignty over the nations of the earth. It is most important to grasp the full significance of the truth that the Person of Jesus Christ not only pre-existed but that he pre-existed as God the Son.

THE INCARNATION OF THE SAVIOR

The very expression, *incarnation*, expresses something that is different and unique. This word cannot be used of the mere birth of people into the world. Parents do not send out notices that a son or a daughter was incarnated to them. For an incarnation to occur there must be the existence of a person first in a non-fleshly form, and then that person must take upon himself a body of flesh. This is exactly what the Son of God did, according to Hebrews 2:14: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Timothy 3:16 states the fact in these words: "God was manifest in the flesh." Romans 8:3 has it: "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." The Apostle John in his Gospel states: "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," (1:14), and in his First Epistle he says: "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God," (4:2).

The Virgin Birth

²⁸¹ J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul - Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (London: Macmillan and Co., ninth edition, 1890), p. 145.

There can be little doubt but that the Virgin Birth is a necessary concomitant to the Incarnation. It is possible that God might have brought His Son into the world by some other means; however, it would seem impossible for Him to do so through natural human generation involving a human mother and father. A child thus born would have been a purely human person and the most that God could have done would have been to cause His Spirit to come upon and indwell such an one, and, of course, this is one of the defective views of the Person of Christ which has been held by some. It is difficult to conceive of a completely natural human person as being the second Person of the Trinity. This fact will become more evident in consideration of the next point dealing with the unique Person of Christ.

Many theologians have rejected the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, but in so doing they have rejected the Scripture, for no honest reader of the Bible can deny that the Scripture plainly teaches that Christ was born of a virgin. [Matthew 1:23](#) plainly declares the fact, and Mary denied having had intercourse with a man before the birth of Jesus ([Luke 1:34](#)). Paul says He was made of a woman ([Galatians 4:4](#)), which is a strange expression if He had a human father.

It is generally held that the Virgin Birth accounts for the sinless humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Various theories have been advanced to explain how His humanity was thus generated in a sinless condition; however, Scripture gives no further explanation than that which Gabriel gave to Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Some have held that the humanity of Jesus was a completely new creation and that Mary contributed nothing to His humanity. This would explain His sinlessness, but would deny the fact that Mary was His mother, as she is called in Scripture, making her only an incubator in which the child was carried. It would also seem to deny the fact that He took upon himself our humanity, if His humanity was a completely new creation. Covenant theologians hold the Creation Theory of the origin of the soul, claiming that only the physical body is passed on by natural procreation and that the soul of each child born into the world is created at the time of conception or birth. In the case of Adam's descendants, because of the supposed covenant God made with Adam and which Adam broke, God imputes a sinful nature to each soul as soon as He creates it. But in the case of Christ God did not impute sin to Him. This theory explains the sinlessness of Christ but it is fraught with numerous difficulties. The Traducian theory holds that the entire human person, body, soul, and spirit, is passed on by natural procreation. It is confronted with the problem of explaining how Jesus could have been sinless if He partook in any measure of Mary's sinful humanity. Roman Catholics have gotten around the problem by claiming Immaculate Conception for Mary, which is another way of claiming that Mary was conceived in a sinless state, but they do not explain how Mary could have been born of sinful parents without receiving a sinful nature. Dr. M. R. DeHaan, in a pamphlet, *The Chemistry of the Blood*, set forth the strange idea that sin is a kind

of virus in man's blood. He claimed that the child received all of its blood from the father and not one drop from its mother, and therefore the blood in Jesus' body did not contain this sinful virus. Besides being a crassly materialistic idea, this view is based upon a false genetic postulate. The fact of the matter is that we do not know how the sin nature of man is propagated, but we do know that it is, both from Scripture and from experience. And we know from Scripture that God so worked through the means of the Virgin Birth to produce a sinless humanity in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Unique Person of Christ

Theologians have coined the word, *Theanthropic*, to describe the Person of Christ. This is another way of calling Him the God-man. There never was another person like Jesus Christ and there never will be another. There is therefore no person to whom He may be compared. We are shut up to statements of Scripture concerning His nature. There has been the tendency on the part of liberals to over-emphasize the humanity of Christ and on the part of conservatives to over-emphasize the Deity of Christ. The Scripture indicates that He possessed a perfect and complete human nature as well as a perfect and complete divine nature.

1. His Human Nature.

a. Scripture indicates that Jesus had a normal, human birth. The conception was supernatural, but everything in the development from that point on was normal ([Luke 2:1-7](#)).

b. He had a normal human body. He was circumcised according to the law ([Luke 2:21](#)). He was handled by his mother, by Simeon, and by others and there is no indication that his body was different from that of any other child.

c. He possessed a human soul ([Matthew 26:38](#); [John 12:27](#); [Acts 2:27,31](#)).

d. He had a human spirit ([Mark 2:8](#); [John 13:21](#); [Luke 23:46](#)).

e. He was called the Son of man ([Matthew 11:19](#)). As descended humanly He is called "the son of Abraham," "the son of David," ([Matthew 1:1](#)).

f. He manifested the limitations of human nature: He was hungry ([Matthew 4:2](#)), weary ([John 4:6](#)), thirsty ([John 19:28](#)), sleepy ([Matthew 8:24](#)), and limited in his human knowledge ([Mark 13:32](#); [John 11:34](#) cf. [Luke 2:40](#)).

g. "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God" ([Hebrews 2:17](#)), with the exception that He was "separate from sinners" and "without sin" ([Hebrews 7:26](#) and [4:15](#)).

2. His Divine Nature.

- a. He is called "the only begotten Son of God" ([John 3:16](#)).
- b. He is called God ([Hebrews 1:8](#)).
- c. He accepted worship due only to God ([John 9:38](#)).
- d. He is the "image of the invisible God" and "the express image of His person" ([Colossians 1:15](#) and [Hebrews 1:3](#)).
- e. He is the Creator and Upholder of all things ([Colossians 1:16, 17](#)).
- f. He exercised the prerogatives of Deity, such as forgiving sin ([Matthew 9:2, 6](#); [Luke 7:47, 48](#)), executing final judgment upon all who have ever lived ([John 5:22-27](#); [Acts 17:31](#); [Matthew 25:31, 32](#); [2 Timothy 4:1](#); [2 Corinthians 5:10](#)).
- g. He has divine attributes. He is eternal ([Micah 5:2](#); [John 1:1](#)). He is omniscient ([John 16:30](#); [Colossians 2:3](#)). He is omnipotent ([Hebrews 1:3](#); [Colossians 1:16, 17](#); [Revelation 1:8](#)). He is immutable ([Hebrews 13:8](#); [1:12](#)). All of the moral attributes are His: Holiness, Righteousness, Goodness, and Truth.

THE PURPOSE OF THE INCARNATION

We may ask, Why was the Incarnation necessary? What purpose did God have in sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh? What reasons may we find for this stupendous event? The Scriptures reveal at least the following answers:

To Fulfill The Promises of God

From Genesis 3:15 to the end of Malachi, God made many promises which could be realized only through means of the Incarnation. "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy" (Romans 15:8, 9). In a sense, this answer is all inclusive, for the promises embrace the many purposes God had in the Incarnation.

To Fully Reveal God

God as infinite pure spirit is incomprehensible to man. John speaks of God in His plenitude when he says: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only

begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him (lit., *exegeted him*)" (John 1:18). He has, as it were, translated God into a form which man can understand. Besides revealing the love and grace of God far beyond anything which God before made known of Himself, Jesus Christ expounded the Tri-unity of the Godhead. While there are intimations of the Trinity in the Old Testament, it is not until the Son is manifested in human flesh that the Father-Son relationship in the Godhead could be understood.

To Take Away Sin

"And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin" (1 John 3:5). Since apart from the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, it was necessary for Him to have blood to shed if He was to do this work (cf. [Hebrews 2:14](#)). As God He could not die, but as Man He could and did die for the sins of the world.

To Become a Merciful and Faithful High-priest

This fact is stated in [Hebrews 2:17, 18](#). Other references to this ministry will be found in [Hebrews 4:14-16](#); [5:1-10](#); and [7:11-28](#). The high-priest is one who represents man before God. In order to understand man's nature and needs experientially it was necessary for the Son of God to become a man and to be tested in all points, yet without sin. Thus we read that since He has suffered through temptation, He is able to succor them that are tempted; and He can have compassion upon the ignorant and on them that are out of the way; and that though He were a Son, yet He learned obedience through the things He suffered.

To Demonstrate a Perfect Humanity

The Scriptures emphasize the fact that Jesus Christ was the only sinless man who ever lived. There is only one exception to the "all" of Romans 3:23 and that is Jesus Christ. The temptation of Jesus by Satan was not for the purpose of discovering whether Jesus would sin, but to prove that He would not and could not sin. It was necessary that He be sinless in order to be able to save others from the penalty of sin, but aside from this it would seem that God also purposed in sending His Son in human flesh to demonstrate what His original plan was for man's life. This life of perfect obedience to God (see [Hebrews 10:7](#)), is set forth as a pattern for the believer's life ([1 John 2:6](#); [I Peter 2:21](#); [Phil. 2:5-8](#)).

To Become the Head of the Body, the Church

Christ did not become the Head of the Body during His life upon earth, but in His life as the Man at God's right hand after His resurrection and ascension. This fact is clearly stated in [Ephesians 1:20-23](#). It must be remembered that the humanity of Jesus Christ did not cease with His death. He is still a man and in

order for Him to become the Head of a Body of redeemed men it was necessary for Him to be a man.

To Judge and Restore the Universe to God

Paul states that God "hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained." The writer of Hebrews quotes Psalm 8 concerning man, showing that it is God's ultimate purpose to put all things in subjection under a man, and that this man is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. This purpose of God involves the Kingship of Jesus Christ. He will be manifested as King of kings at His second coming ([Revelation 19:16](#)), and, of course, as King He will be a man. It was God's ultimate purpose for man that he should bring all creation in subjection to God and thereby glorify God. The first man Adam failed and brought down the whole human race into defeat. The second Man, the last Adam, succeeded, and although, as Hebrews 2:8 states, we do not yet see all things put in subjection under Him, Paul makes it plain that the day will come when the last enemy will be robbed of its power and all things shall be subdued unto Him ([1 Corinthians 15:25-28](#)).

38 UNION OF THE TWO NATURES OF THE SAVIOR

Considerable reference has already been made to the fact that Jesus Christ, as a result of the Incarnation, possesses two natures, the Divine and a human one. He is thus a unique Person, for no other person ever existed with two complete and distinctive natures. There is no other person to whom He may be compared, and we are therefore wholly dependent upon the Bible for our knowledge of Him.

In considering such a unique Person there are bound to be many difficulties in comprehending how two natures can be united in one person, and especially how an infinite nature can be united with a finite one. How is it possible for a person to know all things and at the same time be limited in knowledge? How is it possible for the omnipotent One to become a helpless baby? In what sense could the Source and Giver of life die? There are no doubt many inscrutable mysteries connected with the Person of Christ which must be received by faith, even as there are concerning the Godhead itself.

THE FACT OF THE UNION OF THE TWO NATURES

Scriptures have already been presented to show that Christ had both a perfect and complete Divine nature and a perfect and complete human nature. Our purpose now is to see that these two natures were united in One Person. Christ was not a Divine Person and a human Person, and thus two persons. He was One Person with two natures. There is no evidence in Scripture of a two-fold personality in Christ. There is a three-fold Personality within the Godhead. They

use the personal pronouns in speaking of or to each other. The Father says: "*Thou* art my beloved Son." The Son says: "Lo, *I* come to do *thy* will." The Son says of the Spirit: "*He* will guide you into all truth." But there is nothing analagous to this in the case of Christ. The human nature is never distinguished from the Divine as a distinct person.

Not only is there no intimation of a dual personality in Jesus; there is a positive testimony to the uni-personality of Jesus in Scripture. As Hodge says: "He always says I, me, mine. He is always addressed as Thou, thee, thine. He is always spoken of as He, his, him. It was the same person to whom it was said, 'Thou art not yet fifty years old'; and 'Thou, Lord, in the beginning has laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands.'"²⁸² It might seem unnecessary to prove what appears to be such a self-evident fact, that Jesus Christ was one and not two persons, but a consideration of the many defective views which have been held of the Person of Christ will show the importance and necessity of stressing this fact.

THE TWO NATURES ARE UNITED AND YET DISTINCT

An illustration of what is meant by this statement may be helpful. Two substances may be combined chemically, such as oxygen and hydrogen, forming a third substance, the nature of which is different from either oxygen or hydrogen. Or two substances may be combined in a mixture, such as sand and iron filings, so that it might be said that it was one-half sand and one-half iron filings. Or consider man himself, composed of two distinct parts, body and soul or spirit. In the first illustration there was a true union of oxygen and hydrogen, but the result was a substance possessing a nature different from either. In the second case there was simply a mixture and not a true union, the sand and the iron filings remaining distinct. In the third example the material and the immaterial substances were united to form a man, and yet these two substances remain distinct and separable.

In the Person of Christ the two natures are united, so that He possesses the same essence which constitutes the nature of God, while at the same time possessing the same essence which constitutes us human beings. In this union the human and the divine do not lose their identity, as in the case of the oxygen and hydrogen, and become a third kind of thing, neither human nor divine. Neither is there simply a temporary mixing of the two natures, as with the sand and iron filings, as though the divine nature simply came upon, or indwelt Him, much as the Holy Spirit indwells believers. Rather, the two natures united in One Person, so that it can be said that He is true God and true Man at one and the same time. He possesses all of the elements of human nature, apart from sin, and all of the elements of Divine nature.

²⁸² Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1940), Vol. II, p. 383.

THE TWO NATURES ARE UNITED IN A HYPOSTATICAL UNION

Theologians use the word *hypostatical* to indicate that the union of the natures is a personal one. It is the Greek word which is translated "person" in Hebrews 1:3: "the express image of His *person*." By a personal union is meant a number of things. It means primarily that though Christ has two natures He is but one Person. It is admittedly difficult to understand how this could be, but this is the picture that the Bible presents of the Person of Christ. Christ as God was a Person before He was born into the world. Therefore at His birth it was not the begetting of a new person, which would have resulted in two persons, but the begetting of a new human nature. This human nature was united with the pre-existing Divine Person. Whereas we speak of the *nature* of man, we must speak of the two *natures* of Christ.

By a personal union is also meant that the union is not simply an indwelling of the Person of the Holy Spirit in the human nature of Christ. Believers in this dispensation have the Person of the Holy Spirit indwelling their bodies, but it could never be said that the believer is the Holy Spirit. The believer and the Holy Spirit are two separate persons. The believer is not God. But the Man, Christ Jesus, is God.

When men are born into the world there is the birth of a person with a human nature. But when Christ was born there was not the birth of a person, although there was the birth of a human nature. This would seem to indicate that the human nature in Christ is impersonal. Hodge takes this position, stating: "Human nature, therefore, although endowed with intelligence and will, may be, and in fact is, in the person of Christ impersonal."²⁸³

Berkhof, in discussing this which he calls an incomprehensible mystery, states:

At the same time it is not correct to speak of the human nature of Christ as impersonal. This is true only in the sense that this nature has no independent subsistence of its own. Strictly speaking, however, the human nature of Christ was not for a moment impersonal. The Logos assumed that nature into personal subsistence with Himself. The human nature has its personal existence in the person of the Logos. It is in-personal rather than impersonal.²⁸⁴

Early in the history of the Church a number of heretical views of the Person of Christ were promulgated, (these will be discussed in the next chapter), and finally a Council was called at Chalcedon in 451 to deal with this problem. Strong summarizes the decision of the Council in these words:

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 391.

²⁸⁴ L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941), p. 322.

The Orthodox doctrine (promulgated at Chalcedon, 451) holds that in the one person Jesus Christ there are two natures, a human nature and a divine nature, each in its completeness and integrity, and that these two natures are organically and indissolubly united, yet so that no third nature is formed thereby. In brief, to use the antiquated dictum, orthodox doctrine forbids us either to divide the person or to confound the natures.²⁸⁵

Christ is sometimes spoken of as being *Theanthropic*, that is, God-man. This term applies to His Person but not to His nature, for as has already been stated Christ does not have a nature but two natures. We cannot speak of a divine-human nature. The divine is infinite and the human is finite. What, then, would be the properties of a divine-human nature? Such a nature could not be both infinite and finite, for that would be self-contradictory. But Christ is presented in Scripture as both infinite and finite, so that the two natures must be separate and distinct.

THE TWO NATURES REMAIN DISTINCT AND UNCHANGED

There is no indication from Scripture that the Divine nature of the Son was in any way altered as a consequence of the Incarnation, nor that the human nature was elevated to a semi-divine position. But there is that which Theologians refer to as the Communion of the attributes of the two natures of Christ. This means that the one Person partakes of the attributes of both natures, so that whatever may be said of either nature may be said of the Person. Thus whether it be the act of the divine nature or of the human nature, it is the act of Christ. Hodge finds four classes of passages referring to the acts of Christ.

1. Those in which the acts are predicated of the whole Person of Christ.
2. Those in which the predicate is true only of the divine nature. Christ could not have said of His human nature: "Before Abraham was I am," but He could say this both of His Person and of His divine nature.
3. Those in which the predicate is true only of the human nature, as for example when Christ said, "I thirst," or "My soul is sorrowful even unto death."
4. Those belonging to the first class but having the peculiarity that the denomination is derived from the divine nature, when the predicate is not true of the divine nature itself, but only of the God-man. Hodge places such passages as [1 Corinthians 15:28](#) and [John 14:28](#) in this category. The eternal Son is co-equal with the Father, and yet these passages say that the Father is greater than the Son and that the Son shall some day be subject to the Father. This subjection and inequality is not to be predicated of the divine nature, nor simply of the human nature, but officially of the God-man.

²⁸⁵ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1912), p. 673.

THE DIVINE NATURE SELF-LIMITED IN MANIFESTATION

The Scriptures present the Incarnation as a step downward, as an humiliation, a condescension. The Hebrews writer puts it this way:

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little (or, for a little while) lower than the angels "(2:9). Paul's central passage on the Incarnation, Philippians 2:5-8 contains such words as *no reputation, a servant, humbled himself, became obedient*. It is evident from the Gospel narratives that it was only upon rare occasions that the Deity of Christ shone forth. The effulgent glory of His Person was seen by the three on the mount of transfiguration, but there is no record that there was another instance of its display. In the Temptation He employed none of His divine attributes to satisfy the needs of His humanity. The One who created and possessed the Universe owned not so much as a place to lay His head. Paul speaks of His poverty ([2 Corinthians 8:9](#)). And finally when He hung upon the cross, although He could have commanded twelve legions of angels to deliver Him, He employed none of His divine powers, but instead endured the cross in all of the awful reality of His human nature. No doubt the average person observing Jesus as He went in and out among men saw nothing but the manifestation of His human nature. They surely saw no visible halo around His head. He wrought miracles, it is true, but this same power was given to His disciples also and the miraculous works are always represented as the work which the Father had given Him to do. None of His acts during the time of His humiliation was self-originated. With Him it was ever, "Not my will, but Thine be done ."

This failure or refusal to exercise His divine attributes has naturally raised many questions concerning the exact nature of the Incarnation. Did it involve the surrender or partial surrender of His Deity? Did He as a man possess the knowledge that He was God in human flesh? Of what did He empty Himself, according to [Philippians 2:7](#) (A.S.V.)? This is probably Paul's central passage on the Incarnation, which has been quoted before to prove the pre-existence and the Deity of Christ. Interest at this point concerns only the meaning of the first clause of vs. 7, "but made Himself of no reputation."

This phrase has been translated variously: "emptied himself" (A.S.V.); "stripped himself of all privilege" (Phillips); "made himself nothing" (N.E.B.); "stripped Himself [of His glory]" (Conybeare and Howson).

Lightfoot translates the entire passage:

Though existing before the worlds in the Eternal Godhead, yet He did not cling with avidity to the prerogatives of His divine majesty, did not ambitiously display His equality with God; but divested Himself of the glories of heaven, and took upon Him the nature of a servant, assuming the likeness of men. Nor was this all. Having thus appeared among men in the fashion of a man, He humbled Himself yet more, and carried out His

obedience even to dying. Nor did He die by a common death: He was crucified, as the lowest malefactor is crucified.²⁸⁶

Strong here remarks:

Here notice that which the Logos divested himself of, in becoming man, is not the substance of his Godhead, but the "form of God" in which this substance was manifested. This "form of God" can be only that independent exercise of the powers and prerogatives of Deity which constitutes his "equality with God." This he surrenders, in the act of "taking the form of a servant"--or becoming subordinate, as man,²⁸⁷

Vincent states:

The General sense is that He divested Himself of that peculiar mode of existence which was proper and peculiar to Him as one with God. He laid aside the form of God. In so doing, He did not divest Himself of His divine *nature*. The change was a change of *state*: the form of a servant for the form of God. His *personality* continued the same. His *self-emptying* was not *self-extinction*, nor was the divine Being changed into a mere man. In His humanity He retained the consciousness of deity, and in His incarnate state carried out the mind which animated Him before His incarnation. He was not unable to assert equality with God. He was able not to assert it.²⁸⁸

This we understand to be the meaning of the *Kenosis* or self-emptying of the incarnate Son of God. The erroneous views of the so-called Kenotic theologians will be considered in the next chapter.

39 ERRONEOUS VIEWS OF THE SAVIOR

Throughout the history of Christendom the mainstream of the Church has held true to the Scriptural doctrine of the Godhead and of the Person of Christ in particular. Early Church Councils, such as those held at Nicea and at Chalcedon, established doctrinal statements of the Trinity and of the two natures of Christ which were based upon the Scripture. These views have been held by the great majority of Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, although numerous modern theologians have departed from these historic views and from the Scripture.

The question which Jesus asked the Pharisees is one of the most important ones which could be asked: "What think ye of Christ?" (Matthew 22:42). In every age there have been divergent answers to that question by minority groups within

²⁸⁶ J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistles of St. Paul: Philippians* (London: Macmillan and Co., eighth edition, 1888), p. 110.

²⁸⁷ Strong, *op. cit.*, pp. 705, 706.

²⁸⁸ Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), Vol. III, p. 433.

the professing Church. Some of the more important of these views will be considered in the following paragraphs.

EBIONISM

The Ebionites were a Jewish sect which, while divided into a number of different classes, was united in the denial of the Deity of Christ, while at the same time honoring Him as One who had an unmeasured fulness of the divine Spirit. The Nazarene Ebionites held to the supernatural birth, but denied the essential Deity of Christ. The Corinthian Ebionites followed the Gnostic teaching that the divine Christ Spirit came upon the mere man, Jesus, at His baptism. Thus they denied that Jesus is actually Christ and that any incarnation took place at the birth of Jesus. The Ebionites naturally rejected much of the New Testament, especially the epistles of Paul. Strong suggests that the Hebrew Epistle was written to counteract an Ebionite tendency to overstrain law and to underrate Christ. Ebionism as a sect lasted down to the fourth century.

GNOSTICISM

Gnosticism is difficult to define as it was not a homogeneous system but embraced many widely differing sects. It arose while Paul and John were still on the scene and "in the 2nd century spread with the swiftness of an epidemic over the church from Syria to Gaul."²⁸⁹ Gnosticism was an amalgam, among other things, of Alexandrian philosophy and Zoroastrian dualism with certain Christian ideas of redemption. As the name implies, it claimed for its initiates a superior type of knowledge. We are concerned here only with the way in which the various sects of Gnostics dealt with the Person of Christ.

Since one of the tenets of Gnosticism was that matter is evil, it logically follows that the true humanity of our Lord must be denied. This teaching is called Docetism, a name which means *to seem* or *to appear*. According to this teaching Jesus seemed to have or appeared to have a human body, but in reality it was only a spiritual apparition. This error is combated especially in such passages as [John 1:14](#) and [1 John 4:2, 3](#). Cerinthus, who was an antagonist of the Apostle John, denied the Virgin Birth, teaching that Jesus was just an ordinary man, who, at the time of his baptism, had the Christ-spirit descend upon him to enable him to do miracles and at the time of his death had the Christ-spirit taken from him. He thus taught that Jesus and Christ were two separate persons. Again John answers this error in 1 John 2:22: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ." The author of the article on Gnosticism in I.S.B.E. sums up this heretical teaching thus:

It is easily seen how teaching of this sort strikes at the root of all religion and morality. The personality of God, the personality and free will of man, the existence of moral evil, the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the

²⁸⁹ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 11, p. 1240.

redemption which he accomplished for the world, His resurrection, the whole significance of His person and His work--all is denied. This is the spirit and meaning of Gnosticism.²⁹⁰

The ancient seeds of Gnosticism have sprouted in numerous modern religious sects. Identification of evil with matter, as in so-called Christian Science, and denial of the Virgin Birth, as in many modern theologies, are old heresies dressed in new garments.

ARIANISM

Arius of Alexandria (around 300 A.D.) held a view of the Person of Christ similar to that of present-day Jehovah Witnesses. He taught that Jesus pre-existed as the first creature which came from the hand of God and that through Him God created all other things. He thus denied the Deity of Christ and, of course, His eternal existence. [Colossians 1:15](#) is often used to buttress this teaching, but see the previous chapter on the Incarnation, for an answer. This teaching of Arius was condemned at the Council of Nicea in 325 and he was banished to Illyria. Socinianism and Unitarianism are modern forms of Arianism. Any denial of the Trinity is the equivalent of Arianism.

APOLLINARIANISM

Apollinaris was a bishop of Laodicea during the fourth century. His teaching denied the integrity of the human nature of Christ. That is, he held that Christ had only a human body and soul, but did not have a human spirit. The divine Logos took the place of the human spirit in Jesus according to his view. According to Strong Apollinaris taught that the eternal Word took into union with Himself, not a complete human nature, but an irrational human animal. Strong in the same place quotes Gore:

Apollinaris suggested that the archetype of manhood exists in God, who made man in his own image, so that man's nature in some sense pre-existed in God. The Son of God was eternally human, and he could fill the place of the human mind in Christ without ceasing to be in some sense divine This the church negatived,--man is not God, nor God man. The first principle of theism is that manhood at the bottom is not the same thing as Godhead. This is a principle intimately bound up with man's responsibility and the reality of sin. The interests of theism were at stake.²⁹¹

Apollinaris was condemned at the Council of Constantinople in AD 381.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1247.

²⁹¹ Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 671.

NESTORIANISM

Nestorius was the Patriarch of Constantinople, from which office he was removed after he was condemned for his views by the Synod of Ephesus in 431. It seems that he had difficulty in understanding how two natures could be combined in one person and thus he denied the real union of the divine and human natures in Christ. The union that did exist was more of a moral than an organic one, similar to the marriage union or the union of the believer with Christ. Thus he virtually taught that in Christ there were two natures and two persons; at least, this is the conclusion to which his opponents came. Actually the controversy arose over his denial of the accepted teaching of his day that Mary was the Mother of God. He was probably condemned as much for his denial of this tenet of the church as he was for his view on the Person of Christ. It is interesting to note that the Syriac Version used by the Nestorians (and there is still such a sect in Turkey and Persia) substitutes "Christ" for "God" in Acts 20:28: "The church of God which he purchased with his blood." Nestorius could not accept the statement, "the blood of God" any more than he could "the Mother of God." He separated the human and the divine in Christ to the point of denying that what could be said of the human and the divine in Christ could be said of the one Person.

EUTYCHIANISM

Whereas Nestorius had so divided the two natures of Christ as to virtually make Him to be two persons, Eutychus went to the other extreme and taught that He had but one nature. He held that Christ was *of* two natures, but not *in* two. Cyril of Alexandria, who had been the principal opponent of Nestorius and had secured his condemnation, had taught "there is but one nature in Christ because by the incarnation, or hypostatical union, the human was changed into the divine."²⁹² It was Eutyches, however, a presbyter of Constantinople, who became the most avid advocate of this view, and whose name has been identified with this teaching. The actual result of Eutychianism was that Christ was said to have had neither a divine nor a human nature, but a blending of the two into a third, which might be called a theanthropic nature (God-man nature), similar to the union of an acid and an alkali to form a salt. According to the orthodox doctrine Christ is a theanthropic Person with a complete divine and a complete human nature. He does not have a theanthropic nature.

Opponents of the creed established at Chalcedon, which held that Christ had two natures, came to be known as Monophysites, from the Greek word meaning *one nature*. The Monophysite controversy continued for some two centuries until Emperor Heraclius attempted a reconciliation by trying to get both parties to admit that there were two natures in Christ but only one will. Those who held to this view were called Monothelites. But since will is an essential element of rational nature, to deny that Christ had a human will was to deny that He had a

²⁹² Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1940), Vol. II, p. 402.

true human nature. The emperor was unsuccessful and the controversy continued until the Council of Constantinople in 681, when the Monothelites were condemned and driven eastward, where they perpetuated themselves under the name of Maronites. They exist today as a distinct denomination of the Papal Church, being most numerous in the north of Lebanon.

Dr. Hodge has this summary statement on these erroneous views of the Person of Christ:

With this council (Constantinople) the conflict on this doctrine so far ceased that there has since been no further modification of the Church doctrine. The decision against Nestorius, in which the unity of Christ's person was asserted; that against Eutyches, affirming the distinction of the natures; and that against the Monothelites, declaring that the possession of a human nature involves of necessity the possession of a human will, have been received as the true faith by the Church universal, the Greek, the Latin, and Protestant.²⁹³

Dr. Strong makes this observation:

The foregoing survey would seem to show that history had exhausted the possibility of heresy, and that the future denials of the doctrine of Christ's person must be, in essence, forms of the views already mentioned. All controversies with regard to the person of Christ must, of necessity, hinge upon one of three points: first, the reality of the two natures, secondly, the integrity of the two natures; thirdly, the union of the two natures in one person. Of these points, Ebionism and Docetism deny the reality of the natures; Arianism and Apollinarianism deny their integrity; while Nestorianism and Eutychianism deny their proper union. In opposition to all these errors, the orthodox doctrine held its ground and maintains it to this day.²⁹⁴

KENOTICISM

In the previous chapter reference was made to the Kenotic theologians. The word *kenosis* is derived from the main verb in Philippians 2:7, *ekenosen*, translated in the Authorized Version, "made himself of no reputation," and in the American Standard Version, "emptied himself." Whatever this verb means it is clear that the Scripture declares that this happened to the second Person of the Trinity at the time of the incarnation. There is thus a true doctrine of kenosis taught in Scripture, but what is referred to generally as the Kenotic theory is a rather recently promulgated theory of such men as Thomasius, Delitzsch, Crosby, Gess, and Ebrard.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 404.

²⁹⁴ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 672.

The Kenosis theory is different from the previously considered views of the Person of Christ, but it agrees with Apollinaris that the Logos was the rational element in Christ, and with Eutyclus that Christ had but one nature. But it disagrees with Apollinaris, who taught that the Logos took the place of a rational human soul in Jesus, by teaching that the Logos became a human soul. And it disagrees with Eutyches, who said that there were two natures before the union but only one after it, by teaching that from the beginning the Logos was the sole rational element in the constitution of Christ.

Kenotic theologians differ in certain details, but essentially their theory goes something like this. The second Person of the Godhead laid aside His Godhead and became a man. The substance of that Person remained but in an unconscious form. It became in the form of an infant and possessed nothing beyond an infant's knowledge or power. The Son of God is conceived as existing by the communication of divine life from the Father. At the incarnation that communication was suspended. Thus the Logos in Jesus had no more knowledge or power than any other human being. It was only as the Father communicated knowledge or power to Him to do miracles that Jesus manifested any superhuman powers. As Jesus grew in wisdom and knowledge and as the Father communicated truth to Him He gradually became aware of His Messiahship, and finally after His death, resurrection and ascension He became truly and forever divine. But He exists eternally as an infinite man, possessed of all of the perfections of the Godhead. Hodge quotes Gess: "As the glorified Son remains man, a man is thus received into the trinitarian life of the Deity from and by the glorification of the Son."²⁹⁵

There are numerous objections to this theory. It is not only contrary to the views propounded by the early church councils and accepted almost universally by the church in all ages, but it is contrary to Scripture and to logic. The Bible clearly indicates that Jesus possessed a true human as nature as well as a divine one. But this theory holds that Jesus had only a "Logos-nature," that the soul of Jesus was "not like that of other men, a soul created by God and for God, but the Logos in the form of human existence."²⁹⁶ Jesus thus was not a true human being for He did not possess anything human except a human body. It is surely contrary to the testimony of the four Gospels to claim that Jesus Christ was ignorant of His Messiahship or that He possessed no divine powers. The theory also destroys the Scriptural concepts of both humanity and of Deity. The claim that since the ascension the Logos has become an infinite man gives to humanity that which belongs alone to Deity. On the other hand the theory asks us to believe that the infinite God can cease to be God and then to again become God. Gess held that God is not omnipotent unless He has power over Himself to cease to be God.

²⁹⁵ Hodge. *op. cit.*, Vol II p. 431.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 438.

The true meaning of the Kenosis, of the self-emptying of the Son of God, is stated in the conclusion of the previous chapter. He divested Himself of the *form* of God and of the independent exercise of His divine attributes. He did not divest Himself of His divine Person. He was just as much a divine Person while incarnate on earth as He was before or as He is now at the right hand of God.

40 OFFICES OF THE SAVIOR

Thus far in discussing the Person of the Savior there has been very little, if any, dispensational truth involved. Practically every work on Theology has been patterned after that of Covenant theologians who either disregarded completely or held a very inadequate view of the dispensations. Seeing no difference between Israel and the Church which is His Body, they naturally applied all of the offices of Christ to the one and the same company of the redeemed. The three offices which are always mentioned are Prophet, Priest, and King. Even theologies which are somewhat dispensational in character, such as those produced by Dr. L. S. Chafer and by Dr. Henry Thiessen, hold to this three-fold arrangement, although they do indicate that the office of King is especially related to the nation of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom.

Christ's unique office in this present dispensation is that of Head over the Church which is His Body. He is not King of the Body. A body does not have a king but it does have a head, and this is the office which is set forth in the Pauline epistles.

In the three-fold classifications of the offices of Christ His sacrificial work is made a part of His Priestly ministry. While His priestly ministry is surely based upon His sacrificial work, the typology of the Old Testament would seem to indicate that the priestly work begins only after the sacrifice has been killed. Thus while very closely associated it would appear that the office of Savior is distinct from that of Priest.

Likewise under the three-fold classification Christ's work as Judge is placed under His office as King. While judging is doubtless part of the ministry of a king, it would appear that Christ ministers as a Judge in situations which do not involve His kingly work. For these reasons we shall consider a six-fold classification, including the offices of Savior, Head, and Judge.

It is interesting in passing to note the emphasis given to these three offices in standard works of Theology. Hodge devotes two pages to the office of Prophet, one hundred and thirty-one pages to that of Priest, and thirteen to that of King. Strong takes three pages for that of Prophet, sixty-two for that of Priest, and one and one-half for that of King. And, of course, both of these men applied the office of King to the Church of this dispensation.

THE OFFICE OF PROPHET

The prophetic office of Christ is based upon the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:15, where Moses declared: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken." Peter applies these words to Jesus Christ in Acts 3:22.

The prophet is first of all God's mouthpiece. In the prophecy referred to above it is stated in verse 18: "I ... will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." It is only incidental that the prophet might be a foreteller of events. He was first of all a forth-teller.

The writer of the Book of Hebrews emphasizes the superiority of the Prophetic Office of Christ over all other prophets in the opening words of the epistle: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son."

The people of Israel were expecting that promised prophet, for when John the Baptist began his preaching the people asked him: "Art thou that prophet?" And the people recognized Jesus as a prophet: "When therefore the people saw the sign which he did, they said, This is of a truth the prophet that cometh into the world" (John 6:14). The Emmaus disciples, although ignorant as yet of the fact of Christ's resurrection, declared concerning Him: "Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" (Luke 24:19).

God's prophets spoke with authority and were often given mighty signs and wonders as credentials, as in the case of Moses and Elijah. In like manner Jesus Christ wrought miracles as the Prophet that was to come, even as Peter testified at Pentecost: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know."

God's prophets, having received a revelation from God, became teachers of the people. God, speaking through the lips and the ministry of Jeremiah, declared: "though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction" (ch. 32:33). Likewise Jesus, having received the message from His Father, as He stated: "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me" (John 14:24), became the Teacher par excellence. Nicodemus confessed: "Thou art a teacher come from God" (John 3:2). Over and over it is recorded in the Gospels that He taught the people, and Jesus Himself testified: "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing" (John 18:20).

Whereas some theologians seek to identify the Prophetic Office of Christ with His pre-incarnate enlightening work, with His guidance and teaching of the

Church through the apostles and prophets, and through His final revelation of the Father in glory, it seems best to us to limit His Prophetic Office to His ministry here on earth to the nation of Israel.

THE OFFICE OF SAVIOR

In the Old Testament typology the ministry of Aaron, the high priest, did not begin until after Moses had offered the covenant sacrifice. And it was not Aaron who killed the animal for this sacrifice, but young men appointed by Moses ([Exodus 24:5](#) cf. [vs. 1](#)). Aaron and his sons had to worship "afar off" until the covenant sacrifice was killed. It was not Aaron but Moses as the mediator of the covenant who sprinkled the blood. All of this typology is referred to Christ in [Hebrews 9](#). It would thus appear that Christ was not exercising His priestly office when He offered Himself up as a sacrifice for sins. Sir Robert Anderson expounds this view.

I have already noticed that Israel was not only redeemed, but brought into covenant with God, and sanctified, apart from priesthood; and in the 19th chapter of Numbers, we have again a sacrifice and a rite in which the High Priest took no part. And this is the more remarkable because these, the three great sacrifices that were not sacerdotal, were precisely those which were offered once for all, and could never be repeated.

The death of Christ was not a priestly sacrifice. It was the *foundation* of the covenant, and, as I have already said, it is to the covenant that priesthood pertains. It was "after He had made purification for sins and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" that the Son of God was proclaimed a Priest.²⁹⁷

The fact that Christ would not be a priest if He were on earth ([Hebrews 8:4](#)), along with the Old Testament typology which indicates that the priestly ministry did not begin until the people were on salvation ground, seems to be sufficient evidence that Christ's death was not a part of His priestly work, although His priestly work is based entirely upon the efficacy of that Death.

There is a sense in which deliverance from the present power of sin (sanctification) and from the presence of sin (glorification) may be called present tense and future tense salvation. But most generally when we speak of salvation we mean deliverance from the penalty of sin (justification). Justification has more to do with Christ's office of Savior and sanctification with His office as Priest. Since a number of chapters will be devoted to the Cross-work of Christ, it will not be necessary to say more about it at this point.

²⁹⁷ Sir Robert Anderson, *The Gospel and Its Ministry* (London: Pickering and Inglis, seventeenth edition), pp. 128, 129.

THE OFFICE OF PRIEST

No doubt the thinking of many has been colored by the teaching of the Roman Church which grants such broad powers to priesthood, rather than by the teaching of the Scriptures. Priests supposedly have the power to remit sins, to bestow salvation and to withhold salvation. As we have already seen, salvation is a prerequisite to the ministry of priesthood. The priest ministers only to those who have already become children of God. That is why Christ in His prayer recorded in John 17, which anticipated His High-priestly ministry, prayed: "I pray for them (His disciples): I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." God loved the world and Christ provided a salvation for the world, but as Priest He does not pray for the world. He prays only for those the Father has given Him out of the world.

Israel as a nation was upon redemption ground in Exodus 24. In Exodus 25 God said: "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." This redeemed people were still capable of sin and defilement; how then could a holy God dwell in their midst? The answer is the priesthood ministering in the sanctuary. In terms of present day salvation the question is analogous to asking how the Holy Spirit can dwell in the heart of the sinner who has received Jesus Christ as Savior. It is by means of the High-priestly ministry of Christ. This ministry has a double aspect: that of advocate and of intercessor. The Apostle John wrote his first epistle to believers. To such He says: "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." On the human side John says: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The unsaved sinner is never told that he will receive forgiveness by confessing his sins. He is told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be saved. Then if he sins he is told to confess it in order, not to be cleared from the penalty of sin but, to receive forgiveness within the family of God. The intercessory work of Christ is set forth in Hebrews 7:25: "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." The priestly ministry thus maintains the salvation of the believer and serves to maintain the fellowship with God.

As noted earlier, Jesus Christ would not be a priest if He were on the earth. The book of Hebrews teaches that the priestly work of Christ began with His ascension: "Seeing then we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession" (4:14). This ministry at the right hand of God was in behalf of the Kingdom saints at Pentecost and was continued throughout this dispensation ([Romans 8:34](#)), and will doubtless be exercised for the Kingdom saints again during the great tribulation.

It is important to note that Christ was not a priest after the order of Aaron. The offering of sacrifices was part of the ministry of Aaron ([Hebrews 8:3](#)) but the

order of priesthood has been changed to that of Melchisedec, which is based upon a once-for-all sacrifice where there can be no further place for sacrifices ([Hebrews 7:11, 12; 9:25, 26; 10:11, 12](#)). Because of the inefficacy of the animal sacrifices under the Aaronic order there was the necessity of offering oftentimes the same sacrifices which could never take away sins ([Hebrews 10:11](#)), but under the Melchisedec order which is based upon the efficacy of Christ's blood there is no further need of sacrifice in carrying out His office of High-priest.

THE OFFICE OF HEAD OF THE BODY

This is a unique office of Christ which is related only to members of the Body of Christ. Traditional theology has equated the Body of Christ with Israel, holding that natural Israel has been forever cast away and that the Church is spiritual Israel. This is one of the major points of difference between traditional, covenant theology and dispensational theology. Natural Israel has been set aside only temporarily. As natural branches they have been pruned out, but the plain teaching of [Romans 11:17-23](#) is that God will some day graft these natural branches back into the tree. In the meantime, God is not dealing with Israel specifically, but with a new company of redeemed ones whose existence has been kept secret from age times but finally revealed to and through the Apostle Paul. This company is made up of believing Jews and Gentiles, not on the basis of any covenant promise, but wholly upon the unmerited grace of God. It is for this reason that the present dispensation is called, not only the dispensation of the mystery but also the dispensation of the grace of God ([Colossians 1:25, 26](#) cf. [Ephesians 3:2](#)).

Just as there could be no ministry of Christ as a great High-priest before His resurrection from the dead, so there could have been no ministry as Head of the Body until after His ascension ([Ephesians 1:20-23](#)). But this does not mean that He became Head of the Body at the moment of His ascension. He did not become Head of the Body until the Body was formed. This subject is dealt with much more fully under the heading of Ecclesiology, but suffice it here to say only that the events immediately after the ascension and well beyond the Pentecost of Acts 2 indicate that God was still dealing with the nation of Israel in regard to the establishment of the prophesied Messianic Kingdom. If this is what God was doing, then it is evident that he was not yet forming the unprophesied Body of Christ.

The particular ministry of Christ as Head of the Body is elaborated in Ephesians 4:15, 16: "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ; from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love."

The office of Headship is not to be understood to mean merely that Christ is supreme, or king, or leader. Rather it represents an organic unity of Christ with every member of the Church which is His Body. Just as the head, that is, the mind, of the human being is in every member of the body when it is in a healthy condition, and controls every member, so Christ is in every member of His body in a vital, controlling union.

Christ is also called Head in a non-organic sense. He is said to be Head of principalities and powers ([Colossians 2:10](#)); the Head of every man ([1 Corinthians 11:3](#)); and the Head or Headstone of the corner ([Acts 4:11](#); [1 Peter 2:7](#)). These relationships indicate that Christ is exalted and supreme over the objects enumerated without implying any vital union with them. The unique office of Headship is that which He exercises over the Church which is His Body.

THE OFFICE OF KING

Dispensationalists insist that Christ is not King of the Church and that He is not at present reigning as King. Here we must understand that the title of King is being used in its literal, technical sense. It is, of course, recognized that Christ rules over His Church today in the sense that He is the Head, and that He rules over principalities and powers in heavenly places. But in the strict sense of the word Christ will not enter upon His kingly ministry until He comes back to earth and reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords.

God promised David a King who should reign forever sitting upon his throne ([2 Samuel 7:12, 13](#)). Christ was born to sit upon David's throne ([Luke 1:32, 33](#)). He was called the King of the Jews ([Matthew 2:2](#)). Jesus Himself confessed in the plainest of words to Pilate that He was a King ([John 18:37](#)). By saying that His kingdom was not "of this world," He did not mean that it would not be upon the earth. He likewise told His disciples that they were not of this world ([John 17:16](#)), but this surely did not mean that they were not on this earth. The expression, "not of this world," means that His kingdom did not originate out of this world-system, but that it had its origin in heaven. This is why the Messianic Kingdom here on earth is called the Kingdom of the Heavens.

Covenant theologians and Amillennialists are forced to spiritualize David's throne and make it to be the throne of God in heaven where Christ is now seated. That the apostles did not so understand it is evident from James' remarks in [Acts 15:16](#) where he makes it clear that at the then present David's throne was in a state of deterioration, and that it would be after the return of Christ that it would be rebuilt and established. It is indeed difficult to understand how one can believe that Christ is at present exercising His kingly office and that Satan is at present bound in the abyss that he should deceive the nations no more, when sin and ungodliness are rampant in the world and have been since the days of the apostles. Such misinterpretation of the Scripture makes void nine-tenths of the promises of God and at the same time makes a farce of the Kingship of Christ.

A great deal of confusion concerning the Kingship of Christ has arisen because of a misunderstanding of the Scriptural use of the word *kingdom*. A kingdom implies a king. If there is such a thing as the kingdom of God today, must there not be a king in that kingdom? Assuredly there must. God Himself is King in the Kingdom of God. God's kingdom, according to Scripture, is at times represented as the entire universe, as in [Daniel 4:17](#); and at other times as limited to those beings who are in subjection to God spiritually, as in [John 3:3](#). God's kingdom reigneth over all. Thus the Body of Christ of this dispensation as well as the Messianic Kingdom of the coming dispensation are both a part of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is analogous to the United States as being one and yet comprised of several distinct States. One may be in New York or California and be in the United States, but one cannot be in New York while he is in California. And just as New York and California are separate and distinct parts of the United States, so the Body of Christ and the Messianic Kingdom are separate and distinct parts of the Kingdom of God.

When dispensationalists make reference to the kingdom and to Christ's office of King they mean what the great majority of Scriptural references mean by these terms, namely, the millennial, Messianic kingdom promised to Israel but which will have dominion over the whole earth for a thousand years. It should be apparent to every one that Christ is not now reigning as king in this sense of the word.

THE OFFICE OF JUDGE

This office is very closely associated with that of Head of the Body and that of King of Israel, for in both of these relationships He will judge His own people. All members of the Body of Christ will some day stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive the things done in the body, whether good or bad. ([Rom. 14:10](#); [1 Cor. 3:12-15](#); [2 Cor. 5:10](#); [Eph. 6:8](#); [Col. 3:24, 25](#)). Likewise in the millennial kingdom Christ will judge His people, as a king must do. According to [Matthew 25:31-46](#) Christ will gather the living nations to judge them at the time of His second coming to earth. The twelve Apostles have been promised that when Christ comes again and sits on the throne of His glory, they will sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel ([Matthew 19:28](#)).

While the above ministries of judging fall under the other offices of Christ, there is a sense in which Christ will exercise an exclusive position of Judge. The Scripture teaches that Jesus Christ will be the final Judge of mankind at the end of all of the dispensations. Paul told the Athenians:

"Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

Just as God is the Creator of all things and yet He created through the agency of Christ Jesus ([Colossians 1:16](#)), so also God is the final judge and yet He will accomplish this judgment through the agency of His Son.

The treatment given to the offices of Christ in this chapter has not been exhaustive. Other areas of this work will deal more fully with these ministries.

41 THE EARTHLY MINISTRY OF THE SAVIOR

It has often been said that Jesus Christ was born to die. His name, Jesus, means Savior. He came to be the Savior. Yet it is evident that He did not provide a salvation during the some thirty-three years of His earthly life. The gospel of salvation is not that Christ lived and taught, but that He died for our sins and rose again. What then was the purpose of His earthly life and ministry? For whom was this ministry performed? What was accomplished by this ministry? What relationship does that ministry have to members of the Body of Christ in this present dispensation? These and other questions we will try to answer in this chapter.

THE PURPOSE OF HIS EARTHLY MINISTRY

There are doubtless numerous reasons for the three years of earthly ministry before going to the Cross to make provision for the salvation of mankind. The Apostle Paul states one reason in Romans 15:8: "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." His earthly ministry was first of all a ministry of confirmation. Contrary to popular thought Jesus did not come with some new teaching, nor was His objective to establish a new religion. Everything He taught was based upon the Old Testament Scripture. He Himself declared: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17).

Another reason is stated in Hebrews 2:17, 18: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." It was essential preparation for one who was to become a high-priest to experience all of the trials, temptations, and weaknesses of those he would represent before God, in order that he might sympathize with and succor them. It might seem that Christ as the Son of God would not have need of such experiences to perfect His ministry as high-priest, but the writer to the Hebrews stresses the fact that His perfect humanity had need of these experiences: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (5:8, 9).

Another reason, closely associated with the reason just given, is based upon the typology of the Passover. The passover lamb was set apart on the tenth day of the month and observed for four days before sacrificing it in order to prove that it was without spot or blemish. Although this is not referred to in the New Testament, it does not seem unreasonable to apply this four day testing period to the earthly ministry of our Lord. In order for Him to be the sacrifice which God could accept it was necessary for Him to be sinless. His sinlessness was proved through His temptation by Satan at the beginning of His ministry and by the subsequent events in His life.

These are not simply reasons for the incarnation, but reasons for a period of ministry after His incarnation and before His sacrificial death. His main purpose was to confirm the promises God had made by the prophets of old, to prove that His humanity was sinless and therefore capable of becoming an acceptable sacrifice for the sins of the world, and to enter into the common experiences of humanity in order to become a merciful and faithful High Priest.

THE RECIPIENTS OF HIS EARTHLY MINISTRY

Referring to Paul's statement again in [Romans 15:8](#) it is to be noticed that Christ was a minister of the circumcision, that is, of the Jewish nation. When Jesus sent out His apostles on their preaching mission He instructed them: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5, 6). When a Gentile made request of Him he replied: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." As far as the record is concerned Jesus ministered to only two Gentiles, .a Roman centurion who had built a synagogue for the Jews, who requested Jesus to grant his request ([Luke 7:1-10](#)), and the Syrophenician woman who had great faith ([Matthew 15:28](#)).

It is inexplicable to those who do not recognize the dispensational principle in Scripture why Jesus would limit His ministry to the Jewish people and even refuse on occasions to minister to Gentiles. But when it is remembered that the Gentile nations had given up God and that God had given them up (see [Romans 1:21-32](#)), and that God was in covenant relation to only one people, the Jewish nation, then the reason for this becomes more apparent. And when it is further realized that God's expressed purpose in the prophetic Word was to bring the Gentile world back to Himself through the instrumentality of the nation of Israel, it becomes crystal clear why Jesus would say: "Let the children (of Israel) first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs (Gentiles)" (Mark 7:27). Christ did not limit His earthly ministry to Israel because He had no love for or plan for reaching the Gentiles. His plan was to reach Israel first and then through the instrumentality of that nation to reach all of the other nations. This is not His plan in this present dispensation, for national Israel has been temporarily cast aside, and instead of the children being filled they are now

empty. Paul speaks of this present dispensation as being the fulness of the Gentiles while Israel is diminished, but he goes on to say that when the fulness of the Gentiles has been completed, God will again turn to Israel and bring in their fulness, and "so all Israel shall be saved" ([Romans 11:12, 15, 23-26](#)).

THE CONTENT OF THE EARTHLY MINISTRY

Matthew 4:23 and 10:7, 8 give the content of Christ's earthly ministry: "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people." "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons: freely ye have received, freely give." John had introduced this ministry of Christ with the message: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3: 2). And Luke tells us that John "came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (3:3). It is of prime importance in considering the earthly ministry of Christ to understand that it was not aimed at the Gentile world but at the covenant nation of Israel. It took place during the dispensation of law ([Galatians 4:4](#)). Its purpose was to call the lost sheep of the house of Israel back into a right relationship to God through the baptism of repentance for the remission of their sins. There is a vast difference between calling a backslidden people back into fellowship with God and in bringing spiritually dead and alienated sinners into a saving relationship with God. As Paul expressed it, Israel was near to God by reason of the covenants of promise, but the Gentiles were far off, having no hope, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise ([Ephesians 2:12](#)). One of the great errors of preaching in the church has been to give to Gentile sinners the message that John and Jesus preached to covenant Israel, thus holding out hope that they would be saved by confessing their sins and submitting to water baptism. It should be noted that there is not one word in the gospel that was preached by John and Jesus of faith in a crucified and risen Savior. Instead, we are told that when Jesus did mention His impending death, "they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken" (Luke 18:34).

Not only was the earthly ministry a message of repentance: it was an announcement that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. The kingdom of heaven is not a kingdom in heaven but a kingdom originating from the heavens and ruling over the earth. Dr. Scofield states:

The phrase, kingdom of heaven (lit. of the heavens), is peculiar to Matthew and signifies the Messianic earth rule of Jesus Christ, the Son of David. It is called the kingdom of the heavens because it is the rule of the heavens over the earth (Matt. 6:10). The phrase is derived from Daniel, where it is defined (Dan. 2:34-36, 44; 7:23-27) as the kingdom which "the

God of heaven" will set up after the destruction by "the stone cut out without hands" of the Gentile world-system.²⁹⁸

Accompanying this message of the kingdom of the heavens was a ministry of physical healing and restoration of physical life, which was in keeping with God's promises for that coming time of millennial blessing. Peter in offering this kingdom to Israel after the death and resurrection of Christ spoke of it as "the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21). The writer of the Hebrew epistle speaks of these miracles of healing as tasting of "the powers of the world to come (literally, of the age to come, that is, the Millennial age)" (ch. 6:4). Since the Millennial kingdom was in view and was being offered to the nation of Israel at Pentecost and for some time thereafter, and since that kingdom will be characterized by deliverance from the physical effects of sin, it must be understood that these miracles were credentials of the apostles, proving both that Jesus was alive from the dead and that His messengers were possessed of power and authority to offer that kingdom to the nation.

THE RELATION OF THE EARTHLY MINISTRY TO THE BODY OF CHRIST

We have already shown that the earthly ministry of Christ had as its objective the fulfilling of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah in His relationship to the chosen nation of Israel. Likewise we have seen that there is no mention of God's purpose to form the Body of Christ until the ministry of the Apostle Paul. It would thus appear that there was nothing in the earthly ministry which was primarily for members of the Body of Christ. The important word here is *primarily*, for there are certain things that all dispensations have in common, and members of the Body of Christ may apply these things in the Gospel records to themselves, just as they may apply such things from the Old Testament scriptures. Everything in the Gospels may be applied to Israel in relationship to the Millennial kingdom, but not everything may be applied to members of the Body. Likewise, everything in the Pauline epistles may be applied to members of the Body, but not everything may be applied to Israel. Many of the moral and spiritual principles contained in the sermon of the mount may be applied to the Body of Christ, but it would be a mistake to teach that meek members of the Body will inherit the earth ([Matt. 5:5](#)). It would surely be a mistake to apply Matthew 8:12 to members of the Body: "But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness." While the principle of being reconciled to one's brother before trying to serve God may be applied to members of the Body ([Matthew 5:23, 24](#)), it would be wrong to tell them to bring sacrifices to the altar. It would be wrong to tell members of the Body to preach, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," and to instruct them to go only to Israel, and to make no provision of food or clothing for themselves, as Jesus taught in Matthew 10. Although the Church of Rome tries to apply Matthew 16:19 and John 20:23 to its

²⁹⁸ *Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1917), p. 996.

priests, Protestants deny that preachers in this dispensation have the power to forgive sins or to retain them, although they usually do so by explaining away the meaning of these passages. It is only by applying the dispensational principle to such Scriptures that the true meaning of them may be maintained and at the same time the distinctions may be seen and understood.

When we come to the last event in the earthly ministry of Christ we are upon somewhat different ground, for the death of Christ is central to all of God's purposes throughout all dispensations. It is to be understood that the only ultimate basis for the forgiveness of sins is to be found in the blood of Christ. This fact was not revealed and preached in all dispensations, but since the death of Christ this fact has been revealed ([Romans 3:25, 26](#)). Hence in all of his epistles Paul has much to say to members of the Body of Christ about His death and resurrection. The Twelve apostles in their preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom prior to the death of Christ never mentioned the death of Christ ([Luke 18:31-34](#)), but this does not mean that salvation in the coming Kingdom on earth is not based upon His death. This was a truth that could hardly be enunciated before His death and which we do find fully explained in the writings of Paul.

The Provision of Salvation

42 THE VARIOUS GOSPEL MESSAGES OF THE BIBLE

Theologians argue in general for what they call the unity of the covenant of grace or the covenant of redemption. They claim that there is only one gospel in the entire Bible. Notice the statements of Dr. Berkhof which are representative of the views of many others:

IT IS ESSENTIALLY THE SAME IN ALL DISPENSATIONS, THOUGH ITS FORM OF ADMINISTRATION CHANGES. This is contradicted by all those who claim that Old Testament saints were saved in another manner than New Testament believers, as for instance, Pelagians and Socinians, who hold that God gave additional help in the example and teachings of Christ; the Roman Catholics, who maintain that the Old Testament saints were in *Limbus Patrum* until Christ's descent into hades; the followers of Coccejus, who assert that Old Testament believers enjoyed only a *paresis* (a passing over) and no *aphesis* (full forgiveness of sins); and present day dispensationalists, who distinguish several different covenants (Scofield mentions 7; Milligan 9), and insist on the necessity of keeping them distinct.

The Bible teaches that there is but a single gospel by which men can be saved. And because the gospel is nothing but the revelation of the covenant of grace, it follows that there is also but one covenant. This gospel was already heard in maternal promise, Gen. 3:15, was preached unto Abraham, Gal. 3:8, and may not be supplanted by any Judaistic gospel, Gal. 1:8, 9.²⁹⁹

It appears that there have been overstatements on both sides of this issue. On the one hand, as does Dr. Berkhof, it is contended dogmatically that there is but one Gospel in the Bible, and on the other hand dispensationalists argue just as dogmatically that there are several gospels in the Bible. The misunderstanding appears to arise largely from the use of the word *gospel*. Dr. Berkhof uses the word gospel as the equivalent of how to be saved. He argues, and rightly so, that no one has been saved by his own works; that salvation in every dispensation has been by God's grace, but he contends that dispensationalists argue for salvation by works for those in a former dispensation because they say there is more than one gospel. This is simply a conclusion drawn by Dr. Berkhof which is contrary to the positive statements of dispensationalists. Practically all dispensationalists believe that salvation in every dispensation has been based upon faith in the revealed Word of God, but since they believe that the Bible presents a progressive revelation they must of necessity contend that men in former generations did not possess the totality of revelation which is contained in the New Testament epistles. Therefore there has been a change from time to time in the content of the message which was the object of faith. As pointed out in the last chapter, the content of the gospel of the kingdom which was preached by the apostles during the earthly ministry of Christ was completely devoid of the teaching that Christ would die for the sins of the world, be buried, and rise again the third day. And yet that is the heart of gospel preaching in this dispensation. And even more evident is the fact that in Old Testament times faith demanded that men bring animal sacrifices, a practice which is expressly forbidden in God's message for today.

The fact that God commanded animal sacrifices and that faith brought the sacrifices which God commanded does not negate the idea that God's basis for saving such people was the grace of God. The whole sacrificial system was a gracious provision apart from which the people would have been destroyed under a dispensation of pure law. The worshipper who laid his hands on the head of the animal and confessed his sin upon that animal and then killed it as a sacrifice, if he understood anything, must have understood that this was God's gracious provision for the forgiveness of his sins (Lev. 1:4, 5; 3:2; 4:4). But this does not mean that the worshipper understood that the animal was a type of the coming Redeemer and that he was actually exercising faith in a crucified and resurrected Savior. The typology of the Old Testament institutions was not made known until the New Testament epistles. God knew and we know today that the death of Christ was the actual basis for salvation in every dispensation (Romans

²⁹⁹ L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941), p. 279.

3:25), even though the worshipper did not understand all that was involved in the counsels of God.

Ryrie confronts the same objection against dispensationalism by quoting from such dispensationalists as Chafer, Scofield, and Pettingill to prove that these men did not teach two ways of salvation for sinners. Chafer is quoted as saying: "The Law was never given as a means of salvation or justification "And Scofield wrote: "It is exceedingly important to observe... that the law is not proposed as a means of life"³⁰⁰

J. C. O'Hair wrote: "No one has ever been saved except on the grounds of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ."³⁰¹

As suggested earlier the problem seems to be concerned with a proper definition of the word *gospel* and its relation to dispensations and to salvation itself. Gospel means simply *good news*, and there are many items of good news in the Bible. The Greek word is *evangelion* and the verb is *evangelizo*. These words are found numerous times in the Septuagint (2 Samuel 4:10; 18:19, 20, 22, 25, 26, 27, 31; 1 Kings 1:42; 2 Kings 7:9; 1 Chronicles 10:9; Isaiah 40:9; 52:7; 61:1; etc.). Most of these pieces of good news have to do with material blessings and have no reference to what we would call spiritual salvation. Thus *evangelion* is not always the equivalent of salvation. To be sure there is the "gospel of salvation" (Ephesians 1:13) which is basic to all of the other messages of God's good news, but not all of God's good news concerns salvation from sin. Some of the good news concerns what God has saved the sinner to, which might be called good news for the saint. Some of the good news concerns a particular program of God, such as the gospel of the kingdom, which is the good news that God is going to establish His kingdom in the earth. Sometimes the gospel is distinguished according to the people to whom it is sent, such as the gospel of the circumcision and the gospel of the uncircumcision ([Galatians 2:7-9](#)). Sometimes the distinction is made as to the messenger to whom the gospel is committed, as when Paul speaks of "my gospel."

It may be debated whether it is best to say that there are several distinct and separate gospels in the Bible, or to say that there are several distinct forms or aspects of the gospel, as does Scofield.³⁰² Since all of God's good news is wrapped up in the death of Christ, there is a sense in which there is but one gospel, but in saying this it is most important to at least make the distinctions which follow.

THE GOSPEL OF GOD

³⁰⁰ Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), pp. 113-116

³⁰¹ J. C. O'Hair, *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ* (Chicago: 1941), p. 97.

³⁰² C. I. Scofield, *Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1917), p. 1343.

This is a very general designation and might be applied to any message of good news which originates with God. It is akin to the expression, the church of God, a term which is used to designate both the Old Testament saints ([Nehemiah 13:1 LXX](#)) and members of the Body of Christ ([1 Cor. 1:2](#)). It is used by Paul six times ([Romans 1:1](#); [15:16](#); [2 Corinthians 11:7](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:2, 8, 9](#)) and once by Peter ([1 Peter 4:17](#)). Only one of these passages is definitive ([Romans 1:1](#)): "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures), concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." There can be no doubt but that Paul means by the gospel of God the message concerning God's Son which was promised throughout the Old Testament scriptures. This is practically equivalent to his statement in [1 Corinthians 15:1-4](#), "... the gospel which I preached unto you ... how that Christ died for our sins *according to the scriptures*; and that he was buried, and that he arose again the third day *according to the scriptures*." This is what we may call *the gospel of salvation* ([Ephesians 1:13](#)) and which is interdispensational in character.

PAUL'S "MY GOSPEL"

This is mentioned next because it stands in contrast in the Roman epistle to the gospel of God which God promised before by His prophets. "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but is now made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" ([Romans 16:25, 26](#)). The prophets in this passage are manifestly not Old Testament prophets, for Paul states that this message was kept secret since the world began and only now (in Paul's lifetime) has it been made manifest. In the exegesis of this passage it may be questioned whether Paul is speaking of two different things, "my gospel," and "the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery," or whether the word "and" has the sense of "even" as the Greek *kai* often has; in which case the passage would read: "according to my gospel, even the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery." In either case Paul's preaching was an advance on the gospel of God, for he preached not only that but the truth of the mystery.

Williams states:

"My Gospel" (v. 25), i.e., the glad tidings concerning the secret revealed to him.

"The preaching of Jesus Christ," i.e., salvation for all nations through Him on the principle of faith-obedience (as opposed to works) as commanded by the everlasting God. So Paul had a double ministry,-that of the Gospel, and that of "My Gospel," i.e. the Gospel of the Mystery.

Thus the epistle begins with the Gospel, always revealed, never hidden, and closes with Paul's Gospel, always hidden, never revealed. This mystery, i.e., secret, is the theme of the epistle to the Ephesians.³⁰³

O'Hair has this comment on Paul's "my Gospel:"

*All of the apostles were preaching 1 Corinthians 15:1 to 4. Paul was not referring to that. When Paul wrote Timothy to be a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, he was not referring to "the gospel of the kingdom," or merely to the gospel of salvation of Ephesians 1:13. No, Paul was referring to the Divine truth designated "the mystery." This truth was not revealed by Christ to the twelve apostles. What they knew of the mystery they first learned from Paul.*³⁰⁴

Commentators who do not recognize the dispensational principle in Scripture see nothing distinctive about Paul's gospel. They are forced to say that the mystery is simply the fact that God would one day save Gentiles as well as Jews, but surely there is nothing hidden or secret about this fact, for the Old Testament is full of predictions about Gentile salvation. And they are forced into another contradiction of saying that the scriptures of the Old Testament prophets make manifest the truth that was hidden from them.

Paul uses this expression in only two other places, [Romans 2:16](#) and [2 Timothy 2:8](#). His expression in Ephesians 6:19, "the mystery of the gospel," is apparently equivalent to his "my gospel," as it includes not only salvation but salvation into the heavenly blessings of the Body of Christ.

THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD

This designation occurs but once ([Acts 20:24](#)). It is another name for the gospel which was committed to Paul. There is grace in the gospel which relates especially to Israel, but God's dealings with Israel are based upon covenant promises with Israel placed as Head over the Gentiles ([Deuteronomy 28:13](#)). In the present dispensation Israel's covenant dealings have been set aside. Israel has fallen and has been cast away as enemies of the gospel ([Romans 11:12, 15, 28](#)). Now God is dealing with an alienated world of both Jews and Gentiles who have absolutely no claim upon God. God's extension of salvation to such a world is completely upon the basis of pure grace. For this reason the gospel for this

³⁰³ George Williams, *The Student's Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, fourth edition, 1949), p. 876.

³⁰⁴ O'Hair, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

dispensation is called the gospel of the grace of God, just as the dispensation is called the dispensation of the grace of God ([Ephesians 3:2](#)).

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

At least ten times Paul calls his gospel "the gospel of Christ" ([Romans 15:19, 29](#); [1 Corinthians 9:12, 18](#); [2 Corinthians 2:12; 9:13; 10:14](#); [Galatians 1:7](#); [Philippians 1:27](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:2](#)). This designation is rather general, pointing to the fact that Christ is the object of faith. It is a term similar to the gospel of God and could be applied to Israel's gospel of the kingdom, since Christ is also the object of faith in that message.

THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

Twice Paul speaks of the gospel of peace ([Romans 10:15](#) and [Ephesians 6:15](#)). Peace is a characteristic of both Paul's gospel and the gospel of the kingdom, and so this title is applied to both in the Scripture. Paul quotes from Isaiah 52:7: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things!" This passage has primary reference to Israel in the millennial kingdom. The Ephesian passage has primary reference to members of the Body of Christ.

THE GOSPEL OF THE UNCIRCUMCISION

This is a term which Paul coined to distinguish his gospel from that which was first committed to the Twelve apostles. Paul mentions this distinction in relating how God had given him a special revelation to go up to Jerusalem in order to communicate to the Twelve apostles the truths concerning that gospel which he was preaching among the Gentiles ([Galatians 2:1-9](#)). Paul insists upon two things in this passage: first, that he did not receive his message from the Twelve but directly by the revelation of Jesus Christ, and second, that the other apostles added nothing in the way of truth to him, but contrariwise he added something to them. The fact should be self-evident that Paul had truth which the Twelve did not have, for why would Paul insist that he had not received his gospel from man if, indeed, he was preaching the same thing as the Twelve, and why would God send him to Jerusalem by special revelation to make known his gospel to the Twelve if they already knew it and were the first to receive it?

THE GOSPEL OF THE CIRCUMCISION

Paul coined this expression to distinguish the gospel which had originally been committed to Peter and the Eleven from his gospel, the gospel of the uncircumcision. Attempts have been made to nullify this distinction by contending that [Galatians 2:7](#) should be translated: "But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel *to* the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel *to* the circumcision was unto Peter," thus making the distinction to be, not in the gospel,

but in the people to whom the gospel is sent. The Revised Standard, the New English, Weymouth, and others so translate this verse. There are at least two objections to this translation. The first is that Paul uses the genitive case for circumcision and uncircumcision. The genitive case "denotes any kind of *dependence on or belonging to*."³⁰⁵ It is the gospel *belonging to* the circumcision and that *belonging to* the uncircumcision. The second objection is that in verse 9, where Paul definitely speaks about *going to* these two groups he uses an entirely different construction: "*eis ta ethne*" and "*eis ten peritomen*." Had he intended to mean *unto* these two groups in verse 7, he would no doubt have used the same expression which he did in verse 9.

The good news belonging to the Circumcision is undoubtedly that which is involved in the Covenant of Circumcision made with Abraham. While it is true that in the present dispensation there is no difference between the circumcision and the uncircumcision as far as any advantage of one over the other is concerned, in the coming dispensation of the kingdom Israel will hold a place of priority over the Gentiles. This fact is inherent in the whole concept of Israel being God's chosen nation. What does this expression mean if all nations are equal before God? During the earthly ministry of Christ when the preaching of this gospel was in effect the message was confined to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Christ plainly stated that the circumcision people must first receive their full blessing before the Gentiles could receive anything, but that was under the circumcision covenant dispensation and not under the present dispensation of the grace of God.

It must be emphasized that the gospel of the circumcision is not another way of being saved. It is rather a different spiritual program based upon a specific set of God's promises made to a particular people. It should be noted that in Genesis 17 where these promises are made that God calls this covenant with His circumcision people an "*everlasting covenant*," and that it involves the promise: "I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." Surely there is no such promise in the gospel which is to be preached in this dispensation.

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

Just as the Gospel of the circumcision goes back to the covenant of circumcision made with Abraham, so the gospel of the kingdom goes back for its foundation to the covenant of the kingdom made with David (2 Samuel 7). And since David and his kingdom were circumcision people and since both his covenant and that made with Abraham will be fulfilled at the same time, namely at the establishment of the millennial kingdom at the second coming of Christ, it may be said that the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of the circumcision

³⁰⁵ G. B. Winer, A Treatise on the Grammar of New Testament Greek (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1882), p. 231.

are for all intents and purposes identical. Peter had committed to him the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of the circumcision, but these were not separate or distinct messages.

The expression, *the gospel of the kingdom*, is found only in Matthew (4:23; 9:35; 24:14), although Mark once speaks of the gospel of the kingdom of God (Mk 1:14). All other references in Matthew, Mark, and Luke are simply to the gospel, without any qualification. As pointed out elsewhere, the kingdom of God which had been promised to Israel was the earthly, Messianic, millennial kingdom. While it is only a part of the kingdom of God, yet as a part, it is the kingdom of God.

Thus the gospel of the kingdom is the good news that Christ will establish His kingdom of righteousness and peace in the world. It is interesting to note that in the context where Christ is answering the question of what would be the sign of His coming and of the end of the age, He pointed out that this gospel of the kingdom would be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then the end shall come (Matthew 24:14), that is, the end of the age, which will be marked by the second coming of Christ after the great tribulation. Since the gospel of the kingdom is not God's message for this dispensation, it is evident that after the close of this dispensation at the rapture of the Body of Christ, this gospel of the kingdom will again be preached in all the world by the Jewish remnant of that day. Anti-dispensationalists ridicule the idea that what the Church has not been able to do in two thousand years in worldwide evangelism, a Jewish remnant will be able to do in a period of seven years. These critics apparently forget that all things are possible with God and that this is to be a miraculous work of God in that day. They also seemingly forget the fact that one man evangelized the known world in one generation (Colossians 1:23). If Paul could accomplish what he did under his circumstances, what might a host of Spirit-filled Israelites accomplish with the communications and travel media available today

THE GOSPEL

The majority of references in the New Testament use the word gospel without any qualifying phrase. It should be self-evident that when the Gospel writers use the word gospel in this manner, they mean the gospel which was then being preached and not a gospel which had not yet been revealed. Likewise when Paul uses gospel in this way he is referring to that gospel which was committed to him for this present dispensation. If in 1916 some one spoke of *the war* without qualification it is evident he had reference to World War I. If another did the same thing in 1940 it would be evident that he meant World War II. The same simple principle of interpretation must be applied to Scripture usage of such terms as the gospel.

43 OLD TESTAMENT TYPES OF CHRIST'S DEATH

DEFINITION

According to Scofield, "A type is a divinely purposed illustration of some truth. It may be: (1) a person ([Rom. 5:14](#)); (2) an event ([1 Cor. 10:11](#)); (g) a thing ([Heb. 10:20](#)); (4) an institution ([Heb. 9:11](#)); (5) a ceremonial ([1 Cor. 5:7](#))."³⁰⁶

As to what constitutes a type Dr. Chafer has this to say:

There must, however, be careful recognition of what makes something a true type. Only that so treated in the Bible can be received as typical beyond all question. Some things only illustrate truth, but do not foreshadow or serve as a typeI Corinthians 10:11, however, is of great import in this connection.³⁰⁷

The Greek word *typos* which means a figure formed by a blow or impression is used 16 times in the New Testament and is translated print, figure, fashion, manner, form, example, ensample, and pattern. Of the sixteen occurrences of the word only the following have reference to typology:

"(Adam) who is the *figure* of him who was to come" (Romans 5:14).

"Now these things were our *examples* (Israel's experience in the wilderness)" (1 Corinthians 10:6).

"Now all these things happened unto them for *ensamples*: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world (ages) are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

"Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he that thou make all things according to the *pattern* shewed to thee in the mount" (Hebrews 8:5).

Actually Adam is the only person who is said to be a type of Christ; Israel's wilderness experiences are said to be types or examples for our behavior in this present dispensation; and the priestly service in the tabernacle is said to be a type of the true heavenly priesthood. However, in the Hebrew 8:5 passage two other words are used, *example* (hupodeigmati) and *shadow* (skia). The first word also occurs in [Hebrews 9:23](#); [James 5:10](#) and [2 Peter 2:6](#). The word for shadow is used in [Colossians 2:17](#) and [Hebrews 10:1](#). Although very few things are

³⁰⁶ C. I. Scofield, *Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1917), p. 4.

³⁰⁷ L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), Vol. VII, pp. 308, 309.

specifically mentioned as types in the New Testament it would seem from the above passages to be legitimate to consider the whole sacrificial system of the Old Testament to be typical of the death of Christ and the Levitical priesthood to be typical of His High-priestly ministry.

Dr. William Moorehead, in his article on "Types" in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, quotes one he calls an old writer: "God in types of the last dispensation was teaching His children their letters. In this dispensation He is teaching them to put the letters together, and they find that the letters, arrange them as they will, spell Christ, and nothing but Christ."

Dr. Moorehead also warns against two extremes:

First, the extravagance of some of the early Fathers, as Origen, Ambrose, Jerome (revived in our time by Andrew Jukes and his imitators). They sought for types, and of course found them, in every incident and event, however trivial, recorded in Scripture. Even the most simple and commonplace circumstance was thought to conceal within itself the most recondite truth. Mystery and mysticism were seen everywhere, in the cords and pins of the tabernacle, in the yield of herds, in the death of one, in the marriage of another, even in the number of fish caught by the disciples on the night the risen Saviour appeared to them-how much some have tried to make of that number, 153! The very serious objection to this method is, that it wrests Scripture out of the sphere of the natural and the historical and locates it in that of the arbitrary and the fanciful; it tends to destroy the validity and trustworthiness of the record.

Second, the undue contraction of the typical element. Professor Moses Stuart expresses this view as follows: "Just so much of the OT is to be accounted typical as the NT affirms to be so, and no more." This opinion assumes that the NT writers have exhausted the types of the OT, while the fact is that those found in the later Scripture are but samples taken from the storehouse where many more are found.³⁰⁸

It should be pointed out that the New Testament writers definitely refer to Old Testament references as typical without using the word *type* to describe them. Melchisedec is a good example of this kind of treatment in Hebrews 7. The writer says that this man was "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually" (vs. 3). There can be no doubt but that Melchisedec is here considered to be a type of Christ, even though the word *type* is not used.

It should further be pointed out that the types were recorded for our instruction, and not for the instruction of those who lived under them. It is commonly

³⁰⁸ Wm. Moorehead, article on Types, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Co., 1915), Vol. V, p. 3029.

assumed that when the Old Testament saint brought his animal sacrifice he understood that the animal prefigured Christ, so that in essence he was saying to God: "I know that this animal blood cannot cleanse me from sin, but in anticipation of the future death of your Son, I bring it as a type of Christ." Paul specifically states that these things were written for our instruction (1 Corinthians 10:11). Patrick Fairbairn in his monumental work, *The Typology of Scripture*, shows that the Scripture speaks of the typical content of the Levitical system as a kind of kindergarten where the first principles or elementary things were being taught, based upon material, easily understood objects ([Hebrews 5:12](#); [Galatians 4:9](#); [Colossians 2:20](#)), and that to conceive of the people of that dispensation understanding all of the deep spiritual truths connected with the death of Christ would be akin to supposing that the kindergartener could understand the subjects taught in the university.³⁰⁹ This same truth is set forth in the Doctrinal Statement of the Dallas Theological Seminary:

We believe that it has always been true that "without faith it is impossible to please" God (Heb. 11:6), and that the principle of faith was prevalent in the lives of all the Old Testament saints. However, we believe that it was historically impossible that they should have had as the conscious object of their faith the incarnate, crucified Son, the Lamb of God (John 1:29), and that it is evident that they did not comprehend as we do that the sacrifices depicted the person and work of Christ. We believe also that they did not understand the redemptive significance of the prophecies or types concerning the sufferings of Christ (1 Peter 1:10-12); therefore, we believe that their faith towards God was manifested in other ways as is shown by the long record in Hebrews 11:1-40. We believe further that their faith thus manifested was counted unto them for righteousness (cf. Rom. 4:3 with Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:5-8; Heb. 11:7).³¹⁰

According to the testimony of Christ the entire Old Testament speaks of Himself either in type, or symbol, or shadow, or prophecy ([John 5:39](#); [Luke 24:27](#)). Here, however, we are concerned only with those types which portray the death of Christ. These may be classified under the following heads:

Types Involving the Shedding of Blood

1. *The Coats of Skin*, [Genesis 3:21](#). It is certain that animals had to be slain in order to provide coats for Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness after they had sinned. This type shows man in his natural condition as a sinner, naked, lacking in righteousness, but clothed with a garment of righteousness provided by God Himself.

³⁰⁹ Patrick Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 5th printing, 1967).

³¹⁰ Bulletin: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1968-69, p. 137.

2. *Abel's Sacrifice*, [Genesis 4:4](#). Since Abel *by faith* offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain ([Hebrews 11:4](#)), it is evident that God had commanded them to offer sacrifices. It is also evident from [Genesis 4:7](#) in God's answer to Cain that the sacrifice was for sin. In this particular experience it would seem that the emphasis is upon being made acceptable to God. Cain, who refused to bring a blood sacrifice, was rejected; Abel was accepted.

3. *Abraham's Sacrifice*, [Genesis 22:12, 13](#). The emphasis in this sacrifice is that of substitution. Abraham in obedience to God's command had taken his son to the mount to offer him as a burnt-sacrifice, and as he was ready to slay his son God showed him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns, which he took and offered *in the stead* of his son. Special mention is made of this event in [Hebrews 11:17, 18](#). While Isaac is not said to be a type of Christ, reference to him as Abraham's only begotten son and the statement that Abraham received him from the dead "in a figure" make it evident that the analogy was in the writer's mind.

4. *The Passover Lamb*, [Exodus 12](#). The fact that Christ was actually crucified at the celebration of the Passover and the further fact that Paul speaks of "Christ our passover being sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7) is sufficient authority for making this a type of Christ. While all of the sacrifices have in them the idea of substitution, the Passover has the further significance of deliverance from sin's death penalty. The sprinkling of the blood of the passover lamb ([Exodus 12:22](#)) speaks of personal appropriation by faith of that blood (1 Peter 1:2). The Passover provided the basis for Israel's redemption from the bondage of Egypt, and as such is the type of Christ's death as a provision for redemption from sin to all who will appropriate it by faith.

5. *The Great Covenant Sacrifice*, [Exodus 24:5-8](#). This sacrifice which brought Israel into relation with God under the Old Covenant is set forth in [Hebrews 9:16-22](#) as a type of the death of Christ in providing the blood of the New Covenant. This was a "once-for-all" sacrifice which never needed to be repeated, but it has been superseded by better blood and the better covenant.

6. *The Four Levitical Offerings*, [Leviticus 1-5](#).

a. *The Burnt Offering*. This was a voluntary offering in which the entire animal was consumed in the fire. It is also called a sweet savour offering. It prefigured Christ offering Himself without spot to God ([Hebrews 9:14](#)). The grand motto of Christ's life was ever: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God" ([Hebrews 10:7](#)).

b. *The Peace Offering*. This is also called a sweet savour offering. It represents that aspect of the death of Christ by which He made peace by the blood of His cross ([Colossians 1:20](#); [Ephesians 2:13-18](#)). Sin produces a condition of active enmity against God which is overcome through the death of Christ. The Peace Offering speaks of the work of reconciliation.

c. and d. *The Sin Offering and the Trespass Offering*. These offerings differed from the previous two in that they were not sweet savour sacrifices, neither were they voluntary in character. They both emphasize the need of expiation even though the sin be one of ignorance. The sin offering views sin from the angle of the guilt which devolves upon the sinner; whereas the trespass offering looks upon the injury which sin produces. Forgiveness seems to be the prominent aspect of these offerings.

It is beyond the scope of this work to take up all of the details of these offerings. The student is referred to such works on typology as Fairbairn's *The Typology of Scripture*, Ada R. Habershon's *The Study of Types*, and C. H. McIntosh's *Notes on Leviticus*.

7. *The Ordinance of the Red Heifer, Numbers 19*. This ordinance called for the burning of a blemishless red heifer "without the camp" (cf. [Hebrews 13:11-13](#)) and the saving of its ashes to be mixed with water, for what is called "a water of separation, a purification for sin" (vs. 9). This water, containing the efficacy of the sacrifice, was to be sprinkled upon those who became ceremonially defiled during the course of their daily lives. Typically, this ordinance points to the continuing efficacy of the blood of Christ to cleanse the believer, not only from the original defilement of sin, but to keep cleansing him in his daily walk. See [1 John 1:7-10](#) and [Hebrews 9:13-14](#).

8. *The Sacrifices of the Day of Atonement, Leviticus 16*. The Day of Atonement was an annual event which involved the whole nation of Israel. Williams comments: "Abel's lamb redeemed one man; the Paschal lamb, one family; the Day of Atonement lamb, one nation; the Lamb of Calvary, the whole world."³¹¹ In a sense the fulfillment of this type is yet future as far as Israel is concerned. On this day the nation was to afflict their souls for the sins of the past year and to mourn and then the High Priest was to take the blood of the sacrifice into the most holy place and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat to make propitiation for their sins. In the type this was done once every year, but in the anti-type Christ has already entered the Most Holy Place with His own blood ([Hebrews 9:12, 24-28](#)) and when He comes forth from that heavenly sanctuary Israel will look upon Him whom they pierced, even as [Zechariah 12:10-13:1](#) describes it.

All of these sacrifices were required to portray fully the meaning and the value of the once for all death of Christ. They were repeated daily and yearly because it was not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins ([Hebrews 10:4](#)). Thus all of the Levitical sacrifices stand in direct contrast to the once for all sacrifice of Christ.

Types of Christ's Death involving Water

³¹¹ George Williams, *The Student's Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, fourth edition, 1949), p. 74.

1. *The Ark*, [1 Peter 3:18-22](#). Just as the eight souls were saved through the judgment of the flood by being in the Ark, so also souls are saved today from God's judgment of sin by being in Christ. The Ark was baptized in the flood as Christ was baptized in death, and Peter says that it is this anti-type baptism into the death of Christ which now saves us.

2. *The Passage through the Red Sea*, [1 Corinthians 10:1, 2](#). The waters of the Red Sea brought judgment and death to the Egyptians. Israel passed through these waters and came out on the other side victorious, just as Christ passed through the billows of God's wrath and came out victorious over death and the grave in resurrection. Deliverance from the penalty and power of sin is emphasized in this experience.

3. *The Passage of Jordan and the Two Memorials*, [Joshua 3 and 4](#). This type is similar to that immediately above, with the emphasis being upon entrance into the blessings of the land, rather than on deliverance from Egypt. One is what we are saved from; the other what we are saved to. The twelve stones which were left buried as a monument in the midst of the river may represent the burial of the nation of Israel, and the twelve stones which were erected in [Gilgal](#) which were taken out of the river may represent the new life of resurrection and power which Israel will have in the Millennial kingdom. Doubtless all of these Old Testament types refer primarily to Israel's future blessings, but since these blessings come through the death and resurrection of Christ, and since all of our blessings in this dispensation come from the same source, there are many spiritual applications which may be made to members of the Body of Christ.

4. *The Tree Cast into the Waters of Marah*, [Exodus 15:23-26](#). Scofield says, "These bitter waters were in the very path of the Lord's leading, and stand for the trials of God's people, which are educatory and not punitive. The 'tree' is the cross ([Gal. 3:13](#)), which became sweet to Christ as the expression of the Father's will ([John 18:11](#)). When our Marah's are so taken we cast the 'tree' into the waters ([Rom. 5:3, 4](#))."³¹²

5. *Jonah*, [Matthew 12:39, 40](#). Jesus Himself made Jonah's experience of three days and three nights in the belly of the whale to be a type of His own stay of three days and nights in the tomb. All else about Jonah is representative of the nation of Israel running away from God, swallowed up in the Gentile nations, and finally brought to a rebirth with the attendant blessing to the Gentiles.

Miscellaneous Types

1. *The Smitten Rock*, [1 Corinthians 10:4](#). Paul definitely states, "And that rock was Christ." It is very significant that God commanded Moses at the first to smite the rock in order that Israel might be provided with life giving waters, apart from

³¹² Scofield, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

which they would have perished, and that later on in a similar situation He told Moses to speak to the rock. But when Moses presumed to smite the rock again God was so displeased that He would not permit Moses to enter the promised land. Any theological system which would have Christ to be resacrificed is likewise displeasing to God.

2. *The Brazen Serpent*, [John 3:14](#). When God sent fiery serpents into the camp of Israel because of their murmuring and the people were dying of their bites, God told Moses to make a serpent of brass and put it on a pole, and that everyone that had been bitten would be healed upon looking upon it ([Numbers 21:8](#)). Brass in Scripture is a symbol of judgment which has been executed, so that the brazen serpent represented sin that had been judged—a fitting symbol of Christ lifted up on the Cross bearing the judgment of sin. The healing and life-restoring power of His death is especially emphasized in this type.

3. *The Rent Veil*, [Hebrews 10:20](#). The veil was a heavy curtain which separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, the inner sanctuary where God dwelt. [Matthew 27:51](#) records the fact that the veil in the temple was rent in twain at the time of Christ's death. The Hebrews passage states that the veil represented the flesh of Christ and that through the rending of that veil a new and living way has been opened into the Most Holy Place. This type emphasizes the access to the very presence of God which has been provided through the death of Christ.

There are doubtless numerous other types and illustrations in the Scripture of the meaning and value of the death of Christ, but these are sufficient to show the student the necessity of carefully studying and comparing all Scripture in order to learn the true meaning of that death.

44 THE VICARIOUS CHARACTER OF CHRIST'S DEATH

Vicarious means "made or performed by substitution." There has been considerable controversy in theological circles of whether Christ died *for* our sins only, or whether He also died *in the stead of* the sinner; whether He died simply *for the benefit of* the sinner, or whether He died *in the place of* the sinner. What is the difference in these two views and why has objection been raised to the latter one?

A policeman may be killed in performing his duty of protecting a citizen. Surely the death of the policeman was for the benefit of the citizen. It may have saved the life of the citizen, but in no sense could it be said that the policeman was the citizen's substitute. Again, one person may pay the fine of another who has offended the law. It was for the benefit of the offender that the fine was paid, but the one who paid it was in no sense a substitute for the offender. He did not take his place and was not judged to be the guilty offender instead of the real

offender. It is thus argued by some that Christ's death was for our benefit but that He in no sense died in our room and stead, as our substitute.

What are some of the objections to the idea of a substitutionary atonement? First and foremost is the objection that such an arrangement would be immoral and unjust. Many modern thinkers have problem enough with the idea of a loving God punishing even those who are guilty, to say nothing of such a God punishing an innocent person in the place of the guilty. How long would we tolerate a judge who, upon finding a man guilty of murder in the first degree, would then search the community to find the man of highest and purest character and forthwith have him put to death as a substitute and turn the real criminal free? So stated, the objection poses a real problem. However, the analogy is not a true one. In the analogy there are three parties: the criminal, the judge, and the innocent citizen or victim. In the Scriptural case there are only two parties: the criminal and the one who is both judge and innocent victim. And at this point we see the necessity for the further Scriptural doctrine of the absolute Deity of Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ is a third party and not the very God against whom the offence has been committed, then the idea of substitution is unethical. For this reason liberal theologians who deny the Deity of Christ must also deny His substitutionary death. But there is not the slightest tinge of the unethical if the Offended One steps down and takes the place of the offender and bears the punishment Himself. There is nothing but the display of infinite mercy and grace. Also in the analogy the third party is represented as being compelled to take the criminal's place. In the Scriptural doctrine Christ voluntarily takes the sinner's place. Thus, the Scriptural doctrine of the substitutionary death of Christ, when properly understood, is freed from the objections raised and is seen to be both ethical and gracious.

It is also objected that if the substitutionary doctrine is true then God is bound to save all mankind, for He would be unjust to demand the punishment of any sinner in the place of whom Christ had died. One answer to this objection is that Christ died only for the elect and that all of the elect will be saved, but since His death was in no sense for the non-elect God is not unjust in condemning and punishing them. This is a neat solution to the problem, but the position here taken is that Christ died for all mankind, but not in the sense that all mankind are automatically saved because of that death. God, who voluntarily took the sinner's place, also had the right to set conditions upon which this death of His would become savingly effective, and He did. He stipulated that only those who believe the gospel will have this vicarious death become effective in their behalf. It is for this reason that we have divided this section on Soteriology into the Provision and the Application of salvation. We believe that it has been provided for all but that it will be applied only to those who believe. A military commander may decree and announce to the enemy that all who lay down their arms and surrender will be saved alive and be given their freedom. Those who believe will surrender, but the unbelievers will fight on until they die. The fact that some will

not meet the conditions in no way makes the commander unjust or his offer invalid.

Another objection is based upon the actual meaning of the preposition *huper* which is used in the New Testament for the death of Christ. This word when used with the genitive means *over, above*, and from this derives the meaning of *for, for one's sake, for one's advantage or benefit*, in the sense of one standing or bending over another whom he is seeking to help or protect. This is the usual word which is used to describe Christ's death, and so it is argued that Christ died for our benefit but not in our stead. Some of the occurrences of this word are as follows:

"This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed *for* you" (Luke 22:20).

"the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give *for* the life of the world" (John 6:51).

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life *for* his friends" (John 15:13).

"Christ died *for* the ungodly... while we were yet sinners, Christ died *for* us" (Romans 5:6, 8).

"He ... delivered him up *for* us all" (Romans 8:32).

"... if one died *for* all, then were all dead" (2 Corinthians 5:14). "being made a curse *for* us" (Galatians 3:13).

"Christ hath given himself *for* us ... Christ also loved the church and gave himself *for* it" (Ephesians 5:2, 25).

"that he by the grace of God should taste death *for* every man" (Hebrews 2:9).

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just *for* the unjust" (1 Peter 3:18).

Now there is no question but that Christ died on our behalf, for our benefit. The question is, does the preposition *huper* limit Christ's death to that aspect only? Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon* gives as the third meaning of *huper*, "*in the place of, instead of, (which is more precisely expressed by anti...)*"³¹³ Trench gives *huper* as a synonym of *anti*. He states: "Now, though some have denied, we must yet accept as certain that *huper* has sometimes this meaning," whereupon he quotes examples from classical writers, although he states that in

³¹³ J. H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: American Book Co., corrected edition, 1889), p. 549.

passages far more numerous *huper* means no more than on behalf of, for the good of. He continues:

It must be admitted to follow from this, that had we in the Scripture only statements to the effect that Christ died *huper emon*, that He tasted death *huper panlos*, it would be impossible to draw from these any irrefragable proof that his death was vicarious, He dying in our stead, and Himself bearing on his Cross our sins and the penalty of our sins; however, we might find it, as no doubt we do, elsewhere (Isai. liii. 4-6). It is only as having other declarations, to the effect that Christ died *anti pollon* (Matt. xx. 28), gave Himself as an anti-lutron (1 Tim. ii.6), and bring those other to the interpretation of these, that we obtain a perfect right to claim such declarations of Christ's death *for us* as also declarations of his death *in our stead*. And in them beyond doubt the preposition *huper* is the rather employed, that it may embrace both these meanings, and express how Christ died at once *for our sakes* (here it touches more nearly on the meaning of *peri*, Matt. xxvi. 28; Mk. xiv. 24; 1 Pet. iii. 18; *dia* also once occurring in this connection, 1 Cor. viii. 11), and *in our stead*; while *anti* would only have expressed the last of these.³¹⁴

We believe that this is a sufficient answer to this lexical objection. On the other hand there are positive proofs from the Scripture of the substitutionary nature of Christ's death. First, the whole sacrificial system of the Old Testament was substitutionary. For example, in the case of the scapegoat we read: "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat... and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited" (Leviticus 16:21, 22). If the death of the type is vicarious (and it could not be stated more plainly), then surely the death of the Anti-type is also vicarious.

Reference has already been made to Matthew 20:28 where Christ stated that He was to give His life a ransom for (*anti*) many. No one contests the fact that *anti* means *in the stead of*. Thus, Christ Himself placed this meaning upon His own death.

One facet of the unique revelation of the gospel which was given to the Apostle Paul is the identification of the believer in the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. [Galatians 2:20](#) states the fact of our co-crucifixion with Christ. [Romans 6:4](#) states the fact of our co-burial with Christ through the baptism into His death., [Colossians 3:1](#) states the fact of our co-resurrection with Christ and [Ephesians 2:6](#) declares that we are co-seated with Christ in the heavenlies. Whatever else this joint-sharing with Christ may mean, it surely involves the idea of a vicarious relationship. The immersionist doctrine which

³¹⁴ R. C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprint, 1948), pp. 311,312.

relates this identification with the ceremony of water baptism has done much to cloud the truth of the joint-relationship of every believer with Christ through the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit. It would seem to teach that only water immersed believers have shared in the burial and resurrection with Christ, as these are the two supposed effects of immersion baptism. This presents a rather strange case for those believers who have not submitted to immersion. They have surely been crucified with Christ and ascended with Christ, for these facts are stated of believers in contexts where baptism is not mentioned. This would mean that non-immersed believers have been put to death and have ascended with Christ without having been buried or raised from the dead. The only way to make the immersionist doctrine consistent is to make immersion essential to salvation; otherwise we are confronted with the problem of some believers having only a partial vicarious relationship with Christ. However, by understanding that the baptism of [Romans 6:3, 4](#) is that of the Spirit, it is seen that the burial and resurrection with Christ are true of all believers, and that the moment one believes all of the value of the vicarious death of Christ becomes the immediate possession of the believer.

In preaching the gospel to the unsaved, one must be careful to present this aspect of the death of Christ clearly. As mentioned earlier, some people suppose that if Christ died as a substitute, all men must automatically be saved. What, then, is the correct message to preach to the unsaved? Should they be told that Christ died as their substitute, or simply that He died for their benefit? Did He die two kinds of death, one for the unsaved and one for the saved? Sir Robert Anderson gives his answer to these questions in his chapter on Substitution in his book, *The Gospel and Its Ministry*. He believes that the answer lies in a proper understanding of the types of Exodus and Leviticus.

Both of these sets of types, those of the Passover and the Great Covenant sacrifice of Exodus, and those of the first five chapters of Leviticus, all find their fulfillment in the one sacrifice of Christ, but they present two different aspects of Christ's death: one which is true for the unsaved, and the other which is true only for the saved. Israel's redemption did not depend upon the Levitical offerings, but upon the Passover in Egypt. The Levitical offerings were for a people who had already been redeemed.

In the case of the Sin Offering in Leviticus the worshipper laid his hands upon the head of the sacrifice and the animal died in the stead of the worshipper. This was substitution. But in the case of the Passover there was no laying on of hands and no substitution. The death of the Passover lamb in and of itself saved no one. Everyone in Egypt, Hebrew as well as Egyptian, was under the death sentence. Simply killing the Passover brought no deliverance. Participation in the benefits of that death depended entirely upon the sprinkling of the victim's blood.

Thus, the Passover was a means by which deliverance might be gained, but until the blood was sprinkled (which answers to exercising faith in Christ) the

sinner had no part in it. The sin offering was substitutional, and the result to the offerer depended immediately and only upon the victim's death. "In both cases the death was *for* the unclean person; but in the latter it was *instead* of him."

Anderson states:

"Bearing sin" is a figurative expression, and the figure is derived from the sin-offering; substitution is essentially characteristic of it. But Scripture never speaks of the death of Christ in its relation to the unbeliever--the unsaved--in language borrowed from the sin-offering.³¹⁵

Thus, Anderson insists that Christ died *for the benefit* of the ungodly (*huper*) and not *in the stead* of the ungodly (*anti*), since *huper* is always used in presenting the gospel to the unsaved. It is only after the sinner has appropriated by faith that death of Christ for him in fulfillment of the Passover type that he can claim the further aspect of Christ's death as typified by the sin-offering. The sinner will never be confused or misunderstand the terms of the gospel if he is told that Christ died for his sins, but if he is told that Christ died as his substitute the sinner may draw unscriptural and misleading conclusions.

45 THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRIST'S DEATH

IMPORTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The importance of the doctrine of the death of Christ may be determined both by the emphasis which the Bible places upon it and by the necessity of it in the Divine scheme of redemption. We have already seen how that the whole of the Old Testament, according to Christ's own testimony, spoke of Him ([John 5:39](#); [Luke 24:26, 27, 44](#)). In the latter passage Christ expounded to His disciples in all the Scriptures the things concerning His death and resurrection, thus indicating that there is a very great emphasis in the prophecies and types of the Old Scriptures upon this aspect of His ministry. No doubt He pointed out many more references to the foreshadowing of His death than any one man since has been able to discern or catalog, and surely more than the samples which we have given in previous chapters on prophecies and types of this event. Peter, who sat through that exposition of the Scripture, later wrote concerning the prophets that the Spirit of Christ testified through them of the sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow ([1 Peter 1:10-11](#)). Thus, if the chief theme of the Old Testament is that of the suffering of Christ and the glory that should follow that event, surely it cannot be denied that the Savior's death is there considered to be of utmost importance.

³¹⁵ Sir Robert Anderson, *The Gospel and Its Ministry* (London: Pickering and Inglis, seventeenth edition), p. 92.

IMPORTANCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

One method of judging importance is to consider the amount of space given to the subject. Thiessen gives the following comparison: "The last three days of our Lord's earthly life occupy about one-fifth of the narratives in the four Gospels. If all the three and a half years of His public ministry had been written out as fully as the last three days, we would have a 'Life of Christ' of some 8,400 pages. Manifestly, the death and resurrection of our Lord were esteemed of supreme importance by the Holy Spirit."³¹⁶ Thiessen also quotes Torrey to the effect that the death of Christ is mentioned directly in the New Testament more than 175 times, which would mean that one out of every 45 verses refers to this theme. This ratio may not appear to be overwhelming, but when one considers the many subjects and themes with which the New Testament deals he will probably conclude that space-wise the death of Christ ranks among the highest in importance.

Another method of judging importance is to consider how basic and vital the subject is. Is it essential or merely an accessory? If we were to ask which is the more important, the engine or the radiator grill of a motor car, the answer would be obvious, even though the advertisement of the car spent most of the space in describing the exterior appearance of the car. Some things are foundational; they are the causes, not the effects; without them there could be no workable system. Thus it is with the death and resurrection of Christ. Apart from that death there could be no peace with God, no gospel of salvation, no hope beyond the grave, no Christian life, no Millennial Kingdom, no eternal life. All of these things are the effects, the results of the death of Christ.

Paul plainly states that the gospel of salvation which he preached was that Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture, that He was buried, and that he arose the third day according to the Scripture. It has already been pointed out that the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom during the earthly ministry of Christ made no mention of His death, simply because His death had not yet transpired, but this does not mean that the Gospel of the Kingdom is not based upon His death. Paul also shows in Romans 3:25 that the basis for the remission of sins in past dispensations was the blood of Christ, even though the patriarchs did not understand it. Any message which claims to be gospel but which omits the necessity of the death of Christ for the forgiveness of sins is a heterodox gospel, against which the anathema of God has been pronounced ([Galatians 1:6-9](#)).

THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS DEATH IN RELATION TO HIS WORK

When we speak of the work which a man has accomplished we usually mean all of the things which he did during his lifetime. When theologians speak of the work of Christ they seldom refer to those things which Jesus did during the three

³¹⁶ Thiessen, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

and one-half years of His public ministry. Rather, they speak of His work as that which He accomplished in His death.

The purpose of the incarnation was that the Son of God might take upon Himself human nature, but the main reason for His assuming a human nature was that He might have a human body which was capable of death and human blood that He might shed for the remission of man's sins. This is clearly the reasoning of [Hebrews 2:9-18](#). There are other reasons for the incarnation but this is the chief reason. If it be true that there can be no forgiveness apart from the shedding of blood, and if it be true that it is not possible that animal blood can take away sin and that the blood of sinful human beings cannot atone for the sins of others, then there could have been no ultimate forgiveness on the part of God apart from the incarnation. The shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sins is repugnant to much of modern theology, but this repugnance serves only to show how unchristian and anti-biblical such theology is.

Therefore, while the incarnation was an essential prelude to the work of Christ, His chief work was that of becoming the Savior and that work was accomplished in His death. He Himself said, as he anticipated the Cross: "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:3), and finally as He gave up the ghost He cried: "It is finished." None of the ethical and spiritual teachings of Jesus, even though perfect and far transcending every philosophy conceived by mankind, has the power to forgive sins or to give eternal life.

IMPORTANCE SEEN IN OTHER WAYS

Besides the fact that the death of Christ is one of the great burdens of Old Testament type and prophecy, that the New Testament devotes so much space to it, that it is the basic ingredient of the gospel, that Biblical theologians have recognized that it comprises the *real* work of Christ, there are other evidences of its importance.

When Moses and Elijah were brought back to commune with the Lord upon the mount of transfiguration, the topic of their conversation was the decease which He was to accomplish in Jerusalem ([Luke 9:31](#)). They might have talked about His miracles, His works of healing, His sermons, and a host of other things, but apparently all of these things receded into the background when compared with His death.

When Jesus revealed the fact that He was going to be put to death at Jerusalem Peter began to rebuke Him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." The fact that the Lord had to use such strong language in rebuking Peter, to the extent of calling him Satan, shows the importance which Christ Himself placed upon His death. It is Satanic to suggest that Jesus need not die, or that anything should deter Him from going to the Cross.

Jesus recognized the fact that His main purpose in coming into the world was to die upon the Cross. He said, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I to this hour And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:27, 32). This verse must be understood in its context. Certain Greeks wanted to see Jesus, but Jesus was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and therefore He did not see them. Instead He sent word that He must first die and then He would draw all men to Him. The "all men" thus means "all without distinction," both Jew and Gentile, and not "all men without exception," which would mean universalism.

As far as the Scripture gives us any insight into heaven it informs us that the song which will be sung there is: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9). It would appear from this that the death of Christ is the chief topic of heaven.

Finally, the death of Christ is important because it had to be accomplished before either the Church, the Body of Christ, or the Millennial Kingdom could be established. The Church was purchased with His blood ([Acts 20:28](#)). Until this price was paid there could be no Church for this dispensation. Likewise, Christ emphasized the fact that according to the Scripture He must first suffer before the glory of His Messianic Kingdom could be brought in ([Luke 24:26](#)). Therefore, apart from His death Scripture would remain unfulfilled and there would be no future for the human race.

46 REDEMPTION TOWARD SIN

Three of the basic doctrines of salvation are Redemption, which looks toward sin; Reconciliation, which looks toward man; and Propitiation, which looks toward God. The three, taken together, constitute the one great doctrine of salvation. The basic principles in these three doctrines apply to all dispensations, although it should be evident that the complete revelation of them did not come until Christ had died, risen again, and ascended to heaven, from whence He revealed these truths.

Redemption is not a distinctly New Testament doctrine. In fact the word *redeem* in its various forms occurs 139 times in the Old Testament and only 22 times in the New. In the Old Testament redemption often has to do with things, but perhaps one of the earliest writings records that Job called God his Redeemer ([Job 19:25](#)). God is said to have redeemed Israel out of Egypt ([Exodus 6:6; 15:13](#)). Although there was under the Mosaic ceremonial system *redemption money* ([Numbers 3:49](#)), Isaiah speaks of the future redemption of Israel, "Ye have sold yourselves for naught; and ye shall be redeemed without money" (Isaiah 52:3), reminding us of Peter's words: "Forasmuch as ye know

that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18, 19). The Psalmist was aware of the impossibility of one man redeeming another man: "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth forever:) that he should still live forever, and not see corruption" (Psalm 49:7-9).

THE KINSMAN-REDEEMER TYPE

This classic type of redemption is found in the book of Ruth. The redemption involved was not of the soul but of a parcel of land. Naomi and her husband and her two sons left Bethlehem because of famine and sojourned in Moab where her husband and sons died. When she returned to Bethlehem, Ruth, a Moabitess, the wife of one of her sons, returned with her. Naomi had lost everything. She lamented: "I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty." But Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, "a mighty man of wealth," by the name of Boaz. It was barley harvest in Israel and Ruth went out into the fields of Boaz to glean that which the harvesters had missed. Boaz became acquainted with Ruth and was very kind to her. Ruth appealed to Boaz as a near kinsman to redeem the land of her deceased father-in-law. He consented to do so, if another man, who was of nearer kin, refused to do so. A part of the bargain was that whoever redeemed the estate must take Ruth to wife to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. The nearest of kin could not do this, so Boaz bought all that had belonged to the father and the two sons and he purchased Ruth to be his wife. There is nothing said about love in the story, but doubtless Boaz must have loved Ruth dearly. Their son, Obed, became the grandfather of the great King David. Now all of this is highly typical of Christ as the great Kinsman Redeemer.

There were several requirements for a redeemer. He must first be a kinsman. Christ, in order to become man's redeemer, had to become man's kinsman. He did this through the incarnation. Next, he had to be wealthy enough to pay the redemption price. As has already been quoted from 1 Peter, Christ's redemption price which He paid was His own precious blood. Further, the nearest of kin had the priority over other kinsman if he was able to redeem. The nearest of kin in Ruth's case no doubt represented the Law which has prior claim on sinners, but the Law cannot redeem. Finally, the one who was able to redeem must be willing to do so. And, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ perfectly met each of these requirements. The story is further typical in that the plot was cast in Bethlehem and culminates in King David.

THE WORDS FOR REDEMPTION

There are four words used for redemption in the New Testament.

1. *Agorazo*: This word comes from the word for marketplace and means to buy in the market. All of the occurrences in the Gospel have to do with buying in this manner. The word is used of spiritual redemption in the following passages:

- a. 1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23: "For ye are bought with a price."
- b. 2 Peter 2:1: "denying the Lord that bought them."
- c. Revelation 5:9: "for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood "
- d. Revelation 14:3, 4: "the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and the Lamb."

2. *Exagorazo*: This word means not only to pay the price but to ransom, to buy out of the market, to recover from the power of another. It is used twice of Christ redeeming or setting men free from the dominion of the Mosaic Law.

- a. Galatians 3:13: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree."
- b. Galatians 4:5: "To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

3. *Lutroo*: This word means to liberate on the payment of a ransom. The verb occurs three times:

- a. Luke 24:21: "But we had trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel."
- b. Titus 2:14: "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."
- c. 1 Peter 1:18: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things... but with the precious blood of Christ."

The noun *lutron* is used twice, Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45: "to give his life a ransom for many." The noun *lutrosis* is used three times:

- (1) Luke 1:68: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and wrought redemption for his people."
- (2) Luke 2:38: "And she . . . spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

(3) Hebrews 9:12: "by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

4. *Apolutrosis*: This word means a releasing effected by payment of ransom. It is used nine times of redemption from sin.

a. Luke 21:28: "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

b. Romans 3:24: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

c. Romans 8:23: "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

d. 1 Corinthians 1:30: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

e. Ephesians 1:7: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

f. Ephesians 1:14: "Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession."

g. Ephesians 4:30: "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

h. Colossians 1:14: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

i. Hebrews 9: 15: "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

From these passages it may be concluded that Scripture presents the condition of man by nature as having come under the dominion and power of sin, a state from which he is powerless to free himself. In order for man to be freed a sufficient ransom price must be paid. Christ paid the needed ransom with His own life blood.

Paul thinks of himself by nature as being carnal, "sold under sin" (Romans 7:14), a slave to sin. Deissmann states "When anybody heard the Greek word *lutron*, 'ransom' in the first century, it was natural for him to think of the purchase money for manumitting slaves. Three documents from Oxyrhynchus relating to manumissions in the years 86, 100 and 91 or 107 A.D. make use of this word."³¹⁷

³¹⁷ Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (New York: Geo. H. Doran Co., 1927), p. 327.

Paul is therefore to be understood as saying that he considered himself to have been a slave of sin who had been manumitted through the ransom which Christ had provided.

TO WHOM WAS THE RANSOM PAID?

It is most important to understand who the master was to whom Paul had been enslaved and to whom Christ paid the ransom price. Some of the early theologians supposed that since Satan was "the strong man" to whom the human race had become enslaved, Christ paid the ransom to him. While we may give the Devil his dues, he is surely not due the ransom price which Christ paid. Scripture nowhere intimates such a transaction, and besides, Satan has no claim upon humanity, even though he has blinded and duped mankind. And further, we cannot imagine God entering into negotiations with the arch-criminal of the universe.

Man by nature is enslaved to sin, but it would be rather vague and meaningless to say that Christ paid the ransom to sin. Man is a slave to sin in the sense that he has acquired a nature of sin, which is at enmity to the law of God, so that all he does or can do is displeasing to God. It is not sin that has been offended and needs to be satisfied, but the Law of God or His righteousness which has been offended. Paul says that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law. Again, Paul says: "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:56, 57). Some people who do not understand Pauline theology on this point suppose that the Apostle is saying that God has done away with His law and that the believer is therefore now under no moral restraints, since there is no law. This, however, is the farthest from Paul's thoughts. He gives a complete elucidation of this truth in Romans 7.

He begins with the principle that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives and that death is the only thing that can set a man free from the law. He illustrates this with the marriage relationship. If the husband dies the wife is freed from the marriage law, so that she is free to remarry, and it goes without saying that the husband, being dead, is also freed from the law. In the illustration Paul likens the believer, not to the woman who was set free, but to the husband who died. But how did we die? Paul says, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law by the body of Christ." When Christ died He satisfied every claim of God's law which man had broken, but His death was vicarious, as we have seen, so that the believer judicially died when Christ's body hung upon the cross. But what is the advantage of being dead? This question is answered by Paul as we continue to quote from vs. 4: "that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit to God." Paul was once married to the law. The claims of the law were met when Paul was put to death in the Person of a Substitute. Now Paul is raised up and given a new life and is married to Christ. In all of this the law has not been slighted, nor

has it been destroyed. God's law still stands in all of its righteousness, but Paul's relationship to it has changed. He is no longer under its dominion and condemnation. He is now married to Christ, and in this union he can bring forth fruit to God which he could not do before when his nature was enmity against God. There are passages, such as [2 Corinthians 3:13](#), which state that the law has been abolished, but this does not mean that God has thrown away all of the holy principles of His nature, of which the law is the expression, but that the believer's relation has been so changed through the death and resurrection of Christ that the Law is no longer his master.

In the doctrine of Redemption the freedom and the liberty of the redeemed one is emphasized. "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1). "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty" (Galatians 5:13). And yet, Paul calls himself a bond-slave of Jesus Christ. How can a bond-slave be a free man? Here, again, Old Testament typology comes to our aid. Exodus 21:1-11 states the law concerning the freeing of slaves. After the slave has been set free, "if (he) shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: then his master shall bring him unto the judges: he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him forever." Chafer says: "Christ will not hold unwilling slaves in bondage." The believer is not bound to make himself a bondsman to Christ. He is free to do it or not to do it. But if he truly loves the Lord Jesus Christ as Paul did, then he will say with the manumitted slave of old, "I will not go out free; I will be a bondsman of Jesus Christ forever."

THE FUTURE ASPECT OF REDEMPTION

In four of the passages quoted above, namely Luke 21:28; Romans 8:23; Ephesians 1:14 and 4:30 the act of redemption is cast into the future. There is a sense in which redemption has been accomplished completely, and another sense in which it awaits a future day for its fulfillment. The ransom price has been completely paid and the believer today has received the redemption of his soul. However, Christ's redemption includes not merely the souls of believers, but the creation itself. This is the theme of the middle portion of Romans 8. "Because the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

This future day of redemption is called the adoption because it is the time when the believers will be manifested with Christ in all of their rights and privileges of sonship, (which is the scriptural meaning of adoption). The adoption is called "the day of redemption" in [Ephesians 4:30](#), and in [Ephesians 1:13, 14](#) we are told that the believer has been sealed with the Holy Spirit as the earnest of his inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. This day of

redemption for members of the Body of Christ will occur at the time of the rapture when Christ comes out of heaven to catch away the members of His Body to meet them in the air.

The other passage which deals with a future redemption is in a different dispensational setting. Luke 21:28 takes place after the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, at the end of the Tribulation period, at the time of Christ's return to the earth to establish His Millennial Kingdom. Peter calls this "the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21). While the millennium will not be the final state when the universe will have been brought into complete subjection under Christ, it will be a time of mighty deliverance from the present bondage of corruption. After the thousand year reign of Christ and the final rebellion of Satan ([Revelation 20:7-10](#)) Christ will subdue the last enemy to be destroyed, which is death ([1 Corinthians 15:26](#)) and the whole creation will be finally delivered from the effects of sin, and Redemption in every sense of the word will be complete.

47 RECONCILIATION TOWARD MAN

THE SCRIPTURES

There are three Hebrew words translated with some form of the word *reconcile*:

1. *Kaphar*: This word means to cover. It is translated atonement 76 times and reconciliation 7 times. The English words atonement (at-one-ment) and reconciliation are identical in meaning, but they are not accurate translations of the Hebrew *kaphar*. Theologians have used the word atonement to describe all that was accomplished through the death of Christ, but the word *kaphar* describes only what animal sacrifices could do, namely, to cover sin; whereas the death of Christ takes away sin. The English word *atonement* occurs but once in the King James Version of the New Testament (Romans 5:11), where it should be translated *reconciliation*. Wherever the word atonement occurs in the Old Testament and in the following seven verses where *kaphar* is translated *reconciliation* the meaning is a covering: [Leviticus 6:30; 8:15; 16:20; Ezekiel 45:15, 17, 20; Daniel 6:24](#).

2. *Chata*: This word is translated reconciliation only once ([2 Chronicles 29:24](#)). In the *Piel* it means to offer as a sin-offering.

3. *Ratsah*: This word also is translated only once as *reconciliation* ([1 Samuel 29:4](#)). It means to be pleased with, to satisfy a debt.

The three New Testament words for reconciliation are all derived from the word *allasso*, which means to change. Since the redemptive doctrine of

reconciliation is based upon these words, all of the verses will be quoted where they are found.

1. *Diallasso*: This word means to change enmity for friendship. It occurs but once (Matthew 5:24), where it has no reference to salvation: "Leave thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be *reconciled* to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

2. *Katallasso*: This word means to change from enmity to friendship and is used of the reconciliation of man to God and of a woman returning to her husband.

a. Romans 5:10, 11: "For if, when we were enemies, we *were reconciled* to God by the death of His Son, much more, *being reconciled*, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the *atonement* (reconciliation).

b. Romans 11:15: "For if the casting away of them (Israelites) be the *reconciling* of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead."

c. 1 Corinthians 7:11: "But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or *be reconciled* to her husband."

d. 2 Corinthians 5:18-20: "And all things are of God, *who hath reconciled* us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of *reconciliation*; to wit, that God was in Christ, *reconciling* the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of *reconciliation*. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech by us: we pray in Christ's stead, *be reconciled* to God."

3. *Apokatallasso*: This is an intensive form meaning to reconcile completely. It is used twice:

a. Ephesians 2:16: "And that he *might reconcile* both (Jew and Gentile) unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."

b. Colossians 1:20, 21: "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him *to reconcile* all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now *hath he reconciled*."

There is one other reference in the King James where reconciliation occurs ([Hebrews 2:17](#)) but the word there is propitiation and will be considered in the next chapter.

THE DIRECTION OF RECONCILIATION

Direction refers to the party being reconciled: man, or God, or both. There appears to be a divergence of opinion among theologians on this point. Berkhof, for example, states:

"If a man does wrong and renders satisfaction, this satisfaction is intended to influence the person wronged and not the offending party. In the case under consideration it means that the atonement was intended to propitiate God and to reconcile Him to the sinner And even when we speak of the sinner as being reconciled, this must be understood as something that is secondary."³¹⁸

Strong says: "Meyer, on this last passage (Romans 5:10), says that Christ's death does not remove man's wrath toward God [this is not the work of Christ, but of the Holy Spirit]. The offender reconciles the person offended, not himself."³¹⁹

On the other hand, Chafer asserts:

The two aspects of reconciliation are best disclosed in 2 Corinthians 5:19-20. In verse 19 it is declared that the world (kosmos, which term is never by any stretch of exegesis made to represent the elect who are saved out of it) is reconciled to God. This vital passage presents the truth that, in and through the death of Christ, God was *changing completely* the position of the world in its relation to Himself. The Bible never asserts that God is reconciled. If it be supposed that God is represented as having changed completely His own attitude toward the world because of Christ's death, it will be remembered that it is His righteousness which is involved. Before the death of Christ His righteousness demanded its required judgments; but after the death of Christ that same righteousness is free to save the lost. His righteousness is thus not changed nor does it ever act otherwise than in perfect equity. Thus God who sees the world changed completely in its relation to Himself by the death of Christ, is not Himself reconciled or changed.³²⁰

The confusion on this point is caused by a failure to distinguish between propitiation and reconciliation. Berkhof seems to use these two words as synonyms. He speaks of the offending party rendering satisfaction as rendering reconciliation, but the rendering of satisfaction is propitiation. And besides, if the primary idea in this doctrine is reconciling God to the sinner and if it is only in a secondary sense that we can speak of the sinner being reconciled to God, is it not strange that the Scripture never states the primary idea but only the

³¹⁸ L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941), p. 373.

³¹⁹ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1907), p. 719.

³²⁰ L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), Vol. III, pp. 91, 92.

secondary, namely, that the sinner is reconciled to God. We agree with Chafer that we should place the meaning upon reconciliation which the Scripture does, that the sinner has been reconciled to God and not that God has been reconciled to the sinner.

THE TWO ASPECTS OF RECONCILIATION

1. *One-way Reconciliation*: We have chosen this term to describe the work which Christ has done in order to change the relationship of the world to God. This might be described simply as the removing of all barriers which stood in the way of a righteous God's granting salvation to sinners. Or it might be called simply the provision of salvation. This aspect of reconciliation is not to be equated with personal salvation. Christ reconciled the world to God, regardless of whether anyone in the world receives that reconciliation. The fact that the world has been reconciled does not mean that the world has been saved.

As far as God is concerned He has done nothing against man, so that He needs to do nothing to set Himself right with man. Man is the offender and is the one that needs to do something to satisfy the righteousness of God. But man as a sinner is unable to satisfy justice, except it be to suffer the eternal and just condemnation of sin. It is here that Christ steps into the picture. Paul says that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." The sinless man, Christ Jesus, was able to do what no other man could do. He suffered the eternal consequences of sin and perfectly satisfied the righteous claims of God against the sinner. This work of Christ completely changed the status of the world with God. It did not save the world but it removed every obstacle which otherwise would have made it impossible for the love of God to save sinners whom the justice of God must, condemn. The case is analogous to a man who would woo back to himself an unfaithful wife. He takes the blame upon himself and makes satisfaction for every wrong she has committed. The wife in this act is not thereby automatically restored, but the husband has effected a one-sided reconciliation so that nothing now stands in the way of her being received back into a congenial relationship. Whether the reconciliation will become two-sided and actual depends upon her acceptance of the provision which has been made.

If this view of 2 Corinthians 5:19 is not accepted, then it would appear that there are only two alternatives. In either case the reconciliation would be tantamount to salvation. In this case we would have to conclude either that the whole world being reconciled is saved, which is universal reconciliation, or else the world means only the elect. But as Chafer has been quoted: "the world... is never by any stretch of exegesis made to represent the elect who are saved out of it." Therefore, if it be admitted that even one person will finally be eternally lost, the explanation here given of this passage must be accepted as true.

2. *Two-way Reconciliation*: By this expression is meant that the two alienated parties are actually brought together in a complete reconciliation. In [2 Corinthians](#)

[5:20](#) Paul beseeches men to be reconciled to God. If the death of Christ in and of itself effected a complete reconciliation, where would there be any place for preachers to beseech men to become reconciled? The very fact that this is the burden of the evangelist's message is proof reconciliation is not necessarily the equivalent of salvation. Saved people are reconciled in a way in which the world is not reconciled. The saved ones have accepted God's provision for reconciliation and they have peace with God.

Romans 5:11 brings out this same truth. Here Paul speaks of "receiving the reconciliation;" hence, reconciliation is something that God has provided, but which man must receive in order to benefit by it.

THE DISPENSATIONAL ASPECT OF RECONCILIATION

As we have seen, reconciliation is not something which God has provided simply for Israel or for the elect: He has provided it for the whole race. But in former dispensations God had His dealings exclusively with His elect nation, Israel. Even under the ministry of the Twelve, after the death and resurrection of Christ, God still dealt exclusively with Israel for a time and then with Gentiles through Israel, although only one instance of this is given in the book of Acts (ch. 10). But with Israel's rejection of the gospel of the Kingdom and their subsequent casting away, God raised up Paul and gave to him the ministry of reconciliation. The fall of Israel spiritually was in this sense the cause for the ministry of reconciliation. For this reason Paul states: "For if the casting away of them (Israel) be (result in) the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" (Romans 11:15).

In order that there be a reconciliation of the world, there had to be an alienation of the world first. And while it is true that both Jews and Gentiles were sinners by nature, yet it is not true that Israel was alienated from God as were the Gentiles. [Romans 1:21-32](#) gives the story of the alienation of the Gentiles. However, Israel was God's chosen nation and was near to God by reason of the covenants ([Ephesians 2:12, 17](#)). But with the casting away of Israel at the beginning of Paul's ministry, Jew and Gentile alike were alienated, and although the work was accomplished through the cross, it was only at this point that God could announce the ministry of reconciliation for the world.

In this connection it is interesting to note that in the context of Romans 5 Paul goes all the way back to Adam as the natural head of the whole human race to show how sin and death have passed to every man. And then he shows how Christ, the anti-Type of Adam, as the Head of a new race, has brought reconciliation to the whole world. There is a real sense, of course, in which salvation in any dispensation results in a reconciliation of the sinner with God, just as God has displayed His grace in every dispensation, but in a unique sense there is this ministry of reconciliation which involves the whole world and there is

the dispensation of the grace of God that lays aside every barrier-ethnic, cultural, racial, and anything else which would make a distinction.

UNIVERSAL RECONCILIATION

The doctrine of Universal Reconciliation is a form of Universalism, the teaching that all intelligent beings will finally be saved. Universalism bases its claims, not upon Scripture, but simply upon the belief that God is too loving and kind to punish sinners in hell, and that He will therefore take everyone to heaven and, what is usually held, that He will do this apart from any provision which has been made by the death of Christ. Universal Reconciliationism, on the other hand, holds to the necessity of the death of Christ, claiming that it was in the design of that death to save every fallen being, whether man or angel. This latter doctrine is usually associated with one particular religious sect which bases its teaching upon what is called the Concordant Version of the Scriptures, edited by Mr. A. E. Knoch. This version renders Colossians 1:20: "through Him to reconcile the universe to him (making peace through the blood of His cross) through Him, whether on the earth or in the heaven." The Greek expression *ta panta* (meaning *the all*) is here rendered *universe*, hence *universal reconciliation*.

There is, first of all, the question of whether *ta panta* means absolutely the entire universe of all created beings and things. The expression occurs some 32 times in the New Testament and only in 10 of these does Mr. Knoch render it the universe ([Ephesians 1:10](#), [10](#); [3:9](#); [Philippians 3:21](#); [Colossians 1:16](#), [16](#), [17](#), [20](#); [Hebrews 1:3](#); and [Revelation 4:11](#)). Obviously in the following passages it would be impossible to make *ta panta* to mean the universe:

Acts 17:25: "He giveth to all life and breath, and *all things* (the universe)."

Romans 8:32: "How shall he not with him freely give us *all things* (the universe)."

1 Corinthians 9:22: "I am made *all things* (the universe) to all men."

2 Corinthians 12:19: "but we do *all things* (the universe), dearly beloved, for your edifying."

Philippians 3:8: "for whom I have suffered the loss of *all things* (the universe)."

Colossians 3:8: "But now ye also put off *all these* (the universe)."

Revelation 5:13: "such as are in the sea, and *all* (the universe) that are in them."

Ta panta may refer to the universe but the context usually indicates exceptions, even in a passage such as Colossians 1:16: "all things were created

by him." God and Christ are in the universe, but they were not created by Christ. Paul did not suffer the loss of the universe, for he never possessed it. We are not to put off the universe, but only those things mentioned in the context. And surely the universe is not in the sea.

It is argued, however, that the context of Colossians 1:20 includes all things that are in heaven and that are in the earth, and that therefore we must make the reconciliation coequal with the creation. Vincent, for example, states:

All things (*ta panta*). Must be taken in the same sense as in vv. 16, 17,18, *the whole universe*, material and spiritual.

And in a footnote he continues:

Paul's declarations elsewhere as to the ultimate fate of evil men and angels, must certainly be allowed their full weight; yet such passages as this and Eph. i. 10, seem to point to a larger purpose of God in redemption than is commonly conceived.³²¹

On the other hand, Paul elsewhere includes another sphere in the universe besides the things in heaven and in earth: namely, *the things under the earth*, (Philippians 2:10). Undoubtedly, he places in this category the world of the unsaved which, although unsaved, will one day bow the knee and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God. Since Paul limits the reconciliation ultimately to things in heaven and in earth in Colossians 1:20, it is evident that he does not include the things under the earth.

Finally Universal Reconciliationists make the mistake of equating reconciliation with personal salvation. As we have already seen, God has reconciled the world to Himself, but the world is not thereby saved. The world must receive by faith the reconciliation which Christ has effected before it can be saved. Christ was once asked: "Lord, are there few that be saved?" Surely if our Lord had known that all would ultimately be saved He would have said so, but instead He warned His questioner to enter in at the strait gate before the door is shut and before the Lord says to those on the outside, "Depart from me; I know not whence ye are."

Whereas reconciliation apparently applies to the angelic realm, salvation is expressly limited to the human realm. In order to effect a salvation for mankind it was necessary for the Son of God to take upon himself the nature of man. To save fallen angels He must have taken upon Himself the nature of angels, but the Scripture expressly states: "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham" (Hebrews 2:16). There is not the slightest hint in Scripture of a final restoration and salvation for the Devil and

³²¹ Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), Vol. III, p. 475.

his angels who are to be cast into the lake of fire and to be tormented forever and ever.

Bishop Lightfoot comments on *ta panta*:

The whole universe of things, material as well as spiritual, shall be restored to harmony with God. How far this restoration of universal nature may be subjective, as involved in the changed perceptions of man thus brought into harmony with God, and how far it may have an objective and independent existence, it were vain to speculate.³²²

Chafer states:

The phrase, "reconcile all things," significantly refers to the wider classification of *things* and, in so far as it may involve created beings—fallen angels and unregenerate men—they are, as in Philippians 2:10, 11, returned to the divine authority. This restoration of divine authority by Christ is presented in 1 Corinthians 15:25-28. The rebellion and anarchy of the universe will be put down both by the judgment of the nations (cf. Ps. 2:8, 9; Matt. 25:31-46) and by the millennial reign of Christ (1 Cor. 15:25-28). The passage in Acts 3:21, "Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began," must be limited to the things spoken by the prophets, which things have to do with Israel's future. However, were these Scriptures which assert a restored divine authority to be interpreted as insuring the salvation of all beings in heaven and earth, the immense portion of the Word of God which so positively declares the eternal character of man's lost estate would be contradicted.³²³

We conclude, therefore, that the reconciliation of all things in heaven and earth is the objective reconciliation accomplished by Christ, a *reuniting* of that which had become alienated and separated from God, a changing of the position of a world under the just condemnation of God to one in which God may deal in kindness and mercy, and ultimately the bringing into harmony and subjection the entire creation to God. We may hope with Vincent that there is a larger purpose of God in redemption than is commonly conceived, but we are shut up to that which God has revealed in His Word and there is nothing said about the effects of Christ's work in behalf of the angelic realm as far as salvation is concerned.

³²² J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistles of St. Paul: Colossians and Philemon* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1890), p. 158.

³²³ Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 423.

48 PROPITIATION TOWARD GOD

The English word *propitiation* comes from the Latin, meaning to render favorable, appease. The Dictionary gives the following synonyms: atonement, expiation, reconciliation, satisfaction, with the following distinctions:

Atonement, originally denoting *reconciliation*, or the bringing into agreement of those who have been estranged, is now chiefly used, as in theology, in the sense of some offering, sacrifice, or suffering sufficient to win forgiveness or make up for an offense. *Expiation* is the enduring of the full penalty of a wrong or crime. *Propitiation* is an offering, action, or sacrifice that makes the governing power propitious toward the offender. *Satisfaction* denotes the rendering a full legal equivalent for the wrong done. *Propitiation* appeases the lawgiver; satisfaction meets the requirements of the law.³²⁴

In the Authorized Version the word *propitiation* occurs but three times: Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10. It is a translation in the first passage of *hilasterion*, and in the other two of *hilasmos*. *Hilasterion* is used in Hebrews 9:5 to describe the mercy-seat which covered the ark and upon which blood was sprinkled once a year on the day of atonement. The verb form, *hilaskomai*, occurs twice, once in Luke 18:13 where the publican prayed: "God, *be merciful* (propitiated) to me the sinner," and again in Hebrews 2:17: "*to make reconciliation* for the sins of the people."

To understand Scriptural propitiation one must understand the typology of the tabernacle, since the Holy Spirit has identified this word with the mercy-seat. The mercy-seat was the lid or cover to the ark, made of solid gold, with the figure of a cherub standing at each end looking down upon the mercy-seat. The ark contained the two tables of the Law, the Ten Commandments. The Hebrew word for the mercy-seat was *kapporeth* or covering, from the same root that is translated *atonement* throughout the Old Testament. The mercy-seat was not only a cover for the ark; it also covered the contents of the ark, the Law of God. The cherubim are first seen in Scripture guarding the tree of life in the garden of Eden after Adam and Eve had sinned and had been driven out of the garden. Gold is usually taken to be a symbol of the righteousness of God. Putting all of these things together we see the guardians of God's righteousness looking down upon God's righteous Law. But that Law has been broken by God's people, Israel; the consequences of which merit the judgment of God. But God in mercy intervenes and provides a sacrifice, the blood of which when sprinkled upon the golden lid of the ark transforms it into a mercy seat. Now as the cherubim look down upon the broken Law they see the blood interposed which has completely

³²⁴ *Practical Standard Dictionary* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1927), p. 912.

satisfied the righteousness of God. God has been propitiated and now He is free to deal in mercy with the one who merited judgment.

Hence, Paul can declare:

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3: 24-26).

The mercy-seat was the place where God could meet with His reconciled child. God said in Exodus 25:22: "There will I meet with thee, and will commune with thee, from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim." During the Old Testament dispensation only the high-priest could thus commune with God as the representative of the whole nation, and that only once a year. But now Christ has opened up a new and living way into the holiest by His blood (see [Hebrews 9:6-12; 10:19-22](#)), so that the individual worshipper may now come with boldness into the very presence of God, there to meet and commune with Him. This is what is meant in Hebrews 4:16: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." The throne of righteousness has become a throne of grace; the seat of justice has been transformed into a mercy-seat. And Jesus Christ is set forth as that Mercy-seat. He is the *Hilasterion* and the *Hilasmos*.

One is struck with the great contrast between the Scriptural view of propitiation and that presented by religions of the world. The religion of the natural man supposes that God is angry with the sinner and that the sinner must do something to appease God, so that God will be favorably disposed toward him. The Bible presents an altogether different kind of God. We are told that while we were yet sinners God loved us and Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). Although man has alienated himself from God, and although God cannot look upon sin without judging it, God needed not anything to be done to win His favor. He Himself not only loved the sinner, but He gave Himself as a satisfaction for man's sins, and now, instead of asking man to do something to win His favor, He is beseeching man to be reconciled to God through the work that Christ has already done.

John states that this propitiation is not only for the sins of the believers, or the elect, but also for the whole world. "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). The question of whether Christ died for all men or only for the elect will be discussed fully in a future chapter.

The other reference in John's epistle to propitiation is in 4:10: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." This verse reinforces the statement above that salvation, of which propitiation is but a part, originated with God.

The publican's prayer in [Luke 18:13](#) has been much misunderstood. It is a favorite verse with many evangelists who have their new converts pray: "God be merciful to me a sinner, and save me, for Jesus' sake." As noted earlier, the word for *be merciful* is be propitiated. While it is understood that we have every right to ask God to be merciful to us in the everyday events of life, does the sinner have the right to ask God to be merciful in the context of the publican's prayer? Should a sinner ask God to be propitiated to him? Dispensationally, this was a proper prayer for the publican, who brought his animal sacrifice and prayed that God would accept his sacrifice as a propitiation for his sins, but since that time God has provided a complete and perfect propitiation. There is no need now to ask God to be propitious; He already is. All the sinner needs to do is to accept the provision God has made. One might as well pray that God would send His Son to die for our sins as to pray the publican's prayer today.

We conclude with a quotation from William Owen Carver:

The basal idea in Heb terms is that of covering what is offensive, so restoring friendship, or causing to be kindly disposed. The Gr terms lack the physical reference to covering but introduce the idea of friendliness where antagonism would be natural; hence graciousness. Naturally, therefore, the idea of expiation entered into the concept. It is esp. to be noted that all provisions for this friendly relation as between God and offending man find their initiation and provision in God and are under His direction, but involve the active response of man. All heathen and unworthy conceptions are removed from the Christian notion of propitiation by the fact that God Himself proposed, or "set forth," Christ as the "mercy-seat," and that this is the supreme expression of ultimate love. God had all the while been merciful, friendly, "passing over" man's sins with no apparently adequate, or just, ground for doing so. Now in the blood of Christ sin is condemned and expiated, and God is able to establish and maintain His character for righteousness, while He continues and extends His dealing in gracious love with sinners who exercise faith in Jesus. The propitiation originates with God, not to appease Himself, but to justify Himself in His uniform kindness to men deserving harshness.³²⁵

³²⁵ William Owen Carver, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Co., 1915), Vol. IV, p. 2467.

49 DEFECTIVE THEORIES OF CHRIST'S DEATH

The various theories which have been formulated to explain the meaning of Christ's death may be classified under two heads: 1. Those that interpret His death as satisfying a principle within the Divine nature, and 2. Those that see no need of such satisfaction. Needless to say, the view here taken which has already been set forth, is that the death of Christ was necessary in order to satisfy the demands of God's justice and holiness and that this is what is meant by propitiation. The attitude which one holds towards sin and its punishment will no doubt color the interpretation placed upon the death of Christ. One who holds a very light view of sin or who believes that since God permitted sin He, and not man, is responsible for it, will see little if any need for the death of Christ. Those who feel that God is free to forgive sin without any satisfaction being rendered to Divine justice are prone to look upon Christ's death either as a great tragedy or as an example to follow in the fight for right or as an event which God permitted in order to show man how sinful he is and thereby to lead him to repentance.

THE COMMERCIAL THEORY

This theory was first promulgated by Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, in the eleventh century. It is believed that the exaggerated ideas respecting the authority of popes and emperors in those days, when the highest offense known to law was the dishonor done to their majesty, had a definite influence in shaping Anselm's views. He held that sin violates the honor and majesty of God and that God's honor demands that sin be punished. His view is called the Commercial Theory because it places a disproportionate weight upon those passages which represent the death of Christ under the analogy of a commercial transaction as the payment of a debt or of a ransom. Strong calls it also the *Criminal Theory*. Fisher states:

Anselm's view is that a debt is due to God, that amends must be made for the dishonor to Him. This satisfaction is not said to be the vicarious endurance of the penalty of sin. No stress is laid on the sufferings of Christ. It is not His passive obedience that satisfies. Nor is it the active obedience of Christ, *simply considered*. It is the supererogatory gift of His life. It was an act of obedience, but a supererogatory act of obedience. Therein lies its merit, its moral value, its capacity to procure forgiveness for the ill-deserving.³²⁶

It is interesting to understand how Anselm thought this gift of Christ's life could accrue to the advantage of the sinner. He believed that it was necessary that God should reward Christ for making such a gift, but Christ by virtue of His Deity already possesses all things and hence He could not receive anything additional. He therefore gives His reward to those He came to save as a work of

³²⁶ George Fisher, *History of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), p. 221.

supererogation, that is, as a meritorious act in excess of the demands of duty. The Roman Catholic doctrine of the treasury of merits is based upon the supposed works of supererogation both on the part of Christ and of the saints.

Thiessen states that Anselm's theory is regarded by many conservatives as the true view.³²⁷ However, we are quite sure that he did not mean that many conservative Protestant scholars accept the whole of Anselm's theory, but rather that they regard the death of Christ mainly as a payment for the debt of sin. Although Anselm's theory included some unscriptural ideas and speculations, such as the notion that the number of the elect must equal the number of the fallen angels, he was correct in recognizing that there was something in the very nature of God that needed to be satisfied and that it was satisfied by the death of Christ. Buswell says: "We are thankful to Anselm, therefore, for enunciating the principle that, if any sinner is to be saved, there must be, by ontological necessity, a full satisfaction of the righteous justice of the very character of God Himself."³²⁸

THE GOVERNMENTAL THEORY

Hugo Grotius, a Dutch theologian of the seventeenth century, originated this theory. Thiessen quotes Miley to show that this is the view taken by Wesleyan soteriology, which excludes the satisfaction theory and requires the governmental as the only theory consistent with itself.³²⁹ It is called *governmental* because it supposes that God's government of the universe cannot be maintained unless when pardoning a sinner He exhibits His high regard to His law, which He did when He accepted the sufferings of Christ as a substitute for the penalty of the broken law. Since Grotius did not believe that there was any principle within the divine nature which needed to be satisfied before God could justify the sinner, it may be asked, Why could God not have saved the sinner entirely apart from the death of Christ? The answer, according to this theory, is given by Berkhof: "He had to reveal in some way the inviolable nature of the law and His holy displeasure against sin, in order that he, the moral Ruler of the universe, might be able to maintain His moral government."³³⁰

No one will deny that there is an element of truth in this theory. The death of Christ does show God's hatred of sin, and it no doubt does secure the interests of divine government, but these are only subordinate elements. It does make the death of Christ to be a kind of satisfaction, not to any principle within the Divine nature, but merely a satisfaction to the necessities of government. It seeks to uphold the law of God, but it errs in making it to be, not an expression of God's nature, but an expression of God's arbitrary will. Thus the penalty for breaking

³²⁷ Henry C. Thiessen, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), p. 319.

³²⁸ James Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), Vol. II, p. 87.

³²⁹ Thiessen, *op. cit.*, p. 318.

³³⁰ L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941), p. 389.

the law is not to satisfy justice but merely to deter man from further breaking of the law. And herein is one of the basic errors of the theory. It teaches that Christ's death was *a substitute for the penalty*, and not, as orthodox theologians have held, *an equivalent substituted penalty*. Grotius held that the death of Christ was a "penal example" and not the penalty itself. It was not the actual punishment for sin, but only a symbol of it. It is as though a man had evaded taxes of a million dollars and the government accepted a token payment of a thousand dollars from a friend as a settlement. The thousand dollars was a substitute for the one million; it was not an equivalent substituted penalty. An equivalent substituted penalty might have been the turning over of real estate worth a million dollars or the giving to the government anything of equivalent value.

It is evident that Christ's sufferings for the sin of the world were not identical in kind to those of sinners. The unsaved are not to be punished by being nailed to a cross or by having their side pierced with a spear. The unsaved will be punished by being cast into the lake of fire and that punishment will continue forever, but Christ was not cast into the lake of fire and His sufferings were of comparatively brief duration. But the Scripture surely presents those sufferings as being equivalent to the punishment due for the sins of the world. The demands of God's holy law were fully met by that death. Hence, Christ suffered an equivalent substituted penalty. How He could do this is seen primarily in the dignity of His person as the infinite Son of God. There would be no comparison in the suffering of a drunken vagrant who had been in jail a hundred times before being incarcerated for thirty days, and that of the most virtuous citizen enduring the same sentence. And what of His absolute purity and sinlessness as He was hanging in shame and nakedness before the jeering multitudes, being made sin for us? Not only was the punishment Christ bore beyond comprehension because of the dignity of His person, but also because of the sensitivity of His character to sin. A grain of sand in one's shoe may cause some discomfort, but what is it compared with the suffering produced by that same grain of sand in the eye? Because of who He was He could and did bear in those few hours on the Cross all of the punishment due a world of sinners in the lake of fire for ever.

The Governmental Theory has other defects also. It fails to explain why God did not send Christ to die in Adam's generation, if the purpose of His death was to deter man from sinning as he looked upon this exhibition of the execution of the wrath of God upon sin. In what way could the value of Christ's death be retroactive to the millions who lived during the centuries before His coming, according to this theory? Also, if God could accept a substitute or token penalty for the purpose of displaying His displeasure with sin, He could just as well, or better, have selected a guilty person who deserved to be punished, rather than using His own sinless and innocent Son. Buswell states:

The basic fallacy of the governmental view is, it seems to me, failure to recognize the logical implications of the holiness of our God. With this

goes a failure to realize that the punishment of an innocent person cannot in any way maintain even "public justice," to say nothing of "divine justice." It is true that the forces of the law sometimes "make an example" in punishing one, or a few, offenders, but such an "example" is an admission of the inability of the law to apprehend the other offenders. Furthermore it is not an example," unless the party or parties punished are themselves offenders, and thus representative of those whom the law is unable to apprehend.³³¹

THE MORAL INFLUENCE THEORY

This theory in some respects is similar to the Governmental view. Buswell associates the names of Lelius and Faustus Socinus of the sixteenth century with this theory.³³² Strong connects it with the views of Bushnell in America; Roberson, Maurice, Campbell, and Young in Great Britain; and Schleiermacher and Ritschl in Germany.³³³ Hodge says there are three forms of the theory: (1) The view that the teachings of Christ are the means of salvation rather than His death, (2) The view that Christ's death saves us, not on the basis of sacrifice but of martyrdom. His death gives assurance that what He taught of the love of God, forgiveness, etc., were true. (3) The view that the self-sacrificing love of Christ exerts a moral influence upon men which causes them to repent and live holy lives.³³⁴ This latter view has also been called the Love of God theory. It is the one associated with the views of Bushnell and is the view generally meant by the Moral influence theory.

As an example of this teaching, Thiessen quotes F. W. Robertson:

Let no man say that Christ bore the wrath of God. Let no man say that God was angry with His Son. We are sometimes told of a mysterious anguish which Christ endured, the consequences of divine wrath, the sufferings of a heart laden with the conscience of the world's transgressions, which He was bearing as if they were His own sins. Do not add to the Bible what is not in the Bible. The Redeemer's conscience was not bewildered to feel *that* His own which was *not* His own. He suffered no wrath of God Christ came into collision with the world's evil, and He bore the penalty of that daring. He approached the whirling wheel, and was torn in pieces. He is the law which governs the conflict with evil.³³⁵

In other words, according to this view Christ did not suffer *for* our sins as the Scripture plainly teaches, but He suffered *in* and *with* our sins. It is somewhat analogous to that of a man who permits himself to be inoculated with a fatal

³³¹ Buswell, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 95, 96.

³³² *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 93.

³³³ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1907), p. 734.

³³⁴ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), Vol. II, pp. 568, 569.

³³⁵ Thiessen, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

disease germ in order that the medical profession may find a cure for the dread scourge. But, of course, in the illustration it is not the love of this man for humanity which causes him to lay down his life which is the cure; it is simply a means to the cure. And so, according to this theory, Christ is not the cure; He is simply the means of turning men to God by the display of His love, and God is considered to be free to forgive man, even apart from the death of Christ.

While this theory contains some elements of truth, it seriously errs in denying any propitiatory work in the death of Christ and in making the appeal to sinful man primarily an emotional one, practically ruling out any appeal to the will. And finally, if Christ's death was only an object lesson to turn sinners to God it is difficult to understand why God would wait for more than four thousand years of human history to give that lesson. The death of Christ could have no value or meaning to those who lived before His coming into the world, but Scripture teaches that His death benefited them as well as those of the present dispensation ([Romans 3:25](#)).

THE MYSTICAL THEORY

Hodge states:

This (theory) agrees with the moral view (under which it might be included), in that it represents the design of Christ's work to be the production of a subjective effect in the sinner. It produces a change in him. It overcomes the evil of his nature and restores him to a state of holiness. The two systems differ, however, as to the means by which this inward change is accomplished. According to the one it is by moral power operating according to the laws of mind by the exhibition of truth and the exercise of moral influence. According to the other it is by the mysterious union of God and man, of the divine with the human nature, *i.e.*, of divinity with humanity, brought about by the incarnation.³³⁶

This view is based entirely upon philosophic speculations and has taken many different forms during the past centuries. Hodge devotes some eight pages to a discussion of these mystical views. These pages are recommended to the student who desires more information on this phase of the subject. Suffice it here to say that the Scriptures do teach a mystical union of the believer with Christ which is produced by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit, so that it can be said that Christ is in us and that we are in Christ. Mysticism, on the other is the belief that man may attain through contemplation and to an immediate consciousness or knowledge of God, but in to the mystical theory here being considered either the incarnation or the resurrection or both introduced a new principle of ire into the whole human race bringing mankind back into union God.

³³⁶ Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 581.

THE MARTYR THEORY

This theory is also known as the Example Theory and the Socinian Theory. It holds that the only value in Christ's death is that it shows how firmly Jesus believed in the principles of His teaching and that this example of His loyalty to truth should have a subjective effect upon the sinner, causing him to repent. The whole theory is thoroughly unscriptural, holding as it does that God will grant forgiveness simply upon the basis of repentance. It is one of the theories of salvation by character.

THE RECAPITULATION THEORY

Berkhof mentions this as one of the theories which emerged in the early church and quotes Orr: "that Christ recapitulates in Himself all the stages of human life, including those which belong to our state as sinners." Berkhof explains:

By His incarnation and human life He reverses the course on which Adam by his sin started humanity and thus becomes a new leaven in the life of mankind. He communicates immortality to those who are united to Him by faith and effects an ethical transformation in their lives, and by His obedience compensates for the disobedience of Adam. This, according to Mackintosh, was the *esoteric* theory of the early church.³³⁷

THE RANSOM TO SATAN THEORY

This is another theory which was held by some of the early church fathers, Origen in particular. The view holds that Satan had, so to speak, kidnapped the human race, and that God gave Christ in death to Satan as a ransom to free the race. However, Satan discovered that He was unable to hold Christ, who arose from the dead, having broken the chains of death and of Satan.

Modern Seventh Day Adventists also connect Satan with the Atonement but in a different way. They teach that the scapegoat on the day of Atonement ([Leviticus 16:7-10](#)) typified Satan and that the sins of the truly repentant will finally be placed upon Satan. Van Baalen gives the following quotations from their writings:

We dissent from the view that the atonement was made upon the cross, as is generally held.

After his ascension, our Saviour was to begin his work as our high priest The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel sin; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement.

³³⁷ Berkhof, *op. cit.*, p. 385.

We are now living in the great day of atonement. In the typical service, while the high priest was making atonement for Israel, all were required to afflict their souls by repentance of sin and humiliation before the Lord, lest they be cut off from among the people. In like manner, all who would have their names retained in the book of life, should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin and true repentance.³³⁸

50 THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

In the preaching of the Gospel oftentimes the death of Christ is presented as the sole ingredient of that saving message, whereas the Scripture attests that apart from His resurrection the believer's faith is vain; he is yet in his sins; and those who have died have perished (1 Corinthians 15:14-18). When Paul defines the gospel of salvation he includes not only the fact that Christ died for our sins according to the scripture, but also that He was buried, and that He arose the third day, according to the scripture (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4). Again, when Paul speaks of salvation in Romans 10:9, 10 he seems to place the emphasis upon faith in the resurrection of Christ: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth that Jesus is Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." When Paul preached at Athens he apparently so emphasized the resurrection that his hearers received the impression that he was preaching two new gods: Jesus and the resurrection (anastasis) (Acts 17:18). After Paul had been taken prisoner in Jerusalem and had appeared in trial before the Roman governor, Festus, in relaying the charges to King Agrippa, stated that the case concerned certain questions about "one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive" (Acts 25:19). These statements, and many similar ones, show the importance and emphasis which Paul, in particular, placed upon the resurrection of Christ as part of His redemptive work.

The Fact of the Resurrection. Christ Himself taught that there would be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust (Luke 14:14; John 5:29; Luke 20:27-36). He also claimed that He Himself would rise from the dead (Matthew 20:19; 27:63; Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34; Luke 18:33; 24:7, 46).

The Gospel writers all testify to the fact that Jesus Christ did indeed arise from the dead (Matthew 28:6; Mark 16:9; Luke 24:6; John 20:8, 9).

The burden of the preaching at Pentecost was the fact that Israel by wicked hands had crucified and slain their Messiah, "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." (Acts 2:24).

³³⁸ J. K. VanBaalen, *The Chaos of Cults* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), p. 147.

Paul not only made the resurrection a vital part of His message but claims to have actually seen the Lord Jesus in His resurrection body ([1 Corinthians 15:8](#)).

The writer of the Hebrews epistle states: "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus " (Ch. 13:20). Peter opens his first epistle with the statement that God has "begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1:3). John in the Revelation sees the Lord Jesus revealed in His majesty and hears Him say: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore" (Revelation 1:18).

Not only is there universal testimony throughout the New Testament to the fact of the resurrection, but practically every doctrine of the book presupposes and takes for granted the fact. For example, how could Christ be seated at the right hand of God if He had not arisen from the dead? How could He be a priest ever living to make intercession if He were still dead? Or how could He be Head of the Body, or how could He come back to reign as King of kings, or how could He be the final Judge of all apart from having been raised from the dead?

Proofs of the Resurrection. Luke, the writer of Acts, opens his book by referring to the apostles, "to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (1:3). Thus, the Bible itself, and not merely its defenders, claim many infallible proofs for the resurrection of Christ. What, then are some of these proofs?

Reputable, eyewitness accounts. Luke points out that Jesus was seen by the apostles, not once, but many times over a period of one and one-third months. These were not gullible peasants who would believe anything: in fact, Mark tells us that not one of them believed the report from the first eye-witnesses ([Mark 16:11-13](#)). John tells us of one of them, Thomas Didymus, who declared: "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). If Jesus did not arise from the dead then these men were either despicable deceivers or they were sadly deluded. Both charges have been made but without a shred of evidence to support them.

There were other witnesses beside the apostles. When Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, some twenty-five years after the death of Christ, he stated that there were still alive the greater part of five hundred people who on one occasion saw Jesus Christ in resurrection ([1 Corinthians 15:6](#)). It is rather difficult to overthrow or negate the united testimony of five hundred people.

Paul makes claim that He also saw the Lord Jesus in a resurrection body ([1 Corinthians 15:8](#)). The single witness of one man is not valid proof, but this does become a very powerful testimony in view of the fact that this confrontation with

the resurrected Christ is the only explanation for the transformation of a violent persecutor of the followers of Jesus into a gentle bond-slave of Christ who suffered the loss of all things for His sake and became the greatest Christian of all time. Again, it is very difficult to explain such a transformation on the basis of hallucination.

The Empty Tomb. All four of the Evangelists testify to the fact that three days after the burial of Christ the tomb was empty. Most people will admit certain historical facts: that a man by the name of Jesus once lived on the earth, that He was crucified on a cross; that He was buried in a sepulchre; and that three days later His body had disappeared. There are, of course, some modern theologians who refuse to accept anything supernatural and claim that nine-tenths of the Gospel records is pure myth, but they have no supporting evidence. But it is our belief that apart from an empty tomb Christianity could never have begun.

Christianity was not merely a new religion. It was and is the belief in a Person who claimed to be God in human flesh, who was put to death for our sins and arose again on the third day. The integrity of the whole Jewish nation was at stake. They had crucified either a blasphemous deceiver or their Divine Messiah. They had heard Jesus claim that He would arise again the third day. Such a supernatural event would be proof that they were guilty of the latter. They therefore sealed the tomb with a huge stone and had a Roman guard posted day and night to make certain that nothing happened to the body. It is inconceivable that a few days later the apostles could stand in the temple and accuse the leaders of Israel of having murdered their Messiah on the basis that He had been raised from the dead, if, in fact, that body was still in the tomb and could have been produced to silence once and for all any such divine claims for Jesus. And it is also inconceivable that the disciples in their dejected state of unbelief after the crucifixion of Christ could have been so transformed as to accuse publicly the rulers of the Jews of this crime unless they were very certain that the tomb was empty.

There are only three possible explanations for the disappearance of the body of Jesus from the tomb. First is the supposition that Jesus had not actually died; that He revived and escaped from the tomb. To believe this is to believe the impossible. It is incredible that a man who had been through the torture of Roman scourgings, who had been spiked to a Roman cross all day, who was examined by soldiers and was found to be dead, but to make sure was pierced by a spear to drain the blood from His body, could not only survive but remain alive without food or water for three days in the tomb and regain sufficient strength to roll away the stone from the entrance of the tomb and then overcome the Roman soldiers and escape.

The second possibility is that someone removed His body from the tomb. The Jewish leaders bribed the soldiers to say that the disciples came at night and stole the body while they were asleep ([Matthew 28:13-15](#)). It would have been

fatal, apart from sufficient hush-money, for Roman soldiers to admit that they had slept on guard duty, but what is more certain, they could have had no knowledge of how the body disappeared had they been asleep. On the supposition that the disciples did succeed in getting past the Roman guard and stealing the body, the conclusion is inescapable that Christianity is founded on a fraud and that the disciples were willing to suffer and finally gave their lives to support this fraud. On the supposition that the Jews stole the body it is inconceivable that they would not have produced it to silence the disciples once and for all and to clear themselves of the charges of having slain their Messiah.

The third alternative is that Jesus arose from the dead as He said He would. Paul's question to King Agrippa is just as valid today as it ever was: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead" (Acts 26:8). Those who say that it is impossible for Jesus to have been raised are actually saying that they do not believe in the existence of God, that is, of a personal God with supernatural powers, for everything is possible with the God of the Bible ([Matthew 19:26](#)).

It was a Bodily Resurrection. Resurrection in Scripture always refers to the body. The word *anastasis* means to stand up, the position of the body in life, just as reclining is the position in death. It is true that believers today have been raised up spiritually with Christ, but the believer's *anastasis* has not yet occurred. To deny Christ's bodily resurrection and to claim that He had only a spiritual resurrection is to deny His resurrection.

Probably the outstanding Scriptural proof of His bodily resurrection is found in [Luke 24:16-45](#). Jesus walked with two disciples all the way from Jerusalem to Emmaus and carried on a conversation with them. Upon arrival at Emmaus He entered the house and sat down to eat with them. Later in the evening He appeared to the Apostles in Jerusalem. They were terrified, supposing they had seen a spirit. But Jesus allayed their fears and said: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." Then He ate a piece of broiled Fish and some honey to prove them that He had been raised accepted as authentic, all arguments against a bodily resurrection are at an end. To deny the inspiration of the Scripture is to say that we know practically nothing for sure about Jesus, for in that case each person must rely upon his own subjective judgment as to what is history and what is myth. *Form critics almost all deny the empty tomb and argue for a spiritual resurrection.*³³⁹ But what is meant by a spiritual resurrection? Is it simply continued existence in a spirit form after death? If so, then every person who has ever died has been resurrected. What, then, is so unique about the resurrection of Christ? Form critics say that Paul's *kerygma* (preaching) as recorded in I Corinthians 15 is the earliest resurrection tradition known to us and it does not mention the empty tomb. Therefore the story of the empty tomb, denoting a bodily resurrection, was a tradition which grew up later. It is true that

³³⁹ Klaas Runi, "The Modern Debate Around the Bible," Christianity Today, Vol. XII, No. 21, p. 12 [1020].

Paul does not mention the empty tomb, but in stating the gospel he declares that Christ was buried and this was surely not a spiritual burial but a physical burial in a tomb. Therefore when he goes on to say that He was raised the third day he must mean that the body was raised out of the tomb. But even apart from this, the fact that one writer does not mention every detail of an event recorded by another is no proof that such omitted details did not actually occur. For example, Paul in [Romans 14:9](#) states that Christ both died, and rose, and revived. He says nothing about burial as he does in 1 Corinthians 15. Does this mean that there is a contradiction between the two accounts? And in the Romans passage he adds that Christ revived. Was this idea that Christ revived, which can only refer to a bodily resurrection, a new tradition which grew up in the one year interval between the writing of these two epistles? It is impossible that myths could grow up and be accepted as truth in so short a time, or even in the brief period between Paul's writing and that of the Gospels. Further evidence that Paul meant a bodily resurrection is seen in the fact that four times he uses the word "seen" in the Corinthian passage. He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve, then of above five hundred brethren, then of James, then of all the apostles, and last of all He was seen of Paul. What did all of these people see, a spirit or a body? Do the form critics who claim that a bodily resurrection is scientifically impossible believe it is possible to see a spirit? We believe it is abundantly clear that Paul believed in the bodily resurrection both of Christ and of the believer, and that this doctrine is vital to the gospel. No one denies the bodily death of Christ, but liberal theologians join with atheists and agnostics and all unbelievers in denying anything supernatural about His resurrection.

The Importance of the Resurrection. Hodge says, "It may be safely asserted that the resurrection of Christ is at once the most important, and the best authenticated fact in the history of the world."³⁴⁰ The resurrection of Christ is important for the following reasons:

To deny the resurrection is to deny the veracity of the New Testament writers, since most of them give testimony to this fact. It is also important to the veracity of the Old Testament, since the prophets predicted it, and to the veracity of Christ, since it was foretold by Him.

The resurrection is the seal and proof that His death actually did accomplish what He and the Scripture said it would. Had his body remained in the tomb there would have been no evidence that His unique claims of being the Son of God and Messiah of Israel were true.

He was raised on account of (*dia* with the accusative) our justification. The Authorized Version gives the impression that Christ died in order to accomplish our sin-bearing and that He arose in order to accomplish our justification. However, Romans teaches that we are justified by His death. Chafer quotes

³⁴⁰ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), Vol. II, p. 626.

Bishop Moule on this verse: "He was raised, *because our justification was effected, not in order to give us justification, as many interpret it.*"³⁴¹ He also cites Godet: "So long as the security is in prison the debt is not paid; the immediate *effect* of payment would be his liberation. Similarly, if Jesus were not raised, we should be more than ignorant whether our debt were paid; we might be certain that it was not. His resurrection is the *proof* of our justification, only because it is the necessary effect of it."

His resurrection is the guarantee of ours. "Because He lives we too shall live. His resurrection is the firstfruits of the resurrection of all believers ([1 Corinthians 15:20-23](#)).

Apart from His resurrection there could be no session at present at the right hand of God; neither could there be a future visible return of Christ when every eye shall see Him and when He shall reign as Kings of kings.

The work of redemption, the bearing of sin, the reconciling of the world to God, the satisfying of all of the righteous claims of God all took place upon the cross. These were all completed before the resurrection. But the resurrection is God's answer and assurance that the work of salvation was completed in that death. Besides, Jesus Christ is God, and God is the living God: therefore it was impossible that He could be held by death ([Acts 2:24](#)). Faith in God begins with the belief that God is ([Hebrews 11:6](#)), that is, that God exists or is alive. Abraham's faith was posited in a living God who was able to quicken the dead ([Romans 4:17](#)). Therefore, Paul writes: "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:23-25). It is for this reason that belief in the resurrection of Christ is a vital part of saving faith.

51 THE ASCENSION AND EXALTATION OF CHRIST

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

The bodily ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven was an observed, historical fact. The same men who gave us the facts about His birth, life, death and bodily resurrection, gave us also the record of His bodily ascension into heaven. One cannot logically reject one of these truths without rejecting them all. We shall look first at the Scriptures which state the fact of His ascension, then at objections, then the fulfillment of Old Testament types, and finally at the importance and meaning of the ascension.

³⁴¹ L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947) Vol. IV, p. 88.

Scriptures Supporting the Ascension

Matthew does not record the ascension. This is no doubt due to the dispensational emphasis of Matthew on the Kingdom of the heavens which is to be set up upon the earth. Matthew leaves the King upon the earth with the promise that He will be with His disciples until the end of the age (28:20).

Mark states: "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God" (16:19).

Luke states: "And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (24:51). He also states in Acts: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold two men stood by him in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (1:9-11).

John does not record the actual ascension, but he does record Christ's words predicting His ascension: "What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before" (6:62); "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father" (16:28); "Jesus said unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father" (20:17).

Peter, in Acts 2:25-36, quotes David's psalm to substantiate the resurrection, ascension, and exaltation of Christ. He says that David could not have been speaking about himself; for he has not ascended into heaven: therefore he was a prophet who predicted the ascension of Jesus Christ.

Stephen testified, as he was being stoned: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). If Jesus was in heaven in a body, He must have ascended for Stephen to see Him.

Paul makes several references to the ascension: "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things)" (Ephesians 4:7-11). "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Timothy 3:16). "Seeing we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession" (Hebrews 4:14).

There are many other passages which state that Christ has gone into heaven (cf. 1 Peter 3:22), which imply the ascension. The verses quoted, however, are

sufficient to show that the New Testament writers believed and clearly stated the fact of the bodily ascension of Christ.

Objections

The objections to a bodily ascension come mainly from the field of science. When man discovered that the earth is not a flat surface with the heavens domed overhead, but a ball suspended in space, they realized that "up" was a different direction for every one of its 360 degrees of circumference. And no matter in which direction one ascended up, there is nothing in space for billions of miles except the sun and the other planets. Not only so, but to ascend out of the earth's gravitational force a speed of over 18,000 miles an hour is required. And, of course, in addition to all of this, the atmosphere becomes so tenuous that life becomes impossible above about 40,000 feet apart from an artificial atmosphere. Therefore the scientists say that it is impossible to conceive of the ascension. Astronomers have peered billions of light years into space without observing an inhabited heaven. If heaven is beyond that distance, Christ could not have arrived there for billions of years traveling at that speed. All of these objections, however, do not prove or disprove anything. The objections would be valid for a man in a body of flesh and blood, but Scripture declares that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God ([1 Corinthians 15:50](#)), and Jesus Christ in resurrection did not have a body of flesh and blood. The fact that Christ's body could appear in a room where the doors were locked ([John 20:19](#)), indicates that the organization of that body was something different from anything science has ever yet discovered. The spiritual world is unseen, and yet it is more real and enduring than the visible world which is in a constant state of flux and change ([2 Corinthians 4:18](#)).

Scientists ask us to believe things that we cannot see. They tell us that there is no such thing as solid matter. Iron, or for that matter, any substance, is simply a whirling mass of atomic particles too small to be seen and separated by distances greater by comparison than the planets in the solar system. They tell us that thousands of high-speed cosmic rays (atomic projectiles) actually pass through our bodies every day without ever touching one cell. They tell us that a teaspoon of solid matter (protons without any space between them) would weigh billions of tons. These facts appear to be impossible to the non-scientific person, and yet man has just scratched the surface in his knowledge of the physical world and he has no way of discovering anything by scientific experiment of the unseen, spiritual world. Therefore he is in no position to state the impossibility of such a thing as the existence of a spiritual body and of such an event as the ascension of Christ. Both the resurrection and the ascension are well documented facts, corroborated by reliable witnesses. Just as scientists tell us that two or more bodies may occupy what appears to be the same space, so it is possible that the physical and the spiritual substances may occupy the same space. It is significant concerning the witnesses to the resurrection that none of

them believed when they first beheld Christ ([Mark 16:11](#) cf. [Luke 24:37](#)). This proves that they were not gullible men.

Fulfillment of Old Testament Types

Chafer believes that there were at least two ascensions.³⁴² He bases this conclusion upon the statement of Christ to Mary early on the resurrection morning: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father" (John 20:17), and His statement later to His disciples: "handle me, and see" (Luke 24:39). These statements imply that Christ did ascend to the Father between these two conversations. However, it appears that the first women to visit the tomb met Jesus as they returned to tell the disciples, and they "held Him by the feet" (Matthew 28:9). Hence, others believe that Jesus' statement to Mary did not mean that she could not simply touch Him, but that she was not any longer to fasten herself to His physical presence, as in former times before His death.³⁴³

We may not be certain whether Jesus ascended only once, as recorded in Acts 1:9, or many times during the forty-day post-resurrection ministry. The fact remains that He did ascend bodily into heaven. And that ascension and His subsequent ministry there was typified in the ministry of the Old Testament high priest. While there are intimations of His priestly ministry while Jesus was yet on earth, as in the high priestly prayer of John 17, the fact is stated in [Hebrews 8:4](#) that Jesus would not be a priest if He were on the earth. Therefore His priestly ministry is associated with His session in heaven which was made possible by His ascension.

There is a great deal of typology associated with the Tabernacle, but the writer of Hebrews 9 limits himself to that associated with the most holy place, or the Holiest of all ([9:3](#)). The Holiest of all, the dwelling place of God, was a type of heaven itself, and what the high priest did when he entered that place once a year was symbolic of what Christ did when He entered heaven. It is fitting to quote a few verses from this chapter to substantiate these facts:

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle (than the Old Testament one), not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building: neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these (animal sacrifices); but the heavenly things with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures (types) of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of

³⁴² L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. VII, p. 20.

³⁴³ Marvin Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, Vol. II, p. 293.

many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Not only was the annual entrance of the high-priest into the Holiest of all a type of Christ's ascension into heaven, but the return of the priest to the people is here stated to be a type of the second coming of Christ. Here we are faced with a dispensational distinction. During the whole of this present dispensation Christ is in the Holiest of all making intercession for His people, and at the end of the dispensation the members of the Body of Christ will be raptured to heaven to forever be with the Lord. But as far as Israel and God's purposes with that nation are concerned, the high-priest is to return from heaven to earth to completely fulfill all that He had ever promised to that people in salvation. And when He returns it will be apart from sin, for His bearing of sin was completely accomplished at His first coming. His second coming will be for the purpose of bringing actual salvation to Israel and through Israel to the nations of the earth.

Importance and Meaning of the Ascension

Much emphasis has been placed upon the death and resurrection of Christ in evangelical circles, and rightly so, but the ascension with its distinctive ministry is equally important and is often neglected in preaching and teaching. The Cross-work of Christ is that which He accomplished to provide salvation for the unsaved. The Ascension-work is that which He is presently accomplishing for those who are saved. This distinction is important and failure to recognize it leads to much confusion. When an unsaved person tries to avail himself of the present ministry of Christ in heaven it is much like an alien appealing to the consulate of another country for help or protection. If there were not a difference between these two ministries of Christ, how could we explain Christ's high-priestly prayer: "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me?" We know that Christ loved the world and gave Himself for the world. This He did as the Savior. But as Priest he intercedes only for those who have acknowledged and received Him as Savior.

The student is referred back to the chapter on the Offices of the Savior for the ascension ministries of Christ as High-priest and as Head of the Body, the Church, and also to the chapter on the Security of the Believer, which is based largely upon Christ's present session at the right hand of God.

THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST

There are numerous New Testament passages which speak of the exaltation of Christ, as a result of His ascension. This exaltation does not mean simply that the second Person of the Trinity returned to the position which He formerly occupied before the Incarnation. The Exaltation has to do with the manhood of the Savior. It is not the exaltation of God but the exaltation of the Man, Christ Jesus.

The basis for the Exaltation as given by Paul is His great condescension in becoming a man and humbling Himself, even to the death of the Cross. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus (His human name) every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

The fact of the exaltation having to do with Christ's manhood is further seen in Paul's statement about His *glorious body*, or body of glory ([Philippians 3:21](#)). Hebrews 2:9 states that He was "crowned with glory and honor." Peter declared in his Pentecostal sermon that Christ was "by the right hand of God exalted" (Acts 2:33). And later he told his people Israel: "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). In spite of this Israel rejected Him and then God introduced the new dispensation of the grace of God and revealed through Paul the position of Christ as Head of the Body:

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world (age), but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (Ephesians 1:19-23).

Although positionally all things have been put under His feet, the writer to the Hebrews states that experientially "we see not yet all things put under him" (2:8). This awaits His coming again and His reigning until He has put all enemies under His feet ([1 Corinthians 15:24-28](#)).

The Application of Salvation

52 THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

Reference has been made to the Lapsarian controversy. This controversy concerns the question of whether or not the decree of Election logically precedes or follows the decree to Provide Salvation. The *Supra-lapsarian* makes Election to be the first of the Divine decrees, thereby logically inferring that God created the human race and decreed the Fall so that He would have sinners to save, and

by placing the decree of Election before the decree to Provide Salvation, he logically infers that salvation has been provided only for the Elect. The *Infra-lapsarian*, by placing the decrees to Create and to Permit the Fall before Election, infers that God provided salvation because of the Fall, and not that He caused man to Fall so that He would have sinners to save. And by placing Election logically before the decree to Provide Salvation, He infers, as does the *Supra-lapsarian*, that salvation is provided only for the elect. The *Sub-lapsarian* agrees with the *Infra-lapsarian* in placing Election after the decrees to Create and to Permit the Fall, but disagrees on placing Election before the Provision of Salvation. By placing Election after the decree to Provide Salvation, he logically infers that Salvation has been provided for the whole world and that God has determined that certain ones, the Elect, should be saved.

The following chart will show the order of the decrees according to the various views. The order is logical rather than chronological.

Supralapsarian	Infralapsarian	Sublapsarian
Election	Creation	Creation
Creation	Fall	Fall
Fall	Election	Provision
Provision	Provision	Election

All of the above views are different shades of Calvinism. Since *Infra* and *Sub* both mean the same thing, some theologians do not make the distinction given above, but simply state that some *Sub* or *Infra-lapsarians* place Election before Provision of Salvation, while others reverse this order.³⁴⁴ Thiessen holds to the three-fold division given above.³⁴⁵ Chafer, on the other hand, reverses the *Sub* and *Infra* views as given by Thiessen.³⁴⁶ And Hodge does not even recognize the group which Thiessen calls the *Sub-lapsarians*.³⁴⁷

Whatever views one holds of Election, all agree that the Elect are those who are saved. It seems logical, therefore, in dealing with the subject of the Application of Salvation to begin with the doctrine of Election, or a consideration of those who in the foreknowledge of God would be the recipients of His salvation.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

Divisions

The Church down through the centuries has been divided over this doctrine. The divisions are generally known as Calvinists and Arminians, after the names

³⁴⁴ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 779.

³⁴⁵ Thiessen, *op. cit.*, p. 343.

³⁴⁶ Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 178-181.

³⁴⁷ Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 319.

of two theologians. It seems that very few people can approach this doctrine calmly and with an open mind. People are either violently opposed to the free-will of man and in favor of the sovereignty of God, or they are just as violently opposed to the sovereignty of God and in favor of man's free-will. Since both groups produce many passages of Scripture to defend their positions it seems reasonable to conclude that, if Scripture does not contradict itself, there must be some in-between position or means of reconciling these seeming contradictions.

No one can deny that the Bible teaches election, for the words *elect*, *elected*, and *election* occur 27 times in the Bible, and the same Hebrew and Greek words are translated even more often as *choose*, *chose*, and *chosen*. Because it appears unjust or partial on the part of God to having Him choose the ones which shall be saved, instead of leaving the choice up to man himself, many people try to make election to be simply unto some type of work or service, such as God choosing one to be an apostle, another a pastor, or another a missionary. All such would deny that God chooses anyone to salvation. This is basically the Arminian view. In an effort to explain passages of Scripture which teach that God has chosen people to salvation, it is argued that God has chosen people to be saved only in the sense that He has chosen to provide salvation for all who will believe. Thiessen presents this view. He states:

Furthermore, He chose those who He foreknew would accept Christ Although we are nowhere told what it is in the foreknowledge of God that determines His choice, the repeated teaching of Scripture that man is responsible for accepting or rejecting salvation necessitates our postulating that it is man's reaction to the revelation God has made of Himself that is the basis of His election.³⁴⁸

According to this explanation election means that God chooses people to be saved who He knows will be saved. This is something like saying that we choose people to be Americans who we know will be born in America. Actually, in such a context the word *choose* loses its meaning. There is no doubt but that God foreknows who will believe and who will be saved, but to say that God chooses those to be saved who He knows will be saved is rather tautological. This is almost the equivalent to saying that election is man's own choosing to be saved. The preacher who said: "God has voted for you; the Devil has voted against you; it's up to you to cast the deciding vote," was expressing much the same idea. It is true that man must make a choice to be saved, but plainly election in the Bible is something that God does entirely apart from man, and something that God did before He ever created the universe.

Objections

As already intimated, the problem generated by the doctrine of election is that it seems to make God to be unjust, if He is doing the choosing, to choose some

³⁴⁸ Thiessen, *op. cit.*, p. 344.

and not all to be saved. Thiessen tries to get around this problem by stating that election is based upon God's foreknowledge, and that without any action on God's part, He simply foreknew who would believe, and these are called the elect.³⁴⁹ It is true that Paul states: "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:29), and that Peter states: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Peter 1:2). Here, however, we are confronted with the meaning of foreknowledge. How does God foreknow? Does He possess the kind of foreknowledge similar to that which we have when we read in the newspaper that certain events are going to transpire at such and such a time in the future; or does He foreknow because He has planned and purposed certain things to happen? Since the Scripture is full of statements concerning the purpose of God, and since we have the positive statement that we are "predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Ephesians 1:11), it is evident that election and predestination are according to God's purpose and not simply according to man's purpose. In other words, God knows what is going to happen in the future because He has a plan and purpose which He is carrying out.

Another objection to the doctrine of election is that the elect will be saved whether they want to be or not, and the non-elect could not be saved even if they wanted to be. Neither of these things could be true, for the Scripture plainly states that whosoever will may come and be saved. This indicates that no one who wills or desires to be saved will be rejected by God. And it indicates just as well that no one will be saved who does not will to be. Man is free in exercising his will either to accept or to reject God's salvation, and he will be judged upon this responsibility which is his.

Thiessen infers that those who do not agree with his view of election necessarily teach that election was an arbitrary act of God.³⁵⁰ It is hard to believe that anyone familiar with the Bible could conceive of God doing anything arbitrarily, without a reason, as though God simply closed His eyes and blindly pointed His finger to each member of the human family, saying, "I decree that this one go to heaven and that one to hell." Most theologians take the position that God has very good and just reasons for His elective choices, but that these reasons reside in God Himself and that He has not been pleased to reveal His reasons.³⁵¹ Although God has not revealed why He chose some and not others, the Bible does reveal that it could not have been because God foresaw some goodness or merit in those whom He elected which would cause them to believe the gospel, for in that case salvation would not be of grace but of merit. It could not have been because God foresaw that the elect would be obedient to God, for Peter states:

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 345, 347, 348.

³⁵¹ See Strong, p. 787, *Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 1312, footnote No. 1.

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father... *unto* obedience" (1 Peter 1:2).

Obedience is said to be the result of election and not the cause of it. We are not elect because of obedience but we are elect *unto* obedience. Election cannot be both the object and the cause of salvation.

And finally election could not be because God foresaw faith on the part of the elect. As We have already stated it would be rather meaningless to say that God foresaw who would get to heaven, so He elected them to get there, which would be much like saying after a crowd of people had gathered at a certain function of their own free will that these people had been specially selected to be there. Paul told the Philippians that it had been given (and the word is *charizomai*--undeserved gracious gift) to them not only *to believe* on Him, but also to suffer for His sake ([Philippians 1:29](#)). To believe is to have faith. Faith is something that is given by God. The root of this word *given* is *Charis*, or grace. Paul also says that grace is given unto us ([Romans 1:5, 7; 3:24; 5:15; 12:3, 6; 15:15; 1 Corinthians 1:4; 3:10; 2 Corinthians 8:1; Ephesians 3:7, 8; 4:7; 2 Timothy 1:9](#)). Therefore if it has been given to us to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ it can hardly be said that God chose those whom He saw would have faith.

Not only have objections been raised that election is unjust, that it manifests partiality on the part of God, that it represents God as arbitrary, but it is said that such a belief discourages evangelistic effort. Why should we preach to people if perhaps there are no elect ones present or why should we preach to the elect, since they will be saved regardless. In the first place, if we believe that some will finally be lost, we are confronted with the same situation entirely apart from election. Preachers often preach to a group of the unsaved without any conversions. In the second place, election does not save anyone. The elect are not saved until they hear the gospel and believe. Therefore, it is essential that the elect hear the gospel. And not only so, but God has commanded us to preach the gospel whether people believe or not ([Romans 16:26](#) cf. [Ezekiel 3:11](#)), which is sufficient reason for doing so.

It is argued that belief in election generates pride in those who think they are the elect. If a person believes that election is based upon some merit or goodness in those elected, then it is possible that such belief could and would generate a religious pride. The nation Israel was guilty of this distortion as the elect or chosen nation. They came to believe that God had chosen them because they were better than the other nations. But God said:

"The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, or choose you, because ye were more in number than any people, for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you" (Deuteronomy 7:6-8). It would seem that the only reason God gave for choosing

Israel above all other nations was that He loved them. And by choosing Israel He left the whole Gentile world in its darkness and sin and lost condition for at least fifteen centuries.

Still another objection to Election is said to be that it is not only a decree that certain should be saved but it is also a decree that certain ones should be lost. This is called the decree of reprobation. Hyper-Calvinists do hold to this decree, but moderate Calvinists do not. Just as in the case above with Israel, had not God chosen to reveal Himself to Israel, Israel would have remained in darkness, without God and without hope, the same as the Gentile nations. For God to leave the nations in their sin required no decree on His part. The fact that God has allowed sin to come into the world may be called a *permissive* decree, but God did surely not decree in a positive sense that Adam and his offspring should be sinners. In such case God would be just as responsible for man being a sinner as He is for man being a saint through His great salvation.

Actually, the basic problem which confronts the theologian, whether he be Arminian or Calvinist, is the same. All Christians believe that God possesses foreknowledge, that He knows from the beginning everything that will come to pass in the universe. Arminians may say that God has only simple foreknowledge, knowing apart from having made the future certain by purposeful planning. Calvinists may say that God's foreknowledge is possible only because it is based upon His plan and purpose. But both agree, no matter what is responsible for the foreknowledge, that God foreknew from all eternity that some people would be eternally saved and that others would be eternally lost, and almost everyone would agree that He knew individually who these people would be. If this be true, then the problem arises, Why would God, a God of love and goodness, create a world when He knew before He created it that multitudes of His creatures would spend eternity in the lake of fire? Did not God, even from the Arminian point of view, by choosing to create the kind of world He did, in effect choose that some of His creatures should be saved and others lost? Basing election on simple foreknowledge does not offer any solution to this problem. We can either take the view that God is indeed unjust in having created such a world as this, or we can say that God is just but that we do not know all of the reasons why He has done so, since God's ways are past finding out ([Romans 11:33](#)).

The same objections which can be made against election can be made against God's providence, but God's providence consists of facts against which we cannot argue. It is a fact that God created a world in which millions of people will be eternally lost. It is a fact that God gave up the human race because of their sinfulness and apostasy ([Romans 1:24, 26, 28](#)). It is a fact that God chose just one little nation to which He revealed Himself, and that for a period of at least 1500 years peoples of all of the other nations were left without any personal witness of God and therefore had no opportunity to know God or to be saved. It has been a fact throughout the present dispensation that untold millions have lived and died in heathen darkness without once having heard the gospel of

salvation. We may object to God's providence; we may try to represent God as unjust in His dealings with man, but we cannot deny the facts of conditions as they exist. It is believed that a proper knowledge of the Scriptural doctrine of election will help to explain even the seeming inequities in providence.

The Scriptural Teaching

In approaching the doctrine of Election, we must keep certain Scriptural facts in mind. The first is that God is absolutely righteous. As Paul introduces the subject of Election in Romans 9 he asks the question which comes to the mind of everyone who has ever seriously considered the doctrine: "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?" (vs. 14). And he immediately answers: "Perish the thought." The second fact we need to consider is the estate of man under sin. Man is a responsible being who is fully accountable to God. He is responsible for his apostasy from God and his lost condition. He merits only the judgment of God. The third thing which Scripture presents is that no man of himself seeks after God. In other words, Scripture teaches that even though God provided a salvation for the whole world, not one would accept it and be saved unless God first of all took the initiative by Himself seeking after man.

What Election Is Not

1. It is not an arbitrary act of God or capriciousness. Election is according to God's eternal purpose and foreknowledge ([Romans 8:28, 29](#); [9:11](#); [Ephesians 1:4-11](#); [1 Peter 1:2](#)).

2. It is not an act to choose some to be lost or a decree of reprobation. Election is to salvation, not to condemnation ([1 Thessalonians 1:4](#); [2 Thessalonians 2:13](#)).

3. It is not merely God's purpose to save them that believe, although it is true that only those who believe will be saved.

4. It is not man's choosing of himself, although man must himself choose if he is to be saved. Election is God's choice. Christ said to His apostles: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" ([John 15:16](#)).

5. It is not merely to a place of service, although God chooses men for special tasks. Election is also unto salvation ([2 Thessalonians 2:13](#)).

What Election Is

1. It is a choice on the part of God which includes some, but not all. This fact is substantiated by three lines of proof. The fact that some are lost is proof that not all were chosen. The word itself, to elect, would be meaningless if all were to be saved. When an election is held, it is evident from the use of the word that

only certain ones will be appointed to office. In the third place the Scripture speaks over and over of those who are lost, so that these are definitely not among the elect.

2. It is a choice which God made before the foundation of the world ([Ephesians 1:4](#)). It is sometimes helpful to consider the fact that God is a timeless Being, that He lives in an eternal now. Hence, it is not as though He made a choice a billion years before He really knew what we would do, but rather He knew us then as we are today.

3. It is a choice based upon something that is in God, and not something that is in man. Paul states that election is according to grace ([Romans 11:5](#)), and he also definitely states that it is not of works ([Romans 9:11](#)). Election, like salvation, is all of grace and not of works. Therefore, it should be evident that God did not choose to save certain ones because He foresaw any goodness or merit in them.

4. It is a choice based upon foreknowledge, which in turn is based upon the determinate counsel and purpose of God. There are a number of words which should be studied in connection with Election. Note the words *Predestinate* ([Romans 8:29, 30](#); [Ephesians 1:5, 11](#)); *Foreordain* ([1 Peter 1:20](#)); *Foreknow* ([Romans 8:29; 11:2; Acts 2:23](#)); *Purpose* ([Isaiah 14:26; 23:9; 46:11; Jeremiah 4:28; 51:29; Romans 8:28; 9:11, 17; Ephesians 1:9, 11; 3:11; 2 Timothy 1:9](#)). It is evident that God has purposed everything that He has done, and the reason God foreknows what will happen is because He has purposed it.

5. It is a choice which is absolutely sure of fulfillment; no power can overthrow it. [Romans 8:28-30](#) indicates that every one who is foreknown of God will be called, justified, and glorified. Verse 33 states that no one will ever be able to lay anything to the charge of God's elect, and the chapter ends with the assurance that nothing shall ever be able to separate the elect from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. [Acts 13:48](#) states: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

6. It is a choice which is in harmony with human freedom. Election does not coerce or force the elect to believe. No man upon believing the gospel has the consciousness of being forced against his will to believe. It is probably at this point that human knowledge is most lacking in understanding how God can move upon the will of man without violating man's freedom. Even the Apostle Paul, after discussing the elective purposes of God with Israel, had to confess: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor!... For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen." ([Romans 11:33-36](#))

It should be remarked that there is a difference between free agency and freedom of the will. All responsible moral beings are free agents, whether they be fallen or unfallen angels or men. God is a free moral agent, and yet God is not free to will to sin. It is impossible for God to sin. Fallen men and angels are free agents and yet it is impossible for them not to sin. There is a difference too between free agency or personal freedom and ability. A man may be a free moral agent, solely responsible for the choices he makes, and yet this liberty does not give him ability to change his nature so as to be able to please God. In the words of Scripture: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jeremiah 13:23).

Even Arminian theologians admit the fact that man after the fall lost his ability to do good in the sense of being pleasing or acceptable to God. How then can sinful man ever make the right choice and turn to God? Thiessen, representing the Arminian view on this point, states:

We believe that the common grace of God also restores to the sinner the ability to make a favorable response to God. In other words, we hold that God, in His grace, makes it possible for all men to be saved.³⁵²

God graciously restores to all men sufficient ability to make a choice in the matter of submission to Him. This is the salvation-bringing grace of God that has appeared to all men.³⁵³

... the Scriptures appeal to man to turn himself to God But he can of himself neither turn to God, nor repent, nor believe; the only thing prevenient grace enables him to do is to call upon God to turn him.³⁵⁴

We might ask when this prevenient or common grace began to be manifested, at the time of the fall or in New Testament times? Titus 2:11 points to apostolic times. But even if it could be proved that immediately after the fall God restored the ability of all men everywhere, what did it profit the Gentile world during the countless centuries when they were given up by God and had no opportunity even to hear the Word, to say nothing of calling upon the name of the Lord and being saved? If by common grace is meant the goodness of God to all mankind, giving sunshine and rain, fruitful seasons, health, prosperity, etc., well and good. But to say that God restores to every man the ability to please Him is going far beyond Scripture. Paul surely did not recognize any such principle when he wrote: "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:8).

There seems to be a great deal of confusion among theologians over what is involved in believing. Arminians have to invent a doctrine of common grace before they can see the possibility of fallen man having the ability to believe. And

³⁵² Thiessen, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

Thiessen even goes so far as to say that this grace does not enable the sinner to believe, but only to call upon God for Him to cause the sinner to believe. Strict Calvinists, on the other hand, argue that God must first regenerate the sinner and give him a new divine life before he can believe, which is equivalent to saying that God saves the sinner in order that he might believe, instead of what the Scripture says, that man believes in order that he might be saved.

It appears to this writer that the natural man has ability to believe anything he wants to believe. The perversity of his fallen nature and his natural enmity to the things of God makes him prone to believe the Devil's lie rather than the truth of God. Salvation through a crucified Man appears as foolishness to his sin-warped mind. What he needs in order to believe is to be persuaded that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God and that He died for our sins and rose again on account of our justification. Paul did not tell his listeners that they needed common grace or that they must wait for God to regenerate them before they could believe. He warned everyone night and day with tears ([Acts 20:31](#)) and he persuaded men in view of the terror of the Lord ([2 Corinthians 5:11](#)). If men are fully persuaded that they are lost sinners on their way to hell and that Christ has provided a perfect and complete salvation which He will freely bestow on all who will believe, they will believe. In this sense there is little difference in principle between a man with a fatal disease being persuaded that a certain doctor or treatment can cure him, and believing the gospel after being persuaded that Christ can save him. It is no manifestation of special grace or of good works when a sinner believes the Gospel: rather it is an admission on the part of the sinner of his absolute impossibility of doing anything to save himself. God uses His Word, His Holy Spirit, and His servants to do this work of persuading. Some will not be persuaded. Some never even hear the Gospel. In Paul's experience, the Holy Spirit even forbade Paul to carry the gospel to certain areas ([Acts 16:6, 7](#)). Apparently God had a purpose in this based upon His elective decree. In this connection it is interesting to observe that the great majority of those who believe the Gospel and are saved do so in childhood or youth, and that comparatively few people are converted in old age. Children have far fewer problems with believing than do adults and hence the comparative ease in persuading them of the love and ability of Christ to save.

Definition

From the above facts we may conclude with Strong: "Election is that eternal act of God, by which in his sovereign pleasure, and on account of no foreseen merit in them, he chooses certain out of the number of sinful men to be the recipients of the special grace of his Spirit, and so to be made voluntary partakers of Christ's salvation."³⁵⁵

CONCLUSION

³⁵⁵ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 779.

In conclusion, certain facts about man's freedom of will should be pointed out. The first fact is that man as a sinner is in slavery to sin. Christ plainly stated this fact: "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant (slave) of sin" (John 8:34). Being a slave is just the opposite from being free. Paul shows the impossibility of those in the flesh (sinners) to be subject to the law of God or to be pleasing to God ([Romans 8:7, 8](#)). Not only is the natural man under bondage to sin, but Scripture indicates that Satan, the prince of the power of the air, works or energizes in him. The average unsaved man is totally unaware that he is being influenced in his actions and decisions by Satan: he may even boast that he always acts on his own. But entirely apart from Satanic influence it must be admitted that our decisions and actions are often influenced by other people. We use argument and persuasion and cause people to change their minds and do just the opposite of what they intended to do, and yet, in the end, the person feels that he has freely made his choice and that he is fully responsible for it.

If Satan and human beings can so influence our actions and decisions without violating our freedom of choice, is it not possible for God to do the same, and especially when we understand that God's influence upon human minds and lives is always for good? Almost everyone who is saved realizes that he did not entirely of himself make the decision to accept Jesus Christ as his Savior. Friends and loved ones prayed; the preacher presented the plan of salvation; and either he or others used a great deal of persuasion before the decision was made. All of this was God working by His Spirit through the Word of God and through the people of God. But the choice, the decision, was freely made. And just as Satan energizes in the children of disobedience, so we read: "For it is God which worketh (energizes) in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). When the Christian wills to do what is pleasing to God it is the result of God's Spirit influencing him, and whatever he does that is pleasing to God is likewise the result of the same influence and power.

Arminians who oppose the idea of God working to bring about the salvation of certain individuals on the basis that this teaching is destructive of human freedom often pray like Calvinists. They will pray fervently for unsaved loved ones that God would in some way awaken them to their lost condition and cause them to believe the gospel, unaware that their prayers are in direct conflict with their theology.

Probably the central passage on election to salvation is 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, which reads:

"But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen (elected) you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; whereunto he called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Here it will be seen that election was from the beginning; that it was to salvation, and that it was through or by means of two things: sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. The work of the Spirit is placed before belief of the truth. This work is called a sanctification, or a setting apart of the person unto God, which takes place before belief of the truth. The truth is Paul's gospel and it is by this gospel that God calls the sinner to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a general call of God, as in Matthew 20:16: "for many be called, but few chosen (or elected)." But there is also the special or effectual call of God to salvation, which is equivalent to salvation, since all that He so calls He justifies ([Romans 8:30](#)). Paul always uses the word *call* in this effectual sense. God elects, predestinates, calls, justifies, and glorifies. Salvation indeed is of the Lord.

53 LIMITED OR UNLIMITED ATONEMENT

As pointed out in the previous chapter there has been disagreement among theologians, not only on the place of the decree of election in relation to that of the fall, but also on the place of the decree of election in relation to that to provide salvation. *Infra* and *supra-lapsarians*, therefore, by placing election before the provision of salvation, logically imply that salvation has been provided only for the elect. A mnemonic device often employed to fix in the mind the tenets of Calvinism states this fact. It is based on the word *tulip*.

T --Total depravity of man
U --Unconditional election
L --Limited Atonement
I -- Irresistible grace
P --perseverance of the saints

Although in his earlier writings Calvin taught a limited atonement, that is, that in no sense did Christ die for or make any provision for the salvation of all mankind, but only for the elect, he seems to have altered his views later in life. Strong has this to say:

The progress in Calvin's thought may be seen by comparing some of his earlier with his later utterances. Institutes, 2:23:5--"I say, with Augustine, that the Lord created those who, as he certainly foreknew, were to go to destruction, and he did so because he so willed." But even then in the Institutes 3:23:8, he affirms that "the perdition of the wicked depends upon the divine predestination in such a manner that the cause and matter of it are found in themselves. Man falls by the appointment of divine providence, but he falls by his own fault.".. . In later days Calvin wrote in his Commentary on 1 John 2:2--"he is the propitiation for our sins;

and not for ours only, but also for the whole world"--as follows: "Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world, and in the goodness of God is offered unto all men without distinction, his blood being shed not for a part of the world only, but for the whole human race; for although in the world nothing is found worthy of the favor of God, yet he holds out the propitiation to the whole world, since without exception he summons all to the faith of Christ, which is nothing else than the door unto hope."

Although other passages, such as Institutes, 3:21:5, and 3:23:1, assert the harsher view, we must give Calvin credit for modifying his doctrine with maturer reflection and advancing years. Much that is called Calvinism would have been repudiated by Calvin himself even at the beginning of his career, and is really the exaggeration of his teaching by more scholastic and less religious successors.³⁵⁶

ARGUMENTS FOR A LIMITED ATONEMENT

It is argued that if Christ died for all men; if He paid the price for every man's redemption, then in justice, God must save every man. It is argued that even in human justice, in human courts, if another man pays the fine for a guilty man, the court is bound to free the law-breaker. But it is evident that not every man will be saved; therefore it is evident that Christ did not die for those who are ultimately unsaved.

This argument is built upon the false assumption that the death of Christ automatically applies to those who are to be saved. If in the illustration above the terms should be changed to fit that of the Scriptural presentation of the work of Christ, it would have to be said that a benefactor has deposited a sum of money sufficient to pay the law-breaker's fine, providing the law-breaker desires to accept the gratuitous provision. But what if the lawbreaker is too proud to accept help from another, or because of his hatred of the benefactor refuses his help, or does not believe in the sincerity of the benefactor and therefore fails to act upon the offered help? Surely in such case no one could argue that the court must set the prisoner free.

The typology of salvation in the Old Testament indicates that the value of the sacrifice did not automatically apply. The Old Testament Passover was typical of the death of Christ ([1 Corinthians 5:7](#)). Was the firstborn in the home protected from the destroying angel simply because the lamb had been slain? God did not say, when I see that the lamb has been slain I will pass over you, but when I see the blood sprinkled upon the lintel and posts of the door I will pass over you. The lamb had to be slain in order to provide salvation for the firstborn, but the blood had also to be applied before the provision became effective in behalf of him. Peter shows that the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, in fulfillment of the type,

³⁵⁶ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 778.

speaks of the obedience of faith, the personal application of Christ's death by faith:

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and (even) sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:2).

The New Testament always conditions personal salvation upon faith or belief on the part of the recipient. Does John 1:12 say: "But as many as Christ died for, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them who were elected," or, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name?" Did Paul tell the Philippian jailer: "Christ died for you, hence you are saved," or, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved?" Does Ephesians 2:8 state: "By election ye are saved through the death of Christ," or, "By grace are ye saved through faith?" There is no hint in the New Testament that the efficacy of the death of Christ is ever applied to a sinner apart from personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

Berkhof gives as one of his proofs for a limited atonement: "Scripture repeatedly qualifies those for whom Christ laid down His life in such a way as to point to a very definite limitation. Those for whom He suffered and died are variously called 'His sheep,' [John 10:11, 15](#), 'His Church,' [Acts 20:28](#); [Ephesians 5:25-27](#); 'His people,' [Matt. 1:21](#), and 'the elect,' [Romans 8:32-35](#)."³⁵⁷

It is evident that if Christ died for the whole world He died for His sheep, His Church, His people, the elect. But Scripture nowhere states that He died *only* for the elect. On the other hand, there are unqualified statements in Scripture that Christ did in fact die for the sins of the whole world. Berkhof, in defending his position, is forced to make the word "world," in such passages as John 3:16, mean the world of the elect. Is it not strange that in the very same Gospel John records the words of Christ: "I pray for them (His disciples--the elect); I pray not for the world." (17:9), if, indeed, John means by the world the elect? Berkhof tries to show from such passages as John 7:4; 12:19; 14:22; 18:20, that because Christ did not speak to or show Himself to every person in the world, the word must therefore be greatly limited in meaning, but this conclusion does not necessarily follow. If such were the case then it would be impossible that anything could be said to be worldwide. How could any message be communicated to every human being in existence without exception? When it is said that a thing is for the whole world we understand that no limitation is placed upon it, none is excluded; not that every living individual hears about it or accepts it.

No one can deny that Scripture many times predicates salvation upon "whosoever will." Is whosoever an *inclusive* or *exclusive* term? It must be

³⁵⁷ Berkhof, *op. cit.*, p. 395.

exclusive if the idea of a limited atonement is true, or if the word is allowed to have its usual meaning of all-inclusive, it must be said that the gospel is to be preached as though it had been provided for all men, but that in the secret councils of God it was provided only for the elect.³⁵⁸ It should be observed, even though one accepted the latter contention as tenable, what is called the secret council of God is no longer secret. God has revealed it in His Word for all to read and know.

As quoted earlier in connection with Calvin's commentary, 1 John 2:2 clearly states that "He is the propitiation for our sins (the elect): and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." Not only does John place the world in contrast to the elect, but he includes the *whole* world. Surely in this context the world cannot mean the elect, and the whole world cannot be limited to mean only a small part of the world.

Again, Berkhof argues against an unlimited atonement in these words:

The sacrificial work of Christ and His intercessory work are simply two different aspects of His atoning work, and therefore the scope of the one can be no wider than that of the other. Now Christ very definitely limits His intercessory work, when He says: "I pray not for the world, but for those thou hast given me." John 17:9. Why should He limit His intercessory prayer, if He had actually paid the price for all?³⁵⁹

There is very good reason why He limits His intercessory work, whereas His redemptive work is universal. The typology of the Scripture shows clearly that there is no place for a priestly ministry until people are first brought into a saving relationship with God. Moses, and not Aaron, as a type of Christ, inaugurated the covenant with the great covenant sacrifice, which constituted the nation of Israel God's elect nation (Exodus 24:4-8). It should be observed that before Moses offered the covenant sacrifice Aaron and his sons had to stay afar off and only Moses could come near the Lord (Exodus 24:1, 2). It was after this that God gave instructions for the building of the tabernacle and the induction of Aaron and his sons into the priesthood. Priestly intercession is only for the people of God, whereas the gospel of salvation has been provided for those who are not God's people. Much confusion and harm has come from confusing these two distinct ministries. The unsaved have been told that Jesus is their priest and if they confess their sins to Him they will be forgiven. Such preaching is a travesty on the gospel. Sinners are not saved by confessing sins or by doing any other thing that a Christian is supposed to do: they are saved by believing the gospel. It should therefore be evident that the scope of Christ's work in behalf of the unsaved is different from that in behalf of the saved.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 398.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 395.

SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR AN UNLIMITED ATONEMENT

First, it would seem that there needs to be a clear definition of terms. In speaking of the extent of the atonement, we need to understand whether we are speaking of the extent of the provision or the extent of the application. Everyone agrees that the extent of the application is limited. Surely the Scripture nowhere teaches that all men are going to be saved, in spite of the beliefs of Universalists and so-called Universal Reconciliationists. In the present discussion we are stating the reasons for a universal or unlimited provision. Even Berkhof admits a certain universality in the atonement. He discusses what he calls *the exact point at issue*:

The question with which we are concerned at this point is not (a) whether the satisfaction rendered by Christ was in itself sufficient for the salvation of all men, since this is admitted by all; (b) whether the saving benefits are actually applied to every man, for the great majority of those who teach a universal atonement do not believe that all are actually saved; (c) whether the *bona fide* offer of salvation is made to all that hear the gospel, on the condition of repentance and faith, since the Reformed Churches do not call this in question; nor (d) whether any of the fruits of the death of Christ accrue to the benefit of the non-elect in virtue of their close association with the people of God, since this is explicitly taught by many Reformed scholars. On the other hand, the question does relate to the design of the atonement. Did the Father in sending Christ, and did Christ in coming into the world, to make atonement for sin, *do this with a design or for the purpose of saving only the elect or all men?* That is the question, and that is the only question.³⁶⁰

Berkhof admits the sufficiency of the death of Christ to save all men, but says that the question is, was God's design in the death of Christ to save only the elect or all men? Only Universalists believe that it was God's design to save all men. If God's purpose was to save all men, and all men are not saved, then God's purpose has been thwarted. Even Arminians, whom Berkhof opposes, do not believe it was God's design to save all men, and yet they believe in a universal provision. And doesn't Berkhof himself believe in a universal provision if he believes that the death of Christ is sufficient to save all men? How much more sufficient would it have to be to be a universal provision? It would seem that Berkhof and other Reformed theologians use the word *provide* to mean, not only to provide but, actually to bestow upon. If we define the word in this way and then say that the atonement is unlimited in its provision, it is self-evident that we mean that it was God's design to save all men and that all men will be saved, or that it was His design but that the will of man has defeated His purpose. On the other hand, when theologians differentiate between the extent of the provision and the extent of the application, it should be evident that they do not mean by provision

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 393, 394.

the application also. On this score it would seem that the difference is due to a definition of terms.

However, there is an underlying concept in the limited atonement view that goes deeper than this. Again Berkhof states:

The Reformed position is that Christ died for the purpose of actually and certainly saving the elect, and the elect only. This is equivalent to saying that He died for the purpose of saving only those to whom He actually applies the benefits of His redemptive work.³⁶¹

This, it seems to us, is equivalent to saying that God is willing that some might perish (cf. [2 Peter 3:9](#)), that He was not willing that all men might be saved (cf. [1 Timothy 2:4](#)), that although the gospel is announced as being provided for all men, actually God never had any one in mind but the elect, and that therefore God never loved, never made any provision for, never made any possibility for the non-elect to be saved. Actually, then, it is a lie to say that God so loved the world that He gave, unless we alter the word world to mean the elect.

If we say that the elect are those who are ultimately saved, and that in the infinite foreknowledge of God He knew every last one who would be saved, then it is evident that no one could be saved but the elect whom He foreknew. From this viewpoint, therefore, we must believe that it is impossible for any but the elect to be saved. But this is vastly different from saying that God, in His elective decree before the foundation of the world, had no love or concern or thought for that great multitude who comprise the unsaved, especially in view of the many Scriptures which indicate just the opposite. Chafer, who classifies himself as a moderate Calvinist who is an unlimited redemptionist states:

The men who belong to this school of interpretation defend all of the five points of Calvinism excepting one, namely, "Limited Atonement," or what has been termed "the weakest point in the Calvinistic system of doctrine." This form of moderate Calvinism is more the belief of Bible expositors than of theologians, which fact is doubtless due to the truth that the Bible, taken in its natural terminology and apart from those strained interpretations which are required to defend a theory, seems to teach an unlimited redemption. Men of this group believe that Christ died actually and fully for all men of this age alike, that God has ordained that the gospel shall be preached to all for whom Christ died, and that through the proclamation of the gospel, He will exercise His sovereign power in saving His elect. This group believe in the absolute depravity of man and his total inability to believe apart from the enabling power of the Spirit, and that the death of Christ, being forensic, is a sufficient ground for any and every man to be saved, should the Spirit of God choose to draw him. They contend that the death of Christ of itself saves no man, either actually or potentially, but

³⁶¹ *Ibid.* p. 394.

that it does render all men *savable*; that salvation is wrought of God alone, and at the time the individual believes.³⁶²

We have already quoted the five passages which limited redemptionists use to bolster their arguments, with the comment that the fact that Christ died for the elect does not necessarily mean that He died *only* for the elect. There are many more passages of Scripture which clearly state that Christ died for more than the elect, that He died for the whole world.

Reference has already been made to John 3:16 that God so loved the world that He gave His Son in order that the world might be saved, and to [1 John 2:2](#), where He is said to be the propitiation for the whole world. And we have commented sufficiently to show the unreasonableness of trying to make the world mean only a select company of elect taken out of the world, especially when in the same context the world is that group that hates the elect.

The universality of the death of Christ is clearly set forth in 2 Corinthians 5:19: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." The inconsistency of making the world here to be only the elect can be seen from what follows. Paul has to beseech the world of unbelievers to be reconciled to God. Why, we ask, would Paul choose to use this word *world* in this passage to represent only a select group of humanity, when elsewhere he uses it in a universal sense? Was Paul talking about only the elect when he uttered the following: "from the creation of the world" (Romans 1:20); "all the world may become guilty before God" (Romans 3:19); "by one man sin entered into the world" (Romans 5:12); "the world by wisdom knew not God" (1 Corinthians 1:21); "the saints shall judge the world" (1 Corinthians 6:2); "that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:52); "the world is crucified unto me" (Galatians 6:14)? Paul uses the word *world* some forty-six times elsewhere where the meaning cannot be, under any stretch of the imagination, the elect, and yet in this one passage we are told we must change the definition and usage of the word.

Hebrews 2:9 states: "that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." The word for "every" is *pantos*, also translated "all." Several other statements occur which use the word *pantos*: "If one died for all, then were all dead" (2 Corinthians 5:14). "Who gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:6). "We trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe" (1 Timothy 4:10). "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). These statements taken at face value certainly teach that Christ did something for every man without exception when He died. It is admitted that there may be exceptions when *pantos* does not mean universal all, but the context will indicate this, as it does, for example in 1 Corinthians 15:27, where it is stated that God has put all things under Christ's feet; but Paul

³⁶² Chafer, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 184, 185.

is quick to explain: "But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him."

Romans 5:6 presents a different approach: "in due time Christ died for the ungodly." The question arises: "Were the elect the only ones who could classify as ungodly?" Once we admit that all men universally are by nature ungodly, we have admitted that Christ died for all men universally. It is as simple as that.

There are also the many "whosoever" passages which clearly imply a universal provision. What is the sense of God declaring over a hundred times: "Whosoever will may come; Whosoever believeth on him shall not perish but have everlasting life; Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved;" etc., etc., if in fact it was impossible for all to be saved? It is not here a matter simply of the elect and the non-elect. God could have provided salvation only for the elect, but had He done so it would have been untrue for Him to announce that salvation as though it had been provided for all.

There are other verses which indicate that Christ's blood was shed for men who will ultimately be lost. 2 Peter 2:1: "... even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction." There must be some sense in which Christ paid a ransom price for these apostates, or Peter's words are meaningless. Likewise, in Hebrews 10:29, the writer speaks of those who have trodden under foot the Son of God, and have counted the blood of the covenant, "wherewith he was sanctified," an unholy thing. Here again it is stipulated that the blood of Christ, trampled under foot by these apostates, was that whereby they were sanctified.

Finally, there are analogies in Scripture which teach a universal provision. For example, Christ spoke of how God caused the sun to shine and the rain to fall upon the just and the unjust alike ([Matthew 5:45](#)). What is the thrust of this passage if not to teach that God lavishes his gifts upon all without discrimination, that He makes provision for all, that He loves all, and that He wants His children to be like Him. The same principle is seen in [Hebrews 6:7, 8](#), where the earth drinks in the rain that often falls upon it, resulting in herbs for man's food and also thorns and briars whose end is to be burned. The point here is that the rain, God's provision for life, falls upon the weeds as well as upon the useful herbs.

In conclusion, two things should be said. First, if the atonement is limited in its provision, the Bible writers chose the very poorest words by which to express this fact. The world, the whole world, all, whosoever,--these are the words which are best fitted to express universality. If God had wanted to express universality we cannot imagine any words better suited to convey that meaning. There appears to be something wrong with a theory which necessitates the changing of the meaning of so many words in order to defend its position.

The other thing which needs to be said concerns the exact meaning of the word *provision*. When we say that a father provides food for his family do we mean that he not only provides the money with which to purchase the food, but that he also forces each member of his family to eat all that he has provided? Or is it possible that some members of the family do not like and therefore refuse to eat the food which has been provided? It seems evident that the limited redemptionists admit the use of the word *provide* to mean only the former: that provide means both the supplying and the application of salvation; that it cannot mean only the supplying of salvation. It is our position that God can and has supplied or provided salvation for every man, and that some men accept and others reject it. But we hardly see how one can reject that which was never provided for him. And we believe that this view gives to the preacher of the gospel great assurance and liberty in preaching, so that he can honestly believe that he has a message which is designed and fitted to the needs of every man, woman, and child who will ever come under the sound of his voice. On the other hand, how can one who sincerely believes that Christ made no provision for the salvation of the great bulk of humanity, sincerely tell an audience that Christ died for their sins, that whosoever wills may come, and that whosoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved?

54 THE MEANS OF GRACE

By *means of grace* is meant primarily the means by which the grace of God in salvation is communicated to the believer. Theologians have probably differed as much upon this point as on any other doctrine of the Bible. All branches of Christendom which acknowledge the Bible as the Word of God are agreed that Jesus Christ is the Savior and that His death is basic to the provision of salvation. It is there that the agreement ends. How does the needy sinner avail himself of the merits of Christ's work? Does God distribute salvation through some kind of middleman? Has the Church or some particular denomination been made the repository for it? Is there some mysterious religious ordinance by means of which the grace of God is received? Is there any kind of work which the sinner must accomplish as a prerequisite to being saved? We shall first of all look at the teachings of the various Christian denominations on the subject, and then examine the Scriptures from a dispensational point of view in an effort to resolve the problems associated with it.

It should be pointed out that *the means of grace* are usually associated with the word *sacraments*. The Roman Catholic church recognizes seven sacraments which it claims were instituted by Christ, whereas high Protestant churches recognize only two, water baptism and the Lord's Supper, but choose to call them ordinances rather than sacraments.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia in its article on Sacraments states:

The word "sacrament" comes from the Lat *sacramentum*, Whether referring to an oath of obedience or to something set apart for a sacred purpose, it is evident that *sacramentum* would readily lend itself to describe such ordinances as Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In the Gr. NT, however, there is no word or even any general idea corresponding to "sacrament," nor does the earliest history of Christianity afford any trace of the application of the term to certain rites of the church, ... It is in the writings of Tertullian (end of 2d and beginning of 3d cent.) that we find the first evidence of the adoption of the word as a technical term to designate Baptism, the Eucharist, and other rites of the Christian church In the NT the sacraments are presented as means of grace. Forgiveness (Acts 2:38), cleansing (Eph. 5:25), spiritual quickening (Col. 2:12) are associated with Baptism; the Lord's Supper is declared to be a participation in the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16). So far all Christians are agreed; but wide divergence shows itself thereafter. According to the doctrine of the Roman church, sacraments are efficacious *ex opere operato*, i.e. in virtue of a power inherent in themselves as outward acts whereby they communicate saving benefits to those who receive them without opposing any obstacle. The Reformed doctrine, on the other hand, teaches that their efficacy lies not in themselves as outward acts, but in the blessing of Christ and the operation of His Spirit, and that it is conditioned by faith in the recipient. The traditional Lutheran doctrine agrees with the Reformed in affirming that faith is necessary as the condition of saving benefits in the use of the sacraments, but resembles the Rome teaching in ascribing the efficacy of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, not to the attendant working of the Holy Spirit, but to a real inherent and objective virtue resident in them--a virtue, however, which does not lie (as the Roman church says) in the mere elements and actions of the sacraments, but in the power of the Divine word which they embody.³⁶³

The above quotation, while defining the beliefs of the Roman, Reformed, and Lutheran bodies, is in error in stating that all Christians are agreed that the sacraments are presented in the New Testament as means of grace. More will be said on this subject under the heading of Ecclesiology, where the doctrines of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are dealt with more fully.

AUTHORITATIVE STATEMENTS OF BELIEF

The Roman Catholic Church

"Cone. Trident," Sess. 7, can. 1.- If any one saith that the sacraments of the New Law, were not all instituted by Jesus Christ, our Lord, or that they are more or less than seven, to wit, Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist,

³⁶³ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, op. cit., Vol. IV, pp. 2636, 2637.

Penance, Extreme Unction, Order, and Matrimony; or even that any one of these seven is not truly and properly a sacrament; let him be anathema.

Can. 4 - If any one saith that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary unto salvation, but superfluous; and that, without them, or without the desire thereof, men obtain of God, through faith alone, the grace of justification (though all the sacraments are not necessary for every individual); let him be anathema.

If any one saith that the sacraments of the New Law do not contain the grace which they signify; or that they do not confer that grace on those who do not place an obstacle thereunto; as though they were merely outward signs of grace or justice received through faith, and certain marks of the Christian profession, whereby believers are distinguished amongst men from unbelievers; let him be anathema.³⁶⁴

From these authoritative statements it is evident that the Roman Church teaches that the sacraments of the church are the means whereby the grace of justification is conferred upon the believer, and that the grace of God cannot be received by faith alone.

The Lutheran Doctrine

Lutheran doctrine on the means of grace is similar to that of the Roman Church, in that the so-called sacrament of baptism is essential for the receiving of salvation.

"Apol. Aug. Conf.," p. 156--The ninth article is approved in which we confess, that Baptism is necessary for salvation, and that children are to be baptized, and that the baptism of children is not void, but necessary and efficacious to salvation.³⁶⁵

The Lutheran view differs from the Roman view in at least two respects. Lutherans recognize only two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, both of which are means of grace, and they reject the Roman view that the sacraments confer grace *ex opere operato*. Bellarmin explains what is meant by this expression:

That which actively, proximately, and instrumentally effects the grace of justification is that sole external action which is called a sacrament, and this is called an *opus operatum*, being received passively (*operatum*), so that it is the same for a sacrament to confer grace *ex opere operato*, that it is to confer grace by virtue of the sacramental action itself, instituted by

³⁶⁴ A. A. Hodge, *op. cit.*, pp. 599, 600.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.601.

God for this end, and not from the merit either of the agent or of the receiver.³⁶⁶

The Reformed Doctrine

Berkhof states the Reformed view in these words:

They deny that the means of grace can of themselves confer grace, as if they were endued with a magical power to produce holiness. God and God only is the efficient cause of salvation. And in the distribution and communication of His grace He is not absolutely bound to the divinely appointed means through which he ordinarily works, but uses them to serve His gracious purposes according to His own free will. But while they do not regard the means of grace as absolutely necessary and indispensable, they strongly oppose the idea that these means may be treated as purely accidental and indifferent and can be neglected with impunity. God has appointed them as the ordinary means through which He works His grace in the hearts of sinners, and their wilful neglect can only result in spiritual loss.³⁶⁷

A. A. Hodge describes the Reformed view under seven heads:

Hence as to the efficacy of the sacraments the Reformed--1st. Deny that they confer grace *opus operatum*. 2d. They affirm that they confer no grace to the unworthy recipient. 3d. That their efficacy is not of the mere moral power of the truth they symbolize. 4th. That they do really confer grace upon the worthy recipient. 5th. But they do this instrumentally, because the supernatural efficiency is not due to them, nor to him that administers them, but to the Holy Spirit who as a free personal agent uses them sovereignly as his instruments to do his will 6th. That as seals of the covenant of grace they convey and confirm grace to those to whom it belongs, *i.e.*, that is to those who are within that covenant, and in the case of adults, only through a living faith. 7th. That the grace conferred by the sacraments often is conferred upon true believers before and without their use.³⁶⁸

Remonstrant (Zwinglian) Doctrine

Limborch, "Christ. Theo.," 5, 66, 31.--It remains to say that God, through the sacraments, exhibits to us his grace, not by conferring it in fact through them, but by representing it and placing it before our eyes through them as clear and evident signs And this efficacy is no other than objective, which requires a cognitive faculty rightly disposed that it may be able to

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.600

³⁶⁷ Berkhof, *op. cit.*, p. 608

³⁶⁸ A. A. Hodge, *op. cit.* P. 596.

apprehend that which the sign offers objectively to the mind They operate upon us, as signs representing to the mind the thing whose sign they are. No other efficacy ought to be sought for in them.³⁶⁹

Baptist Doctrine

Baptists in general reject the use of the term sacrament and in its place use the word ordinance. Strong states:

By the ordinances, we mean those outward rites which Christ has appointed to be administered in his church as visible signs of the saving truth of the gospel. They are signs, in that they vividly express this truth and confirm it to the believer Instead of being the external manifestation of a preceding union with Christ, they are the physical means of constituting and maintaining this union.³⁷⁰

The Baptist position is nearest to that of the Zwinglian; however, as Strong has pointed out, Baptists hold that one must have first received the grace of God by faith before he is a fit candidate to observe the ordinance.

The Dispensational Position

Practically all dispensationalists agree that there are no sacramental means of grace in effect in this present dispensation of the grace of God. Even those who practice water baptism do so, not for the purpose of conferring the grace of God in salvation, but for a variety of reasons: as an act of obedience to Christ, as a symbol of death and burial, as a testimony to the world, as an initiation into church membership, etc. Thiessen, an Acts 2 dispensationalist, is representative of this school which believes in the practice of both water baptism and the Lord's Supper, not as sacraments conferring grace, but as ordinances to be practiced after God's grace has been received. He states:

In order to avoid giving any encouragement to sacramentarianism we prefer the word *ordinances*.³⁷¹

Concerning the Lord's Supper he wrote:

We would not rob this holy ordinance of any of its meaning, but seek to uphold its Scriptural significance to the full. Yet there is danger on this theory (that of the Westminster Confession) that the mere observance of the Supper may be regarded as conferring grace.³⁷²

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 602.

³⁷⁰ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 930.

³⁷¹ Thiessen, *op. cit.*, p. 422

³⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 431.

The Mid-Acts dispensationalists (those who begin the new dispensation with Paul in mid-Acts, instead of at Pentecost) agree essentially with Thiessen on the Lord's Supper, but hold a different view on baptism. Water baptism was an essential part of the Mosaic ritualism. The Hebrews letter states that Judaism had its standing in meats and drinks and various baptisms, all of them carnal ordinances (9:10). These ordinances were not mere witnesses to something already received from God, but were requirements for this covenant nation. One of the many baptisms of the law was the water of separation, connected with the ordinance of the red heifer. Numbers 19:20 describes the man who would not avail himself of this ceremony:

"But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the Lord: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean."

Not only were all of these Mosaic baptisms required in order to receive God's blessings, but it appears that John's baptism and that of the Twelve also were of the same nature. They are both called "a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38). The commission to the Twelve stated: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16), and not, as so many have interpreted it: "he that believeth and is saved should be baptized." There is no indication in the early preaching of the Twelve that the Holy Spirit was imparted before or apart from baptism. Peter's message was: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye *shall* receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Philip's converts in Samaria were baptized but did not receive the Holy Spirit until some days later (Acts 8:12-17). It was not until the first Gentile heard the message of salvation and believed that the Holy Spirit was imparted before and apart from baptism (Acts 10:44-48). When Saul was saved he was told "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). No religious ordinance ever had the power in itself to impart grace or forgiveness, but it appears very evident that in God's dealings with Israel He channeled His blessings through the instrumentality of ordinances, but not apart from faith. Therefore it would appear that baptism was an ordinance which was an instrumental means of grace, but the Lord's Supper is never so represented in Scripture. It is not even a specific command, but only "as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show forth the Lord's death until He comes." Just as a circumcision made without hands supplanted the ritual circumcision of Judaism under Paul's new dispensation (Philippians 3:3; Colossians 3:11), so also Spirit baptism supplanted water baptism. This subject is dealt with more fully under Ecclesiology.

If there are no sacraments or ordinances in this dispensation which confer God's grace, how then is that grace received? To answer this question we must define what we mean by grace. If we mean salvation, including the ideas of justification and the forgiveness of sins, then we can answer simply with Paul:

"By grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8).

Whereas in other dispensations faith required the exercise of various ordinances and sacrifices, in this present dispensation of the grace of God it is faith alone apart from all such ceremonies. Paul's message is:

"But NOW the righteousness of God *apart from* the law is manifested, even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe" (Romans 3:21, 22).

The contrast of NOW would be meaningless if the righteousness of God was not ministered in conjunction with the law in the former dispensation. Thus the grace of God in salvation comes by faith which operates apart from any and all physical or material religious ceremonies.

If by means of grace is meant the means whereby Christians receive spiritual enrichment, a number of things might be mentioned. Hodge, however, does not concur that this is what is meant by means of grace.

By means of grace are not meant every instrumentality which God may please to make the means of spiritual edification to his children. The phrase is intended to indicate those institutions which God has ordained to be the ordinary channels of grace, *i.e.*, of the supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit, to the souls of men. The means of grace, according to the standards of our Church, are the word, sacraments, and prayer.³⁷³

Strangely enough, A. A. Hodge confesses:

Many who receive the sacraments are notoriously without the grace they signify Many have had the grace without the sacraments.³⁷⁴

Abiding by Hodge's definition of the means of grace but omitting sacraments, we are left with two, the Word of God and prayer. In a very true sense the Word of God is the means whereby all of God's blessings are imparted, for it is the Word that contains the gospel of salvation and all of the promises of God. Thiessen points out the fact that the Word represents itself to us as a means of grace in various ways:

The Bible is a *Hammer* (Jer. 23:29) with which to break the hard heart; it is a *Critic* (Heb. 4:12, so the Greek adj. *kritikos*) of the "feelings and thoughts of the heart" (Westcott, *In loc.*); it is a *Mirror* (2 Cor. 3:18; Jas. 1:25) to reveal the true condition of man; it is a *Laver* (Eph. 5:26; Ps. 119:11; John 15:3) for the washing of the defiled; it is *Seed* (Luke 8:11; 1 Pet. 1:23) for the soil; it is the *Sun* (Ps.

³⁷³ Charles Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 466.

³⁷⁴ A. A. Hodge, *op. city.*, p. 594.

19:1-6) for the seed sown; it is the *Rain* and the *Snow* (Isa. 55:10,11) for the seed sown; it is *Food* (Job 23:12) for the hungry,--milk for babes (1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12, 13) bread for the more mature (Deut. 8:3; Isa. 55:1, 2), strong meat for the full grown (1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5: 12-14), and *Honey* for all (Ps. 19:10); it is *Gold* (Ps. 19:10; 119:72) for the poor; it is a *Lamp* (Ps. 119:105; Prov. 6:23; 2 Cor. 4:6; 2 Pet. 1:19) for the traveler; it is a *Sword* (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12; Rev. 19:15) for the soldier; and it is *Fire* (Jer. 20:9; 23:29; Ps. 39:3) to impel the believer to service.³⁷⁵

The Scripture plainly declares that without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6), and that the sinner is justified by faith apart from works (Romans 3:28). By what means, then, does the sinner receive faith? Again the Scripture is very plain: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). It is impossible to have faith in that concerning which one has never heard. Therefore one must first hear the gospel of salvation which is contained in the Word of God before he can believe. But the Word of God is not merely a book which relates certain facts about God and His salvation. The Scriptures are able to make one wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). "For the Word of God is quick (alive), and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12). "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:23). "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth" (James 1:18). These Scriptures indicate that the Word of God not only relates facts but that it is powerful and able to generate faith in those who hear. However, we should not make the mistake that some have, - in supposing that there is some magical power in the Bible which operates by itself in producing the results previously mentioned, or that the power in the Bible is due merely to the moral power of the truths it contains. The Word is called the sword of the Spirit; that is, it is the implement which the Holy Spirit uses. The Holy Spirit moved upon men to write the Word and in the hand of the Spirit the Word becomes a living and life-giving Word. As far as revelation is concerned, the Holy Spirit always works through the Word, and He uses that Word, not in a mechanical way, but in a personal, sovereign way as it pleases Him.

It appears evident, therefore, that in this present dispensation the means that God uses to impart salvation to the sinner is the Word of God empowered by the Spirit of God received by faith apart from ceremonial works. The fact that multitudes of sinners have received Christ and have manifested the grace of God in their lives entirely apart from and before receiving water baptism is evidence that the grace of salvation is not conferred through baptism. Concerning the other so-called sacrament, the Lord's Supper, sufficient evidence is presented on this subject under the heading of Ecclesiology to answer the claim that the actual body and blood of Christ are conveyed to the recipient. It is of course true that any truly spiritual exercise, whether it be reading the Word of God, praying, fellowshiping with God's people, listening to a sermon, studying the Word,

³⁷⁵ Thiessen, *op. cit.*, pp. 394, 393.

brings and should bring spiritual blessing, but this is a far different thing from what is affirmed to be the workings of the sacraments.

Although Hodge, Thiessen and other theologians consider Prayer to be a means of grace there is a question whether it should be singled out as one of the two or three appointed means whereby God conveys His spiritual blessings. It is no doubt a divinely appointed institution and a very important one. It is a means of obtaining things from God, for one of the major aspects of prayer is that of making petition. And we are told that we receive not because we ask not, and that we ask and receive not because we ask amiss ([Philippians 4:6](#); [James 4:2, 3](#)). Prayer is also worship, praise, and communion with God, all of which result in spiritual enrichment and glory to God. Prayer is not only a privilege but a command based upon faith in the Word of God, and just as salvation comes through direct, personal faith in God through the Word, so prayer operates in the same way.

In conclusion, we repeat that there are many and varied spiritual exercises which may minister grace and strength to the child of God, but these are not what is meant by theologians when they speak of the means of grace. We prefer to let this expression remain the property of the sacramentalists and to simply give the Word of God its rightful due as the source of all spiritual blessings which are received by faith alone. We do not believe that the Bible teaches that God has established some kind of repository or pipeline through which He transmits His grace to man.

55 THE TERMS OF SALVATION

The previous chapter has dealt with what might be called ceremonial terms of salvation, that is, religious ceremonies such as baptism and the Lord's Supper considered as conditions imposed as the requisites for receiving salvation. This chapter will deal with another set of moral and emotional conditions which some have imposed upon the gospel. In the former chapter one of the considerations was, "Believe and be baptized." Here the question will be, "Repent and believe," or "Confess and believe." In other words, the question to be answered is, what conditions, if any, has God placed upon the reception of salvation in addition to faith? Is the sinner justified by faith alone, or must he do something besides believe in order to be saved? The answer to the baptism question is largely a dispensational one; baptism was a requirement for the covenant nation of Israel under their Messianic Kingdom program and no such stipulation was made under the new dispensation of which Paul was made the administrator ([1 Cor. 1:17](#)). The issues to be discussed in this chapter are both dispensational and lexical in nature.

FAITH AND REPENTANCE

Definition of Repentance

Our English word *repent* is derived from the Latin word which means to be penitent, to feel sorry or contrite and to submit to penance or punishment. This, however, is not the meaning of the Greek word of which repentance is the translation. The Greek verb is *metanoeo* and the noun *metanoia*, meaning to change the mind. *Meta* means after and *noeo* means to think, so that the word etymologically means *after-thought*. It refers to reconsidering or changing the mind after an action has taken place. The Greek word has no element of emotional feeling contained in it. Sorrow may accompany a change of mind or it may not. Godly sorrow may lead to repentance ([2 Corinthians 7:10](#)), but it is not in itself repentance. One may be sorry without changing his mind. Since the popular concept of repentance is sorrow for sin, it is first of all necessary to arrive at a correct definition of the term in order to understand the meaning of the scriptural doctrine of repentance. We shall not endeavor to find a substitute term for the Greek word, but keep the English word *repentance* and give it the meaning of *metanoeo*.

Scriptural usage of repentance

The Greek words for repent and repentance occur 58 times in the New Testament, and it would appear highly significant that Paul's epistles contain only five references to the word ([Romans 2:4](#); [2 Corinthians 7:9, 10](#); [12:21](#); and [2 Timothy 2:25](#)). The other 53 occurrences of the word are in those Scriptures which deal primarily with the nation of Israel in covenant relationship to God. Israel, being a covenant people already, were not told to repent in order to become a covenant people. As a covenant people who had strayed away from God they are called upon to change their minds, to turn back to God. This fact indicates that the major usage of the word refers not to becoming saved but to an adjustment of those who are already in covenant relation to God. In this connection Chafer states:

A covenant that is unconditional, as the above-named covenants are, is not affected by any human elements, nor is it changeable even by God Himself. However, the *fact* of a covenant and the experience of its blessings are two different things. It is possible to be under the provisions of an unconditional covenant and to fail for the time being to enjoy its blessings because of sin. When sin has cast a limitation upon the enjoyment of a covenant and the covenant, being unchangeable, still abides, the issue becomes, not the remaking of the covenant, but the one issue of the sin which mars the relationship. It therefore follows that, for covenant people, there is a need of a divine dealing with the specific sin and a separate and unrelated repentance respecting it. This repentance is expressed by confession to God. Having confessed his sin, David did not pray for his salvation to be restored; he rather prayed for the restoration of the "joy" of his salvation ([Ps. 51:12](#)). In like manner it is joy and fellowship

which confession restores for the believer (1 Jn. 1:3-9). When Christ came offering Himself to Israel as their Messiah and announcing their kingdom at hand, He, with John and the apostles, called on that people to repent in preparation for the proffered kingdom. There was no appeal concerning salvation or the formation of covenant; it was restoration of the people by a change of mind which would lead them to forsake their sins (Matt. 10:6ff.). The application of these appeals made to covenant Jews concerning their adjustments within their covenants to individual unregenerate Gentiles, who are "strangers from the covenants" (Eph. 2:12), is a serious error indeed.³⁷⁶

None of the references to the word in Paul's epistles is associated with faith in the receiving of initial salvation, with the exception perhaps of Romans 2:4: "Or despiseth thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Here the context concerns the ungodly who should be led to change their minds about God because of His goodness and longsuffering with them. This change of mind would then lead them to submission in faith unto Him. The three occurrences in 2 Corinthians all have to do with Christians changing their minds. In ch. 7:8-10 it is most important to translate accurately, for here we find another Greek word translated *repent* and the subject of sorrow is injected into the discussion.

For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent (Gr. *metamelomai* - regret), though I did repent (regret); for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance (*metanoia*--a change of mind); for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance (a change of mind) to salvation not to be repented of (not to be regretted); but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

Here it is evident that sorrow and repentance are two separate things. Worldly sorrow ends in death; godly sorrow brings about a change of mind regarding sin and God. The salvation here mentioned is not initial salvation, for these people were already saved as a once for all fact. The reference is to what may be called present tense salvation, or deliverance from the power of sin. The reference in ch. 12:21 is likewise about those believers at Corinth who had not changed their mind about the uncleanness, fornication, and lasciviousness which they had committed.

The reference in 2 Timothy 2:25 is apparently to the unsaved, who are taken captive by the Devil at his will: "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." Here it is important to note that God is giving the change of mind, and that the result of this will be the acknowledging of the truth.

³⁷⁶ Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 375, 376.

Paul, in his sermons recorded in Acts, mentions repentance three times: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (17:30). "Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (20:21). "But shewed first unto them at Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance" (26:20).

From these three passages it is evident that Paul, the apostle chosen to be the administrator of this present dispensation, preached about the necessity of all men repenting, Gentiles as well as Jews. But the question arises, does Paul say that the sinner must repent as a separate and distinct work from believing the gospel? Does he have to do two distinct things in order to be saved, repent and then believe? We answer these questions with an emphatic "No!" for the following reasons.

Saving faith always includes the element of changing of the mind, just the same as it contains the idea of conversion or turning. In Acts 26:20, quoted above, Paul preached that men "should repent and *turn* to God." But everyone who simply believes the gospel is by that act turning to God. This is well illustrated by Paul's statement about the Thessalonians, "How ye *turned* to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thessalonians 1:9). A man may change his mind about his sins and yet not turn to God. He may turn to something else. But the man who acknowledges the gospel to be God's message of salvation and trusts Jesus Christ as his Savior must of necessity in so doing both change his mind and turn to God in the act of faith.

That repentance and turning are to be included as elements of saving faith is further evident from the fact that in the major passages on salvation only faith is mentioned as the condition of receiving salvation. John wrote his Gospel with the avowed purpose that men might receive eternal life by believing on Jesus Christ (20:31), and while he mentions believing over one hundred times he never mentions repentance even once. If repentance were required as a separate act from believing, it is inconceivable that John would never have made reference to it. The same thing is true in Paul's epistles. His great summary statement in Romans about justification is, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law" (3:28), and, we might add, apart from everything else. As noted before, Paul does not employ the word once in any of the following epistles: 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, and Titus, but he surely states the terms of salvation many times in those epistles.

Dispensationalists are sometimes accused of not preaching repentance or of preaching against it. This charge is untrue. What they oppose is the preaching today to unsaved Gentiles who are strangers from the covenants of promise the

message of repentance which God sent to His covenant nation of Israel. In early Acts Israel needed to repent as a nation of the sin of rejecting and crucifying their Messiah. Our job today is to present that crucifixion as the basis of God's good news to the world. Evangelists often err in their preaching of repentance. Besides the mistake just mentioned, they often make repentance to be sorrow for sin or a giving up of all known sin as a prerequisite to believing and being saved. A saved person should desire to give up his sins, but it is hopeless to tell the sinner that he must first cleanse himself from his sins before He can come to Christ. The very purpose in coming to Christ is to be cleansed. Some preach repentance and water baptism of Acts 2:38 as the terms of salvation today, and this frustrates the grace of God. These and other errors spring from either ignorance of the meaning of repentance or from a failure to recognize dispensational changes which have taken place in God's program.

FAITH AND CONFESSION OF CHRIST

On the basis of Romans 10:9, 10 it is contended by some that there must be a public confession of Christ plus believing on Him before salvation becomes a reality. "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus (Jesus as Lord) and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The words of Christ are also quoted in support of this teaching: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32, 33).

It should be evident first of all that if confessing with the mouth is made an absolute prerequisite to receiving salvation, it would be impossible for a dumb person to be saved. Out of the dozens of passages which state the terms of salvation elsewhere in Scripture, none state that confessing as a separate act is a requirement. Furthermore, such a requirement would make it impossible for a person isolated from society to be saved through reading the Word of God and believing the gospel.

It might as well be argued from the context which follows in Romans 10 that a person must literally call with his voice on the name of the Lord to be saved (vs. 13), or that in order to be saved one must listen audibly to a preacher (vs. 14). One can call on the Lord without uttering any audible sound, and one can hear the gospel by simply reading the Word. This does not at all mean that one should not confess Christ with his mouth or hear with his ears if he has them, or preach the Word audibly: it means simply that none of these things are essential prerequisites to receiving salvation. They are not a part of the terms of the gospel.

Paul's reference to the mouth and heart in salvation is to be understood in reference with what has gone before. Shedd in commenting on this passage states:

Thought is internal language; and language is external thought Faith and confession are two modes of the same thing: viz., the new divine life in the soul. Christian confession is as truly a gracious and holy act, as Christian faith. A man who is ashamed of Christ does not savingly believe in him. There may be saving faith when, owing to providential reasons, it is impossible to confess it publicly; but in this case there is a *desire* to confess the faith of the heart, and the desire is the will, and the will, in the sight of God, is the deed (2 Cor. viii. 12) The meaning (of vs. 10), of course, is not that faith is the instrumental cause of justification, and confession that of salvation. This is to divide the indivisible. Salvation supposes justification, and confession supposes faith. Each, therefore, may stand for the other. St. Paul could have said: "With the heart, faith is exercised unto salvation, and with the mouth, confession is made unto justification;" because sincere confession is meant, and this implies faith.³⁷⁷

It would thus appear that true faith and confession are, like true faith and repentance, but the two sides of the same coin. And the reason, perhaps, why the two are sometimes mentioned together is that there is a possibility of a change of mind or of a verbal confession without there being true faith. Surely there is no thought in confession here of any set formula or group before whom confession is to be made. Neither are we to suppose that a person who truly believes the gospel is unsaved until he makes a public confession, for this would make faith and confession two separate, isolated acts.

FAITH AND CONFESSION OF SINS

There are those who, on the basis of 1 John 1:9, reason that one must not only believe the gospel but must confess his sins in order to be saved: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Reference is made back to the High-priestly ministry of Christ where it was shown that this passage has nothing to do with initial salvation of the sinner. Confessing sins as a step in salvation would be a hopeless enterprise. How would one be able even to begin to recall all of his sins in order to confess them, and how could he be sure he had confessed them all sufficiently? Under a message of this kind there could never be any assurance of salvation. The sinner is required only to believe the gospel in order to become a child of God. And the people to whom John was writing had already done this. He could call them brethren and little children. He is not writing to tell them how to be saved, but being saved, how to have fulness of joy (1:4) and how to walk in

³⁷⁷ W. G. T. Shedd, *A Critical and Doctrinal Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967--a reprint from 1879 edition), pp. 318, 319.

fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Sin in the Christian's life will destroy both the joy and the fellowship, but if we (believers) confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Confession of sins in this context is a separate act subsequent to saving faith, just as the act of repentance in 2 Corinthians 7:9 was shown to be.

There are doubtless other terms which men have injected into gospel of God's grace, such as the necessity of praying, of making restitution, or surrendering to God, all of which inject some human work as a requirement for salvation in addition to the finished work of Christ.

Chafer gives us this practical advice:

A suggestion born of this theme is that in all gospel preaching every reference to the life to be lived beyond regeneration should be avoided as far as possible. To attend to this is not a deception nor a withholding of the truth from those to whom it applies. It is the simple adjustment to the limitation and actual condition of those to whom the gospel is addressed. To such among the unsaved who, because of the weakness and inability which they observe in themselves, are fearful lest they would not "hold out" as Christians, it is desirable to remind them that, in the new relation to Christ which will exist after they receive Him, new abilities will be possessed by which they can live to the glory of God. Such proffered assurance is far removed from the practice of introducing obligations which are exclusively Christian in character and as something to which they must consent in order to be saved. Multitudes of unsaved people have been diverted from the one question of their acceptance of Christ as Savior to other questions regarding amusements and unchristian ways of living. As an unsaved person has no motive or spiritual light by which to face such problems, that person can only be bewildered by these issues. His problem is not one of giving up what in his unsaved state seems normal to him; it is a problem of receiving the Savior with all His salvation.³⁷⁸

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE

Since we have concluded with Paul that a man is justified by faith alone apart from all manner of human works, it is only proper that we should examine more closely the meaning of faith.

The Word Itself

The Greek word *pistis* is used 243 times in the New Testament and is always rendered *faith* with four exceptions: [Acts 17:31](#) -assurance; [2 Thessalonians](#)

³⁷⁸ Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 387, 388.

2:13-belief; Titus 2:10--fidelity; and Hebrews 10:39--believe. The verb, *pisteuo*, occurs 246 times and is almost always translated *believe*. It is once translated *believers* (Acts 5:14); *commit* 7 times (Luke 16:11; John 2:24; Romans 3:2; I Corinthians 9:17; Galatians 2:7; 1 Timothy 1:11; Titus 1:3); *trust* 3 times (Luke 16:11; I Thessalonians 2:4; 1 Timothy 1:11). These two words are derived from *peitho*, to persuade, to cause belief in a thing. It is used 55 times in the New Testament. It is translated *persuade* 22 times, *obey* 7 times, *trust* 10 times, *confidence* 9 times, *assure* once, *yield* once, *believed* 3 times, *make friend* once, *agree* once. Wherever faith or believe occur in the New Testament it is the translation of one of these Greek words. Vine gives the meaning of *pisteuo*:

to believe, also to be persuaded of, and hence, to place confidence in, to trust, signifies, in this sense of the word, reliance upon, not mere credence.³⁷⁹

Various Senses in Which Faith is Used

1. In its widest sense, faith is the persuasion that a thing is true. We believe that which we consider to be true.

2. Faith is trust. The Greek as well as the Hebrew words for faith mean to be persuaded that a thing or a person is trustworthy.

3. Faith is a persuasion which is stronger than opinion but is weaker than knowledge. Hodge quotes Meiklejohn:

Holding for true, or the subjective validity of a judgment in relation to conviction (which is, at the same time, objectively valid) has the three following degrees: opinion, belief, and knowledge. Opinion is a consciously insufficient judgment, subjectively as well as objectively. Belief is subjectively sufficient, but is recognized as being objectively insufficient. Knowledge is both subjectively and objectively sufficient. Subjective sufficiency is termed conviction (for myself); objective sufficiency is termed certainty (for all).³⁸⁰

4. Faith is based upon facts of knowledge. It is impossible to believe that which we do not know. The Bible teaches that Christ's death is a propitiation for our sins, but if we do not know the meaning of propitiation we can neither believe nor disbelieve the statement. There must be an object for our faith. We cannot have faith in nothing, or stated another way, nothing cannot be the object of our faith. Paul says as much in Romans 10:14: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" And so he concludes, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." We cannot have faith in a person of whom we have never heard. We

³⁷⁹ W. E. Vine, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 116.

³⁸⁰ Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 46.

must first hear what a person has to say before we can believe him. This is true of both man and God. We cannot believe in God, trust Him, have faith in Him unless we have first heard him.

5. Faith or believing, in popular usage, means only an opinion. The statement, "I believe it will rain today," if made by a non-informed person, would be only a guess or an opinion; if made by a weather technician in the light of scientific observations, it would be more of the nature of true faith or belief.

6. Faith is often made to be an independent entity in itself. We are told, "Have faith," without any object being stated or inferred, unless it be to have faith in faith. As stated earlier faith must have an object. Faith cannot exist independently. It is this mistaken concept of faith that gives rise to the idea that faith is a leap in the dark.

Religious Faith

There are at least three different kinds of faith mentioned in the Bible. These may be designated as Rationalistic Faith, Temporary Faith, and Saving Faith.

1. *Rationalistic Faith*. This is faith which is based solely upon reason or mental assent. True faith includes this element but it is more than simple assent to truth. A person through the study of Christian Evidences, Biblical Archeology, Textual Criticism, and other like studies may become convinced that the Bible is authentic and even inspired of God. Or one may have been taught from childhood that the Bible is the Word of God and that Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world, and he may assent to these truths. One may assent to the historical facts of the Bible in the same way he assents to any other historical facts. In each of these cases it may be asserted that the person believes, that he has faith. But if the belief has gone no further than mere mental assent, his faith is dead according to the Bible ([James 2:17, 20, 26](#))- James states that dead faith is not able to save. The converse then must be true that faith must be living in order to be saving faith. Dead faith has never brought any conviction and persuasion concerning spiritual truth. Such faith may be compatible with sin and immorality.

2. *Temporary or Emotional Faith*. This is the kind of faith of which our Lord spoke in Matthew 13:20, 21: "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." John 2:23-25 seems to be an illustration of this kind of faith: "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them (did not *pisteuo* himself to them)." Godet rendered this: "He had no faith in their faith." He did not trust them, for he knew what was in man.

Such manifestations of faith have been mistaken for true, saving faith, and these have given rise to arguments against the security of the believer in Christ. Belief that was generated through miraculous manifestations, as in the case of Christ, or through situations of extreme danger, such as soldiers experience on the battle field, or in cases of extreme need, such as people may feel when a loved one is near death, may go no further than bring a conviction to the soul without renewing it. Then when the crisis has passed or when one is called upon to suffer persecution for the sake of Christ, there is a falling away, and the reason, according to Christ, is that such an one does not have any root in himself. The seed began to sprout, but having no root the process of reproduction was not completed.

3. *Saving Faith*. Saving faith does not mean that faith itself is the savior. It is that faith in the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, which results in regeneration, the renewal of the inner man, and which imparts forgiveness of the penalty of sin and creates one anew as a child of God and a member of the Body of Christ. This kind of faith includes not only mental assent to the truth and emotional feeling, but also the volitional element, the activity of the will in surrendering self to God and appropriating Christ as Savior. It is a persuasion which results in trust and commitment. This vital element of saving faith is indicated in various ways. It is spoken of as receiving Christ: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12). Saving faith receives Jesus Christ as Savior. Eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood is equated with believing in [John 6:53, 54](#) cf. 47. Saving faith is represented not as a simple believing about Christ only, but prepositions are used to indicate something further: believing *epi*, believing upon Him (cf. [Acts 16: 31](#)) "Believe *on* the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Believing *eis*, believing into, is also used, as in John 3:16: "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." The dative case is also used with *pisteuo* to indicate the same truth as in John 5:24: "He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life."

The Source of Faith

Reference has already been made to the fact that faith comes by hearing the Word of God, and in this sense the Word is the Source of faith. There are other considerations to this question, however. The question arises, is the natural man capable of exercising faith in God without God first imparting some kind of enabling work? Most theologians, including both Calvinists and Arminians, agree that the Fall left man in a depraved condition. The Arminian supposes that God extends to all men such a measure of common grace to enable all to exercise faith in God if they will. The Calvinist supposes that God extends irresistible grace to the elect which guarantees that they will exercise saving faith and that He passes by the non-elect. Faith, therefore, is the gift of God and not the product of man's nature. Such passages as [Ephesians 2:8](#) and [Philippians 1:29](#)

are used as proof texts. The general impression is given that faith is a kind of good works and that if the natural man exercised faith of his own accord it would mean that man was partly saved by his own works.

It is evident from the Scripture that the natural, carnal mind is enmity against God; that the unsaved man cannot do any works that are pleasing to God; that there is none that seeketh after God; and that apart from God's initiative both in providing salvation and in applying it none would be saved. Salvation from start to finish is of the Lord. But no man knows why God has chosen only some to salvation and not others. It seems certain that had not God chosen some, none would ever have been saved. This means that none would have exercised faith apart from God's initiative in applying salvation. But is the exercise of faith to be considered as a meritorious work on the part of the sinner? It appears rather that God's work in applying salvation and in calling forth faith from the sinner consists in the varied ministry of the Holy Spirit in bringing such conviction to the sinner through the preaching of the Word and the pleadings and persuasion of God's saints, that the sinner comes to the end of self and simply surrenders, just as a lone soldier out of ammunition and surrounded by a well-armed enemy would do. This surrender, this throwing of one's self upon the mercy and grace of God, instead of being some kind of meritorious work, is the frankest admission that could be made by the sinner that he has absolutely no righteousness or merit. But it was God who supplied the Salvation and it was God who did all of the work in bringing the sinner to despair of self and to admit this hopeless condition. In this sense, then, faith is the gift of God, just as every other facet of salvation is the gift of God, and this is probably the meaning of [Ephesians 2:8](#), and not that God automatically drops down a gift of faith directly into the heart of the elect which irresistibly causes him to believe. There are too many scriptures that speak of faith and believing which attribute it to man to deny the fact that it is man's faith. The gospel becomes an enigma when the unsaved are told that to be saved they must exercise faith, but that only those to whom God grants the irresistible gift of faith can believe. Surely nothing like this is to be found in the pages of the Bible. Paul persuaded men with tears; he extended the invitation to whomsoever; he taught that Christ died for all, and that God was not willing that any should perish. But he also taught that salvation was the free gift of God's grace from beginning to end, and he also taught that the redeemed were chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world.

Other Uses of the Word Faith

Consideration thus far has been concerning saving faith in particular. However, after one is saved, faith still plays an important role in the Christian life. "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). What has been called *sustaining faith* or *sanctifying faith* is the faith that lays hold of the truth of God's Word concerning the new life which the believer has in identification with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, which enables him to live as

though he were actually dead to sin and alive unto God. Faith is required to reckon these rederuptive facts to be experiential in life.

There is also what has been called *serving faith*, which concerns the gifts and enablements necessary for serving God.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion it should be pointed out that the New Testament uses the expression *the faith* to describe the whole Christian message which is to be believed. Paul speaks of the *common faith* in Titus 1:4, and Jude *the faith* which was once for all delivered to the saints in Jude 3. The following verses should probably be understood as referring not to faith as the act of believing, but to the message to be believed: [1 Corinthians 16:13](#); [Galatians 1:23](#); [3:23](#), [25](#); [Ephesians 4:5](#); [Philippians 1:27](#); [Colossians 1:23](#); [2:7](#); [1 Timothy 3:9](#); [5:8](#); [6:10](#), [21](#); [2 Timothy 3:8](#); [4:7](#); [Titus 1:4](#), [13](#); [Jude 3](#).

56 REGENERATION

The one thing that characterizes man in his natural state is death. It is not only appointed unto man once to die, but because of sin he is under the sentence of death. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Man is dead through his trespasses and sins ([Ephesians 2:1](#)). Man is alienated from the life of God ([Ephesians 4:18](#)). If nothing is done to change the situation man is headed for physical death and then the second death. Man's crying need is first of all for life and Christ declared: "I am the life" (John 14:6). "I am come that they might have life" (John 10:10). That which is dead cannot bring itself to life. If man is to have life it must be given to him from a source outside of himself, and therefore we read, "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

The work of God in imparting eternal life through belief of the gospel is called regeneration. It is also spoken of as the new birth, as being born of God, as being born from above. It is sometimes portrayed as a spiritual resurrection, and again as a new or re-creation. It is the specific work of the Holy Spirit. It is an instantaneous act and not a process. Just as in natural birth, the one born does not assist or contribute any effort or work in producing the new life, so it is with spiritual birth.

THE VARIOUS BIBLICAL WORDS

The word *regeneration* occurs but twice in our King James version. It is the translation of the Greek *palingenesis*, which is from the root *gennao*, to be born, plus the prefix *palin*, meaning again. Thus the word means to be born or

generated again. This word occurs in Matthew 19:28, where it refers primarily to the restoration and rejuvenation of nature in millennial times:

"And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

While this regeneration will doubtless include a spiritual renewal for the people of that day, it will touch every aspect of creation, for the creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption ([Romans 8:21](#)), and there will be the restoration of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began ([Acts 3:21](#)).

The second occurrence of the word is in Titus 3:5:

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

This spiritual regeneration of the individual believer through the ministry of the Holy Spirit is spoken of elsewhere by such expressions as "born of the Spirit," "born from above," "born of God," "born again," and "begotten of Him."

"Which were *born*, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1: 13).

".. . so is every one that is *born* of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

".. . for in Christ Jesus I have *begotten* you through the gospel" (1 Corinthians 4: 15).

"I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have *begotten* in my bonds" (Philemon 10).

".. . every one that doeth righteousness is *born* of him" (1 John 2:29)

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit (practice) sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is *born* of God" (1 John 3:9).

".. . every one that loveth is *born* of God" (1 John 4:7).

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is *born* of God, and everyone that loveth him that *begat* loveth him also that is begotten of him" (1 John 5:1).

"For whatsoever is *born* of God overcometh the world" (1 John 5:4).

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is *begotten* of God keepeth himself" (1 John 5:18).

"Blessed be God,... which according to his abundant mercy hath *begotten* us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3).

"*Being born again*, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:23).

James uses the word *apokueo*, to give birth to:

"Of his own will *begat* he us with the word of truth" (James 1:18).

Still another word is used by Paul, *odino*, to travail in birth, which carries out the idea of a spiritual birth:

"My little children, of whom I *travail in birth* again until Christ be formed in you" (Galatians 4:19).

Here Paul who stands in doubt of the Galatians as having been truly born again, represents himself as a mother going through labor pains again to bring them to spiritual birth.

THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION

The necessity of regeneration is perhaps most clearly stated by Christ in John 3:7, "Ye must be born again." The new birth is imperative for becoming a partaker of eternal life and of becoming a member of the family of God. The reason why regeneration is necessary is also stated by Christ: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Flesh can only produce flesh. It is impossible for either the flesh to produce this spiritual life or for spiritual life to be generated spontaneously. The law of biogenesis states that in the natural world life can only be produced by living things or beings. Rocks cannot beget animals. So in the spiritual world, only the Spirit of God can beget spiritual beings with eternal life. This fact is emphasized in [John 1:11-13](#):

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Not only is it physically, psychologically, and spiritually impossible for a human being to regenerate himself, it is impossible that a fallen, corrupt, sinful nature could generate a sinless, holy nature. It is customary to say that whereas the unsaved man has but one nature, the saved person has two natures: the old and the new. Paul speaks of the "old man" which is to be put off, and the "new man" which is to be put on ([Ephesians 4:22-24](#); [Colossians 3:9, 10](#)). Peter states that

we are born again of incorruptible seed ([1 Peter 1:23](#)) and John states that whosoever is born of God does not practice sin; "for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9). The old nature can do nothing but sin, but John seems to be saying that the new nature is holy and cannot sin, because it is born of God. Paul backs up this argument for the sinlessness of the new nature by saying, "put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:24, R.S.V.).

ERRONEOUS VIEWS CONCERNING REGENERATION

Baptismal Regeneration

It is claimed by sacramentarians that the following Scriptures teach that regeneration takes place through the instrumentality of water baptism:

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word "(Ephesians 5:26).

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).

In the first place, although water is mentioned in two of the passages, baptism is not. There are three passages which might seem to indicate that water baptism effects regeneration. Christ commissioned the circumcision apostles: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Peter, in carrying out this commission at Pentecost, told the Jews: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins "(Acts 2:38). And Saul at his conversion was told: "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). These passages show that under the kingdom gospel, water baptism was a requirement, but they do not prove that the physical water was the procuring cause of spiritual regeneration. Water can only ceremonially wash the flesh, according to [1 Peter 3:21](#). Even the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins ([Hebrews 10:4](#)), but only sanctified to the purifying of the flesh ([Hebrews 9:13](#)). The early church fathers who believed in baptismal regeneration recognized the fact that water could not effect a spiritual renewal. Dale quotes Jerome:

"How can the soul, which has not the Holy Spirit, be purged from old defilements? For water does not wash the soul unless it is first washed by the

Holy Spirit, that it may be able to wash others." And he quotes Cyprian to the same effect:

For neither can the Spirit operate without the water, nor the water without the Spirit ... but it is necessary that the water first be purified and sanctified that it may be able by its own baptism to cleanse away the sins of the baptized man.³⁸¹

Thus these men believed that the Holy Spirit did a miraculous work upon the baptismal water giving it supernatural power to actually regenerate the soul. But it will be noted that they did not believe that the water by itself had such ability. Even if John 3:5 referred to water baptism, it still remains that the new birth was by both the water and the Spirit.

But the question arises, did Christ mean to refer to water baptism in His word to Nicodemus? It is surely significant that Jesus used water in this Gospel a number of times in a figurative or spiritual sense. Surely the *living water* which He offered the woman at the well was not literal water (4:10-14). And when He said: "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (7:38), we are plainly told that He was speaking of the Holy Spirit. Even the Old Testament prophets used water as representing the Holy Spirit and His work. Would anyone suppose that Isaiah was speaking of holes in the ground when he said: "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation"? (12:3) And is the writer to the Hebrews, after having told us of the absolute inability of holy water to cleanse from sin, going back to the weak and beggarly elements when he says: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water"?

It is our belief that the water in John 3:5 is the Holy Spirit, and that the "and" (*kai*) should be translated "even," making the passage read: "Except a man be born of water, even of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God."

The "Washing of water" in Ephesians 5:26 is not by baptism, but "by the Word." If the Church was to be sanctified and cleansed by water baptism, is it not strange that Paul was not even commissioned to practice the ceremony which was to effect this work?

Both the Ephesian passage and Titus 3:5 have in common the use of the word *loutron* for washing. *Loutron* is the word for laver. The Septuagint uses this word in such passages as [Exodus 38:8](#) and [Leviticus 8:11](#). Actual water was used in the Old Testament laver, but the book of Hebrews makes it plain that the washings of the priests at the laver were but shadows and types of the spiritual realities which we have in Christ. If the literal water in the Levitical laver is a type, it could not have been a type of literal water. It must have been a type of

³⁸¹ James W. Dale, *Christic and Patristic Baptism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1974), p. 492.

something spiritual. If we were to illustrate the flow of electricity through a wire by using the analogy of pouring water through a pipe, who would be so foolish as to suppose that pouring water on a light bulb would cause it to light? To put literal water into Paul's laver is just as unreasonable as to pour water on the light bulb.

But even if one were ignorant of Old Testament typology, the context of Titus 3 should save him from the error of reading a ceremonial work into the laver of regeneration. Paul introduces this verse with the words: "*not by works of righteousness which we have done.*" Water baptism, when it was God's will for His people, was surely a work of righteousness. The proof texts for baptismal regeneration prove only one thing, and that is that they have been grossly misinterpreted.

Chafer quotes Walvoord to indicate some of the false concepts of regeneration:

Theological usage of the word *regeneration* has tended to confuse rather than enrich the word. Other words such as *conversion*, *sanctification*, and *justification* have been either identified or included in the concept of regeneration. Roman Catholic theologians have regarded *regeneration* as including all that is embraced in salvation, not only justification and sanctification, but even glorification. *Regeneration* is taken to include the means, the act, the process, and the ultimate conclusion of salvation. Protestant theologians have been more cautious in extending the meaning of regeneration. The early Lutheran theologians used regeneration to include the whole process by which a sinner passed from his lost estate into salvation, including justification. Later Lutherans attempted a clarification of the doctrine by holding that justification did not include a transformation of life, thereby excluding sanctification from the doctrine of regeneration. The Lutheran Church continues to hold that infants are regenerated at the moment of water baptism, however, at the same time affirming that this regeneration signifies only their entrance into the visible church, not their certain salvation. Regeneration becomes then merely a preparatory work of salvation Reformed theologians have failed to be consistent in usage also, and have shared to some extent the errors embraced by others Even Calvin failed to make a proper distinction between regeneration and conversion Charles Hodge, however, argues effectively for the necessary distinction in the meaning of these terms (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. III, pp. 3-5). Shedd agrees with Hodge and cites the following contrasts: "Regeneration, accordingly, is an act; conversion is an activity, or a process. Regeneration is the origination of life; conversion is an evolution and manifestation of life. Regeneration is wholly an act of God; conversion is wholly an activity of man. Regeneration is a cause; conversion is an effect. Regeneration is

instantaneous; conversion is continuous" (*Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. II, p. 494).³⁸²

Strong defines regeneration as "that act of God by which the governing disposition of the soul is made holy"³⁸³ He rejects the view that regeneration results in the production of a new nature. He criticizes Hodge's statement that regeneration is an "origination of the principle of the spirit of life, just as literal and real a creation as the origination of the principle of natural life," by accusing him of literalizing Scripture metaphor.³⁸⁴ He illustrates the unsaved man as a runaway locomotive and regeneration as an engineer who changes its course, not by adding any new parts, but simply by reversing the throttle, bringing the engine to a stop and starting it in the opposite direction to which it had been going.³⁸⁵ We would ask of this view, what happens when a Christian sins? Does he get degenerated and need to be regenerated again? It appears that this is a defective view of regeneration. While we do not receive a new soul or become another person in regeneration, Scripture plainly asserts that the believer receives something besides simply a new direction to our dispositions. The warfare between the flesh and the spirit can be satisfactorily explained only on the basis that regeneration has produced something in the believer which was not there before.

There are some dispensationalists, mostly those of the extreme view, who contend that the new birth refers to Israel under the kingdom gospel and that members of the Body of Christ are not born again, but are a new creation. To begin with, this is an inconsistent position for those to take who begin the Body of Christ after Acts 28, for the epistle which states that believers are a new creation is one that was written before the end of the Acts period. As noted earlier, regeneration is best defined as a rebirth or new birth, and the suggestion has been made that the new creation of 2 Corinthians 5:17 refers corporately to the one new man, the Body of Christ, of which all born again believers of this dispensation are members.

57 IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST

Medical science has advanced to the point where surgeons are now able to transplant organs from one body to another. It is not unusual to hear of the transplanting of kidneys, eyes, or even hearts. Strangely enough, the Apostle Paul based his teaching about the Body of Christ upon this same idea of adding members to that Body through a divine operation called *baptism by the Spirit*. The only difference is that Paul considered whole, individual, redeemed persons

³⁸² Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, pp. 114, 115.

³⁸³ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 809.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 825.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 809.

as organs of the one Body ([1 Corinthians 12:12-27](#)).

In the transplanting of bodily organs suppose that a kidney were taken from a criminal and transplanted into the body of the most upright man of the community. Would we now consider that kidney to be criminal or to have become a part of and to have taken on the nature of the man in whose body it now functioned? Surely we would conclude the latter. This organ, though once a part of a dying criminal, is now joined to, incorporated into, brought into an organic union with a new man.

Christians are prone to think of salvation in only one of its many aspects. Some may conceive of salvation simply as the forgiveness of sins, others of escaping eternal punishment or of getting to heaven at last. Few apparently include this doctrine of identification or union with Christ. From the illustration above of the transplanted organ it can be seen that the organ becomes a vital part of the new man, so that whatever is true of the new owner is true of that organ. Likewise when the believing sinner is regenerated and baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Christ, that one becomes one with Christ and shares as a joint-heir in all that Christ is and has done.

The truth of the doctrine of identification is to be found in two classifications of Scriptures: one in which the expression "in Christ" is found, and the other in a group of words compounded with the preposition "*sun*" (together with). The identification itself is effected through the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit. We shall therefore consider first of all this Spirit baptism which makes the believer a member of the Body of Christ and thus places him "in Christ" in this unique relationship. However, we should mention at this point the distinction between being *in Christ* redemptively and being *in the Body of Christ* dispensationally. Christ stated that by reason of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer He would be in the believer and the believer in Him ([John 14:20](#)). Thus, in this sense, every believer from Pentecost to the end of time is in Christ, and all of the saints who lived before Pentecost will be raised from the dead in an "in Christ" relationship. But not all of the saints of all time are said to be *in Christ* in the sense of being *in the Body of Christ*. Only believers in this present dispensation become members of the Body of Christ. When the last member is added to that Body it will be raptured to be with Christ as a perfect and complete body. During the thousand year millennial kingdom to follow there will doubtless be millions of saints "in Christ" redemptively who will not be in the Body of Christ. We believe that the Body of Christ began with the ministry of Paul, but Paul states that some were in Christ before he was ([Romans 16:7](#)). Believers today are in Christ redemptively as well as being in the Body of Christ.

HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM INTO CHRIST

Paul makes five references to the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit:

1. *Baptism into the Body of Christ.* "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

2. *Baptism into Christ and His death.* "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Romans 6:3).

3. *Baptism into Christ, putting on Christ.* "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27).

4. *One baptism.* "One Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5).

5. *Buried with Christ in the baptism.* "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Colossians 2:11, 12).

That Paul is speaking of Spirit baptism in all of these passages is evident from the following facts. Passage No. 1 plainly states that the baptism is by the Spirit. If it is the Spirit baptism which places the believer into Christ, then other references to a baptism which does the same work must also be to Spirit baptism, for surely there are not two separate and distinct ways of getting into the Body of Christ. Therefore passage No. 2 must also be Spirit baptism, for it is a baptism "into Christ." This passage indicates that by reason of our identification with Christ through Spirit baptism, we also partake of Christ's death baptism ([Luke 12:50](#)). Reference No. 3 must also be Spirit baptism, for it too is a baptism "into Christ." Everyone who has thus been baptized into Christ has put on Christ. Both this passage and No. 2 emphasize that this baptism is effective for everyone who has experienced it. This could not, therefore, refer to any kind of ceremonial baptism, for even the most ardent advocates of baptismal regeneration would not contend that every water-baptized person is saved. Reference No. 4 simply states that there is only ONE baptism for members of the Body of Christ. However, the New Testament makes reference to several distinct baptisms. Therefore Paul must be limiting the present dispensational order to just one of these baptisms.

Some Baptist expositors follow I. M. Haldeman who, in a booklet entitled *Truth on Baptism*, contended that Spirit baptism ceased at Acts 10 and that since that time only water baptism remains as the one baptism for this dispensation. This position is untenable for at least two reasons. In the first place, it is Spirit baptism which places the newly saved person in the Body of Christ, and without it there would be no way to accomplish this work. And in the second place, it is inconceivable that the apostle to whom the present dispensation was committed should have been sent "not to baptize" if the one baptism which remains for this dispensation is that of water. Reference No. 5 is similar to No. 2. That Spirit

baptism is intended here is evident, not only from the fact that it accomplishes the same work as Spirit baptism elsewhere, but by the fact that it is bracketed along with spiritual circumcision, a circumcision made "without hands." Bishop Nicholson has an enlightening comment on this passage:

The meaning is, that we were circumcised in Christ when we were thus buried in the baptism. But now, what baptism is meant? Not baptism with water, surely? For as the circumcision is spiritual, so the baptism must be spiritual. The baptism by the Holy Ghost is the ruling baptism of the New Testament, and is always to be understood except where the language or context makes evident the contrary. Indeed, Rom. 6:4 shows what the baptism is, namely, the baptism into death. The being baptized into anything is the being brought under, and saturated with its influence and power. When we were circumcised in Christ, it was by means of getting under the power of His death so really and thoroughly that we were buried with Him, lying in the same grave.³⁸⁶

IN CHRIST

Scriptural Statements

The expression "in Christ" occurs some seventy times in Paul's epistles and only twice elsewhere (1 Peter 3:16 and 5:14). Probably the central passage on this truth is 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." Other passages tell us, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1); "He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4); "And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:10); "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13).

Nature of This Union

1. *It is a Vital Union.* Paul states: "I was crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). It is not an organizational but an organic union. "For we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones" (Ephesians 5:30). In this latter passage Paul's allusion to the relation of Adam and Eve is significant, for Eve was organically one with Adam when created and was taken from Adam's body as part of him. So likewise the Church of this dispensation is the Body of Christ.

2. *It is a Spiritual Union.* There is, of course, no thought of a physical union of any kind with Christ. We are spiritually united with Christ. And because it is spiritual in nature it is unseen and not demonstrable to the human senses. Christ

³⁸⁶ W. R. Nicholson, *Oneness With Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, reprint, 1951), p. 195.

dwells in our hearts by faith ([Ephesians 3:17](#)). If we partook of Christ in a physical sense each of the millions of believers would have only an infinitesimal part of Christ, but because it is a spiritual union each believer has the whole of the person of Christ.

3. *It is an indissoluble Union.* As Strong points out:

Since there is now an unchangeable and divine element in us, our salvation depends no longer upon our unstable wills, but upon Christ's purpose and power. By temporary declension from duty, or by our causeless unbelief, we may banish Christ to the barest and most remote room of the soul's house; but He does not suffer us wholly to exclude Him; and when we are willing to unbar the doors, He is still there, ready to fill the whole mansion with His light and love.³⁸⁷

False Views of This Union

1. *That It Is a Physical Union.* This view is held by sacramentarians who believe that in partaking of the Lord's Supper they actually eat the physical body and drink the physical blood of Christ, so that they become a part of the physical Christ and the physical Christ becomes a part of them. It is true that Christ in [John 6:51, 54-58](#) spoke of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and while this passage has nothing to do with the Lord's Supper, it is evident from the context that "believing on Him" was equivalent to "eating His flesh and drinking His blood." He stated unequivocally in vs. 47: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." He was surely not giving another and different way to have eternal life in the verses that follow. Besides this is a cannibalistic and heathenish concept which is foreign to the Scriptures for man actually to eat the physical flesh of man and to drink his blood.

2. *That it is a Union of Essence.* This view has been held by many mystics who speak of being absorbed into Deity. Strong quotes one of the disciples of Weigel: "I am Jesus Christ, the living Word of God; I have redeemed thee by my sinless sufferings." And Strong says, "We are ever to remember that the indwelling Christ only puts the believer more completely in possession of himself, and makes him more conscious of his own personality and power. Union with Christ must be taken in connection with the other truth of the personality and activity of the Christian; otherwise it tends to pantheism."³⁸⁸

3. *That it is simply a Moral Union,* that is, that it went no further than, for example, the union which existed between Jonathan and David, where it is written, "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Samuel 18:1). There is a union of friendship, of

³⁸⁷ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 801.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 800.

profession, of endeavor, but all such unions fall far short of expressing that which exists between Christ and the believer.

IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST

As stated earlier, Identification is a doctrine unique to the Pauline revelation. It results from the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit which incorporates the believer into the Body of Christ. It is set forth in Scripture by a number of different words prefixed with the preposition *sun* (meaning *together with*). Such compound words have the sense of meaning a joint relationship. For example, Romans 8:17 states that we are joint-heirs with Christ. The word for heirs is *kleronomoi*, and the word for joint-heirs is *sug-kleronomoi* (the "n" before "k" is changed to "g" for sake of euphony). When Paul describes the mystery in Ephesians 3:6 he uses three terms, all expressing joint relationship: "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs (joint-heirs), and of the same body (a joint-body), and partakers (joint-partakers) of his promise in Christ by the gospel."

By thus being "in Christ" the believer is made to share in the whole history of Christ's passion, burial, resurrection, ascension, and glorification. He is said to have been jointly crucified with Christ (*sunstauroo*, [Romans 6:6](#); [Galatians 2:20](#)); to have been jointly buried with Christ (*sunthaptomai*, [Romans 6:4](#); [Colossians 2:12](#)); to have been jointly raised with Christ (*sunegeiro*, [Colossians 3:1](#)); to have been made to jointly live with Christ (*sunezoopoiesen*, [Ephesians 2:5](#)); to be jointly seated with Christ at present in the heavenly places (*sunekathhen*, [Ephesians 2:6](#)); and in the future to be jointly glorified with Christ (*sundoxasthomen*, [Romans 8:17](#)).

Concerning the baptism which thus identifies the believer with Jesus Christ in this joint relationship, Seiss has this to say on Romans 6:3, 4 and Colossians 2:11, 12:

In these words we have a sublime description of the wonderful efficacy of the Gospel upon the inner being of believers, and a condition of things resulting from their oneness with Christ, which amounts to an actual reproduction of His crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection, in the experience of their hearts

According to our estimate of the type of Paul's mind, and of the conception and import of these passages, they are the words of a man of God laboring to express some of the profoundest mysteries of the transforming power of the Savior's grace. He speaks neither of immersion nor affusion, nor of any mode of performing an external rite, but the inner purification of man's whole moral nature by incorporation with Jesus Christ. The crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection to which he alludes, so far from being mere images of immersion and emersion, are literal terms denoting realities, and pointing, not to a figurative, but to an actual

death of every believer to his sins, and his real resurrection to newness of life. The cross here is not of going under the water, but the inward crucifixion of the old man with the crucifixion of Christ. The parallel in the apostle's mind is not between the outward mode of external baptism, and the death, burial, and resurrection of the Savior, but between these particulars of His passion, and the inward spiritual experiences of those who are truly His. His object is to show, not that Christians ought to walk in newness of life because figuratively raised from a watery grave in an outward ceremony, but that justification by faith, so far from ministering to licentiousness, carries with it and effects in the soul an extinction of man's licentious and sinful being, and sets up in its place, a new and holy creature; that it actually transfers to the believer's heart the whole history of the Savior's passion, and continues it there as a thing now transpiring in the hidden experiences of every true disciple.³⁸⁹

It thus appears from the Divine viewpoint that God saw every believer hanging upon Calvary's cross with Christ; that He saw every believer buried with Christ in Joseph's tomb; that He saw every believer being raised from the dead to live jointly with Christ in a new creation; that He looks upon every believer today as being seated with Christ at His own right hand; and that He will some day glorify every believer with Christ when He is manifested in glory. This doctrine of identification with Christ becomes the basis for the doctrines of sanctification and of eternal security. True victory over sin in the daily life can come only from an understanding and appropriation of this truth. Paul brings in this truth of identification with Christ in answer to the question: "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" and he shows the impossibility of this in that according to his gospel the believer has already died unto sin through baptism into Christ's death. The truth that the believer's death for sin has already been accomplished is also a powerful argument for assurance and security, and for this reason Paul can close this section of Romans with the statement that nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39).

58 FORGIVENESS AND JUSTIFICATION

Forgiveness and justification, while two separate ideas, are in Scriptural salvation the negative and positive aspects of the one operation of God in clearing the sinner of his sins. Forgiveness is the remission or the taking away of the legal penalty for sins, and justification is the judicial declaration of a righteous standing before God. However, since there are several different aspects of forgiveness it will be necessary first to deal with these.

FORGIVENESS

³⁸⁹ Joseph A. Seiss, *The Baptist System Examined* (Philadelphia: G. W. Frederick, 1883), pp. 243, 244.

Different Words Used in Scripture

There are three Hebrew words used in the Old Testament, which are translated by some form of the word *forgive* 51 times, and by some form of the word *pardon* 20 times. The word *pardon* does not occur in the King James New Testament. Two words are there translated by some form of the word *forgive* 58 times, and by some form of the word *remit* 11 times. It should be noted that the word translated *remission* in Romans 3:25 is *paresis* and means "a passing over or suspension of judgment." It is used of sins committed in past dispensations before the death of Christ. God passed over these sins, not as a matter of disregard or indifference, but of forbearance.

The two New Testament words for forgiveness are *aphiemi* or *aphesis*, meaning to send away, dismiss, release; and *charizomai*, meaning to bestow favor unconditionally or to bestow grace upon. It is instructive to note that Paul, the apostle of grace, uses *aphiemi* in the sense of forgiveness only once (Romans 4: 7). Elsewhere when he speaks of forgiveness he uses the word which is derived from the word *grace* itself. *Charizomai* appears in [2 Corinthians 2:7, 10; 12:13](#); [Ephesians 4:32](#); [Colossians 2:13](#) and [3:13](#). Christ also used the word in the parable of the two debtors: "and when they had nothing to pay, he *frankly forgave* them both" (Luke 7:42), showing the completely gracious character of the forgiveness. *Aphiemi* indicates what happens to the sins: they are remitted, sent away, dismissed. *Charizomai* reveals the Divine grace through the death of Christ which made it possible for God thus to clear the sinner from the guilt and penalty of his sins and to restore him to a position of perfect standing before God.

Different Senses in which Forgiveness is Used

There is the forgiveness by the human father of his wayward child, the basis for which is doubtless love. There is the forgiveness by a master of an unfaithful servant. Here the basis may be simply pity or compassion. There is the forgiveness of a criminal granted by a king or governor which is called pardon. Pardon may be granted for good behavior or for a number of other reasons. For example, it seems to have been a custom in the days of Christ to pardon criminals at certain feast times. At the trial of Jesus Pilate said to the Jews: "But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the king of the Jews?" (John 18:39). Matthew 27:15 has it: "Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would."

Lexicographers make the distinction between *forgive* and *pardon* by stating that forgive refers to feelings and pardon to consequences. *Pardon* is the act of the executive or superior, implying the right to punish. It should be noted that in all of the above uses the forgiveness or pardon in no sense clears the offender of his guilt. The pardoned criminal has escaped the penalty of his crime but he is

still a criminal. The forgiven child or friend may now enjoy the fellowship he once forfeited, though his wrong may simply have been excused or condoned. In none of the above cases have we considered the action of a judge in dealing with an infraction of the law. A judge may suspend sentence or he may show leniency, but he may not forgive or pardon the wrongdoer. A judge is bound to execute justice in accordance with the statutes of the law. In the law of Moses it is stated: "If there be a controversy between men, and they come into judgment, that the judges may judge them; then shall they justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked" (Deuteronomy 25:1). No human judge has the right to justify the wicked or to condemn the righteous. This leads us to our next consideration.

A Judge Cannot Forgive or Pardon a Criminal

Since it is wrong for a judge to acquit or justify or let go free the wrongdoer, or to punish the innocent, we are immediately confronted with a problem in the Biblical doctrine of salvation, for we read that God does justify the ungodly ([Romans 4:5](#)), and that He punished the Innocent for the guilty. How can this be?

There are two possible answers to the first part of this question. It may be answered that God can be just in justifying those who through their suffering and good deeds satisfy all of the claims of the broken law. Of course this view supposes that man can in time satisfy his affront to infinite holiness, but the Bible teaches that this is impossible. The penalty for sin is death and eternal separation from God. How, then, could one ever come to the end of the penalty in order to be set free? This is what might be called the naturalistic view of salvation in which God is recognized in His office as Judge. Most people who hold a naturalistic view do not recognize God as a Judge, but simply as a kind and loving Father of all mankind, who can and will forgive His erring children without any thought of exacting justice.

The Roman Catholic view of justification is akin to the above view, in that it holds to a justification by works, but it differs in holding that God through Christ's atonement has provided for the remission of the guilt of original sin, which is received through the sacrament of water baptism, but that all personal sins committed after baptism must be atoned for by the person himself, either through penance and good works in this life or through sufferings endured in purgatory. This whole idea is foreign to the Scripture. No Scripture can be produced that teaches that water baptism remits original sin and no Scripture can be found that describes such a place as purgatory. The only purgatory or place of purging was at the Cross of Christ, where He "by Himself purged our sins" (Hebrews 1:3). On the other hand much Scripture can be quoted which denies the whole idea of justification in the sight of God by works and which upholds the doctrine of justification by faith completely apart from works.

Actually, in neither the Naturalistic nor the Roman Catholic views is there a real justification or acquittal of the sinner. The sinner in any case himself has to

satisfy justice in suffering or paying for his sins. He simply emerges into heaven or a happy estate after a longer or shorter period of suffering. He has in no sense been acquitted or forgiven. He has not been justified; he has justified himself supposedly. He has not been saved, but supposes he has saved himself by his own works. There is surely no good news in such a message. The only thing that approximates good news or hope is that the suffering is temporal and not eternal.

The only other explanation of how God can be just and at the same time be the justifier of the ungodly is that which is taught in Paul's epistles, namely, that God Himself has done something to satisfy all of the claims of justice, so that He is now free to clear the guilty ones who accept the provision which He has made. And this provision was made in causing an innocent victim to bear the guilt and penalty of the sins of the world. It would have been unjust for God to smite just any innocent victim, had there been others to smite. But in this case God Himself became the innocent victim. He was the only One who could have taken the sinner's place, and He did. This brings us to the consideration of our next topic.

JUSTIFICATION

Definition

By justification we mean that judicial act of God by which, on account of Christ, to whom the sinner is united by faith, he declares that sinner to be no longer exposed to the penalty of the law, but restored to his favor.³⁹⁰

The forensic, judicial, or gracious act of God by which the sinner is declared righteous, or justly free from obligation to penalty, and fully restored to divine favor.³⁹¹

Words Related to Justification

There are seven words in the family related to justification. *Dike* means what is right, a judicial hearing, and hence the execution of a sentence, translated judgment, punishment and vengeance. *Dikaïos*, an adjective, means righteous, a state of being right or right conduct. *Dikaïos*, an adverb, means justly or righteously. *Dikaïosis* denotes the act of acquittal, pronouncing righteous, justification. *Dikaïoma* may mean an ordinance of the law, a sentence of acquittal, or a righteous act. *Dikaïoo* is the verb meaning to justify or declare righteous. *Dikaïosune* is always translated righteousness. Paul's epistles account for 161 occurrences of these seven words out of the 273 total occurrences in the New Testament. Paul speaks of righteousness 60 times, 36 of these being in Romans alone. While justification is not strictly a Pauline doctrine, Paul alone expounds the doctrine, showing the basis upon which God can justify the ungodly sinner. The epistles of Romans and Galatians contain the central

³⁹⁰ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 849.

³⁹¹ Funk and Wagnalls, *The Practical Standard Dictionary*, p. 629.

teaching on the subject. In this study we shall be concerned mainly with the verb *dikaioo* in those passages which have to do with God's justifying of man by faith in Jesus Christ. Paul uses this word 28 times and in all but three of the occurrences he makes reference to man's justification before God. A concordance of these passages follows:

"And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be *justified* by the law of Moses: (Acts 13:39).

"For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be *justified*" (Romans 2:13).

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be *justified* in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20).

"Being *justified* freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3: 24).

"Therefore we conclude that a man is *justified* by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28).

"To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just and the *justifier* of him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

"Seeing it is one God, which shall *justify* the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith" (Romans 3:30).

"For if Abraham were *justified* by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God" (Romans 4:2).

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that *justifieth* the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5).

"Therefore being *justified* by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

"Much more then, being now *justified* by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Romans 5:9).

"Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also *justified*; and whom he *justified*, them he also glorified" (Romans 8:30).

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that *justifieth*" (Romans 8:33).

"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are *justified* in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be *justified*. But if, while we seek to be *justified* by Christ, we ourselves also be found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid." (Galatians 2: 16, 17).

"And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would *justify* the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Galatians 3:8).

"But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The *just* shall live by faith" (Galatians 3:11).

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be *justified* by faith" (Galatians 3:24).

"Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are *justified* by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4).

"That being *justified* by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7).

The Means and Method of Divine Justification

From the above passages it will be noted that some nine times Paul states the case negatively: the impossibility of being justified by the works of the law. Romans 2:13 does not deny this fact, for there Paul is arguing for the justice of God and he states that anyone who fulfills the law shall be justified by the law. But in what follows he proves that no one (except Christ) has fulfilled the righteousness of the law, and therefore no one has been or can be justified by that means.

On the positive side Paul states that we are justified by grace, by blood, and by faith. These are not three different ways of being justified, but these are simply three aspects of the one method of justification. To begin with Paul states that we are justified freely by His grace ([Romans 3:24](#); [Titus 3:7](#)). The word translated freely (dorean), is translated *without a cause* in John 15:25: "They hated me without a cause." The word means a gift. Justification is a free gift of God for which no cause can be found in man. It is just the opposite of condemnation for which every cause can be found in man. Being bestowed freely, it is by grace. Grace is the *source* of justification. Having proved the impossibility of man's

being justified by his own works, the only other source imaginable is the grace of God. Grace is God's love manifested to the undeserving.

But then Paul says that we are justified by His blood (Romans 5:9). The blood of Christ is *the righteous basis* upon which God can justify the ungodly. Apart from the blood of Christ, every ungodly person must be condemned. Earlier it was noted that a judge cannot justify the lawbreaker. However, in this case, as we have seen, it was the Judge Himself who took upon Himself the condemnation and through bearing the penalty of the broken law, which is death, satisfied every claim of justice, so that He can now declare righteous all who believe on Him.

In the majority of cases where Paul refers to justification he speaks of *the means* whereby justification is received by man. We are justified by faith. Faith, as we have previously seen, is not a commodity with which man barter with God in purchasing justification or salvation. Faith is simply the acceptance of the free gift through trusting in Jesus Christ as Savior.

The Elements of Justification

1. *Negative*. Justification involves the remission of the penalty of sin. It does not declare one to be innocent; rather it declares that the demands of the law have been satisfied so that the sinner is now free from condemnation. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," is Paul's conclusion of the matter in Romans 8:1.

2. *Positive*. Justification is the restoration to Divine favor. It involves the gift of God's righteousness. It is not a subjective experience in which the believer becomes righteous in character. The peace of justification in Romans 5:1 is not the peace of mind, but objective peace involved in being reconciled to God. The righteousness acquired in justification is a declarative righteousness. God declares the believer to be righteous as a sovereign act, not on the ground of anything the believer is, or has accomplished, but solely upon faith in what Christ is, and has done. Justification is a judicial act which places the believer in a position in which he is treated as if he were personally righteous. Justification results, not in the production of human righteousness, but in the righteousness of God which is *unto* all and *upon* all that believe ([Romans 3:22](#)). Man by nature is shown in the opening chapters of Romans to have no righteousness *in* him and to have condemnation *upon* him. In justification the believer has the righteousness of God *upon* him without any reference to what is *in* him. But justification is not the sum total of salvation. Salvation does include the subjective element. Salvation also imparts a new nature, and hence Paul next develops the doctrine of sanctification, which results in God's righteousness *in* us. It is most important for a new convert to recognize that the acceptance of Christ as Savior does not instantaneously produce a perfectly sinless and holy life. It is rather the beginning of a new and good work in the believer ([Philippians 1:6](#)). The new

nature must be nurtured; it must grow and develop. But justification gives the believer a perfect standing before God the moment he believes, which could never be improved upon by a lifetime of perfect obedience. But before discussing the development of the Christian life in sanctification, it is necessary to look at another facet of justification.

Human and Divine Justification

No discussion of justification would be complete without reference to the statement of James: "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). On the surface it might seem that James is contradicting Paul's doctrine of justification by faith apart from works. He seems to be saying that man is justified by both faith and works. When Paul speaks about justification there can be no doubt but that he is talking about justification before God. In Romans 2:13 he uses the expression "before God." In Romans 3:20 and Galatians 3:11 it is "in his sight." And in Romans 4:2 Paul states clearly, "If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God." Now the question arises, did James refer to Abraham's justification by works as before God or before man? Some have tried to explain the difference between Paul and James on a dispensational ground, and while the difference between these two men dispensationally may explain their difference in point of view, it would appear that they are not at all making contradictory statements. The following quotation from Vine gives a very satisfactory explanation of the problem.

In regard to justification by works, the so-called contradiction between James and the Apostle Paul is only apparent. There is harmony in the different views of the subject. Paul has in mind Abraham's attitude toward God, his acceptance of God's word. This was a matter known only to God. The Romans episode is occupied with the effect of this Godward attitude, not upon Abraham's character or actions, but upon the contrast between faith and the lack of it, namely, unbelief, cp. Rom. 11:20. James (2:21-26) is occupied with the contrast between faith that is real and faith that is false, a faith barren and dead, which is not faith at all.

Again, the two writers have before them different epochs in Abraham's life--Paul, the event recorded in Gen. 15, James, that in Gen. 22. Contrast the words "believed" in Gen. 15:6 and "obeyed" in 22:18.

Further, the two writers use the words "faith" and "works" in somewhat different senses. With Paul, faith is acceptance of God's word; with James, it is acceptance of the truth of certain statements about God, (ver. 19), which may fail to affect one's conduct. Faith, as dealt with by Paul, results in acceptance with God. i.e., justification, and is bound to manifest itself. If not, as James says "Can that faith save him?" (ver. 14). With Paul, works are dead works; with James they are life works. The works of which Paul

speaks could be quite independent of faith: those referred to by James can be wrought only where faith is real, and they will attest its reality.

So with righteousness, or justification: Paul is occupied with a right relationship with God, James, with right conduct. Paul testifies that the ungodly can be justified by faith, James that only the right-doer is justified.³⁹²

CONCLUSION

We conclude, therefore, with Paul that justification in the sight of God is a divine act in which God declares a man to be fully acquitted and restored to His favor by faith alone, apart from any and every human work or endeavor, on the basis of faith in the death of Christ, and that this whole transaction had its origin in the grace of God. It has been said that justification means 'Just as if I'd never sinned,' but this definition falls far short of its true meaning. If we had never sinned we would have human or self-righteousness. All of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in the estimation of the prophet (Isaiah 64:6). In Revelation 19:8 the saints are seen arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; "for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." We are made the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21).

59 SEALING, ADOPTION, ANOINTING, AND SANCTIFICATION

In the application of salvation to the believer the Holy Spirit is the active Agent of the Godhead. As we have already observed, the Holy Spirit is the One who regenerates the believer and imparts eternal life to him and through His baptizing ministry makes him a member of the Body of Christ. Four further ministries in behalf of every believer are the subject of this section. It should have become evident by this stage of our study that salvation is not simply the forgiveness of sins, a transaction which conceivably could be reversed, but that it is a complex Divine undertaking in which many things transpire. Each one of these Divine works, as they are understood and appreciated, add to the security and assurance that the believer has of his new and eternal standing in Christ.

SEALING

The word *seal* in the New Testament has much the same connotation as our modern usage. We seal our letters when they are private in nature. We seal a package of goods to be sure that nothing falls out or is lost. We affix a seal to important documents to indicate ownership. We send valuable papers by registered mail when we want a guarantee that they will be delivered safely to the

³⁹² W. E. Vine, *op. cit.*, Vol. II p. 286.

right party, and the postmaster places a special seal upon the letter that no one but the addressee has the right to break. A seal is for protection, security, and preservation. The word seal is used in a number of different ways in Scripture which do not concern us here, such as the seven-sealed scroll in the Revelation, or circumcision as a seal or authentication of the righteousness of Abraham's faith. We are concerned here only with those Scriptures which refer to the sealing work of the Holy Spirit in the behalf of the believer. There are only three verses which refer to this work of the Spirit:

"Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Corinthians 1:21, 22).

"In whom (Christ) ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Ephesians 1:13, 14).

"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30).

First, it should be pointed out that the sealing of the Spirit takes place upon believing, and not *after* believing, as the A.V. indicates in Ephesians 1:13. The aorist participle of *believe* here marks the definiteness and completeness of the act of believing. It is upon believing that the Spirit does this work.

Leon Tucker gives a seven fold analysis of this truth:

1. The Place of Sealing,-in Christ, in whom.
2. The Person Sealing,--that Holy Spirit of Promise.
3. The Persons Sealed,--in whom ye were sealed.
4. The Purpose of Sealing,--earnest of our inheritance.
5. The Property Sealed,--the purchased possession.
6. The Pledge of Sealing,--unto the day of redemption.
7. The Praise of Sealing,--His glory.³⁹³

Cobern, the archeologist, states: "To be 'sealed' (*sphragizo*) (Roman 15:28), meant in the papyri to be imperially protected and retained for imperial use."³⁹⁴

³⁹³ Leon Tucker, *With Him* (New York: The Christian Alliance Publishing Co., 1928), p. 57.

God's seal upon the believer is the mark of God's ownership. As Paul has said elsewhere, "ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20). Paul's further statement that we are "a peculiar people" also indicates the same truth. On this expression Vincent says:

Periousios also means *possessed over and above*, that is, specially selected for one's own; exempt from ordinary laws of distribution. Hence correctly represented by *peculiar*, derived from *peculium*, a private purse, a special acquisition of a member of a family distinct from the property administered for the good of the whole family. Accordingly the sense is given in Eph. i. 14, where believers are said to have been sealed... with a view to the redemption of possession, or redemption which will give possession, thus = acquisition.³⁹⁵

This seal is the earnest of our inheritance. Earnest in a commercial transaction is money paid in advance to bind a bargain and to give assurance of the completion of the transaction in the future. Believers today appear no different from the unsaved in most respects. They are subject to all of the troubles and ills of life and finally to death, but God has given His Holy Spirit to the believer as a pledge and guarantee that He will some day complete the work He has begun and will redeem the whole person, body, soul, and spirit. That future day is called *the adoption* or the day of redemption (cf. [Romans 8:23](#)).

God's seal is upon the believer unto that day of redemption, which means that no power in the universe will ever be able to break the seal or to take the possession away from God. This truth thus becomes one of the very strong arguments for the eternal security of the believer, a subject soon to be dealt with.

ADOPTION

Since this sealing work guarantees the safe delivery of the saint at the adoption, a word should now be said about this subject. The word *adoption* means "sonship." The Scriptural idea of adoption was not the modern concept of taking into the family an outsider by legal action, but rather the placing of the child belonging to the family in the position of privilege and authority upon arriving at maturity. This custom is seen reflected in the story of the prodigal son, to whom the Father divided his portion of the inheritance ([Luke 15:12](#)). Paul points out the fact that Israel under the law was similar to a child in his minority, at which time he differed nothing from a slave ([Galatians 4:1-5](#)). But when the fulness of time came, and God's Son had come to redeem those under the law, the people of God were made sons, i.e., they received the adoption of sons.

³⁹⁴ Camden M. Cobern, *The New Archeological Discoveries* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1917), p. 36.

³⁹⁵ Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), Vol. IV, p. 346.

Paul states that adoption, along with other privileges, pertained to Israel ([Romans 9:4](#)). This is the truth brought out in the Galatian passage above. However, this aspect of sonship does not apply to Israel alone, for Paul shows that in this dispensation all believers have received this adoption or sonship. This is no doubt another illustration of the general truth that Paul enunciates in Romans 15:27, that the Gentiles now have been made partakers of Israel's spiritual things. This truth of God having placed us as full-fledged sons should have a practical effect in the Christian life. We may feel, as the prodigal did, that we are not worthy to be called His sons, and, of course, we have no worth in ourselves, but the fact is that God has through Christ given us all of the privileges of full sonship and He expects us to act like sons of God.

While it is true that we have already received the adoption of sons, in another sense we are waiting for the adoption, as Romans 8:23 points out, and as was pointed out several paragraphs previously. When that time of adoption comes, God will have perfected every believer in body, soul, and spirit, and will present them before the universe as His sons. This is what Paul refers to in Colossians 3:4: "When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also be manifested with him in glory," and in Ephesians 2:7: "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

ANOINTING

The New Testament uses three main words for anointing. *Aleipho* is the general word for anointing the body with oil. *Murizo* is used for the anointing of the body for burial. *Chrio* and the noun *chrisma* are confined to sacred and symbolical anointings. Of course, the name *Christ* itself means *the Anointed One*. The practice of anointing as a sacred rite is very ancient indeed. In the Old Testament, anointing is mentioned over 140 times in reference to kings, priests, prophets, and sacred objects. David is called the Lord's anointed some twelve times in 1 Samuel alone. In the Septuagint this reads, the Lord's *christos* or christ. In the Hebrew the word is *mashiach* or messiah. The physical anointing of the king or priest symbolized the setting apart of that person by God unto his special office and the impartation to him of divine power and authority. Although the king in Israel was called the Lord's christ or messiah, the prophets held out the promise of one particular One which was yet to come who would be THE Messiah, THE Christ. Herod reflected this belief when he inquired of the priests and scribes, "where the Christ should be born" (Matthew 2:4). The same expectation is seen on the part of the people when John The Baptist began his ministry: "And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not" (Luke 3:15). Jesus asked the Pharisees, "What think ye of the Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David" (Matthew 22:42). Paul's custom was to go into the synagogue and reason with the Jews "out of the scriptures, opening and alleging, that the

Messiah or Christ must needs have suffered, and risen from the dead" (Acts 17:2, 3), and after having done this to identify Jesus as the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. Such Scriptures show plainly the Messianic expectation of the Jewish people.

How then did Jesus become the Anointed One, the Christ of God? Peter states that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power" (Acts 10:38) The anointing oil of the Old Testament was symbolical of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was not anointed with oil, the symbol, but with the Holy Spirit, the reality. This anointing with the Holy Spirit, then, becomes the basis for understanding the doctrine of anointing as it applies to the believer in Christ.

Paul declares: "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God" (2 Corinthians 1:21). John says: "But ye have an unction (*christma*--anointing) from the Holy One, and ye know all things But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" (1 John 2:20, 27). In these passages the impartation of the Holy Spirit to the believer is called the anointing. Thus the Spirit of Adoption which generates the cry upon our lips of Father, is also the Anointing which we have received. And although there is an infinite gulf between the Person of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, and ourselves, yet we as believers are also called "sons of God" and "christs" (or anointed ones).

SANCTIFICATION

The Scriptural Words

The words sanctify, sanctification, sanctuary, saint, and holy all come from the same root word in the Greek. The verb is *hagiazō* and is translated *sanctify*, *hallow*, and *let be holy*. The noun *hagiasmos* is translated *holiness* and *sanctification*. The neuter of the adjective *hagion* is translated *sanctuary*, *Holiest of all*, *holiest*, and *holy place*. The adjective *haglos* is translated *holy* and *saints*.

The Meaning of Sanctification

The basic meaning of sanctification is a separation unto God or a separation from evil, or the resultant state, the conduct befitting those who are thus set apart. A saint is one who is thus set apart. The Authorized Version in two places ([Rom. 1:7](#); [1 Cor. 1:2](#)) gives the impression that believers are not yet saints by translating "called *to be* saints." This should read, "called saints." Saints is the most frequently used title for Christians in the Bible. It is God's name for His people, whereas *Christian* is the name that man gave to the believer: "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26).

It would be helpful to note several things that sanctification is not. It does not necessarily mean sinlessness. Paul addressed the Corinthians as saints, yet as one reads the epistle he is struck with the sinfulness of these saints. This fact may sound like a contradiction in terms and it would be, were it not for two different aspects of sanctification which are involved and which will be explained later. Another evidence that sanctification does not necessarily mean sinlessness is that the word is often used in the Old Testament of inanimate objects which are not capable of sinning. Neither does sanctification necessarily imply finality. The Israelites needed to be sanctified over and over again. Nor does sanctification necessarily imply improvement in conduct, for God is said to be sanctified and to be holy, and He has always been infinitely that without change.

Different Aspects of Sanctification

1. *Positional Sanctification.* By this is meant a position of being set apart by God. It is thus an objective work of God, and not a subjective experience of the believer. As justification does not mean that the believer is necessarily just in all of his actions, so this aspect of sanctification does not mean that the believer is necessarily holy in his conduct. He is a saint because of his having been set apart by being placed in Christ Jesus. This is his perfect standing before God. Christ is made unto us sanctification ([1 Corinthians 1:30](#)). "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10). The Roman Catholic doctrine of sainthood is very far removed from that of the Bible. In that church men and women are canonized as saints by the church only after they have died and have supposedly appeared after death and have performed some kind of miracle. Yet in the Catholic Bible all of the Christians are called saints dozens of times. This is just one of the many situations in which tradition prevails over revelation. The story is told of an Irishman who began reading the Bible and after a while exclaimed: "Sure, I have been praying to Saint Patrick all my life, and now I discover that I am Saint Patrick myself."

2. *Experiential Sanctification.* This is the subjective aspect of sanctification. This aspect has to do with conduct. Paul states: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor" (1 Thessalonians 4:3, 4). The word sanctification occurs in only three other verses in our English New Testament. [1 Corinthians 1:30](#) was quoted above. [2 Thessalonians 2:13](#) speaks of sanctification of the Spirit, which has to do with the preliminary work of the Spirit in bringing salvation to the individual believer. [1 Peter 1:2](#) is similar to the previous verse, showing how the elect come into the possession of salvation. This same word is translated holiness in Romans 6:19, 22; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; 1 Timothy 2:15; and Hebrews 12:14. All admonitions to godly living have reference to experiential sanctification, even though the word is not used.

3. *Ultimate Sanctification.* Although the word sanctification is not used in the Bible for the final, perfected state of the believer in eternity, the idea is contained in many passages which speak of our "being like Him," or our "being conformed to the image of His Son," or of "being presented faultless before the presence of His glory."

The Means of Sanctification

1. *Sanctification is said to be by God.* The Father sanctifies ([1 Thessalonians 5:23](#)). The Son sanctifies ([Ephesians 5:26](#); [Hebrews 2:11](#); [13:12](#)). The Spirit sanctifies ([Romans 15:16](#); [2 Thessalonians 2:13](#)).

2. *Sanctification comes from union with Christ.* "... sanctified in Christ Jesus" ([1 Corinthians 1:2](#)).

3. *Sanctification comes by the Word of God.* "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" ([John 17:17](#)).

4. *Sanctification comes through the death of Christ and the shedding of His blood.* "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" ([Hebrews 10:10](#)). "Wherefore, Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" ([Hebrews 13:12](#)).

5. *Sanctification comes through faith.* "Sanctified by faith that is in me" ([Acts 26:18](#)).

6. *Believers may sanctify unbelievers.* "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the (believing) wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband" ([1 Corinthians 7:14](#)). This does not mean that the unbeliever is saved although it may result in his salvation. It simply means that he is affiliated with a Christian environment, especially in being "one flesh" with his wife ([Ephesians 5:31](#)).

7. *Believers may sanctify themselves.* "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness (sanctification) in the fear of God" ([2 Corinthians 7:1](#)). Such sanctification of self results from yieldedness to God ([Romans 6:13, 19](#); [12:1, 2](#)), from reckoning self dead indeed unto sin ([Romans 6:11](#)), from walking in the light ([1 John 1:7](#)); and from growth in grace ([2 Peter 3:18](#); [2 Corinthians 3:18](#)).

Erroneous Views of Sanctification

1. *Eradicationism.* Certain "holiness groups" teach that it is possible to kill or eradicate the sin nature completely, so that the person is from that point onward perfectly holy and free from sin. This is sometimes called a "second work of

grace." It is referred to as receiving the baptism of the Spirit, and is usually associated with the speaking in tongues. The teaching is based upon several verses of Scripture. Jesus told His disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49). Hence, these people teach that it is necessary to tarry to receive this pentecostal experience, not realizing that the reason for the disciples' tarrying was not to agonize and pray and clean up their lives so that the Holy Spirit could be given, but simply because Pentecost was the day the Holy Spirit was to make His advent into the world, and that day was ten days off when Christ spoke this to them. There is no more need of another Pentecost than there is for another incarnation of the Son of God. This form of holiness doctrine does not recognize the truth of positional sanctification, but supposes that the believer must make himself sinless in this life in order to be fit for heaven. Hebrews 12:14 is often quoted in support of this teaching: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," not realizing that the only holiness which God can accept is that which we have in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. *Antinomianism.* At the other extreme of the spiritual spectrum are those who see only those passages of Scripture which speak of the perfect position which we have in Christ, from which they argue that they are already perfected so that there is no place for growth in holiness. Perhaps few would openly admit to the doctrine of continuing in sin that grace might abound the more; rather, they no longer recognize sin as sin. They feel that their liberty in Christ makes right whatever they feel inclined to do. Many people overreact to the extremes of holiness teaching and shy away from anything that sounds like sanctification or holiness.

Thiessen quotes someone as having said: "'Sinless perfection' is an unscriptural doctrine, so also is 'sinful imperfection.'"³⁹⁶

Chafer states:

It may be concluded from these and many other Scriptures that a son of God need not sin. To that end the Savior died (Rom. 6:1-14). To that end Christians have a message written them (1 John 2:1-2). To that end they are indwelt by the Spirit of God (Gal. 5:16). It is the purpose of the Father that His children be free from sin in order that He may have fellowship with them, for "truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His son Jesus Christ."³⁹⁷

Errors and extremes in sanctification teaching can only be avoided by clearly distinguishing between positional sanctification, which is a divine act, and experiential sanctification, which is a process. The former is perfect and complete and can never be improved upon; the later is imperfect and incomplete and

³⁹⁶ Thiessen, op. cit., p. 383.

³⁹⁷ Chafer, op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 282.

requires constant diligence to maintain growth and maturation. Only glorification in the Day of Christ, when the Adamic nature will be forever put off, will bring about a sinless state, a complete and final sanctification.

60 ETERNAL SECURITY

The doctrine of Eternal Security is also known as the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints, which has been defined as the continuance in grace and certain salvation of those whom God effectually calls, accepts in Christ, and sanctifies by His Spirit. Eternal Security looks at the doctrine from the Godward side, showing that it is the power of God which keeps the saved person eternally secure. Considered from the manward side, Perseverance emphasizes the fact that the saved person will hold out to the end. The use of the word Perseverance may give the impression that the continuance in salvation is due to some work or merit on the part of man; therefore, it is believed that the term Eternal Security is to be preferred. Scripture emphasizes the fact that the credit for this continuance belongs to God. Peter says that we are kept by the power of God ([1 Peter 1:5](#)). Paul states that nothing past, present, or future will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord ([Romans 8:38, 39](#)). Jude closes his brief epistle with the benediction: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever" (Jude 24, 25). John declares: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

Generally speaking, Calvinism upholds the doctrine of Security, and Arminianism opposes it. The one emphasizes salvation by grace entirely apart from human works of merit, while the other stresses human free-will and synergism in salvation. The issue boils down to the simple question: "Is it possible for one who has been truly saved to lose his salvation?" Of course, there are many in Christendom who will not go as far as to say that a person can ever come to a point in this life where he can say that he is saved. Anyone who believes to any extent in justification by works must logically believe that he must wait until life is ended to discover whether he has done sufficient works to merit salvation. Therefore, it shall be our purpose in this chapter to show first from Scripture that it is possible to have the assurance of salvation in the here and now, to answer objections which have been raised, and to prove that the Scripture teaches that salvation is eternal in character and cannot therefore be lost once it has been received.

THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

Assurance of salvation can come only from accepting the Scriptural teaching that salvation is the free gift of God's grace to undeserving sinners entirely apart from any and all human works. This fact is plainly stated in a number of passages.

1. *Romans 3:19-28*. This important passage ends: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law." The apostle shows that the believing sinner is justified freely by the grace of God and that he has nothing in which he can boast as a possessor of salvation.

2. *Romans 4:1-5*. This passage indicates that the great patriarch Abraham had no works of which he could boast before God, and that faith is counted for righteousness to the man who does not work for salvation, but simply believes on Him that justifies the ungodly.

3. *Romans 8:33-39*. Here we learn that no one can lay anything to the charge of God's elect, nor can anyone condemn one who is saved, due to the fact that Christ is now at the right hand of God making intercession for every such one, nor can any power in this life or in that to come ever separate such a one from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

4. *Ephesians 2:8, 9*. "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast."

5. *Titus 3:5*. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

These and many other Scriptures plainly teach that salvation is a free gift, and since one may receive a gift and know that he has it, so one may receive God's free gift and be assured that he possesses it.

The Bible plainly teaches Assurance. God wants His people to know that they are saved.

1. *1 Thessalonians 1:5*. "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."

2. *Colossians 2:2*. "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding.. ."

3. *Hebrews 10:22*. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.. ."

4. *Hebrews 6:17, 18*. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by

two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us."

5. *1 John 5:13*. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life."

Assurance comes only from a commitment of self to Jesus Christ as Savior. This means that there must be a genuine spiritual experience of accepting or receiving Jesus Christ as Savior. It is not sufficient merely to give mental assent to the facts of the Bible, or to join a religious organization, or to be baptized. One must recognize himself as a lost and condemned sinner, without God and without hope, and voluntarily entrust self to Jesus Christ on the basis of His redeeming death. When one does this, God does His work of regeneration, imparting His Spirit to the believer. Therefore Paul can say: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption (sonship), whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

OBJECTIONS STATED AND ANSWERED

There are three general reasons why some Christians oppose the doctrine of Eternal Security, or, as some call it, the doctrine of once saved, always saved. The first to be considered is the argument from the supposed harmful effect of the teaching; next is the argument from experience; and thirdly the argument from certain Scriptures.

The Argument from the Practical Effect of Security Teaching

It is argued that this doctrine makes the Christian careless of his manner of life; that since nothing that he does can cause him to lose salvation, he will feel free to indulge in the pleasures of sin. Some advocates of Eternal Security have very unwisely made statements that they could steal and murder and do the most dastardly crimes and that they would still be saved. Now a wise father in trying to convey his undying love to his son would never tell him, "Son, it makes no difference to me what you do with your life; you can throw it away on drink, drugs, and women, but you will still be my son." The father may feel in his heart, in the eventuality that his son did fall into such great sin, he would still stand by him and treat him as his son, but it would matter greatly to the father how the son lived his life. God is a wise Father and we would never expect to hear Him saying in Scripture: "Regardless of what a Christian does he cannot lose his salvation." It matters a great deal to God how His children live and He never uses terms or expressions in His Word which would give liberty to His children to commit sin. There is much that the Christian can lose, and Paul in dealing with this question in 1 Corinthians 3: 10-18 states that a Christian's works, if worthless, will all be burned, and he shall suffer loss, "but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire."

Paul has many warnings to believers, not to deceive themselves, for whatsoever a Christian sows he is also going to reap ([Galatians 6:7, 8](#)). The Scriptural doctrine of Security must always be balanced with the truth of God's parental discipline within the family of God. When the doctrine is presented in this manner, there can be no objection that it encourages or leads to careless or sinful living.

The Argument from Experience

There are always cases to be cited of those who once were Christians and have now fallen away. Is not this practical proof that Security is untrue? There are at least two difficulties with this argument. In the first place only God really knows who is saved and who is not. All we can go by is a man's profession, and there are many false professions in every realm of life. If we cannot be absolutely sure who is saved, then we cannot be sure that anyone has lost salvation. The fact that a man raised his hand or went forward in an evangelistic service, or that he joined the church or taught a Sunday School class or even became a minister is no proof that he was ever saved. The other difficulty with this kind of argument is that one whom we may have judged to have lost his salvation may be in a temporary state of rebellion against the Father's will and may later be restored to fellowship.

The classic example from Scripture which is usually cited in proof of this view is Judas Iscariot. Was he not one of Jesus' disciples, and did he not die as an unsaved man? It is true he was chosen as a disciple, but it is very evident that he was never saved. Jesus prayed for His own, as he prayed for Peter that his faith fail not, but He did not pray for Judas. The fact that Satan entered into Judas ([John 13:27](#)) is also evidence that he was not a child of God. But the most evident proof of the true spiritual condition of this man is to be found in the words of Christ in John 6:64, 70, 71: "But there are some of you who believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him Jesus answered them, Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake this of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve." Further evidence is seen on the occasion when Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with the costly ointment in John 12:1-6. Judas objected, saying, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." No further proof should be needed to show that Judas was never saved and therefore could not have lost what he never had.

The Argument from Certain Scriptures

A number of proof texts are generally quoted to disprove the doctrine of Security. These may be classified under six general heads:

1. *Those Applying to Some Other Dispensation.* Many of the warnings from the Old Testament and the Gospels have to do, not with soul salvation, but with physical consequences of breaking the law (cf. [Ezekiel 33:13](#)). The curse of a broken law brought physical death upon many who no doubt were saved people. Saints today die physically because of the curse of sin, but that does not mean that they are not saved. Other warnings, such as [Matthew 18:23-35; 24:13; 24:25-30](#), etc., refer to a time after the Church is taken out of the world.

2. *Those Applying to Unregenerate Teachers of the Last Days.* Many churches of Christendom are filled with such teachers and preachers today. They are described in such passages as [1 Timothy 4:1, 2; 2 Peter 2:22; Jude 17-19](#). These men were never saved in the first place.

3. *Those Applying to Rewards and not to Salvation.* [1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 9:24-27; 2 Corinthians 5:9, 10; Colossians 3:24, 25](#) are examples of such passages. Salvation is entirely apart from all of man's good works. No man will ever receive salvation as a reward for what he has done. But after one is saved he will receive a reward for faithfulness, or suffer loss of reward for unfaithfulness, but this will in no way affect his eternal salvation.

4. *Those that Warn Believers of Things They May Lose.* Believers are in danger of losing many blessings which the Lord has provided for them. Any sin, disobedience, lack of faith, neglect of the Word of God, or prayerlessness is bound to result in loss of joy, loss of power, loss of fruitfulness, loss of fellowship, and loss of reward. Typical of such warnings is [Colossians 2:4, 8, 18](#).

5. *Those that Warn Unbelievers.* When God says, for example: "For if God spared not the natural branches (Israel), take heed lest he also spare not thee (Gentiles)," ([Romans 11:21](#)), He is not warning Gentiles that they may lose their salvation. Rather, He is warning the whole Gentile world, which in this new dispensation has come into the place of great spiritual privilege, that God will cast the Gentiles aside as He did Israel, if they do not believe. This passage is not dealing with personal salvation but with national privilege. In the future, after the great tribulation, God is going to restore Israel to her place of privilege and priority over the Gentile nations.

6. *Those that Prove Christian Profession by Fruit-bearing.* [John 8:31; 15:6; 1 Corinthians 15:1, 2; Hebrews 3:6, 14; James 2:14-26; 2 Peter 1:10; Colossians 1:23](#) are typical. If there has been the work of regeneration in the heart there is bound to be some manifestation of that new, Divine life, just as surely as the new born babe will cry or give other indication that it is alive.

7. *Special Passages.* The following passages claim special attention, as the main passages used to disprove Security:

Hebrews 6:4-6: "For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance; seeing (the while, marginal reading) they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." (A.S.V.)

If this passage proves the possibility of losing salvation, it also proves the impossibility of ever regaining it. In order to understand just what it does teach it is necessary to go back to Israel's provocation of God at Kadesh-barnea, which was alluded to in Hebrews 3 and 4. This was the great crisis in the history of ancient Israel as they were ready to enter the Promised Land and was a foreshadowing of that greater crisis which confronted the Hebrew nation when this was written, namely that of entering into the promised Kingdom through their Messiah, Jesus Christ. In Numbers 14, Israel had been enlightened, they had tasted of the fruits of Canaan, they had experienced miraculous powers, they had tasted the good word of God, but they turned back in unbelief because of the giants in the land. In the same manner Israel at Pentecost had been enlightened by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, they had tasted the heavenly gift, and they had experienced the miraculous powers of the coming Kingdom age, and that generation also had turned back in unbelief. After the provocation in Numbers 14, God closed the door to their going into Canaan and told them they would all die in the wilderness. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that God had told them it was now impossible for them to be renewed, they presumed to go up, but were smitten by their enemies. Just so in the days when Hebrews was written, God closed the door to the Messianic Kingdom when Israel hardened their hearts, and God sent blindness upon them and told them it was now impossible to enter in.

It should be evident that no one today could duplicate the experience of Hebrews 6 any more than he could that of Numbers 14. National Israel committed the unpardonable sin of rejecting the Holy Spirit's testimony to the risen Messiah after Pentecost, and according to Romans 11 they are now blinded and cast away until the fulness of the Gentiles comes in. No one today is tasting the powers of the Kingdom age and therefore it follows that since none of the conditions laid down in Hebrews 6:4-6 are being met today, neither are the consequences.

Hebrews 10:26, 27: "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries." (A.S.V.)

Here again it is necessary to understand that these Hebrews were confronted with the great crisis mentioned in the sixth chapter. They had received the knowledge of the truth at Pentecost, but that does not mean that they were all saved. Insecurity teachers usually interpret this passage as though it had said: "If

we sin wilfully after that we have been saved, there remaineth no more forgiveness of sins." The wilful sin of Hebrews was the crucifying afresh the Son of God, by rejecting His once-for-all sacrifice. If they rejected that sacrifice there was no other sacrifice they could turn to, because God had now disowned the sacrifices of the law and was ready to destroy Jerusalem and the temple, making it impossible for them to offer animal sacrifices. Having no sacrifice for his sins, therefore, the Israelite had nothing to anticipate but fiery indignation.

Mathew 24:13: "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

What "end" is here meant, and what "salvation" is in view? The disciples had asked "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?" (vs. 3) Jesus tells them of many things which will take place before His coming, but in vs. 6 He says: "but the end is not yet." The end of what? Of the age, of course. And then He says in vs. 14, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." Again, He means the end of the age. And in vs. 13 when He speaks of enduring unto the end, what end does He mean? Surely He is still talking about the end of the age.

This verse was spoken to those kingdom disciples who will pass through the tribulation after the Church has been raptured out of the world. Those who stand true and refuse to take the mark of the Beast will be saved by the coming of Christ and will enter into the kingdom. They will have endured to the end of the age. The age will end with the second coming of Christ as King. The new Millennial age will then be ushered in. But there will not be a single member of the Body of Christ on earth at the end of the age; therefore no believer of this dispensation could endure to the end of the age. It is impossible to apply this verse to the Church without putting the Church through the Great Tribulation.

Galatians 5:4: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."

This verse is often quoted to teach that a Christian who commits sin falls from grace and is lost. But the verse says that those who try to justify themselves by keeping the law have fallen from grace. The Galatians were guilty of reverting to the principles of the law after they had apparently been saved by the grace of God. Law and grace are mutually exclusive (cf. [Romans 11:6](#)). Hence one who goes back to the law as a means either of justification or sanctification necessarily falls away from grace. Falling from grace does not mean losing salvation. In fact, Paul doubted that some of these Galatians had really experienced the new birth ([4:19, 20](#)). Saved people, through false teaching, may fall away from grace doctrine, but this is vastly different from falling away from salvation.

John 15:6: "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

In the figure of speech which Jesus here employs all men are pictured as branches. But only those branches that are vitally joined to Christ can bear fruit. There is no thought expressed of cutting off branches. The branches which are not abiding in Christ were never in Him to begin with. Branches that are in Christ and are not bearing fruit (vs. 2), He taketh away. The verb translated "taketh away" is rendered "taketh up" or "lifteth up" 39 times in the New Testament. This may refer to the vinedresser lifting up a trailing branch from the ground so that it can bear fruit, or, as some think, a disciplinary action, similar to that in 1 Corinthians 11:30. We can be sure that Jesus is not here teaching the opposite of what He taught in [John 6:39,40](#); [10:27, 28](#);and [17:11, 12](#).

Colossians 1:23: "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be moved not away from the hope of the gospel "

The word "if" does not always involve doubt. In the grammatical construction of this sentence "if" (*eī*) is followed by the indicative mood, which means that the hypothesis is assumed as an actual fact, the condition being unfulfilled, but no doubt being cast on the supposition. The same construction is used in ch. 2:20 and 3:1: "if ye be dead with Christ," and "if ye then be risen with Christ." The same is true in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19: "if Christ be preached," "if there be no resurrection," etc. Paul was not casting doubt on whether the Colossians had been crucified with Christ or had risen with Him. In this construction we could as well translate: "since you died with Christ," and "since you rose with Christ." Hence, Paul was saying in 1:23: "since you continue in the faith," or "if ye continue in the faith, which ye surely will."

The Basis of Insecurity Teaching

1. *Inadequate concept of salvation.* Many Christians think of salvation as being simply the forgiveness of sins; hence, if further sin is committed it is naturally felt that should they die before doing something to get forgiveness they would be lost. But salvation involves many other things which are not related to or affected by the forgiveness of sins: regeneration, membership in the family of God, baptism into the Body of Christ and into His death; justification, sealing, and much more. The committing of a sin cannot reverse all of these works which God has done in the behalf of every believer.

2. *Exalted View of Human Will.* There are those that hold what is known as "conditional security," that is, that the believer is secure in Christ as far as his safekeeping is concerned, but that the Christian still has a free will and at any time he decides to, he may "step out of Christ" and be lost again. They say that no man can pluck us out of God's hand (John 10:29), but we are free to jump out

of our own accord. It is well to remember that man's will is not supreme over God's will. Jesus has a will also, and He prayed in John 17:24: "Father, *I will* that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." We can be sure that Christ's will is not going to be defeated. The Body of Christ will not be maimed by missing members in eternity. Again, it is well to remember all of the works of God in salvation before speaking of a true believer losing his salvation.

CONCLUSION

Much of a positive nature regarding the Eternal Security of the believer has already been stated in answering objections. In conclusion it will be helpful to look at salvation in its three tenses.

Salvation as a Past, Finished Fact

The moment a person accepts Christ he is saved. This is an instantaneous action. The person is clothed with the righteousness of God and is just as fit for heaven as Christ Himself. Every person is either saved or lost. There are no degrees to this aspect of salvation. This salvation can never be lost. It is eternally secure.

Salvation as a present process

This aspect of salvation has to do with the application of the gospel to the daily life, resulting in deliverance or salvation from the power of sin. This is a process. Believers are on a continuum anywhere from complete victory to complete defeat, and each individual may vary from day to day. It is here that Philippians 2: 12, 13 fits: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." God has worked the salvation in us, and now He asks us to work it out in our daily lives. Some work it out to a greater extent than others, but none can work *for* his salvation. There are spiritual saints and there are carnal saints. The very fact that the Bible anticipates the Christian's sins and failures and gives the remedy is proof that present tense salvation is not perfect, and that our perfect standing in the once for all past tense salvation is not affected by our manner of life.

Salvation as a Future Fulfillment

"Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Romans 13:11). As past tense salvation is from the penalty of sin, and present tense salvation is from the power of sin, future tense salvation will be from the presence of sin. This will occur at His coming for the members of His Body, when the believer will receive his spiritual body which will contain no principle of sin whatsoever. We are called

upon to live *blameless* lives in the present, but we will be presented in that day *faultless* before the throne of His glory.

One who has a proper understanding of these three tenses of salvation will be safeguarded from many blunders in doctrinal interpretation.

61 INFANT SALVATION

CONDITION OF INFANTS AT BIRTH

It is almost universally agreed that infants at birth are relatively innocent. They do not know the difference between good and evil ([Deuteronomy 1:39](#)), and cannot be held morally accountable for anything they do. They cannot, therefore, be charged with any act of sin or transgression. This being the case, the question arises, are children born into what might be called a saved condition, in which they remain until they become morally accountable, and only then through an act of transgression become lost? This might seem to be a reasonable assumption, were it not for the fact that infants die. If we accept the teaching of Scripture that human death is the consequence of sin, then we must conclude that infants, although free from any act of sin, must have some connection with sin, since infants are subject to death.

What this connection is may be seen from [Romans 5:12-14](#). Paul explains that by one man, Adam, sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all sinned. The fact that all sinned does not here mean that all committed acts of sin, but that all sinned in the one race sin of Adam. Infants and the mentally incompetent have not committed acts of sin, but they are subject to death because they shared in Adam's sin. Physical death is not due to breaking the law, for Paul shows in the next two verses that death reigned from Adam to Moses before the law was given. Physical death, therefore, is due to Adam's one sin, and it is universal because the whole human race was seminally in Adam. Theologians speak of this as the immediate imputation of Adam's sin, which means that each individual receives the penalty of physical death directly or immediately from Adam. But Adam not only incurred the penalty of physical death: his holy nature became sinful and depraved, and Adam passed this fallen nature on to his offspring. This sin nature is, therefore, inherited mediately from Adam, that is, it comes indirectly through a long line of ancestors.

From the above facts it may be seen that every infant born into the world inherits a sinful nature which is bound to manifest itself in acts of sin when the person becomes morally accountable and that it shares in the penalty of Adam's sin which is physical death. It can now be seen why we employed the expression, *relative innocence*, in speaking of the condition of infants. They are innocent in that they have never personally committed acts of sin and in that they

are not as yet accountable, but they are not innocent as far as their nature and the imputed sin of Adam is concerned. Therefore children are not born into the world in a sinless or saved condition. Infants, therefore, stand in need of salvation.

CONDITION OF INFANTS AT DEATH

In considering infant salvation it is necessary to distinguish between infants who live to accountability and those that die in infancy. Since salvation is always presented in the New Testament on the grounds of personal faith in Jesus Christ, the question arises, Is it possible for infants to be saved, since they cannot exercise personal faith? This question has been answered in various ways. Those who contend that salvation may be imparted to infants while they are living almost invariably teach that salvation is imparted through baptism. This is the teaching of Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, Lutheranism, and in a modified way of Reformed Covenant theology. All of these groups believe that water baptism is the appointed means of conferring the grace of God. Whereas Rome makes baptism to be a kind of automatic conferring of grace, Lutheran and Reformed churches make the efficacy of baptism to depend upon the faith of the recipient. Berkhof states that when Luther "reflected on the fact that infants cannot exercise faith, he was inclined to believe that God by His prevenient grace wrought an incipient faith in them through baptism."³⁹⁸ The general practice in ritualistic churches is to have adult sponsors who are supposed to do the believing for the infant. A Roman Catholic writer states:

In the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism a very prominent part is taken by the sponsors or god-parents, who present the child at the baptismal font and make a profession of faith and certain promises in his name When there is only one sponsor, it is usual (but not necessary) to select one of the same sex as the child, for thereby it is made certain that there will never be any question of marriage between the god-parent and the god-child. Parents are not allowed to be sponsors for their own children, to mark more strongly the difference between spiritual and carnal parentage--for it is not deemed proper that one person should hold both relationships.³⁹⁹

There is not one line of Scripture to support any of the above practices. It is based entirely upon tradition which has grown up over the centuries. In fact, there is no statement in Scripture concerning the baptism of infants. Berkhof, although he steadfastly defends infant baptism as a means of grace is frank to admit: "It may be said at the outset that there is no explicit command in the Bible to baptize children, and that there is not a single instance in which we are plainly

³⁹⁸ Berkhof, *op. cit.*, p. 641.

³⁹⁹ John F. Sullivan, *The Externals of the Catholic Church* (New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1918), pp. 47, 50.

told that children were baptized."⁴⁰⁰ The whole theory of infant baptism rests upon the assumption that baptism has taken the place of circumcision as the seal of the covenant. And Berkhof is also frank to admit: "If baptism did not take its place, then the New Testament has no initiatory rite."⁴⁰¹ We believe that it can easily be shown that baptism did not take the place of circumcision and that therefore there is no ceremonial rite to initiate one into the Body of Christ in this dispensation.

In the first place there is no statement in Scripture that baptism has taken the place of circumcision. John the Baptist did all of his baptizing work on a people who were at the same time zealously practicing circumcision. The apostles baptized 3,000 circumcised converts at Pentecost. If circumcision had been superseded by baptism, why would the Christian Jews at Jerusalem contend with Peter for going to an uncircumcised man ([Acts 11:3](#))? If there was ever a situation where this supposed changeover should have been made crystal clear, it is the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15. The council argued all day over the question whether it was necessary to circumcise the Gentile believers and finally concluded that it was not necessary. If baptism had taken the place of circumcision why was there any argument at all? And is it not plain as day that the Jewish Christians continued practicing circumcision; for they concluded that the Gentile believers were not to observe those things which the Jewish believers were observing ([Acts 21:25](#)). Finally, Paul shows us in his epistles that neither ceremonial circumcision nor baptism is to be practiced in this dispensation. Instead, members of the Body of Christ have both a spiritual circumcision and a spiritual baptism ([Colossians 2:11, 12](#)). As far as New Testament history and teaching is concerned, Israel practiced both of these ceremonies together, and Paul applied both of their spiritual counterparts to his believers. In neither case did one take the place of the other.

For the sake of argument, let us assume that baptism does effect the regeneration of infants. It is a fact beyond doubt that many baptized infants do not embrace the faith as adults. It is understandable how Roman Catholics and Lutherans, who believe that salvation can be lost after it is received, could believe that baptized infants could later in life fall away and be lost. But it is not so easy to understand how our Reformed brethren, who believe so strongly in the perseverance of the saints, can believe the same thing. Berkhof recognizes this problem and spends several pages discussing what he calls "presumptive regeneration," and the different views Reformed theologians have held on the subject. He quotes the following from the *Conclusions of Utrecht*, which he says were adopted by his church in 1908:

And, finally, as far as the fourth point, that of *presumptive regeneration*, is concerned, Synod declares that, according to the confession of our Churches, the seed of the covenant must, in virtue of the promise of God,

⁴⁰⁰ Berkhof, *op. cit.*, p. 632.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 634.

be presumed to be regenerated and sanctified in Christ, until, as they grow up, the contrary appears from their life or doctrine; that it is, however, less correct to say that baptism is administered to the children of believers on the ground of their presumptive regeneration, since the ground of baptism is the command and promise of God; and that further the judgment of charity, with which the Church presumes the seed of the covenant to be regenerated, by no means intends to say that therefore each child is really regenerated, since the Word of God teaches that they are not all Israel that are of Israel, and it is said of Isaac: in him shall thy seed be called (Rom. 9:6, 7), so that in preaching it is always necessary to insist on serious self-examination, since only those who shall have believed and have been baptized will be saved.⁴⁰²

This doctrine of presumptive regeneration must raise many serious questions in the minds of those who accept this teaching. If infant baptism is the God appointed means of regenerating infants, why is it that the baptism does not "take" in so many cases? And what about those who die in infancy? Parents may only presume that they were regenerated, but what if they were not actually regenerated? And since it is taught that only children of believing parents may be baptized, what happens to all of the unbaptized infants who die? The presumption would surely be that they are lost, along with the baptized ones whose baptism did not "take." However, most Reformed theologians claim to believe that none dying in infancy are lost, but it is difficult to see how they square this belief with their views on infant baptism.

If infant baptism has not taken the place of circumcision, and if adult sponsors cannot vicariously believe for the infant, and we do not believe that there is a line of Scripture to support either notion, and if new born babes are incapable of exercising intelligent faith in the redemptive work of Christ, it would appear that there is no human means of imparting salvation to infants while they are living. If the infant lives to the years of accountability, whenever that may be in the case of the particular individual, then that one must personally exercise faith in Jesus Christ or remain in an unsaved condition. Parents bear a heavy responsibility so to teach their children and so to live before them that they will make that decision at the earliest possible age.

We started this section by making a distinction between the condition of infants who live to accountability and those who die as infants. Our conclusion to this point is that those who live to accountability remain in a state of sin and are never regenerated until they come to the place where they can personally receive Jesus Christ as Savior. And this experience may come at a very early age. It is said that Isaac Watts was saved at the age of 9, Jonathan Edwards at 7, Robert Hall at 12. But what about those who die as infants?

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 640.

To answer this question we must take several things into account. The first is that God will judge every man according to his works. Infants have no works and therefore cannot be thus judged. God plainly states in His Word that these little ones have no knowledge of the distinction between good and evil ([Deuteronomy 1:39](#)). And Jesus on numerous occasions used a little child as an example, for instance, saying, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," and "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:3, 10). These facts argue very strongly that no infants who die as infants are going to be condemned by God and shut out of God's heaven. But the question still remains, If infants are born with a nature of sin and are under the sentence of physical death because of Adam's sin, how does God save them if they die as infants?

Infants are saved if they die before becoming morally accountable, not because of their innocence; nor because of some religious ceremony; nor by proxy or accident; nor because everyone is saved. They are saved because Christ died for them and because it is not God's will that one of them should perish ([Matthew 18:14](#)). God is perfectly free to choose all who die in infancy to salvation, and it is evident from Scripture that He does. Scripture positively states in Matthew 18:14 that God wills their salvation, and since there is no personal transgression to their account, He is free to save them by His grace. There is no statement or intimation in Scripture that any such are lost. David had implicit faith that he would go to be with his dead child, and this child was not old enough yet to have been circumcised ([2 Samuel 12:23](#)). Surely if we needed to do anything for the salvation of infants God would have told us about it, but the Bible is silent on the subject, except of course, to "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

Since God foreknew all who would die as infants or in a state of non-accountability, and since He willed that none of these should perish, it seems inescapable that all such are in the company of the elect. At the time of their death God does whatever is necessary in applying the work of Christ to them to make them His own. The following epitaph which was found on a grave in St. Andrew's Churchyard in Edinburgh, Scotland, speaks volumes:

Bold infidelity turn pale and die;
 Beneath this stone four sleeping infants lie.
Say, are they lost or saved?
 If death's by sin, they sinned
For they are here.
 If heaven's by works in heaven they can't appear.
Ah, Reason, how depraved.
 Revere the Bible's sacred page.
The knot's untied:
 They died; for Adam sinned.

They live; for Jesus died.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CONVERSION OF CHILDREN

Five reasons which Dr. R. A. Torrey has given to show the importance of the conversion of children, will provide a practical conclusion to this section on Infant Salvation.

1. *Because children oftentimes die.* It is comforting to know that infants who are too immature to be accountable are safe, but we do not know how soon they may become accountable. What a tragedy to let the years go by without winning the child to Christ, if accident or illness snuffs out the life.

2. *Because it is much easier to win a child than an adult.* The great majority of real Christians became such in youth.

3. *Because persons converted in childhood make the best Christians.* Those converted late in life have habits and prejudices and reputations that are very difficult to overcome.

4. *Because there are so many years of possible service before them.* If a man was saved at 60 and lived to 70 there is a soul saved plus 10 years, but 10 years of weakened mental and bodily powers. If a child is saved at 10 and lives to 70, there is a soul saved plus 60 years--the best, most fruitful years of the life.

5. *Because children are among the most useful workers for Christ.* Children can reach persons who are inaccessible to everyone else. They can often reach their parents when others cannot. They can reach hardened sinners who could never be reached by an adult. Strong refers to such an incident in Elliot's novel:

Silas Marner, the old weaver of Raveloe, so pathetically and vividly described in George Elliot's novel, was a hard, desolate, godless old miser, but after little Eppie strayed into his miserable cottage that memorable winter night, he began again to believe. "I think now," he said at last, "I can trusten God until I die."⁴⁰³

Part Eight

Ecclesiology

62 THE EKKLESIAS OF THE BIBLE

INTRODUCTION

⁴⁰³ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 664.

Ecclesiology is the doctrine of the Church. The name is derived from the Greek word, *ekklesia*, which is translated *church* in our English Bibles. The Greek word means a called out assembly of people and would be more accurately translated assembly or congregation. The English word *church* is derived from the Greek word *kuriakos*, which is the possessive form of the word *Lord*, thus meaning *belonging to the Lord*. While it is true that the assembly of believers which comprise God's *ekklesia* belongs to the Lord, it is not true that all *ekklesias* belong to the Lord, for the word is used in Scripture of political assemblies as well as of religious ones (cf. [Acts 19:32, 39, 41](#)). It should be noted in the above passage that the translators of the King James Version rendered the expression in v. 37, "robbers of churches," which in the original is not "robbers of *ekklesias*," but "robbers of temples." This is the only occurrence in the Authorized Version where the word *church* is used to translate any word other than *ekklesia*, and it is the only passage where the word *ekklesia* is translated by any word other than *church*.

The English word *church* has taken on a variety of meanings. It may refer to a building which has been dedicated to religious usage; it may refer to a group of people who belong to a religious assembly; or it may mean a particular denomination or religious sect. Since the word *ekklesia* has reference only to an assembly of people, and uniquely to an assembly of God's people, our usage will be limited to that of the people of God.

It should be noted that the doctrine of Ecclesiology logically follows the doctrine of Soteriology, as it indicates that which God does with the believer after having saved him. In the various dispensations God has done various things with His people; that is, He has placed them in various *ekklesias*, which have had various religious and spiritual programs and ministries. It is important that these *ekklesias* with their dispensational programs be kept separate and distinct.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The first historical reference to an *ekklesia* in the Bible is found in Acts 7:38, where Stephen refers to "the church in the wilderness." The reference, of course, is to the descendants of Jacob, some six hundred thousand in number, who were called out of Egypt to inherit the promised land of Canaan. It was there in the wilderness that God gave to Moses the plans for the Tabernacle, the place of assembly, for the people of Israel. Prior to that time there is no record in the Bible of an assembly or a place of assembly for the people of God.

From the time of Adam to that of Moses the only recorded religious life was that of the family, in which the father acted as a kind of priest. This fact is seen especially in the lives of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ([Gen. 17:23-27; 21:4; ch. 22; 26:1, 2; 35:1-4; 49:1-27](#)). Job apparently lived in the patriarchal age, when as a father he offered up sacrifices for his children ([Job 1:4, 5](#)). This

order of things continued even to the night of the passover in Egypt, when each household took a lamb and killed it and sprinkled its blood (Ex. 12). But a few days later when this same people were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor. 10:2), they became a corporate body, and from that point onward God dealt with them as such.

Many dispensationalists, especially those of the Scofield school of interpretation, in an effort to distinguish clearly between the nation of Israel and the Church which is the Body of Christ, have practically denied that Israel was an *ekklesia*. Thiessen, for example, states:

Once the term "church" is applied to Israel in the New Testament (Acts 7:38), but it is evident that it is there used in the non-technical sense of a congregation or assembly (marg. A.S.V.). It is frequently used in this sense in the Septuagint. There is no Scriptural term that is used of the people of God in Old Testament times in a collective sense. Certainly the New Testament term "church" cannot rightly be applied to them."⁴⁰⁴

Lewis Sperry Chafer states:

The rule will usually obtain that, if there is more than one meaning to a Biblical term, the first use of it in the Sacred Text will be that of its most important signification. This suggestion is sustained, at least, in the case of the word *church*. The term appears for the first time when spoken by Christ Himself and is recorded in Matthew 16:18 This is a difficult aspect of truth for those who contend that the Church has existed throughout the period covered by the Old Testament, or any part of it.⁴⁰⁵

As will be pointed out in due time, Matthew 16:18 is not a reference to the Church of the Mystery, nor is this the first occurrence of the word *ekklesia* in the Bible. It is the first place in our English Bibles where the word *church* occurs, but historically Acts 7:38 is fifteen hundred years prior to Matthew 16:18. Had the Old Testament been written in Greek instead of in Hebrew, there would have been at least seventy occurrences of the word *ekklesia* in that book as do occur in the Septuagint, where *ekklesia* is used consistently to translate the Hebrew *kahal*. Not only so, but in the New Testament when the Holy Spirit quotes from the Old, He employs the word *ekklesia* to translate the Hebrew *kahal*, as in Hebrews 2:12: "in the midst of the church (*ekklesia*) will I sing praise unto thee." Thus, the Holy Spirit indicates that *ekklesia* and *kahal* are equivalents.

Dr. Scofield states:

The word is used of any assembly; the word itself implies no more, as, e.g., the town meeting at Ephesus (Acts 19:39), and Israel, called out of

⁴⁰⁴ Thiessen, *op. cit.*, p. 404.

⁴⁰⁵ Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 43.

Egypt and assembled in the wilderness (Acts 7:38). Israel was a true "church," but not in any sense the N.T. church--the only point of similarity being that both were "called out" and by the same God. All else is contrast.⁴⁰⁶

On the other hand, Covenant theologians argue on the basis that Israel is called an *ekklesia* in Old Testament times there is but one *ekklesia* in the Bible. Berkhof declares:

The New Testament Church is essentially one with the Church of the Old dispensation.⁴⁰⁷

The only difference between the two which he sees is that what had been a national church now becomes universal and what had been a ritual worship now becomes more spiritual. He quotes the Belgic Confession, Art. XXVII:

The church has been from the beginning of the world, and will be to the end thereof, which is evident from the fact that Christ is an eternal King, which without subjects He cannot be.

Hodge puts it this way:

The Church under the new dispensation is identical with that under the Old. It is not a new Church, but one and the sameThe conclusion is that God has ever had but one Church in the world.⁴⁰⁸

A. A. Hodge endeavors to answer the following two-fold question in the affirmative:

How may it be shown that this visible church is identical under both dispensations, and what argument may be thence derived to prove that the infant children of believers should be baptized?⁴⁰⁹

Where great minds disagree it is sometimes wisdom not to side with one against the other, but to analyze carefully the views of each to see whether both might have some elements of truth. It is difficult to believe that men of God on one side or the other of this question could be completely in error. If such is not the case then it is evident that some principle of interpretation has been overlooked by both sides.

THE DISPENSATIONAL SOLUTION

⁴⁰⁶ *Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 1021.

⁴⁰⁷ Berkhof, *op. cit.*, p. 571.

⁴⁰⁸ Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 549, 551.

⁴⁰⁹ A. A. Hodge, *op. cit.*, p. 619.

We believe that the dispensational principles when rightly applied will solve the problem which has just been confronted. Covenant theologians are correct in their position that there is just as much a church in the Old Testament as in the New. They are wrong in not recognizing the difference between the Israelitish Church and the Church which is the Body of Christ in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile and which was never the subject of Old Testament prophecy. The dispensationalists thus far considered are correct in seeing the difference between Israel and the Body of Christ, but they are mistaken in identifying every reference to a church in the New Testament with the Body of Christ, and in practically denying that Israel was a church in an effort to prove the difference between Israel and the Body.

Confusion arises over the use of the expressions *Old and New Testaments*. It is assumed by some dispensationalists that the Old concerns Israel and the New the Church. However, if anything is clear in Scripture it is that both the Old and the New Testaments were made with the House of Israel (cf. [Jer. 31:31](#)). It is also commonly assumed that the Old Testament begins with Genesis 1:1 and the New with Matthew 1:1. Technically speaking, that covenant which became *old* was the one made under Moses at Mt. Sinai in Exodus 19, and the New Covenant did not in any sense become operational until the blood of that covenant was shed at the Cross. Thus from Genesis 1:1 to Exodus 19 was pre-Old Testament. Paul plainly declares that Christ was made under the Law ([Galatians 4:4](#)), so that the Gospel records up to the Cross are still under the Old Testament dispensation.

Dr. Scofield makes or tries to make the distinction between Israel and the New Testament Church, but the fact of the matter is that Israel is a New Testament Church. In what we call the New Testament Scriptures, from Matthew to Revelation, we find Israel first as the Old Testament Church, then we find the Israelitish disciples of Christ, whom He called His *little flock*, to whom it was the Father's good pleasure to give the coming Kingdom ([Luke 12:32](#)) and who comprised the Church of Matthew 16:18 and 18:17, and on the day of Pentecost we find the Holy Spirit adding members to that *ekklesia* ([Acts 2:47](#)). There is not the slightest intimation that a new *ekklesia* began at Pentecost; rather, it is evident that believers were added to an existing *ekklesia*, but that *ekklesia* was not the Body of Christ. It was the *ekklesia* of prophecy which will find its fulfillment in the Millennial Kingdom. The members of that *ekklesia* were expecting the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel ([Acts 1:6](#)). Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, declared that everything that was happening in connection with that *ekklesia* was in fulfillment of all that the prophets had spoken since the world began ([Acts 3:21](#)). The truth about the Body of Christ was a secret kept from all former ages and generations ([Eph. 3:9](#)), and therefore must of necessity be something different from that which was the subject of all prophetic utterances of old. Thus, the true dispensational distinction which must be made is that between the Israelitish *ekklesia* of prophecy and the Body of Christ *ekklesia* of the mystery, both of which are found in the book called the New Testament.

SUMMARY

In summarizing this truth it should be pointed out that the Old Covenant Church under Moses was not a spiritual organism, but an outward, physical union in the form of a theocracy. When Christ came to earth that Church had apostatized from God and Christ proceeded to call out from its number His own Church ([Matthew 16:18](#)). This *ekklesia* of Christ is clearly related to the Messianic Kingdom, for the keys of the kingdom of heaven were given to Peter in connection with it. The kingdom of the heavens is to be understood, as any Jew would have understood it, as the kingdom promised to Israel by the prophets. It was the kingdom which was being preached as at hand all during Christ's earthly ministry. It was the kingdom which was to be taken away from the outward, then present, Old Testament *ekklesia* and to be given to His New Testament *ekklesia* ([Matthew 21:43](#)). It was the kingdom which was not to appear immediately, but was to await the return of Christ for its establishment ([Luke 19:11-27](#)). It was the kingdom which the disciples had been taught to expect and to pray for ([Matthew 6:10](#)). It was a kingdom in which Israel would be restored ([Acts 1:6](#)). It was a kingdom in which Christ would sit upon the throne of David and rule over the house of Israel ([Luke 1:32, 33; Acts 2:30; 15:16, 17](#)).

It was impossible that this kingdom could be established on earth before Christ had accomplished His redemptive work in His death and resurrection. But after all had been fulfilled concerning His sufferings ([Acts 3:18](#)), Peter offered the Kingdom to his nation Israel upon the condition that they repent of the murder of their Messiah and be converted. While a few did repent, the nation as a whole rejected the testimony of the Holy Spirit and the kingdom was taken from them.

It was at this point that God revealed His secret purpose to call out from a world which had rejected His Son and which was worthy of eternal condemnation an *ekklesia* which He has named the Body of Christ. In order to reveal this hitherto unannounced purpose, He saved Saul of Tarsus, the most unlikely candidate for the office, and commissioned him as the apostle of the Gentiles and the steward of the mystery. Paul received all of his truth, not from those who had been apostles before him, but by direct revelation from Jesus Christ ([Galatians 1:12](#)). Dr. Scofield recognized this truth when he wrote:

In his (Paul's) writings alone we find the doctrine, position, walk, and destiny of the church.⁴¹⁰

What happened to Christ's Kingdom *ekklesia* will be discussed in a further chapter. Whether these Israelitish believers remained as members of that Kingdom *ekklesia* to be resurrected when it is finally established, or whether they became incorporated in the new Body is a question upon which there is disagreement. One thing is certain, however, and that is that God's *ekklesia* in

⁴¹⁰ *Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 1252.

this present dispensation is a spiritual organism, the Body of Christ, formed by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit, and comprised of all true believers, whether they be Jews or Gentiles in the flesh.

63 THE EKKLESIA OF THE PRESENT DISPENSATION

In speaking of the various ekklesias of the Bible considerable has already been said about the ekklesia of this present dispensation. In this chapter appeal will be made mainly to the Scriptures. Later chapters will be given over to an examination of major views which have been held on this subject.

The Scriptural designation for the ekklesia of this dispensation is *the Church which is His Body* (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 10:16, 17; 12:12, 13-27; Eph. 1:23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:30; Col. 1:18, 24; 2:17, 19; 3:15). It almost goes without saying that there could have been no Body of Christ (except in the mind of God) until at least Christ had come into the world. Nowhere outside of Paul's epistles is there to be found in Scripture a reference to a church by this title.

The Church as the Body of Christ must, of course, be differentiated from His human or physical body. The human body with its many members is used as an illustration of the vital spiritual relation that exists between fellow-members and with Christ Jesus the Head (1 Cor. 12:12-27).

Christ is the one and only Head of this church (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:19). As the head, the controlling mind, is present in every member of the human body, so Christ is living in every member of His Body.

This Body is a joint-body (Gr.-*susoma*, Eph. 3:6). The King James is misleading at this point by its translation "of the same body," which might be taken to mean the same body that always existed. The second chapter of Ephesians relates the fact that the Jew and the Gentile have both been reconciled to God in one body by the cross, and that He has made in himself of the twain (Jew and Gentile) one new man. In all of the Scripture before Paul's day the Jew was given a place of priority over the Gentile. Under Christ's earthly ministry it was not right to give the children's (Israel's) bread to the dogs (Gentiles). The children must first be filled (Mk. 7:27). One of the distinguishing features of the Body of Christ is that the Jew and the Gentile believers are brought into a joint-relationship in which there is absolute equality.

Believers become members of this Body by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles "(1 Cor. 12:13). This work is simultaneous with the work of salvation. Every truly saved person in this dispensation has thus become a member of the Body. This baptizing work of the Spirit does not take place in any visible, physical, or emotional experience. In fact, in the great majority of cases it

is only after some time has elapsed that the new convert learns through the study of the Word that he has thus become a member of the Body of Christ. This is in sharp contrast to the so-called Spirit baptism at Pentecost when there were visible tongues as of fire, the sound of a mighty rushing wind, and other physical and emotional phenomena. If for no other reason this great contrast should serve to show that these two baptisms are different. One had to do with the fulfilling of the prophets: "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16); the other had to do with the formation of the unprophesied Mystery Body of Christ. Very few theologians have noted the distinction between these two baptisms in which the Holy Spirit is involved. However, Dr. Chafer makes the following comments:

Those Scriptures in which the Holy Spirit is related to baptism are to be classified in two divisions. In the one group, Christ is the baptizing agent, yet the Holy Spirit is the blessed influence which characterizes the baptism. In the other group of passages, the Holy Spirit is the baptizing agent and Christ as the Head of His mystical Body is the receiving element and by so much that blessed influence which characterizes the baptism.⁴¹¹

Dr. Chafer seems to identify the work of Christ baptizing with the Spirit at Pentecost with the new birth and the subsequent indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which is a part of the common salvation of all believers in this dispensation. However, the context seems rather to identify it with the Kingdom prophecies of Joel and with the receiving of miraculous powers from on high (Lk. 24:49).

This church is an organism, not an organization. A following section will be devoted to the outward, local church, which is a visible organization and which often contains unsaved people in its membership. The Body of Christ, on the other hand, is an invisible spiritual organism, containing only regenerated believers, and in further contrast to the visible church, containing *all* true believers. Thus there is only one true Bible Church, which is the real basis for Christian unity, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body "(Eph. 4:3, 4). Regardless of outward church affiliations believers find their true bond of unity as fellow-members of the Body of Christ.

Whereas there was a living, spiritual relationship between Christ and His Jewish disciples, it was not as close and vital as that experienced in the Body. He said to His disciples: "I am the vine, ye are the branches. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (John 15:4, 5). Branches may be and are constantly pruned from the vine, but not so with the members of the Body. The organization of human life is on a much higher plane than that of plant life. While both the Vine and the Body are blessed relationships with Christ, they are not identical.

⁴¹¹ Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 141.

Other figures are used by Paul to represent the Church which is His Body. One is that of a holy temple: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God: and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:19-22). Another figure is that of a cultivated field: "For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building" (1 Cor. 3:9). Both figures are mentioned together in this passage. As the Body we are vitally joined to Christ, as a Temple we are the true worshippers of God; as a Cultivated Field we are workers and fruit-bearers for God.

A word should be said about the use of *ekklesia* for this relationship as the Body of Christ. *Ekklesia* means a called out assembly. Besides its religious use in the Bible it is applied to a lawful assembly of citizens, as in [Acts 19:39, 41](#). It is sometimes used as a synonym for *synagogue*, which means a gathering together for some specific purpose, whether it be political, social, or religious. It is easy to see how the word could be applied to Israel, called out of Egypt and assembled in the wilderness, or how it could be applied to any local group of people assembled for a religious service. But it is not so easy to understand its application to an invisible company of people, the majority of whom have never even seen each other or known of their existence, and who have never been assembled together. Because of this problem some have taken the attitude that the only church that exists is the visible gathering of believers and that in order to belong to the church and partake of its ministry one must join the local church. This practice has sponsored the spirit of denominationalism, and has confused the local assembly with the Body of Christ. While it is true that all of the members of the Body have never yet been assembled physically, it is also true that no closer an assembly could be imagined than the members of a human body. The Body of Christ is not a physical but a spiritual organism, and in the truest sense of the word all of the members are constantly assembled in their spiritual relationship to Christ. And it is also true that all members will some day be assembled physically when they are raptured to be with Christ forever ([1 Thess. 4:13-18](#)).

64 THE CHURCH OF COVENANT THEOLOGY

Covenant or Federal Theology is specifically that type of Theology which is held by the Reformed bodies. It is based upon a supposed covenant of works between God and Adam and a covenant of grace as a method of forgiveness and salvation through Christ. It was Cocceius, a Holland theologian and professor at Leyden, who formulated this theory of the covenants. Fisher states: "Cocceius divides the history of the New Covenant into three parts, or

'economies'; the ante-legal in the era of the patriarchs, where the kingdom was a family, and law was given through conscience; the legal era, in which grace was shown through the prophets and typical ceremonies, the kingdom being national; and the post-legal, in which Christ appeared, and the kingdom became universal."⁴¹² Other Christian bodies, while either denying or not mentioning the supposed covenant of works with Adam, hold essentially the same ideas on the covenant of grace. As a result, we may say that as far as its effect upon the doctrine of the church is concerned, this teaching holds that the Church of today has taken the place of Israel and that the covenants which God made with Israel find their fulfillment in the Church. Covenant theology teaches that the Church is spiritual Israel, and since all of the physical and material blessings promised in the covenants must be spiritualized, it is evident that there is little, if any, place in this scheme for an actual kingdom of Christ on earth or of a future national blessing of Israel. Practically all covenant theology, if consistent, is Amillennial.

As mentioned earlier, Covenant Theology teaches that one and the same Church has existed from the beginning of the human race to the present and that this is the final dispensation of the church. The Gospel Age or the present dispensation will run its course until the end of the world, at which time there will be a general resurrection and general judgment.

Covenant Theology teaches that Baptism has taken the place of Circumcision as the initiatory rite into the Church. Dr. Berkhof declares: "In the new dispensation baptism is by divine authority substituted for circumcision as the initiatory sign and seal of the covenant of grace. Scripture strongly insists on it that circumcision can no more serve as such, Acts 15:1, 2; 21:21; Gal. 2:3-5; 5:2-6; 6:12, 13, 15. If baptism did not take its place, then the New Testament has no initiatory rite."⁴¹³ He quotes Matt. 28:19, 20 and Mark 16: 15, 16 as proof that Christ clearly made this substitution. However, there is no mention of circumcision in these passages, and the fact of the matter is that as far as the historical record of the Bible is concerned, the Jewish apostles and believers continued the practice of circumcision along with baptism. It would have been a very simple matter to settle the problem which occasioned the Council at Jerusalem in Acts 15 had baptism taken the place of circumcision. There was no question raised about Jews practicing circumcision; the question was, must Gentile converts be circumcised in order to be saved? ([Acts 15:1, 23, 24](#)). Even Paul circumcised Timothy ([Acts 16:3](#)), and he took a vow that he had not taught the Jews that they ought not to circumcise their children ([Acts 21:21](#)). It is strange that Dr. Berkhof gives this reference as a proof that circumcision should not be practiced. The context shows that this false charge had been lodged against Paul, and in order to correct it, Paul goes into the temple and shares the expenses of four men who were offering sacrifices in connection with the Nazarite vow.

⁴¹² George Park Fisher, *History of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), pp. 348, 349.

⁴¹³ Berkhof, *op. cit.*, pp. 633, 634.

In teaching that Baptism has taken the place of circumcision, Covenant Theology must teach that infants are the fit subjects for baptism. Dr. Berkhof states: "It may be said at the outset that there is no explicit command in the Bible to baptize children, and that there is not a single instance in which we are plainly told that children were baptized. But this does not necessarily make infant baptism un-Biblical."⁴¹⁴ He then proceeds to give reasons to justify this practice.

Infant baptism supposedly makes the infant a member of the Church and a child of the covenant. Unbaptized infants are outside the covenant. This idea is more or less contained in Roman Catholic Theology, where it is held that unbaptized infants are lost and if they die in infancy will go to a limbus infantum which is outside the lake of fire but removed from the beatific vision of God. Reformed theologians do not teach that unbaptized infants dying in that state are lost. (See Hodge, Vol. III, p. 605, footnote 4-"We can only say that we never saw a Calvinistic theologian who held that doctrine. ")

The church of Covenant Theology consists in families which have been baptized into the covenant. As in Old Testament times parents were responsible for circumcising their sons when eight days old to make them children of the covenant, so Christian parents are responsible today to have their children baptized for the same purpose. Neither circumcision nor baptism effect salvation or regeneration in themselves, "But baptism signs, seals, and actually conveys its benefits to all its subjects, whether infants or adults, who keep the covenant of which it is a sign... so the infant when arrived at maturity receives the full benefit of baptism, if he believes in the promises signified and sealed to him in that ordinance."⁴¹⁵ Hodge further states:

In like manner, baptism does not make a man a Christian. It is the appointed means of avowing that he is a Christian; it is the badge of his Christian profession before men, it secures for him the privileges of membership in the visible Church, and it is a pledge on the part of God that, if sincere and faithful, he shall partake of all of the benefits of the redemption of Christ. It is only in this sense that the Reformed Church teaches the necessity of baptism. It has the necessity of a divine precept ... Although not the means of salvation or necessary to its attainment, its benefits are great and manifold.⁴¹⁶

Thus a person may be regenerated apart from baptism, but in an unbaptized state he is cut off from the visible Church and all of its benefits.

We must quote Hodge once more on what he says is really the turning point in the controversy concerning infant church-membership. "If the Church is one

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 632.

⁴¹⁵ Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 590.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 585.

under both dispensations; if infants were members of the Church under the theocracy, then they are members of the Church now, unless the contrary can be proved."⁴¹⁷ Thus, if it can be proved that the Body of Christ of this dispensation is not identical with the theocracy of Israel in the Old Testament, the Church of Covenant Theology collapses. This, then, is a crucial issue in Ecclesiology. Covenant theologians think they have proved the above identity; a great segment of believers who would be classified as Fundamentalists, Independents, Baptists, and Grace believers do not agree.

Covenant theologians generally take the view that the church consists of those who profess the true religion, together with their children. This does not mean that all such are regenerated. In fact, Hodge says: "The attempt to make the visible Church consist exclusively of true believers must not only inevitably fail of success, but it must also be productive of evil."⁴¹⁸ But all baptized church members, whether saved or not (God only knows), are children of the covenant. It is not the prerogative of the Church to judge who are truly saved or not. All are to be accepted into membership who make a profession of faith and promise obedience. (This of course does not mean that the church could not refuse membership to one whose profession was proved to be false, either through heretical doctrines embraced or an ungodly life). After quoting from the Helvetic, the Gallic, the Belgic, the Westminster Confessions, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, Hodge concludes: "It is, therefore, plain that according to the standards of the Reformed Church, it is the children of the members of the visible Church who are to be baptized."⁴¹⁹ Children of non-church members are not fit candidates for baptism. Only those who are entitled to baptism are entitled to partake of the Lord's Supper. The privileges of the Church are confined to members of the Church.

In answer to these contentions of the Covenant theologians concerning the nature of the Church we would point out:

That whereas the Church which is seen in the Gospels and in the early Acts, as well as that in the coming Millennial Kingdom is identified with the Church of the Old Testament, the Church which is the Body of Christ and which was revealed to and through the Apostle Paul as the subject of the Mystery, is separate and distinct from it. This fact has already been demonstrated, and if accepted, is the end of controversy on this matter. However, there are further objections to the Covenant idea of Theology.

The theory that baptism took the place of circumcision is not substantiated by the Scripture. There is no statement to this effect in Scripture. All so-called proofs are purely inferential. The fact that the Twelve Apostles never commanded the cessation of circumcision, but continued circumcision along with the practice of

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 555.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 572.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 573.

baptism, is proof that one did not take the place of the other. In fact, baptism was practiced in the Old Testament along with circumcision, and both were practiced together during the earthly ministry of Christ.

The same thing may be said for infant baptism, even as Dr. Berkhof admits that there is no explicit command in the Bible to baptize infants, nor any single instance where they were so baptized. It is difficult to see how circumcision, which was performed only upon the male, can be equated with baptism, which was practiced upon both male and female.

While it may be agreed that the ideal is for parents to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and that it is a great advantage for children to be reared in the environment of the Church, there is nothing in the epistles of the N.T. limiting the ministry of the church to the so-called baptized children of the covenant. It is true that Paul said: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy" (1 Cor. 7:14). The condition here is not if the husband or wife are baptized church members, but simply if they are believers. And there is surely nothing in the context about the children being baptized and thus becoming children of the Covenant in order to make them clean. Strong quotes Jacobi on this passage who calls this text "a sure testimony against infant baptism, since Paul would certainly have referred to the baptism of children as a proof of their holiness, if infant baptism had been practiced." And Strong says: "Moreover, this passage would in that case equally teach the baptism of the unconverted husband of a believing wife."⁴²⁰

None of the covenants of the Bible were made with the Gentiles. Paul plainly states that the covenants pertain to the Israelites, the very people who at that time were ignorant of the righteousness of God, who had stumbled, who had fallen, who had become enemies of the Gospel. Surely no thought could have been further from the mind of Paul than to call Gentiles or members of the Body of Christ *Israelites*. A reading of Romans 9-11 should convince any one of this fact. Peter could say to his listeners in Acts 3:25: "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers," but Paul never made any such statement to the Gentiles. What Paul plainly teaches is that Christ's blood is the blood of the New Covenant which has been shed for the remission of sins, and that as a result of Israel's fall, God in pure grace, not in fulfillment of a covenant promise to Gentiles, has made the Gentiles partakers of the salvation and all of the other spiritual blessings which were promised to Israel in covenant ([Rom. 15:27](#)). This is doubtless the reason that this dispensation is called the dispensation of the grace of God ([Eph. 3:2](#)). It is as though God had said: "I made a covenant with Israel in which I promised them all of the spiritual blessings of salvation, but seeing they have put it from them and judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, I am going to exercise my sovereign

⁴²⁰ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 951.

grace and send it to the Gentiles who were strangers from the covenants of promise" (See [Acts 13:46](#), and [Eph. 2:11, 12](#)).

It is true that believers today are called Abraham's seed, but it is most important to see in what sense Gentiles can be called Abraham's seed. Paul makes Abraham's seed in this connection to be, not all of his descendants, but only one Man, which is Christ (Gal. 3:16). Then he says: "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed" (vs. 29). Paul did not go to the Gentiles and convert them into Abraham's seed, so that they could belong to Christ. He preached Christ to them, and then told them that Christ is Abraham's seed, and because they belong to Christ they are joint-heirs with Him and therefore inherit the spiritual blessings of salvation which were promised to Abraham. It is only because we are in Christ that we can be called Abraham's seed. And as stated under the previous point, this preaching of Christ to the Gentiles today is not in fulfillment of a covenant; it is by the sovereign grace of God and not even anticipated in the covenant itself.

We will endeavor to prove later on under the division of Eschatology that the Scripture plainly predicts another dispensation on earth after the present one, in which Christ will return to reign as King of kings and Lord of Lords. Covenant Theology must logically deny this fact. If the Church of today is spiritual Israel, and if all of the Old Testament promises must be spiritualized, then the kingdom must also be spiritualized, and this is A-millennialism. Hodge says concerning the present dispensation it "is permanent and final This dispensation is, therefore, the last before the restoration of all things; the last, that is, designed for the conversion of men and the ingathering of the elect. Afterwards comes the end But we have no intimation in Scripture that the dispensation of the Spirit is to give way for a new and better dispensation for the conversion of the nations. When the gospel is fully preached, then comes the end."⁴²¹

65 THE CHURCH AT PENTECOST

Whereas Covenant Theology teaches the unity of the Church in both the Old and the New Testaments, quite a segment of Protestantism contends that the Church of the present dispensation began on that notable feast of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2. This is the position held by many dispensationalists. In fact Ryrie, in his book, *Dispensationalism Today*, contends that this is the criterion for true dispensationalism. Placing the beginning of the Body of Christ at any place other than Pentecost is to him extreme or ultra-dispensationalism.

Thiessen, after discussing the theories that the Church began in the Old Testament, or with John the Baptist, or with the sending out of the Twelve Apostles states:

⁴²¹ Hodge, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 377.

But all these positions are shown to be unscriptural on the basis of Christ's own statement. He declared at Caesarea Philippi in His fourth and last withdrawal from Galilee, that the Church was still future. "On this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18) The Word teaches that the Church was rounded on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), but hyper-dispensationalism holds that there was a "Church" for the period of the Acts that is not the "Church" of today. It holds that the present Christian Church began when the book of Acts closed (Acts 28:23-31). More recently some are teaching that it began when Paul said at Antioch of Pisidia, "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:45-49).⁴²²

Chafer gives four reasons why the Church began at Pentecost.⁴²³ He says that there could be no Church in the world until (1) Christ's death, (2) Christ's resurrection, (3) Christ's ascension to become its Head, (4) the Holy Spirit's Advent. It should be observed that these are not necessarily reasons why the Church must have begun at Pentecost, but reasons why it could not have begun before Pentecost.

Thiessen gives only one reason, that of the baptism by the Spirit which forms the Body (1 Cor. 12:13), which took place on the day of Pentecost. "Thus it is evident that the baptism of the Spirit occurred on the day of Pentecost and that the Church was rounded on that day."⁴²⁴

This latter reason concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the only evidence which has been given of why the Church must have begun at Pentecost. All of the other reasons given prove only that the Church could not have begun before Pentecost and would apply equally to any theory that it began after Pentecost. Since this appears to be the determining argument for the time of the beginning of the Body of Christ, it will be well to examine the evidence closely.

Reference was made earlier to a statement by Chafer in which he shows a clear distinction between the Spirit baptism spoken of in the Gospels and Acts, and that spoken of by Paul in 1 Corinthians. He stated:

Those Scriptures in which the Holy Spirit is related to baptism are to be classified in two divisions. In the one group, Christ is the baptizing agent, yet the Holy Spirit is the blessed influence which characterizes the baptism. In the other group of passages, the Holy Spirit is the baptizing agent and Christ as the Head of His mystical Body is the receiving element and by so much that blessed influence which characterizes the baptism. Six passages are to be identified as belonging to the first group,

⁴²² Thiessen, *op. cit.*, p. 409.

⁴²³ Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 45.

⁴²⁴ Thiessen, *op. cit.*, p. 410.

namely, Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5 and 11:16.⁴²⁵

Scriptures which he identifies with the second group are [1 Cor. 12:11-13](#); [Gal 3:27](#); [Rom. 6:1-4](#); [Col. 2:9-13](#); [Eph. 4:4-6](#); [1 Pet. 3:21](#); [Mark 16:16](#).

Dr. Chafer believed and taught that both of these baptisms took place at Pentecost and that therefore the Body of Christ had its inception at that time. We believe that Dr. Chafer has made a legitimate distinction between these two works of baptism in which the Holy Spirit is involved, but we do not believe that he has given any evidence that the latter of these works took place at Pentecost. And we do not believe that the latter two Scriptures, 1 Pet. 3:21 and Mk. 16: 16, should be included in this category. Since both of these passages speak of a saving power in baptism, Dr. Chafer feels that the reference must be to what he calls Real Baptism and not to a ritual ceremony. These passages will be considered in detail in the chapter on Water Baptism.

If there is a distinction between Christ's baptizing with the Spirit and the Spirit baptizing into the Body of Christ, and we believe that there is, then there is the possibility that one does not necessarily imply the other and it is possible that the two might have taken place at different times. There is nothing in the context of the passages dealing with the Holy Spirit's baptizing into the Body of Christ which relates to a time element, so that if we are to discover whether this work took place at Pentecost or at some subsequent date, we must search elsewhere for the evidence. By comparing the Church at Pentecost with the Church which is the subject of the special revelation given to the Apostle Paul it should be possible to discover any differences which exist between the two.

We believe that the following twelve points of contrast will show that the Church of Paul's epistles is a separate and distinct company of the redeemed from the Church which existed at Pentecost.

1. There was already a church in existence at Pentecost. The Scripture does not say that the believers at Pentecost were formed into the church. It says that they were *added* to the church ([Acts 2:41](#)). A thing must first exist before anything can be added to it.

2. Peter's preaching at Pentecost proclaimed the fact that Israel's LAST DAYS had arrived ([Acts 2:17](#)), not the FIRST DAYS of the Body of Christ. Israel's last days does not mean the last days of the existence of the nation of Israel, but those days predicted to usher in the glorious Kingdom.

3. The title, "the Church which is His Body," is distinctive with Paul. This expression is not used at Pentecost or in other New Testament writings. It might be argued that Paul sometimes refers to the Church without using the full

⁴²⁵ Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 141.

expression: "the Church which is His Body," and that, therefore, the use of the word "church" in the Pentecost account may in like manner refer to the Body of Christ. There is, however, this difference. When Paul uses the expression, "the Church which is His Body," he is implying that there are other churches or another church which is not His Body. If we should be sent to a certain city and be told to go to a hotel which is called the Biltmore, we would take it for granted there were other hotels in the city, otherwise, why specify the Biltmore?

4. Pentecost was one of the annual Jewish feast days which depict God's redemptive dealings with Israel in the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom. Whatever Pentecost meant, it is evident that it must have had primary, if not exclusive, reference to Israel. Doubtless all will agree that there was a typology connected with the seven annual feasts of Lev. 23. These feasts were given to Israel. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel.... " It would seem strange indeed if the typology of these feasts of Israel had no reference whatsoever to Israel. In fact, most dispensational commentators refer all of the other six feasts to Israel, and isolate Pentecost and claim that this one does not refer to Israel but to the Gentiles in this dispensation when Israel is set aside.

5. Paul teaches that it was because of the casting away of Israel that his message of reconciliation had been sent to the Gentiles. But at Pentecost Israel had not yet been cast away. The Jew, like the Gentile, had to be *alienated* from God before both Jews and Gentiles could be *reconciled* to God in one body. This is why Israel had to be cast away nationally before God could offer reconciliation to the world and form the Body of Christ. This fact is brought out in [Rom. 11:15, 32](#); and [Eph. 2:17](#). If anything is evident from the record it is that God had not yet set Israel aside at Pentecost. The fact that Peter's first two sermons are addressed exclusively to Israel should be sufficient proof of this, but there can be no gain-saying of this when Peter plainly declares: "Unto you (Israel) first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (Acts 3:26).

6. Not only was Israel not cast away at Pentecost, but it is here that we find the first real offer of the Kingdom to Israel. It was because of their rejection of the King and the Kingdom that a new dispensation under Paul was ushered in. Many dispensationalists have taught that Christ offered the kingdom to Israel in the Gospels and that they rejected it by crucifying Him. Then on the day of Pentecost Israel was set aside and the new Gentile dispensation began. Evidence given in the point immediately above is proof that Israel was still in covenant relation with the Lord at Pentecost. It is true that the kingdom was preached as being "at hand" by Christ ([Matt. 4:17](#); [10:7](#)), but this is not to say that the kingdom could have been offered in the sense that it might have been established before the death of Christ. The prophets testified the sufferings of Christ and the glory *that should follow* ([1 Pet. 1:11](#)). Christ Himself plainly stated this fact: "But first he must suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation" (Lk. 17:25 cf. [24:26](#)).

And that the rejection of Christ in His incarnation was not the unpardonable sin is also plainly stated by Christ: "And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him; neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matt. 12:32). In fact, that is why Christ prayed for Israel on the Cross: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34). And it was because God answered that prayer of His Son that Peter could preach to the very ones who had crucified Jesus: "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled" (Acts 3:17-18). And the very next word in the Greek text is "*therefore*"; therefore, because all has been fulfilled regarding His sufferings, if you will repent and be converted, God will send back Jesus Christ. Here the kingdom is not merely at hand; it is being offered with nothing standing in the way but Israel's continued rejection of Christ. The point is that God's offer to send back Jesus Christ to usher in the times of the restoration of all things would surely have been insincere had He already cast Israel aside and begun a new dispensation.

7. The Body of Christ is a joint-body of Jews and Gentiles, but at Pentecost there is no mention of the Gentiles. The message is directed specifically to, and only to, the men of Israel. There were doubtless many Gentiles in Jerusalem at that time, at least, we know there was a Roman garrison there. Had Peter known that Israel had been cast aside and that God was beginning a new Gentile dispensation, it is very strange that he constantly addresses his message to the men of Israel and never mentions the Gentiles.

8. A part of the Pentecostal celebration was the presentation of the two "wave loaves" as described in [Leviticus 23:17-20](#). Acts 2 dispensationalists interpret these two loaves as representing Jews and Gentiles being brought into the Church of this dispensation. This could not be, since the Church of this dispensation was hidden from men in all former ages. It has been suggested that the two loaves represent the two houses of Israel which will be united in the Kingdom ([Ezekiel 37:15-22](#)). The Body of Christ is not *two* loaves. Rather, Paul states in 1 Corinthians 10:17 that we are *one* loaf.

9. At Pentecost the believers received water baptism for the remission of sins. There is no record that Paul ever practiced baptism for this purpose. In fact, water baptism was not even a part of his commission ([1 Corinthians 1:17](#)).

10. At Pentecost there is no indication that the Spirit baptism was forming a new Body. To the contrary it is stated that this baptism resulted in receiving Power from on high ([Luke 24:49](#)). This baptism was experiential, resulting in great signs and wonders. The baptism which forms the Body is not experiential. There is no sensation or feeling when the Spirit does this work. At Pentecost Christ was the Baptizer. In [1 Corinthians 12:13](#) the Holy Spirit is the Baptizer.

11. At Pentecost Christ was the Baptizer, baptizing with or in the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 the Holy Spirit is the Baptizer, baptizing into Christ.

12. Finally, and perhaps the most convincing, is the fact that everything that happened at Pentecost was in direct fulfillment of prophecy. Peter quotes Joel and David in Acts 2, and in Acts 3:24 he says: "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days." But Paul says that the truth about the Body of Christ is a "mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but in NOW made manifest to his saint" (Col. 1:24-26). It is very difficult to believe that that which every prophet of old predicted is that which had been hidden from ages and generations.

The above twelve reasons are fully supported by the Scripture and surely outweigh any evidence to the contrary that the Body of Christ and the dispensation of the Mystery began on Israel's feast of Pentecost.

66 THE CHURCH OF PAUL'S PRISON EPISTLES

There is a school of dispensationalism which recognizes the uniqueness of Paul's claims for the revelation which Christ Jesus gave to and through him and which teaches that the Body of Christ and the dispensation of the mystery did not begin until some forty years after Pentecost, after the close of the book of Acts. This is the view which was held by the late Dr. E. W. Bullinger and Mr. Charles Welch of England. This view is peculiar in that it claims that the Body of Christ in Paul's pre-prison epistles is a different body from that found in his prison epistles.

The main difference between the various schools of dispensationalism lies in the point at which God set Israel and her Kingdom program aside and began the new dispensation and the Body of Christ. All dispensationalists who recognize a difference between Israel and the Church must locate a point in the historical development of God's redemptive program at which this division took place. Some believe that God set Israel aside at the Cross and began the new dispensation at Pentecost. This view was the subject of the previous chapter. Some believe the new dispensation began with the separation of Paul to his new Gentile ministry, while others postpone the beginning to a point past Acts 28:28. It is with this view we are presently concerned.

Dr. Bullinger sums up his views on this subject in an article entitled: "The Dispensational Position of the Book of Acts." He concludes by commenting on John 16:12, 13 in reference to the saints of the Acts period: "But not even yet had they been guided into 'all the truth.' This was reserved, and not permitted to be revealed, until the public proclaiming of 'the kingdom' had ended, after the close of the 'Acts'.... Then it was, at the commencement of this present interim period during which 'blindness in part is happened to Israel' (Rom. 11:25), that 'the

church which is His body' (Eph. 1:22, 23) began to be formed 'to the praise of the glory of His grace.'⁴²⁶

Dr. Bullinger did not always hold to this position. In his book, *The Church Epistles*, he argues very convincingly for the unity of Paul's epistles, showing that his epistles to the seven churches are all to, and for, the members of the Body of Christ. For example, he says: "The object, therefore, of this first Epistle to the Corinthians is thus to lead them back, and to lead them on by the reproof administered to see what *Jesus Christ and Him risen again* means; and to teach them in his Epistle (chap. xii.) something of 'the Mystery' which he could not announce to them when he first visited them, and planted the church of Christ among them."⁴²⁷ Again, in commenting upon another of the epistles written before the close of the Acts, 1 Thessalonians, concerning Ch. 4:13-18: "Now, what we must so particularly notice is that, we have here a new revelation ... the revelation of a truth which had never before been known This is truth affecting only the Church of God. It is church-truth of the highest kind."⁴²⁸ But in his book, *Foundations of Dispensational Truth*, he says: "Thus the teaching of 1 Corinthians is precisely on the same lines as that given by 'them that had heard' the Lord. There was no fresh line of truth; though there was a development of it as the end drew nearer."⁴²⁹ And concerning the rapture which he formerly said was the highest kind of church-truth, he later writes: "We can quite understand, and fully sympathize with, those who like ourselves have spoken or written on 1 Thess. iv. as being the great charter of our hope of the Lord's coming. But we ought thankfully to relinquish it when we find we have a better hope; which we can enjoy all the more because we need not reproach ourselves with having robbed Israel of their hope..."⁴³⁰

For want of a better name, Bullinger's view has been called *the Acts 28 Position*. It is called by many the Ultra-dispensational view, because it pushes the beginning date for the Body of Christ to an extremely late date in New Testament history. Before examining this theory in the light of Scripture we should note some of its implications.

The main implication is that the pre-prison epistles of Paul were not addressed to the Church which is the Body of Christ. This means that any truth which is dispensationally related in Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and 1 & 2 Thessalonians is not for the Church of this dispensation. It means that believers are no longer related to Abraham through being in Christ, that they no longer benefit from the blood of the New Covenant and that they have no business observing the Lord's Supper, that their hope is not the Rapture of 1 Thess. 4:17, that there are two or more Bodies of Christ (there was one in Rom. 12 and

⁴²⁶ *The Companion Bible* (London: Oxford University Press, N.D.), Appendix 181, p. 204.

⁴²⁷ E. W. Bullinger, *The Church Epistles* (London: Messrs. Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1928), p. 98.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

⁴²⁹ E. W. Bullinger, *Foundations of Dispensational Truth* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode Ltd., 1930), p. 126.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

another in I Cor. 12 which they say is different from the one in Ephesians and Colossians), that the Messianic Kingdom was being offered to Israel until the end of the Acts period, that the Gentiles saved during the Acts period were subservient to Israel, and that Paul shared Peter's kingdom ministry until Acts 28.

It is true that there is a dispensational significance to Acts 28, but there is no Scriptural warrant for teaching that the Body of Christ and the present dispensation of the mystery began at that point. The following quotations from *The Silence of God*, by Sir Robert Anderson, present a more Scriptural interpretation of the Acts period.

And we have turned to the Acts of the Apostles to find how fallacious is the popular belief that the Jerusalem Church was *Christian*. In fact, it was thoroughly and altogether Jewish. The only difference, indeed, between the position of the disciples during the 'Hebraic period' of the Acts, and during the period of the Lord's earthly ministry, was that the great fact of the Resurrection became the burden of their testimony. And finally we have seen how the rejection of that testimony by the favoured nation led to the unfolding of the Divine purpose to deprive the Jew of his vantage-ground of privilege and to usher in the Christian dispensation.⁴³¹

In speaking of the selective character of the Bible he says:

And so with the Acts of the Apostles. As St. Paul's companion and fellow-labourer, the writer must have been familiar with the great truths revealed to the Church in the earlier epistles, but not a trace of them appears in his treatise. Written under Divine guidance for a definite purpose, nothing foreign to that purpose finds a place. To the superficial it may appear but a chance collection of incidents and memoirs, and yet, as has been rightly said, "there is not a book on earth in which the principle of intentional selection is more evident to a careful observer" (The Bampton Lectures, 1864).⁴³²

He asks how startling it would be if there were no Book of Acts and we turned directly from the study of the Evangelists to the heading, "To the Romans." How could we account for the transition thus involved? How could we explain the great thesis of the Epistle that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile? He says:

The earlier Scriptures will be searched in vain for teaching such as this. Not the Old Testament merely but even the Gospels themselves are seemingly separated from the epistles by a gulf. To bridge over the gulf is the Divine purpose for which the Acts of the Apostles has been given to the Church. The earlier portion of the book is the completion of and sequel

⁴³¹ Sir Robert Anderson, *The Silence of God* (London: Pickering & Inglis, ninth edition, N.D.), pp. 84, 85.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, pp. 51, 52.

to the Gospels; its concluding narrative is introductory to the great revelation of Christianity.⁴³³

He states in another place that the Acts of the Apostles is "a book which is primarily the record, not, as commonly supposed, of the rounding of the Christian Church, but of the apostasy of the favoured nation."⁴³⁴

If Sir Robert Anderson is correct, the first half of the Acts is simply a continuation of the dispensational program of the Gospels concerning the proclamation of the Kingdom of the Messiah. The second half of the book reveals in particular the apostasy of the Nation and the final setting aside of Israel; but what is important, though not made a part of the content of the Book itself, is the fact that during the latter half of Acts the great truths concerning the Body of Christ and the new dispensation had been made known in Paul's earlier epistles. It was not Luke's purpose to unfold the doctrine of the Body of Christ, but to explain the transition from the Kingdom program of the Twelve Apostles to the introduction of the new dispensation under Paul. The Book of Acts fulfills its purpose and ends with the final witness to the leaders of the Dispersion in Rome and with the final pronouncement of blindness upon Israel.

Returning to Dr. Bullinger's view, it is very interesting to understand the basis of his reasoning. He states in the Introduction to his book: *The Foundations of Dispensational Truth*: "There is one great foundation principle in the science of LOGIC which will meet all the difficulties, if we are careful to observe it. It is this:-- "We cannot reason from the particular to the general."⁴³⁵

What he is saying is that we must use Deductive, *a priori*, reasoning. We cannot learn the truth by using Inductive, *a posteriori*, reasoning. He is saying that the process of examining all of the particulars will lead to error. We must begin with a generalization, and this he does. He begins with the premise that the Body of Christ and the revelation of the Mystery did not begin until after Acts 28. And if we encounter difficulties in Paul's earlier epistles which seem to contradict this premise, we are simply to remember that we cannot find the truth by arguing about particulars.

As we saw earlier, all scientific investigation is done upon the basis of Inductive reasoning. We cannot establish a major premise for Deductive reasoning without first making a complete induction of the facts. How do we know that Dr. Bullinger's premise is true? People once believed that putrefying meat spontaneously generated maggots, but finally Pasteur applied the scientific method and discovered that if the meat were kept in a covered container so that flies could not lay eggs on the meat, no maggots were formed. He disproved the major premise of the public by a particular. Would Dr. Bullinger ask us to go on

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

⁴³⁵ Bullinger, *Foundations of Dispensational Truth*, p. vii.

believing in spontaneous generation of maggots, in spite of particulars to the contrary?

But even Dr. Bullinger is forced to see the inconsistency of his stand on this point. Notice his words: "If Paul knew anything personally about the Mystery before Acts xxviii, he could hardly have made it known even to individuals without entirely upsetting their Dispensational standing. Though it was not committed to writing, yet we can in no wise assert that he did not mention it one to another, who were prepared to receive it, or be *initiated* into it. This is the meaning of the word 'perfect' in 1 Cor. ii. 6."⁴³⁶ He practically admits that there were a few mature saints to whom Paul made known the mystery during the Acts period on the basis that Paul mentioned the mystery in 1 Cor. 2:6, but then he assumes on his own authority that the mystery could not have begun until Paul wrote the Ephesian Epistle explaining the mystery. Where do we find proof for the idea that a dispensational program cannot begin until it is committed to writing? If this be the case when did our Lord's earthly ministry begin? When the Gospels were reduced to writing? And when did the Pentecostal ministry begin? Was it at Pentecost or when Luke wrote the Acts, which was after the Acts period closed? Are we to suppose that the truth of the gift of God's righteousness of faith apart from the law first became operative when Paul penned the words of [Romans 3:21](#)? Paul surely first preached as truth for people of his day everything that he later put down in his epistles. The content of his epistles was dictated largely by errors of doctrine that the Christians had fallen into. Paul's oral teaching came first. Afterward he wrote to correct and to instruct further in what he had taught while present with them.

Dr. Bullinger and many of his followers have doubtless been fine Christian people who loved the Lord Jesus Christ and trusted Him as Saviour, and who upheld the inspiration and authority of the Scripture, but in our judgment they were in error on this point of dispensational truth, and their error lay largely in their method of approach to the Scriptures, denying the validity of Inductive research and in formulating premises, such as, the Mystery could not have begun until it was committed to writing.

67 THE UNITY AND UNIQUENESS OF THE PAULINE REVELATION

Our purpose in this chapter will be to make an induction of the facts in Paul's epistles to discover whether there is a basic unity in all of them, or whether they can be divided into two parts, each dealing with a different dispensation, as held by the view considered in the previous chapter. At the outset we should define what we mean by a change of dispensation. There can be changes in growth or development which do not change the identity of a thing.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

Charles H. Welch tries to prove the Acts 28 position by stating the principle: "Similarities, however many, cannot constitute identity in the presence of one proved contrary."⁴³⁷ He agrees that there are many things in Paul's earlier epistles which are similar to things in his later epistles, but he claims these things cannot be identical because he finds some things that are contrary. He illustrates the principle by giving a description of a man wanted by the police, and the police find a man who answers to the description in all points but one: the wanted man was born in New York, whereas the one apprehended was born in London. This, of course, is a case of mistaken identity. But this illustration which seems so convincing on the surface does not tell all of the truth. Suppose the apprehended man had been born in London and this detail of his description was at variance: the wanted man had dark hair but this man had white hair. Does this contrary fact disprove identity? Could not the man have bleached his hair, or if some time had elapsed could not his hair have changed color naturally? There is doubtless growth and development in Paul's later epistles, and some of the things in the early epistles have passed away in the later, even as he said they would (1 Cor. 13:8-11). But our contention is that throughout all of Paul's epistles God is dealing with one and the same Body of Christ. We do not define a dispensation as any change or development that might take place, such as the cessation of the sign gifts of 1 Cor. 12-14, but as a major change of dealing from Israel's kingdom program to that of the Body of Christ.

The theory under consideration postulates that there were at least two or more bodies of Christ after Acts 28. There was a Body of Christ of which the Corinthians were members (1 Cor. 12:13) and a Body of which the Romans were members (Rom. 12:5). There is nothing in Paul's later epistle to indicate that the Body of which they were members ceased to exist after Acts 28. If the Body of Ephesians is an entirely different Body, then there must have been two bodies in existence at the same time. But Paul declares in Eph. 4:4 that there is only ONE Body. Welch quotes 1 Cor. 12:7-12 to prove that this is a different Body from that in Ephesians: "if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it not therefore of the body?" He says, "Here, members of the head are introduced which cannot possibly be true of the Church of the One Body, for the Head of that Body is Christ Himself."⁴³⁸ It seems that Mr. Welch has a very materialistic concept of the Body of Christ. Christ is not a physical Head of the Body. Eyes and ears are located on the physical head, but they are not the head; they are simply members which God could have located elsewhere in the body. The Headship of Christ over the Body refers to the principle of the mind which is in every member and controls every member. The head controls the eye and the ear the same as it does the hand and the foot. In Philippians Paul does not use the terms, *Body* and *Head*, but he refers to them when he says, "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).

⁴³⁷ Charles H. Welch, *Acts 13 or 28?* (Banstead, Surrey, England: The Berean Publishing Trust, 1957), p. 7.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

The boundary line between ours and the former dispensation is marked off in Scripture by Israel's fall. Paul makes it very plain in [Romans 11:12-15](#) that it was through the fall of Israel the Gentiles had been blessed under his ministry. If we can locate Israel's fall we can locate the dispensational boundary line. We have already considered the view that claims that Israel fell at the Cross, but we have seen how the prayer of Christ overrode that fall and gave Israel another opportunity. The view now under consideration says that Israel fell at Acts 28:28. In answer to this claim it may be pointed out that in Romans 11, written at least three or four years before Acts 28, Paul definitely announces that Israel has already fallen. Likewise, in his very first epistle he announces concerning the Jews: "for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thess. 2:16). Apparently in Paul's mind God's wrath was upon the Jew to the uttermost, which does not at all sound as though they were still in the good graces of God and still having the kingdom blessings offered to them.

A great deal of emphasis is placed upon Paul's declaration in Acts 28:28: "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." This is made to mean that at that moment Paul was sending a new and hitherto unknown message to the Gentiles. But this is not what Paul said. The verb *is sent* is the second aorist, indicative passive, and should be rendered *has been sent*. It is so translated in the R.S.V., the N.E.B., Weymouth, Phillips, Rotherham, and others. This passage is a very strong proof that Paul's message to the Gentiles had been sent to them long before the close of Acts.

Paul clearly mentions the revelation of the Mystery in his earlier epistles. We have already quoted Bullinger where he admits that Paul probably mentions the mystery of the Body in [1 Cor. 2:6, 7](#). In Rom. 16:25 he says: "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began." If this verse was written by Paul at the time he wrote the remainder of the Roman Epistle, it is evident that the two-body theory is proved false. Hence Dr. Bullinger argues that this verse must be a postscript which Paul added to the original letter after he reached Rome.⁴³⁹ If believers are mistaken and confused because they suppose the mystery was revealed to Paul during his Acts ministry, it seems rather indiscreet of Paul to slip this truth into one of his earlier epistles without explaining what he was doing.

Paul founded the church at Philippi in Acts 16. He refers to this in Phil. 1:6: "He which hath begun a good work in you." He then goes on in this letter written after Acts 28 to say: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." There is here no intimation that a great change took place at Acts 28, or that the work that God started in Acts 16 has come to an end and a new work has been begun. Paul makes it plain that he had shared their fellowship in the gospel "from the first day

⁴³⁹ *Companion Bible*, p. 1694.

until now" (1:5). It is true that Paul talks about fellowship in the Gospel, but it is very difficult to dissociate fellowship in the Body from that in Paul's gospel.

If the mystery was not made known in the latter half of the Acts period, then everything in Paul's pre-prison epistles must be according to Old Testament prophecy. But where can we find the Rapture of 1 Thes. 4:13-18 predicted, or the new creation of Jews and Gentiles reconciled in one body of 2 Cor. 5:17 in O.T. prophecy? It is true that Paul quotes from the O.T. a number of times in his early letters, as he does for example in [Rom. 15:8-16](#), but he does not say that these prophecies are being fulfilled in his ministry. He rather quotes them to show that God had it in His purpose to bless the Gentiles through the nation of Israel, but that now Israel has fallen and has been cast aside, He has purposed to bless them in spite of Israel. It should be remembered that Paul also quotes O.T. Scripture in his prison epistles, as for example in [Eph. 4:8](#).

Paul states that he was in prison for preaching the mystery ([Eph. 6:19, 20](#)). This was his imprisonment as recorded in Acts 28. If he was in prison for preaching the mystery he must have preached the mystery before he was put into prison.

Paul said in Acts 28:20 "that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." It is claimed that this means that up to this point Paul had been preaching Israel's earthly kingdom expectation and that this is proof he had not been preaching about the heavenly hope of the Body. It is true that God promised Israel an earthly kingdom and that it is correct to speak of that as Israel's hope, but this is not the essential and vital part of Israel's hope. We may say that the Rapture is our hope, but this is not the sum of our hope. Paul speaks of "the Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope" (1 Tim. 1:1). Christ is not only *our* hope; He is also Israel's hope. The prophet Jeremiah, predicting the coming of Israel's Messiah, says: "O the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land.. . ?" (Jer. 14:8). It is evident from the following references in Acts that when Paul talks about Israel's hope he is speaking about Jesus Christ raised from the dead, and not about the Millennial Kingdom ([Acts 23:6; 24: 15; 26:6-8](#)).

It is also argued that during the Acts Paul declared: "Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets did say should come; that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first to rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:22, 23), which is supposed to prove that Paul could not have said anything about the Mystery before that. If it be remembered that Paul was on trial, having been charged with apostasy from Moses, and that his defense here is against that charge, and not concerned with what he might have told the Gentiles, it will help to understand what he means. He is saying that he was not guilty of teaching anything contrary to the law and the prophets. They had predicted that the Messiah would come,

that He would rise from the dead and that He would bring light to both Israel and the Gentiles. This will happen in an even greater degree in the coming Millennial Kingdom (cf. [Rom. 11:15](#)), but it is true today that God is still enlightening the Jew and the Gentile. We have already pointed out some new truths that Paul had written about which are not in Moses and the prophets, but these new truths do not contradict Moses, nor can it be charged as apostasy against the Law and the prophets.

It has also been argued that the Jew still had the advantage over the Gentile as late as the writing of Romans, where Paul asks: "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?" And he answers: "Much in every way" (Rom. 3:1, 2). This is supposed to show that at the time there was a great difference in the standing of Jews and Gentiles before God, but that after Acts 28 there is no difference. Those who argue this way seem to overlook the fact that in this very same epistle Paul declares: "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek" (10:12). The advantage that Paul speaks about in Ch. 3 was simply that the Jews had had the oracles of God committed to them, whereas the Gentiles did not have the Word of God. This is the same kind of advantage we speak about in contrasting the lot of a child reared in a Christian home with one reared in a heathen land where Christ has never been mentioned. Chapters 9-11 of Romans is the most convincing argument imaginable against the idea that at this time Israel was in a place of ascendancy over the Gentiles. How one can read that Israel has not attained, that Israel has stumbled, that Israel is ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own, that Israel has been given a spirit of slumber, that Israel has fallen, that Israel has been cast away, that Israel is blinded until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and that Israel is the enemy of the Gospel, and still contend that the statement of ch. 3:1 means that Israel is still in God's favor and that it is much more blessed to be a Jew than a Gentile?

There are several other lines of evidence that testify to the unity of the Pauline epistles. Both the early and late epistles set forth the one Body of Christ linked together with the one Spirit and the one Baptism ([Eph. 4:4, 5](#) cf. [1 Cor. 12:13](#)). Both sets of epistles teach that this one Body is composed of believing Jews and Gentiles ([Eph. 2:16](#) cf. [1 Cor. 12:13](#)). Both teach that "in Christ" there is neither Jew nor Gentile ([Col. 3:11](#) cf. [Gal. 3:28](#)). Both teach the reconciliation of believing Jews and Gentiles on the basis of the Cross ([Eph. 2:13-16](#) cf. [2 Cor. 5:14-21](#)), And both the early and late epistles associate the message of Paul with God's purpose which He purposed before the foundation of the world ([Eph. 1:3, 4, 9](#) cf. [1 Cor. 2:7](#)).

It would surely seem that the combined weight of all of these evidences proves rather conclusively that Paul, at least from the beginning of his written ministry, was ministering the same gospel to members of the same Body throughout his entire apostolic labors. The evidence presented here has not been mere similarities but matters of vital identity. Paul apparently received a number of

revelations from the Lord (cf. [Acts 26:16](#); [2 Cor. 12:1](#)), but a new dispensation was not introduced by each of these revelations. His ministry from his separation for the work whereunto Christ had called him in Acts 13 to his death was a unity which was marked by a period of transition at the beginning, which is the subject matter of a later chapter.

It should be evident that the teaching of Bullinger and Welch on this point is based solely upon the commonly accepted view that the prison epistles of Paul were written from Rome after Acts 28. However, if the theory espoused by Professor Deissmann, George S. Duncan, and others could be proved true, that the prison epistles originated from an unrecorded imprisonment in Ephesus before he wrote 2 Corinthians, then there would remain no basis whatsoever for this extreme dispensational view. See Duncan's book, *St. Paul's Ephesian Ministry* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930). In this case, if the new dispensation began after Acts 28 there would be no Scripture addressed specifically to the Body of Christ.

68 THE GENESIS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

We have reviewed a number of theories for the beginning of the Body of Christ which are currently held by various Christian groups and we have discovered serious objections to each of them. Since there is no direct statement of Scripture to identify the exact point at which the Body began, we must rely upon the preponderance of evidence, as with other questions of this nature. The position taken here, and that which appears to have the least objections and the greatest positive evidence, is that the Body of Christ had its historic beginning with the ministry of the Apostle Paul before he wrote his first epistle.

It is important to ascertain the approximate time when the Body began in order to know what is to be included in the spiritual program of the Church. For example, if the Body of Christ came into being on the day of Pentecost, it would appear logical to go back to Pentecost to discover the program and message which the church should be practicing. This is, of course, what those do who denominate themselves as Pentecostalists. They make [Acts 2:38](#) the basis of their ministry. They preach repentance and water baptism for the remission of sins. They insist on speaking with tongues as evidence of the reception of the Holy Spirit. They claim to possess the gifts which were poured out by the Spirit on that notable day. On the other hand, there are many Fundamentalists who also hold that the Body began at Pentecost, but who inconsistently disclaim the message of Pentecost for themselves. If the Body began with Paul's ministry; if the revelation concerning this new Body and dispensation was committed to him; then it would be only logical to suppose that the spiritual program and message for the Body would be found in his epistles.

What then are the reasons for believing that the Body of Christ began with Paul's ministry?

There are many objections to beginning it at some other point. These objections have already been stated in previous chapters. Probably the chief objection to beginning it at Pentecost is that the Holy Spirit revealed the fact that everything that was happening in [Acts 3:19-26](#) had been prophesied by all of the prophets, whereas the things that concern the Body of Christ were kept secret and were never revealed to the sons of men in former generations. To begin the Body after the close of the Acts is to contradict the clear statements of such Scriptures as [1 Corinthians 12:27](#) and [Romans 12:5](#). Any view that the Body of Christ began before the death and resurrection of Christ is faced with a multitude of objections. Surely there was no baptizing work of the Spirit before the death of Christ, and that is the divine work which forms the Body. The Body is a new creation with the risen Christ as its Head. There was no new creation or risen Head before the death of Christ. The Body existed only in the mind of God before the death of Christ. It could become a historic reality only after the death and resurrection of Christ and the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit.

It is logical that the Body begin with Paul, since the revelation of this truth was committed to Paul, and since no other New Testament writer makes specific mention of the Body of Christ. Many dispensationalists have recognized the fact that Body truth was first made known to Paul, but they reason that God formed the Body at Pentecost and then later revealed what He was doing. Ryrie takes somewhat this position when he states:

"... the question which decides the beginning of this dispensation is, When did God begin to do this? not, When did man understand it?"⁴⁴⁰

In answer to this argument it has already been pointed out that God plainly stated what He was doing in Acts 2 and 3, and if He was bringing in the consummation of all prophecy and offering the Kingdom to the nation of Israel, He could hardly have been doing instead that which He never had predicted. And even if it were admitted that God began the new, secret dispensation at Pentecost and that the Apostles, ignorant of what God was doing, supposed that He was still carrying out the prophesied Kingdom purpose with Israel, we could not go back to the mistaken notions of the Twelve for our message and program, but would have to go to those Scriptures which do reveal the truth concerning the Body of Christ, namely, Paul's epistles. But we must reject this supposition because the Apostles were all filled with the Holy Spirit and it is unthinkable that they were merely stating their own ideas about what was happening and not about what God was doing.

Up until the time of Paul the Church was Israel and Israel was the Church. But the Church which is Christ's Body is not Israel and Israel is not the Body of

⁴⁴⁰ Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), p. 199.

Christ. The message of the first half of Acts was not simply to the Jews first, but to the Jews only; the same as during the earthly ministry of the Lord. As late as Acts 11:19 we read:

"Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only."

If it be argued that the Apostles and all of the other Jewish disciples were out of the will of God in limiting their preaching to none but the Jews only, then it also follows that we cannot base any doctrine or program upon the activities and words of men who were out of the will of God. We prefer to believe that these Spirit-filled men were in the will of God and were carrying out God's program in the way He intended. Even the fact that some Gentiles were saved in Acts 10 is no proof that the Body had begun, for the distinctive truth concerning the Body of Christ is not simply that Gentiles are to be saved but that they are to become joint-members with saved Jews in the Body of Christ. Under the Kingdom dispensation Gentile salvation will be worldwide, but it will be under the supremacy and rule of Israel. It thus appears that as far as the historical record of the Bible is concerned, there is no evidence of the existence of the joint-body of Christ as long as the message was confined to the Jews only, and until Paul is separated unto his distinctive ministry.

Having considered some of the reasons for beginning the new dispensation and the Body of Christ with Paul's ministry, let us now consider some of the objections which have been voiced against this view.

Ryrie charges that this view is based upon an "erroneous concept of a dispensation." He defines a dispensation as "a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God's purpose,"⁴⁴¹ and he asks: "Is something distinguishably different being done since Paul came on the scene that was not being done from Pentecost to the time of Paul?"⁴⁴² He argues that there was no difference in message or program after Paul, and that what this view fails to recognize is "that the distinguishableness of a dispensation is related to what God is doing, not necessarily to what He reveals at the time and least of all to what man understands of His purposes."⁴⁴³ To this objection we would state first that God does tell us what He was doing in Acts 2:16 and 3:24, namely, that He was fulfilling the prophecies concerning Israel's last days in preparation for the offer of the Millennial kingdom. On the other hand, there is not one statement in the whole New Testament which states that the Church was born on the day of Pentecost or that the dispensation of the mystery began at that point. The only thing which remotely suggests that the Body began at Pentecost is 1 Corinthians 12:13, where the Body is said to be formed by the baptizing work of the Holy

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

Spirit, and we have elsewhere shown the clear distinction between this work and the work of Christ baptizing with miraculous power at Pentecost.

Further, we believe that there are some distinguishable differences after Paul comes on the scene. There is first of all the separation of a new apostle for a new, unprophesied ministry ([Acts 13:2](#)), and the turning over of Gentile ministry to this new apostle by the other apostles ([Galatians 2:9](#)). Why a new apostle, a new revelation, and the giving up of a former ministry unless something different was being done? And further, it was not until Paul was separated unto the ministry for which God had called him that the door of faith was opened to the Gentiles ([Acts 14:27](#)). Also there are many new things in Paul's epistles which are in contrast to the message which had been given to the other apostles. For example, the Twelve were given to understand that they would pass through the Great Tribulation ([Matthew 24:15](#) -- note that Christ is here speaking privately to His disciples, 24:3), and that they would sit on twelve thrones in the millennial kingdom ([Matthew 19:28](#)). We believe that Paul teaches the Rapture of the Church before the Tribulation, and he says nothing about members of the Body being judges among the tribes of Israel in the Kingdom. These and other contrasts and changes are surely distinguishable differences between the ministries of the Twelve and Paul.

Ryrie does not prove that the Church began at Pentecost: he merely assumes that it did and takes that as his major premise for further arguments. He states: "The distinguishable feature of the present dispensation is the formation of the Church, and since the Church began at Pentecost there has been only one economy from Pentecost to the present."⁴⁴⁴ As to the Church beginning at Pentecost, the Scripture indicates that there already was a church in existence at Pentecost, for the converts at that day were *added to* the church ([Acts 2:41, 47](#)), not formed into something that never existed before. Hodge, who was not a dispensationalist and therefore made no distinction between Israel and the Church of this dispensation, uses this fact to try to prove that there has been but one church since the beginning of the world. He says: "The pre-existence of such a visible society is everywhere taken for granted as a fact. Their disciples were always *added to* the 'church' or 'congregation' previously existing.- Acts ii. 47."⁴⁴⁵ Christ plainly referred to His disciples long before the day of Pentecost as a church in [Matthew 16:18](#) and [18:17](#).

In this connection Ryrie deals with Acts 5:14, where believers were "added to the Lord." He argues that this could not be a Jewish church if they were added to the Lord, but he doesn't show why it could not have been a Jewish church. It was surely composed of none but Jews. And surely under the New Covenant Israel was to be joined unto the Lord. Even in the Old Testament there is reference to being joined unto the Lord ([Isaiah 56:3](#)). Everyone who is saved in any dispensation is joined unto or added to the Lord. Members of the Body have

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 199.

⁴⁴⁵ A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology, op. cit.*, p. 619.

been joined to the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:17). But not everybody that has been joined to the Lord or that has been indwelt by the Holy Spirit has been joined to the Body. The millennial saints will surely be indwelt by the Spirit and will be joined to the Lord, but they will not be members of the Body of Christ. Ryrie speaks of a *Jewish church* in contrast with the *Body church*. We would prefer to refer to it as the *Kingdom church*, since the word Jewish carries the connotation of natural, carnal, unspiritual.

Ryrie further objects to the view here advocated on the basis that the Mystery was revealed to the other apostles as well as to Paul. He bases this upon Ephesians 3:1-12. He states: "If this is provable (that to Paul exclusively was revealed the mystery of the Church, the Body of Christ), then the mystery Church, the Body, could not have begun until Paul came on the scene."⁴⁴⁶ He then quotes Sauer in proof that Ephesians 3:3 teaches that there is even a hint that it is to be found in the Old Testament under veiled forms or types.

In answer to these objections it should be pointed out first that none of the other apostles make any reference to the mystery, which is rather strange if it was first revealed to them. Next, Paul positively states that the mystery was made known to him by revelation (Ephesians 3:3; Colossians 1:25). Further, Paul claims that he did not get his message from those who were apostles before him (Galatians 1:12), and in Galatians 2:2 he states that he went up to Jerusalem by revelation to communicate to the other apostles that gospel which he preached among the Gentiles. All of this seems to be a rather useless activity if the Twelve had received the revelation of the mystery before Paul was even saved and had been preaching it during the intervening years. It seems evident from these facts that the Twelve had the mystery revealed to them when God by a special revelation sent Paul to Jerusalem to make it known unto them. If Paul is talking about the Twelve apostles in Ephesians 3:5, as he appears to be, he is surely not saying that the mystery was revealed to them before it was made known to him. Paul wanted to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery, and that would include the other apostles. The fact that Paul was the first to receive this revelation is recognized by many expositors, and this very fact creates a problem for them. Abbott, for example, states:

A more considerable difficulty seems to rise from the statement that the mystery of the free admission of the Gentiles had been revealed to "the apostles and prophets," viz. as a body. For this is precisely the special doctrine which St. Paul seems elsewhere, and here in ver. 3, to claim as his own, and which, at least at first, was not accepted by the other apostles (Gal. ii). In ver. 8, also, this is recognized as the distinctive characteristic of St. Paul's apostleship. For this reason Reuss makes the

⁴⁴⁶ Ryrie, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

suggestion that the second half of ver. 5 is a gloss But the authority of the MSS. is too strong for this suggestion to be accepted.⁴⁴⁷

Putting all of these facts together, the complete silence of the other apostles about the mystery, the repeated statements of Paul that the mystery was revealed directly to him by Jesus Christ and not simply by illumination or inspiration of the Spirit, and the opposition at the first by the other apostles to Paul's message ([Acts 15:7](#)), appears to be positive proof that Paul was the first to receive this revelation, and that he was delegated to make it known to others by means of the Spirit. Ryrie has admitted that "if this is provable, then the mystery Church, the Body, could not have begun until Paul came on the scene."

A further word should be noted concerning the expression, "the apostles and prophets." The definite article is used before "apostles" but not before "prophets." Dana and Mantey give the rule for such grammatical construction:

When the copulative *kai* connects two nouns of the same case, if the article *o* or any of its cases precedes the first of the said nouns or participles, and is not repeated before the second noun or participle, the latter always relates to the same person that is expressed or described by the first noun or participle: i.e., it denotes a further description of the first named person.⁴⁴⁸

The suggestion has been made, on the basis of this construction, that Paul is speaking about men who might be called *apostle-prophets*: not official apostles, but men in his churches who had the gift of prophecy. It should be remembered that until the New Testament canon was completed, God gave the gift of prophecy to certain in each assembly, to whom revelations were given for the edification of the saints ([1 Corinthians 14:29, 30](#)).

Whether this grammatical construction means that apostle-prophet refers to one and the same person, or whether apostles and prophets are to be considered as a unified whole, as Moulton suggests,⁴⁴⁹ is not clear, although Paul's other references to apostles and prophets elsewhere seems to refer definitely to the Twelve official apostles. But what this construction does indicate is that the prophets are not Old Testament prophets, but men associated with the apostles.

A great deal of weight has been placed upon the expression in Ephesians 3:5: "as it is now revealed," as though this proves that the apostles and prophets got this revelation before Paul on the day of Pentecost, thereby further proving that

⁴⁴⁷ T. K. Abbott, *The International Critical Commentary*, Galatians and Ephesians (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1953), p. 82.

⁴⁴⁸ Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1948), p. 147.

⁴⁴⁹ James H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), Vol. III, p. 181.

the Body began at Pentecost. The "*now revealed*" indicates just the opposite. Paul received the revelation first, and now it has been revealed to the others. In the light of Paul's positive, unqualified statements elsewhere that the mystery had never before been revealed ([Romans 16:25](#); [Colossians 1:26](#)), we cannot understand the "as" referring to the degree to which the mystery was revealed in other ages. If, for example, we should say, "Men in other ages and generations did not take trips to the moon as they do in our generation," we would not mean that men in the past took some kind of partial trips to the moon. The mystery was not made known before Paul - period.

The final objection voiced by Ryrie against the uniqueness of the Pauline revelation of the mystery concerns Spirit baptism. This is the only argument which, at first sight, seems to give positive evidence that the Body of Christ began at Pentecost. If every reference to baptism which is associated with the Holy Spirit is assumed to refer to one and the same work, as Ryrie and most dispensationalists do, then it is obvious that Spirit baptism first took place at Pentecost and that Spirit baptism is that which forms the Body of Christ. However, if it can be proved that Christ baptizing with the Spirit at Pentecost is a different work from that of the Spirit baptizing believers into the Body of Christ, this argument loses all of its force.

Ryrie argues that since the same expression is used in both cases, namely, *en pneumatii*, the preposition *en* must be translated the same in both cases and that therefore the two baptisms mentioned in Acts 1:5 and 1 Corinthians 12:13 must be identical. That such is not the case has been demonstrated by Vernon A. Schutz, who answers Ryrie's contention as follows:

Dr. Ryrie concedes that *en* can sometimes mean "with," "by," or "in," but he asks us to face the "possibility that in both instances it does mean the same and refers to the same baptism." Since Dr. Ryrie has coupled two ideas together let us examine them one at a time. His plea to us rests partially on the basis that we translate *en* "consistently" in both cases since "*it is used in exactly the same phrase with the Spirit.*" But we do not always translate *en* the same way simply because it is used in the same phrase with the same noun. For instance, would you always translate the preposition *en* when used with the noun *heaven* "IN heaven?" Would you translate Matthew 5:34, "Swear not at all; neither IN heaven," or "Swear not at all; neither BY heaven?" Does Christ tell us not to swear IN heaven? How much sense does that make? Obviously we must translate *en* "BY" here.

Now let's look at Matthew 5:45; 6:9 and 22:30. Would Dr. Ryrie suggest that we should "consistently" translate *en* "by" since it is used in exactly the same phrase with the word "heaven?" How much sense does it make to translate *en* "BY" in these passages? "Your Father which is BY heaven?" "Our Father which art BY heaven? But are as the angels BY

heaven?" It is best to change the word BY in these passages to IN. The point is, you must not always translate *en* the same way in all cases even when used with the same noun. It is the sense of the passage that determines *whether* it should be IN heaven or BY heaven, and it is the sense of the passage and context that determines whether it should be IN the Spirit or BY the Spirit.

It is important to see that we do not actually build our position on the preposition *itself*, even though at first glance it may seem as though we do. We depend more on the sense of the passage than does Dr. Ryrie. Dr. Ryrie, however, keeps focusing our attention on the translation of the preposition. He would like the Greek *en* translated "IN" the Spirit in both cases. As a result of this he carefully restricts himself to using only Acts 1:5 with 1 Corinthians 12:13. The promise Christ speaks of in Acts 1:5 is recorded in four other places. They are Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; and John 1:33. Dr. Ryrie does not mention or list these other passages. There is good reason for this. It will be noted in the Greek texts that God does not find the Greek preposition *en* so important, for, although it appears before the words "water" and "Holy Spirit" in John 1:33 and Matthew 3:11, in Luke's account it only appears before the words "Holy Spirit" but it does not appear before "water," *and in Mark's account the preposition does not appear at all.* This shows that the true sense of these passages is not really dependent on the preposition. To demonstrate this more graphically, translate Matthew 3:11 as either "with," or "by," or "in." Take your choice. It is still evident who the baptizing agents are, even though one preposition may serve better than another one.

"I (John) indeed baptize you with/by/in water.. .; but He (Christ) shall baptize you with/by/in the Holy Spirit."

Changing the prepositions does not destroy the obvious sense of the passage. The argument does not really rest on one little preposition as Dr. Ryrie would have you believe. It is clear that John is the baptizing agent. It is equally clear, because of the parallelism, that Christ is the baptizing agent. Since it is not possible to make the water the baptizer in this passage, neither is it possible to make the Spirit the baptizer. Christ was the agent baptizing on the day of Pentecost.⁴⁵⁰

Chafer espouses the same view on these two baptisms. He states:

Those Scriptures in which the Holy Spirit is related to baptism are to be classified in two divisions. In the one group, Christ is the baptizing agent, yet the Holy Spirit is the blessed influence which characterizes the baptism. In the other group of passages, the Holy Spirit is the baptizing agent and Christ as the Head of His mystical Body is the receiving

⁴⁵⁰ Vernon A. Schutz, "An Answer to an Analysis of Our Position," *TRUTH*, 1969, Vol. XIX, No. 3, p. 57.

element and by so much that blessed influence which characterizes the baptism.⁴⁵¹

It is only fair to state that Chafer taught that the Body began at Pentecost, and therefore he had to teach that both of these baptisms took place on that day. However, he produced no evidence whatsoever to show that there is any reference to the Spirit baptizing into the Body of Christ at Pentecost. We believe we have shown conclusively that there is a distinction between these two baptisms in which the Holy Spirit has a part, and that there is no reference to the one mentioned by Paul outside of Paul's epistles.

Another rather general objection is based upon the historical continuity of the New Testament. Is there not a steady historical progress from Pentecost to and through the ministry of the Apostle Paul, it is asked. This objection can be made against beginning the Body of Christ at any point in history, for there is a steady progress all the way from the garden of Eden to the present. It is true that when God began the Body of Christ He did not go to the other side of the earth and begin with a people completely removed from His former Kingdom people. He saved and called an Israelite to be the new apostle of the Gentiles. And while there was this historical bridge with God's past redemptive dealings, it should be remembered that there was a break also. Paul did not receive his message or his teaching from those who were apostles before him, but directly from Jesus Christ by personal revelation ([Galatians 1: 1, 11, 12](#)). And in that revelation is contained a message which had been kept secret from times eternal. Conybeare and Howson state this fact which is often overlooked or watered down by Bible expositors:

All we can confidently assert is, that he (Paul) did not learn from St. Peter the mystery which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it was now revealed unto God's holy Apostles by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise by the Gospel.⁴⁵²

There has been the tendency among covenant-type theologians to recognize only the connections and to deny all dispensational distinctions. On the other hand, there has been the tendency among dispensationalists to see only the distinctions and to deny the connections. Both the distinctions and the connections are essential to a balanced view of Scripture.

Other objections have been voiced against the distinctiveness of the Pauline revelation which are hardly worthy of notice. For example, some have objected that to begin the Body with Paul is to dishonor Christ and to practically deify Paul. It is strange that those who have brought this charge believe that the Body began

⁴⁵¹ L. S. Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 141.

⁴⁵² Conybeare and Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longroans, & Roberts, 1857), Vol. I, p. 140.

with Peter at Pentecost. Do people degrade Jehovah and deify Moses when they speak of the law of Moses? There is no thought of exalting Moses or Peter or Paul. God needed men for His work and these are the ones He chose for distinctive tasks.

CONCLUSION

Scripture nowhere states specifically when the Body of Christ began. Evidence has been presented that it did not begin at Pentecost or before that time, and that it did begin with Paul's ministry. Can we be more specific and pinpoint the beginning to a specific point in Paul's ministry? Those who hold to the uniqueness of the Pauline revelation present three different viewpoints: that the Body began at Paul's conversion, at his separation to his distinctive ministry in Acts 13, and at Acts 28:28. We have already demonstrated the impossibility of the latter view. If it began with his conversion in Acts 9, there is nothing in Scripture to indicate that there was any revelation of this truth at that time. What seems to be of greatest importance is the point at which Paul was separated from his ministry to Israel unto that work for which God had called him, namely, to become the Apostle of the Gentiles and Dispenser of the truth of the Mystery. This separation definitely occurred in Acts 13. The important thing to ascertain is when Body truth began to be revealed, so that we might know what is Body truth, not simply when God might have secretly begun the Body.

69 THE TRANSITION PERIOD

Many Bible expositors speak of a transition period in the New Testament. A transition is a change from one thing to another. Numerous changes took place from the time Jesus was born into the world to the end of the apostolic period. God's religious program underwent a complete change from Levitical priesthood and ceremonialism to the Melchisedec priesthood and finished work of Christ. The Old Covenant was superseded by the New. The nation of Israel was set aside and salvation was sent to the Gentiles. The Kingdom promises were put in abeyance and an entirely new Divine purpose was undertaken, the formation of the Church which is Christ's Body.

The word *transition* might be used in a general way to describe any or all of the changes which might be catalogued. However, for the present purpose the term will be narrowed down to describe the change during the history of the book of Acts from the Kingdom ministry of the Twelve apostles to the Body of Christ ministry of the apostle Paul. Since Paul's special ministry began in Acts 13, the Transition Period will be considered to have covered the latter half of the Acts period.

THE NATURE OF A TRUE TRANSITION

The word transition can hardly be used simply of the beginning of a new undertaking with its subsequent development. To qualify as a true transition there must be a change from one thing or undertaking to a different thing or undertaking. Also, to be a transition the change must take place over a more or less extended period of time. An instant change from one thing to another would not constitute a transition. If, for example, a group of men decided to start a new business adventure, there would be no transition in beginning their venture. Neither would there be a transition if the owners of a business decided to sell it and buy out another company. But if the owners of a business which manufactured washing machines decided to change their product to automobiles, there would doubtless be a period of transition during which they would close out their washing machine operation, retool their production machinery and train their personnel for their new tasks. The transition period would be over when the changeover had been completed and the plant was in full production of automobiles.

THE NATURE OF THE ACTS TRANSITION

We must carefully define what we mean by the Acts Transition, and at the same time state what we do not mean. In some areas there was a definite transition and in others there was not. In speaking of the Transition we do not mean that the nation of Israel gradually changed into the Church, the Body of Christ. We believe that the Body of Christ began as a completely new creation of God, and in this sense there was no transition. We do not believe that God was carrying on two separate dispensations at the same time, one of offering the Kingdom to Israel and the other of forming the Body of Christ, and that one of these gradually died out while the other increased.

If God, in beginning the new dispensation of the mystery, had appeared to a man in China and had revealed the new dispensation to him entirely apart from any connection with His former redemptive program with Israel, there would have been no place to speak of a transition. But God did not do this. Instead, He appeared to a man who was an Israelite, a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Although Saul was saved in an unusual manner by the direct appearing of Jesus Christ, he came under the prevailing kingdom dispensational program and was baptized to wash away his sins ([Acts 22:16](#)). The miraculous program of signs and wonders which characterized the Pentecostal period continued under his ministry. In fact, every recorded miracle performed by the apostle Peter was duplicated by the apostle Paul. There is such a close historical connection between Paul and the earlier disciples that from the book of Acts alone we might conclude that Paul was simply extending the ministry of the Twelve apostles. In fact, this is the view of the great majority of non-dispensationalists. They see only one Church in the Bible from the beginning of time to the second coming of Christ. The only change they see is that in the New Testament Gentiles are admitted to membership in the Church. But the epistles of Paul, written during the latter half of the Acts and afterward, reveal the change and the unique character of the new dispensation

which God had begun. The book of Acts will be searched in vain for any truth about the mystery or the Body of Christ. The word church is used eighteen times throughout Acts, beginning at 2:47, without making any distinction whatever between the church at Jerusalem and the churches Paul founded. Sir Robert Anderson's statement of the purpose of the book of Acts is helpful at this point.

Every one recognizes that the advent of Christ marked a signal "change of dispensation," as it is termed: that is, a change in God's dealings with men. But the fact is commonly ignored that the rejection of Christ by the favoured people, and their fall in consequence from the position of privilege formerly held by them, marked another change no less definite and important (Rom. xi. 15). And yet this fact affords the solution of many difficulties and a safeguard against many errors. As indicated in these pages, it gives the clew to the right understanding of the Acts of the Apostles--a book which is primarily the record, not, as commonly supposed, of the rounding of the Christian Church, but of the apostasy of the favoured nation.⁴⁵³

To go back to our illustration of a transition, God was in business with the nation of Israel with a view to establishing the earthly, millennial kingdom from Pentecost to approximately half way through the book of Acts. At a definite point in time, known only to God, He closed out that business; He cast Israel aside ([Romans 11:15](#)); He broke off the natural branches ([Romans 11:17](#)). He then began a brand new business with the Body of Christ under a new dispensation with the apostle Paul as the chief administrator. According to our definition there was no transition involved in this aspect of the change. Wherein then was there a transition?

The transition is involved with the historical continuity of God's spiritual or religious program. There was seemingly no sharp break in this program at all. The Jewish kingdom church which existed at Pentecost continued on throughout the book of Acts. Paul went out to the Gentile world and had as his chief fellow-workers members of the Jerusalem church. Paul and his churches ministered to the Jerusalem saints on various occasions ([Acts 11:29, 30; 18:21; 21:17; Romans 15:25-28; I Corinthians 16:1-3; 2 Corinthians 1:16](#)). The various sign gifts which characterized the great commission to the Kingdom apostles ([Mark 16:17, 18](#)) were also manifested in Paul's ministry and in his churches (1 Corinthians 12-14). It was decided in conference with the apostles at Jerusalem that Paul's Gentile converts did not need to submit to circumcision and other Jewish rites ([Acts 15:19-27](#)). This is seemingly the only noticeable difference in Paul's ministry as far as the book of Acts is concerned. But Paul's epistles written during this period indicate some very great differences, and this fact has caused many people to condemn Paul for some of his activities in the book of Acts. For example, the Scofield Reference Bible has this heading over Acts 18:18: "The author of [Rom. 6:14; 2 Cor. 3:7-14; and Gal. 3:23-28](#) takes a Jewish vow." And

⁴⁵³ Sir Robert Anderson, *The Silence of God* (London: Pickering & Inglis, ninth edition, N.D.), p. 177.

again, over Acts 21:18: "Paul takes a Jewish vow involving a Jewish sacrifice." (cf. [Heb. 10:2, 9-12](#))

It is apparent from all that has just been stated that as far as the outward religious program was concerned, there was not a sharp breaking off of the kingdom program and a sudden beginning of the Body program. Instead there was a period of gradual change over a number of years, and we call that period of change the Transition Period.

It is both difficult and dangerous to try to establish permanent doctrines on the practices of a period of transition, when everything is in a state of flux. One can go to Paul's experiences in the book of Acts to find support for practicing circumcision, Nazarite vows, animal sacrifices, tongues, healing, visions, baptism, etc., all of which are either forbidden or are to pass away according to his epistles.

THE TRANSITION IDEA IN PAUL'S EPISTLES

[1 Corinthians 13:8-13](#) is the central passage in Paul's epistles indicating the transitional nature of the latter half of the Acts period. Here Paul uses the illustration of the transition that occurs in the process of maturing from childhood to adulthood. He says, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." He equates the miraculous sign gifts as things which characterized the childhood of the new dispensation. These things were to pass away when the mature or perfect state of the dispensation comes. (The word *perfect* in this context, Greek *teleion*, means mature or full age: it is translated men in 14:20 in contrast to children.) The things which are to characterize the grown-up stage of the dispensation are faith, hope, and love. Most commentators completely miss Paul's meaning here and represent him as saying that this whole dispensation of nearly two-thousand years is to be kept in the state of infancy, and at death or at the rapture we will suddenly be changed into adulthood. This interpretation logically keeps us in the mixed religious program of the book of Acts to the present time, and teaches that the heavenly state will be characterized by faith, hope, and love. But it is evident that faith and hope will not be the chief characteristics of heaven. Heaven is the realization of all of God's promises, and Paul would ask: "what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" (Romans 8:24). In heaven, all hopes will be realized. We will no longer walk by faith ([2 Corinthian 5:7](#)): faith will be turned into sight there. The only one of this trilogy which will endure in the heavenly state is love. No, Paul is not talking about dying and going to heaven in 1 Corinthians 13:10. He is talking about the transition from the babyhood stage to the adult stage of the dispensation.

The transition involves two things: the completion of revelation concerning the dispensation, resulting from the writing of Paul's final epistles, and the passing away of those things which characterized the Pentecostal dispensation which are

mentioned in the Corinthian letter. Until the Scriptures for the Body of Christ were completed there was need in each assembly for those with the gift of prophecy to receive and transmit to the congregation revelations from God (1 [Corinthians 14:24-33](#)). This gift was to pass away when the dispensation came to maturity. During the transition period God in His longsuffering was giving a special witness to the nation of Israel before executing His judgment in the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. The sign gifts were designed for this witness to Israel, for "the Jews require a sign" (1 Corinthians 1:22), and tongues were for a sign (1 [Corinthians 14:22](#)). After Paul had been sent to bear witness to Israel in the dispersion and Israel everywhere had as a whole rejected and blasphemed, God sent the armies of Rome to destroy Jerusalem and disperse the Jews. After that there was no need or place for a manifestation of the sign gifts.

THE STATE OF THE SAINTS DURING THE TRANSITION

There were thousands of Jewish saints who were alive at the time that God began the Body of Christ. The question naturally arises, what happened to these people who were not members of the Body but who lived on into the new dispensation where every one became members of the Body at the time of salvation? Did they remain attached to Israel or did they too become members of the Body? We have pointed out that things were in a state of flux during the transition and that it is therefore difficult to determine accurately everything that was transpiring. For that reason there is a difference of understanding upon this point among dispensationalists who hold the general scheme presented in this book.

There are those who hold that all of those who were saved before the Body of Christ began and who lived on into the new dispensation never became members of the Body but remained in what might be called the Kingdom Church. There are a number of facts which might lead to this conclusion.

1. Christ promised the Twelve Apostles that they would sit as judges in Israel's Kingdom ([Matthew 19:28](#)). Since the basic tenet of dispensationalism is the distinction between Israel and the Body of Christ, this distinction would be obliterated by having members of the Body as a part of Israel's Kingdom. Therefore it is seemingly impossible to have the Twelve in the Body and at the same time have them in Israel's Kingdom.

2. It is argued that the principles stated in Romans 11:29 forbids the placing of the Twelve and other Jewish believers in the Body: "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." *Calling* is here interpreted to mean the dispensational group to which one is called when he is saved, such as Kingdom calling or Body calling. Thus the passage is made to mean that God cannot repent or change His mind concerning the calling of one after he is saved. Since the Twelve and the others who were saved before the Body began were saved in the Kingdom calling, it is impossible for God to change their calling to that in the Body.

3. It is evident from [Acts 15:19-21](#) and [21:25](#) that the Jewish believers at Jerusalem carried on a different religious program from that practiced by the Gentile believers. The Jewish believers continued with circumcision and other Mosaic customs concerning the Law and the temple, whereas Paul taught the Gentiles that Christ would profit them nothing if they engaged in such practices. Therefore, these differences are evidences of a difference in calling between these two groups.

4. Paul stated that he had been entrusted with the gospel of the Uncircumcision, whereas Peter had been given the gospel of the Circumcision ([Galatians 2:7-9](#)). Since the gospel of the Circumcision is the gospel for Israel and is almost synonymous with the gospel of the Kingdom, this is further evidence that Peter and Paul belonged to two different churches.

5. Paul stated that members of the Body have one hope ([Ephesians 4:4](#)). *Hope* is construed to mean the Rapture, as distinct from the Second Coming of Christ, which is the hope of Israel. Since the Twelve Apostles were given the hope of reigning with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom and members of the Body have a different hope, the Twelve would have two hopes if they were also members of the Body.

6. A final argument is the fact that none of the other apostles in their writings ever mention the Body of Christ or the dispensation of the Mystery. Instead, their epistles are addressed to the twelve tribes scattered abroad ([James 1:1](#)) and the sojourners of the dispersion ([1 Peter 1:1](#)), and the subject matter concerns the prophetic program of Israel. It is therefore argued that if these apostles were members of the Body they would surely have mentioned specific truth which concerns the Body in their epistles.

Those who hold this view generally concur that all who were saved after the Body began became members of the Body, even though they were saved through the ministry of those who were not members of the Body. It is also generally held that many of Paul's fellow-workers, such as Barnabas, Silas, and Apollos, men who were saved before the Body began, never became members of the Body, even though they preached and practiced Body truth.

On the other hand, there are those who feel that the weight of evidence is in favor of the view that all believers during the latter half of the Acts period became members of the Body. They believe that when God began forming the Body of Christ, all believers who were alive at that time were baptized into the Body. How, then, are the above objections answered?

1. The promise of Christ to the Twelve that they would sit upon thrones judging the tribes of Israel in the Kingdom was not a part of Israel's covenant promises, but rather a personal reward which Christ gave to His apostles for having

forsaken all and having followed Him. This reward has nothing to do with either Israel's hope or the Body's hope. Members of the Body of Christ are going to reign with Christ ([2 Timothy 2:12](#)), apparently as a reward for faithfulness. We are not told what particular position we shall hold in reigning with Christ, but the Twelve were told what position they would have. There is considerable difference between the position of ruler or judge and that of subject. The fact of the Twelve reigning with Christ poses no more a problem than other members of the Body reigning with Him.

2. It is very doubtful that Paul used the word *calling* in [Romans 11:29](#) in the sense of being called to a particular dispensational group. In the context Paul is not raising the question of whether God can put an Israelite into the Body of Christ. Rather, he is showing that God's promises to Israel cannot fail of fulfillment. Israel has fallen and has become an enemy of the gospel at present, and yet God has not repented His calling of that nation. The Deliverer will yet come to Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob. Had God repented, He would have cast off Israel permanently.

3. It is true that there were two orders of religious programs for Jews and Gentiles during the transition period, but this does not mean that Jews and Gentiles were in two separate and distinct bodies or churches. As long as Jerusalem and the temple stood, the Jews in that city of necessity must have observed religious rites which had never been imposed upon the Gentiles. Even Paul, when he went back to Jerusalem, placed himself under the Mosaic requirements ([Acts 21:24-26](#)). Because he took Jewish vows, observed ordinances of the temple, circumcised Timothy, and practiced other Jewish customs does not prove that he was not a member of the Body of Christ.

4. It is true that Peter had been entrusted with the gospel of the circumcision, but this was before the Body of Christ began. This gospel was God's good news to Israel, not only of personal salvation, but of the fulfilling of all of the promises of the covenant of circumcision to that nation. Paul does not say that Peter continued preaching this gospel in the new dispensation, but simply that it had been committed to him. Concerning his own commission Paul says, not merely that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to him, but "I have been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision." He uses the perfect tense, implying that his was a permanent commission. After Paul had gone to Jerusalem and made known to the other apostles the new message for this dispensation of the Mystery, it is taken for granted that they should have conformed their ministry to agree with that of Paul.

5. It is doubtful that Paul always referred to the rapture when he spoke of the believer's hope. Paul says that Jesus Christ is our hope ([1 Timothy 1:1](#)); he speaks of the hope of eternal life ([Titus 1:2](#)), the hope of salvation ([1 Thessalonians 5:8](#)), the hope of the gospel ([Colossians 1:23](#)), the hope of glory ([Colossians 1:27](#)), the hope of righteousness ([Galatians 5:5](#)), as well as the

blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ ([Titus 2:13](#)). Since all of the aspects of the believer's hope is to be found in the person of Jesus Christ, it is more likely that Paul is referring thus to our one hope.

6. It is true that the other apostles do not write about the mystery, but this fact does not necessarily prove that they did not become members of the Body. Paul mentions the Body in only four of his fourteen epistles. He speaks of the mystery in only four or five of his epistles. Paul was uniquely the one to whom the mystery was revealed, and thus is the only one commissioned to write about it.

There are some positive evidences that all of the believers of Paul's day were members of the Body of Christ. We must go to Paul's epistles for information and not merely to Acts, where things are in a state of flux and transition. Here we find the following facts:

1. In both Romans and I Corinthians Paul surely gives the impression that he considers all believers everywhere to be members of the Body. 1 Corinthians is addressed not only to the saints at Corinth, but to "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's." And he informs all of these so addressed that whether they be Jews or Gentiles they have all been baptized by one Spirit into one Body ([12:13](#)). Paul addressed his Roman letter to all of the saints at Rome ([1:7](#)), and although he had not founded the church of Rome, nor had he ever been to Rome, and surely he did not know all of the saints that might be in Rome, he nevertheless tells them all that they are members of the one Body ([12:5](#)).

2. Paul's two main fellow-workers, Barnabas and Silas, were both men who were saved in the Jerusalem church long before the Body began. It is almost unthinkable that Paul would choose men who were not even members of the Body to become his main leaders in conducting the ministry to the Body.

3. Apollos was a mighty preacher who knew only the baptism of John until Priscilla and Aquila met him and instructed him more thoroughly in Pauline doctrine. Paul states that he planted the seed at Corinth and that Apollos watered it, which would indicate that they were both engaged in the same ministry ([1 Corinthians 3:6](#)).

4. Paul rebuked the Corinthians for being divided between Peter, Apollos, and himself. If, in fact, Peter and Apollos were members of the kingdom church and not members of the Body church, Paul should have informed them of this, and not have found fault with Peter's converts for joining themselves to Peter.

5. Paul himself as an Israelite possessed the promises of God concerning the Messianic kingdom, and many believe that he was saved before God began the Body, but we are certain that he did become a member of it when it began.

6. Paul's two kinsmen, Andronicus and Junia, were saved before he was, and therefore before the Body began. These two men were in Rome when Paul wrote his epistle and therefore must be included in the one Body of 12:5.

7. Paul gives a universal classification of the human race in 1 Corinthians 10:32: "Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." Apparently Paul did not recognize the existence of two separate churches when he wrote this. The Jews and Gentiles here represent all of the unsaved, whereas all of the saved are classified as the church of God.

8. Timothy's mother and grandmother were true Jewish believers before the Body began ([2 Timothy 1:5](#)). Timothy from childhood had been taught the holy Scriptures which were able to make him wise unto salvation ([2 Timothy 3:15](#)). It would thus appear that Timothy was a true Jewish believer before ever he heard the gospel by Paul's mouth. No doubt godly Jewish believers who lived before the gospel of Christ reached them were in a saved condition. Thus it would appear that Timothy was saved as a Jew with expectation of inheriting the Messianic kingdom, but he later became a member of the Body of Christ and Paul's fellow-worker.

9. The church at Antioch which was Paul's home-base from which he was sent out to open the door of faith to the Gentiles and to begin the new dispensation of the Mystery was founded by Jerusalem saints who were scattered abroad by persecution ([Acts 11:19, 20](#)). It would seem strange indeed if the members of Paul's home church were not members of the Body. How could Paul minister any of his distinctive truths to this church if it was not a part of the new dispensation?

10. There were doubtless many local churches which contained people who were saved both before and after the Body began. If these people belonged to two separate groups, with separate dispensational programs, with some looking for the Rapture and others for the Tribulation and the second coming of Christ to establish the earthly kingdom, there would be constant confusion in the teaching and preaching.

In one sense of the word the question under consideration is an academic one, affecting only the Jewish saints who lived on into the new dispensation. All are agreed that once the Body of Christ began all believers since that time have become members of the Body. The most important aspect of the problem is the effect it has on our understanding of the General Epistles. Capable students of the Word will be found on both sides of the question. Each individual must weigh the evidence for himself.

70 THE LOCAL CHURCHES

The emphasis thus far in the study of Ecclesiology has been upon the One true Church of this dispensation, the Body of Christ, which is sometimes referred to as the Church Universal, the Catholic Church, or the Invisible Church. This present study will deal with the local, visible, humanly organized assemblies of Christians, which in the Scripture are also called by the name, *ekklesia*. This word is used in the plural thirty-five times, twenty of these occurrences being in the Pauline epistles. Some of the occurrences of the word in the singular also refer to local churches.

REFERENCES TO LOCAL CHURCHES

Plural. Acts 9:31; 15:41; 16:5; 19:37; Romans 16:4, 16; 1 Corinthians 7:17; 11:16; 14:33, 34; 16:1, 19; 2 Corinthians 8:1, 18, 19, 23, 24; 11:8, 28; 12:13; Galatians 1:2, 22; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; Revelation 1:4, 11, 20, 20; 2:7, 11, 17, 23, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 22:16.

Singular. Matthew 18:17, 17; Acts 2:47; 5:11; 7:38; 8:1, 3; 11:22, 26; 12:1, 5; 13:1; 14:23, 27; 15:3, 4, 22; 18:22; 20:17, 28; Romans 16:1, 5, 23; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 4:17; 6:4; 10:32; 11:18, 22; 12:28; 14:4, 5, 12, 19, 23, 28, 35; 16:19; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Philippians 4:15; Colossians 4:15, 16; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:5, 15; 5:16; Philemon 2; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:13; 3 John 6, 9, 10; Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14.

A few of the above references in the singular may also refer to the Church Universal. Sixty out of the seventy-eight occurrences of the word in the singular refer to visible, local assemblies, but not all of these have reference to the Body of Christ.

PARTICULAR CHURCHES MENTIONED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. The church at Cenchrea ([Romans 16:1](#)).
2. The church in the house of Priscilla and Aquila ([Romans 16:5](#); [1 Corinthians 16:19](#)).
3. The church of God at Corinth ([1 Corinthians 1:2](#); [2 Corinthians 1:1](#)).
4. The church in the house of Nymphas ([Colossians 4:15](#)).
5. The church of the Laodiceans ([Colossians 4:16](#)).
6. The church of the Thessalonians ([1 Thessalonians 1:1](#); [2 Thessalonians 1:1](#)).

7. The church in the house of Philemon ([Philemon 2](#)).
8. The churches of the Gentiles ([Romans 16:4](#)).
9. The churches of Galatia ([1 Corinthians 16:1](#); [Galatians 1:2](#)).
10. The churches of Asia ([1 Corinthians 16:19](#)).
11. The churches of Macedonia ([2 Corinthians 8:1](#)).
12. The Churches of Judea ([Galatians 1:22](#) cf. [Acts 15:41](#)).
13. The churches of Syria and Cilicia ([Acts 15:41](#)).
14. The churches mentioned in [Revelation](#): Ephesus ([2:1](#)); Smyrna ([2:8](#)); Pergamos ([2:12](#)); Thyatira ([2:18](#)); Sardis ([3:1](#)); Philadelphia ([3:7](#)); and Laodicea ([3:14](#)).

LOCAL CHURCHES ARE ORDAINED OF GOD

Just as there has been the tendency on the part of denominational churches to emphasize the importance of the local, visible church almost to the exclusion of one true Body Church, so also those who place the emphasis upon the one Church often minimize the importance of the local assembly. As one reads the above catalog of local churches which were founded by the apostles and of the many apostolic instructions to these churches, he cannot doubt but that the local church is just as much ordained of God as is the Body of Christ. Sinners can be saved and become members of the Body of Christ without ever identifying themselves with a local assembly, but it is evident that God wills that all believers be united in fellowship and ministry with other believers in a local church.

DEFINITION OF A LOCAL CHURCH

What constitutes a local church? How many believers must there be in order to form a local church? How much organization, if any, is required? The Scripture is silent on these questions. From the meaning of *ekklesia* it is evident that there must be some kind of assemblage of believers before there can be a church. On the basis of Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," it has been argued that even so small a number might comprise a church. While the Lord was not there speaking about the church of this dispensation, it is significant that among the Kingdom group He recognized so small a number as being worthy of His special presence. Every church which begins through purely evangelistic methods must begin small. Usually groups that are too small to support a pastor are called *missions*, although there is no Scripture warrant for this. Paul's evangelistic efforts were

usually rewarded with many converts, so that some of his churches were quite large. At Ephesus, for example, the believers made a bonfire of their books of magic, the value of which was 50,000 pieces of silver. No doubt many hundreds of people were needed to bring that many books together.

If a local church is to support its own pastor and have its own meeting place it is evident that a minimum of about twenty wage-earners would be necessary, if each wage-earner gave at least one-tenth of his income. The tithe from ten families should support the pastor on the same economic level as the congregation, and the tithe from the additional ten families should take care of the cost of the meeting place and incidentals. Since social and economic conditions vary so greatly from place to place and from age to age, it would seem that God has wisely refrained from laying down any rules for such matters.

The local church, though separate from the State (at least, in the United States), has a relationship to government, and often must meet certain requirements of the civil authorities. In order to qualify as a tax-free organization and in order to have contributions deductible for tax purposes, a church is required to be legally organized and registered with the government. These civil and legal requirements may dictate to some extent the organization and size of a church, but these are matters of a purely secular nature and have nothing to do with God's recognition of a group as a church.

THE MINISTRY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Chafer presents the view that the church as such has no responsibility or service imposed upon it. He says that all responsibility is individual. He states:

The common phrase, "the church's task," is, therefore without Biblical foundation.

He quotes Scofield:

Much is said concerning the "mission of the church." The "church which is His body" has for its mission to build itself up until the body is complete (Eph. 4:11-16; Col. 2:19), but the visible church, *as such*, is charged with no mission. The commission to evangelize the world is personal, and not corporate Doubtless the local church may be called upon by the Spirit to "separate" individuals to that work (of evangelizing), as at Antioch (Acts 13:1-3).⁴⁵⁴

Thiessen, on the other hand, gives a seven-fold mission for the church. In this connection he makes no distinction between the local church and the Body of Christ. He states that the mission of the Church is (1) to glorify God, (2) to edify itself, (3) to purify itself, (4) to educate its constituency, (5) to evangelize the

⁴⁵⁴ L. S. Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 149, 150.

world, (6) to act as a restraining and enlightening force in the world, and (7) to promote all that is good.⁴⁵⁵ He prefaces his remarks with these words: "There is perhaps no other phase of *Ecclesiology* that has been so misconceived as this one. Beginning with a wrong view of the nature of the Church, educators and social workers have promoted a program of political, economic, and social reform that is without Biblical warrant and often anti-Biblical in character."

The liberal wing of the professing church which teaches that the Bible has become outmoded and is no longer able to meet the social needs of the world, having no real spiritual ministry to give, occupies itself entirely with social and political programs, advising the government on home and foreign policy, sponsoring urban renewal, organizing protest marches for racial equality and better housing, advocating civil disobedience to put over its program, and attempting to unite all churches in a one-world religion. On the other hand, it is to be feared that many evangelicals have leaned over backwards, assuming that Christians have no responsibility to government or society, and by their indifference have provided fertile soil for radical extremists.

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between individual and corporate responsibility, whether in the church or in government. However, it seems certain that there can be no corporate responsibility apart from individual responsibility. It is true that the seven things Thiessen mentions are individual responsibilities, but if the individual believers comprise the church and if they assume their responsibilities, then it seems to be making a distinction where none exists to say that the church has no responsibilities.

It should be noted that most of Paul's epistles are addressed to churches. It would seem, therefore, that whatever responsibilities are laid down in those epistles are the responsibilities of the churches. Paul commends the church at Philippi for sending him financial help, and he states: "no church communicated with me concerning giving and receiving, but ye only" (Philippians 4:15), thus showing that Paul's churches acted as churches in his support. It would appear that the churches of Macedonia also acted in like manner, since Paul held them up as an example to the church at Corinth (2 Corinthians 8:1-6), when he gave orders to them and to the churches of Galatia to take up an offering for the poor saints at Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:1-4). Besides the fact that Scripture indicates that churches undertook projects as churches, Scripture recognizes the fact that there is strength in unity. "A three-fold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:12). One hundred Christians acting independently of one another can accomplish a certain amount, but the same one hundred working together as a team can be more efficient and accomplish much more. What, pray tell, would be the purpose in appointing elders and deacons, of having government in the local church, if the church as such had no responsibility? The church surely has the responsibility along with other things, of maintaining a certain discipline (1

⁴⁵⁵ Thiessen, *op. cit.*, pp.432-436.

[Corinthians 5:9-13](#)) and of teaching the Word of God ([1 Corinthians 14:19](#); [Ephesians 4:11, 12](#), etc.).

THE TEST OF A LOCAL CHURCH

One of the differences between the Body of Christ Church and the local church is that every member of the former is a saved person, whereas this is not necessarily true of the latter. The teaching of Covenant Theology which makes all of the baptized children of believing parents to be members of the church has been productive of much evil in this regard. Many of these children as they mature remain in their unregenerated state, and then in turn their children become members of the church. It does not require many generations to produce a situation where the majority of the members may be unsaved people, and when that occurs there is either a cold, dead orthodoxy or a liberal, naturalistic heterodoxy. Local churches which are endeavoring to govern themselves according to Scripture should take every precaution to insure that only saved persons are accepted into membership. It goes without saying that only God knows them that are His ([2 Timothy 2:19](#)), so that it is possible and probable that some unsaved people will sooner or later get into every evangelical church.

Any group of people may legally organize under the name of *church* and sponsor any kind of religion they desire, whether it be Christian or anti-Christian in teaching. Many churches which began as sound, evangelical works have fallen into the hands of liberals and have departed more and more from the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Christians are often confronted with the question of whether or not they should remain loyal to a particular church which has become theologically liberal. How far may a church depart from either the standards of conduct or of doctrine before it can no longer be recognized as a Biblical church?

The Bible provides no simple answer to this question. If a church has been careless and lax and has permitted unsaved people to gain the majority in the membership, it would seem that the minority of saved members would be powerless to do anything but to separate themselves. It is difficult to understand how a truly regenerated person can remain in fellowship where immorality is tolerated or the doctrine of Christ or of the gospel is denied, without protesting or withdrawing if his protests go unheeded. However, we are not made the judges of other men's consciences. One man may feel that as long as he is permitted to remain in such a church he should stay and boldly witness his faith in Christ. Another may feel that he should withdraw and seek fellowship elsewhere. This is apparently a question in which every man must be persuaded in his own mind ([Romans 14:5](#)).

Often local churches are split into factions, as was the Corinthian church ([1 Corinthians 1:11, 12](#)). Paul did not advise them to form new churches, but to be joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. Sometimes men like

Diotrephes (3 John 9) get into places of leadership and put the spiritual ones out of the church. Believers should be sure of having fulfilled Romans 12:18 before withdrawing from fellowship with other Christians: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

71 GOVERNMENT AND AUTHORITY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

It shall be our purpose in this chapter to consider first the various forms of church organization and government which have evolved in Christendom over the centuries, and then to look at the Scriptures for whatever instruction they present on the subject.

DIFFERENT FORMS OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Episcopal

Quite early in the history of the Church large and powerful churches arose in the principal cities of the empire. These churches founded mission churches in the surrounding towns and villages and maintained oversight of them. The head of the mother church was called the *episcopos*, or bishop. The word actually means overseer. The area over which the mother church ruled was known as the diocese. For historical details on the rise of the episcopate the student is referred to books on Church History.⁴⁵⁶

The word *episkopos* is used five times in the New Testament. Paul in speaking to the elders of the church at Ephesus states that "the Holy Ghost hath made you *overseers*" of the flock (Acts 20:28). Paul addresses his letter to the Philippians "to all the saints ... with the *bishops* and deacons" (1:1). He tells both Timothy and Titus that a bishop must be blameless (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7). And Peter speaks of Christ as the "Shepherd and *Bishop* of your souls" (1 Peter 2: 25). The first reference is of special interest since these words were spoken to men who are also called elders (*presbuteroi*). It would appear from this usage by Paul that *elder* and *bishop* refer to the same office. However, in the Episcopal form of government the bishop is a separate and much higher office than that of elder.

The Episcopal Church, the Methodist-Episcopal Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Greek Catholic Church, while differing in some orders of the clergy, all have a basic episcopal form of government. We might call this a *monarchial* form of government in which the supreme authority is vested in a bishop and in which the laity have little or no voice.

Presbyterial

⁴⁵⁶ George P. Fisher, *History of the Christian Church*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), pp. 51-59 traces the rise of the Episcopate.

This is a *representative* form of government. It derives its name from *presbuteros*, usually translated *elder*. This word occurs 67 times in the New Testament. About half of the references are to the elders of Israel mentioned in the Gospels and early Acts. Paul uses the word only in the Pastorals: [1 Timothy 5:1, 2, 17, 19](#); and [Titus 1:5](#). The word also appears in reference to Paul's ministry in [Acts 14:23; 20:17](#); and [21:18](#).

Whereas the Episcopal form of government recognizes three orders of the clergy: bishops, priests, and deacons, Presbyterianism recognizes only one: presbyters or elders. These are of two classes: teaching elders (ministers or pastors) and ruling elders (men who are associated with the pastor in the oversight of the congregation). Deacons have duties which are non-spiritual. The membership elects the elders who form the *Church Session*, which rules the local church. Although elected and called by the local church, the pastor must be approved by the next highest court, the *Presbytery*, which consists of all of the ministers and a selection of the ruling elders from the congregations in a prescribed area. The Presbytery has oversight of all of the congregations within its jurisdiction, sanctions the formation of new congregations, superintends education of ministers, exercises discipline, hears appeals from members, etc. The next highest court is the *Synod*, which is composed of ministers and ruling elders from all of the Presbyteries in a prescribed area. It deals with appeals and complaints from the Presbyteries. Finally, the highest or supreme court is the *General Assembly*, which consists of representatives from all of the Presbyteries in the country. In many respects the Presbyterian form of government is similar to that of the United States of America with its elected representatives in the various levels of authority.

Congregational

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* describes this form of church government in these words:

It regards church authority as inherent in each local body of believers, as a miniature realization of the whole Church, which can itself have only an ideal corporate being on earth. But while in practice it is a religious democracy, in theory it claims to be the most immediate form of theocracy, God Himself being regarded as ruling His people directly through Christ as Head of the Church, whether Catholic or local. So viewed, Congregationalism is essentially a "high *church*" theory, as distinct from a high *clerical* one. It springs from the religious principle that each body of believers in actual church fellowship must be free of all external human control, in order to more fully obey the will of God as conveyed to conscience by His Spirit. Here responsibility and privilege are correlatives.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁷ *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1947 edition, Vol. VI, p. 246.

While Congregationalism always regards the local church as independent of all external human authority, the actual order of government within the local church may vary. In its purest form the assembled congregation has supreme authority and conducts all of the business. In a modified form a representative board, named either elders or deacons, may be appointed to conduct the business of the church and to report back to the entire congregation at stated times. Generally, however, the pastor is considered to be the Elder, and the Deacons are appointed to superintend the financial affairs, attend to the church property, and assist the pastor in the visitation of the sick.

This form of government prevails among Congregationalists, Baptists, Christian, and Independent, non-denominational churches. While contending for independence from the authority of other churches, the basic concept of congregationalism is not separatistic or divisive. Strong, a Baptist, speaks of the relation of local churches to one another in these words:

The general nature of this relation is that of fellowship between equals No church or council of churches, no association or convention or society, can relieve any single church of its direct responsibility to Christ, or assume control of its actions No church can properly ignore, or disregard, the existence or work of other churches around it. Every other church is presumptively possessed of the Spirit, in equal measure with itself. There must therefore be sympathy and mutual furtherance of each other's welfare among churches, as among individual Christians ...Independence is qualified by interdependence. While each church is, in the last resort thrown upon its own responsibility in ascertaining doctrine and duty, it is to acknowledge the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in other churches as well as in itself, and the value of the public opinion of the churches as an indication of the mind of the Spirit.⁴⁵⁸

FACTS FROM THE SCRIPTURES

It should be recognized that Paul as an apostle exercised a unique authority over the churches, and that while the hierarchical churches contend for a succession of apostles, there is absolutely no authority for this from the Scriptures. The Twelve were not apostles of the Body Church and there was no succession among them, for they are destined to sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. The only succession was that of Matthias who took the place of Judas to fill up the number twelve. When James was put to death no one was appointed to take his place. Paul held a position of authority that no other man has held in this dispensation, but he was very slow to resort to the use of that power (1 [Corinthians 4:21](#); 2 [Corinthians 10:8](#)). It is, therefore, out of the question to base church government today upon apostolic power in a human leader.

⁴⁵⁸ Strong, *op. cit.*, pp. 926-928.

There is no instance in the New Testament where one local church intervened in the affairs of another. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) is no exception. This council did not dictate to any of Paul's churches, but rather sent a letter to them informing them that the Jerusalem church had not issued any orders commanding them to be circumcised or to keep the law of Moses.

There was cooperation between Paul's churches. Witness the collection which he received from all of the Gentile churches for the relief of the poor saints in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8:16-24).

The apostle Paul ordained elders in every church (Acts 14:23), and instructed Titus to do so too (Titus 1:5). As pointed out earlier, elder and bishop refer to the same office. Elder denotes rank of office; bishop the duties of office. The overseer was to be a mature, older person. Scofield states:

The eldership in the apostolic local churches was always plural. There is no instance of one elder in a local church. The functions of the elders are: to rule (1 Tim. 3:4, 5; 5:17), to guard the body of revealed truth from perversion and error (Tit. 1:9), to "oversee" the church as a shepherd his flock (Acts 20:28; John 21:16; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:2). Elders are made or "set" in the churches by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28), but great stress is laid upon their due *appointment* (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5). At first they were ordained (Gr. *cheirotoneo*, "to elect," "to designate with the hand,") by an apostle; e.g. Acts 14:23; but in Titus and 1 Timothy the qualifications of an elder become part of the Scriptures for the guidance of the churches in such appointment (1 Tim. 3:1-7).⁴⁵⁹

The office of *Deacon* is mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:8, 10, 12, 13 and Philippians 1:1. The word means simply a servant. It is used thirty times in the New Testament and is elsewhere translated *minister* and *servant*. As Vine points out, the word is used of domestic servants, civil rulers, followers of Christ in relation to their Lord, followers of Christ in relation to one another, servants of Christ in the work of preaching and teaching, those who serve in the churches, and false apostles, the servants of Satan.⁴⁶⁰

The qualifications for the office of Deacon are given in 1 Timothy 3, but nothing is said concerning their duties. The seven who were appointed to serve tables in Acts 6:3 are often referred to as deacons, but they are not so called in Scripture. Apparently the Scripture allows for a great deal of latitude in the duties of both elder and deacon to accommodate to the varying situations and changing conditions which have confronted the church down through the centuries. The spiritual and moral standards alone remain unchanged. It is interesting to note

⁴⁵⁹ *The Scofield Reference Bible*, op. cit., p. 1283.

⁴⁶⁰ W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1952), Vol. I, pp. 272, 273.

that Paul calls himself a *diakonos* in [2 Corinthians 3:6](#); [6:4](#); [Ephesians 3:7](#); [Colossians 1:23, 25](#). He applies the word to Timothy in [I Thessalonians 3:2](#) and [I Timothy 4:12](#); to Tychicus in [Ephesians 6:21](#); and to Epaphras in [Colossians 1:7](#).

The English word *pastor* occurs but once in the Authorized New Testament ([Ephesians 4:11](#)), although the Greek word *poimeen* occurs seventeen times and is always elsewhere translated *shepherd*. Referring again to the elders of the church at Ephesus, Paul said: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers (*bishops*) to feed (act as shepherds) the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" ([Acts 20:28](#)). It is evident that not only are the elders also bishops in this passage, but they have the duty of pastoring the flock. Thus, eider, bishop, and pastor all refer to the same office.

Although Paul did not receive a salary or stipend from his churches, he plainly teaches that those who occupy themselves in the ministry of the Word should be supported by those to whom the ministry is given ([1 Corinthians 9:7-18](#); [Galatians 6:6](#); [1 Timothy 5:18](#)). Note particularly [1 Corinthians 9:14](#): "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." Paul recognized that the love of money was the root of all kinds of evil ([1 Timothy 6:10](#)), and he was therefore most careful to safeguard himself from criticism in taking money from the churches, but in spite of this he was still accused of avarice by some ([2 Corinthians 11:7-12](#); [12:15-18](#)). One of the qualifications of elders is: "not greedy of filthy lucre" ([1 Timothy 3:3](#)). Love of money does not mix with the Christian ministry.

Church Membership: The only church membership of which the Bible speaks is membership in the one Body of Christ. One does not join this church, but rather is joined to it by the baptism of the Holy Spirit at the time of receiving Christ as Savior. Believers thus become members of Christ ([1 Corinthians 6:15](#)), and members one of another ([Ephesians 4:25](#)). Other references to membership in the Body of Christ are [Romans 12:4, 5](#); and [Ephesians 5:30](#).

Whereas the words *member* and *membership* are not used in Scripture in relation to the local church, it is evident that there was something that set certain people apart as belonging to the church. When Paul addressed a letter to the church of the Thessalonians he was not addressing it to a non-entity. The believers were joined together in some outward, visible manner. There are groups such as the *Plymouth Brethren* which oppose church membership, and yet they have such a very closely knit organization that a visitor to their assembly must present a letter of commendation from another recognized assembly before he can partake of the Lord's Supper. They have a membership but they do not call it by that name, just as they have a church but choose rather to call it an assembly. All churches, or assemblies, or congregations have some means of identifying their adherents, whether they call them members or not, and whether they have some official ceremony of joining or not. Most of the denominational

and many of the independent churches make water baptism a requisite for membership. Some churches accept and recognize baptism performed in other churches and denominations, while others require rebaptism in their particular style and formula. For example, Berkhof states regarding the Reformed Churches:

They have generally recognized the baptism of other churches, not excluding the Roman Catholics, and also the various sects, except in the case of churches and sects which denied the Trinity In general they considered a baptism as valid which was administered by a duly accredited minister and in the name of the triune God.⁴⁶¹

Due to the inroads of theological radicalism in many of the large Protestant denominations many sincere Bible-believing Christians have withdrawn and formed themselves into independent churches. Such churches draw up their own doctrinal statements and constitutions and present a wide spectrum of practices. Some of these groups require water baptism for membership, many make baptism optional, and some do not practice baptism at all. One denomination, the Society of Friends, more commonly known as Quakers, does not practice water baptism. The churches associated with the Grace Gospel Fellowship likewise do not practice this religious rite. These independent, fundamental, evangelical churches usually accept into membership all who make a sincere profession of faith in Jesus Christ, who agree to the major doctrines of the Christian faith, and who manifest a consistent Christian character. In general, independent churches have moved away from the formalism and ritualism of the staid denominational churches to a more simple type of organization and service. As a rule they stress evangelism, are usually premillennial, and often accept to some extent the dispensational principle of interpreting the Scriptures. They usually place emphasis upon becoming members of the Body of Christ rather than simply membership in the local assembly.

72 ERRONEOUS VIEWS CONCERNING THE CHURCH

In discussing the doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ thus far numerous references have of necessity been made to false or defective views. Our purpose in this chapter will be to bring all of these views together, and where necessary, to treat them more fully.

THAT THE CHURCH IS SPIRITUAL ISRAEL

This is one of the chief tenets of Covenant Theology. Most Covenant theologians are A-millennial and must therefore argue that the present dispensation is the final one in which all of the Old Testament promises must find

⁴⁶¹ Berkhof, *op. cit.*, p. 631.

their fulfillment. These promises were made to Israel; hence the Church must be spiritual Israel, since the Church comprises God's people today. Not only must Israel be spiritualized to mean Gentiles, but the physical and material earthly promises must be spiritualized to mean purely spiritual blessings in heaven. This type of *spiritualizing* interpretation (there is nothing spiritual about it) is forced to make the Scripture mean something different from what it says. Pentecost, for example, quotes Amillennialist Allis:

Carrying to an almost unprecedented extreme that literalism which is characteristic of Millenarianism, they insist that Israel must mean Israel, and that the kingdom promises in the Old Testament concern Israel and are to be fulfilled to Israel literally.⁴⁶²

But if Israel doesn't mean Israel, how can we be sure that any word means what it purports to mean? There are some Covenant Theologians who, strangely enough, are Premillennial. Ryrie states their position in treating the views of George E. Ladd:

...he declares that "although the Church is spiritual Israel, the New Testament teaches that literal Israel is yet to be saved." In other words, he distinguishes the Church and Israel in the future millennial age, but he does not distinguish them in the present age.⁴⁶³

Another way of saying that the Church is spiritual Israel is to say that "the New Testament Church is essentially one with the Church of the old dispensation,"⁴⁶⁴ as Berkhof states it, or, "The Church under the New Dispensation is identical with that under the Old,"⁴⁶⁵ as Hodge puts it. Actually, according to this view, God had a spiritual Israel from the beginning of the human race, which was at least twenty-five hundred years before there was a natural Israel.

On the one hand, it should be noted that the Bible does speak of Israel as a church; it does speak of "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16); it does say "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter," (Romans 2:28, 29), and it does say, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel," (Romans 9:6), but in each case the apostle is speaking about actual, literal Israelites and not saved Gentiles. Simply being a natural descendant of Abraham, or being circumcised, never saved any one, either in past dispensations or the present. There has always been a spiritual remnant in Israel, and that is the meaning of the above Scriptures.

⁴⁶² J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Dunham Publishing Co., 1966), p. 86.

⁴⁶³ Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), p. 46, footnote.

⁴⁶⁴ Berkhof, *op. cit.*, p. 571.

⁴⁶⁵ Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 549.

On the other hand the Scripture plainly distinguishes between Israel as either a nation, a church, or the people of God, and that company of God's people who are called "the Church which is His Body." Paul states that Israel at the present has fallen, has been broken off, has become an enemy of the present Church, and will yet be restored to God's favor and saved (Romans 11). So far from the Body of Christ being Israel, Paul states that in Christ's Body there is neither Jew nor Greek ([Galatians 3:28](#); [Colossians 3:11](#)). Paul was an Israelite in the flesh, and many such Israelites were saved, but in the Body all such distinctions were obliterated. Not one passage in the New Testament can be produced where saved Gentiles are called Israelites of any description.

THAT THE CHURCH OF MATTHEW 16:18 IS THE BODY OF CHRIST

This passage is one of the chief proof-texts of Roman Catholics. Protestant commentators, ignorant of the dispensational principle of interpretation, have been led into all kinds of vagaries of interpretation in an effort to answer Rome's claim. They have robbed Peter and the Eleven of all of the apostolic authority given to them by Christ, claiming that these apostles had no more authority than any other believer, and that the powers of binding and loosing mean simply that people are forgiven or remain unforgiven depending on their acceptance or rejection of the gospel, and that we exercise these powers whenever we witness the gospel to the unsaved.

If it can be proved that the Church in this context is the prophesied Kingdom Church and not the unprophesied Body Church of this dispensation, then we have no need to water down the authority given to the apostles and at the same time Rome's claims are seen to be baseless. The fact that this passage does have reference to the Messianic Kingdom is evident from the next verse: "And I will give unto thee (Peter) the keys of the kingdom of the heavens." This is the kingdom which was promised in the Old Testament and proclaimed by Christ to be at hand. Later on, in the Olivet discourse, when the Lord was relating those events which would immediately precede His second coming, He spoke the parable of the fig tree, which doubtless represents the restoration of national Israel:

Behold the fig tree, and all the trees: when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not (*may not*, the Greek particle, *an*, indicates a condition must be fulfilled) pass away, till all be fulfilled. (Luke 21:29-32)

Thus, the Kingdom Church which Christ was building, and to which He gave Peter the keys, was to be realized after the second coming when the kingdom would again be nigh at hand. The fulfillment was doubtless conditioned upon Israel's acceptance of their Messiah. Because Israel rejected, this Kingdom

Church has been put in abeyance and its future establishment will be preceded by the signs of Christ's second coming. No doubt Peter began this ministry of offering the Kingdom to Israel at Pentecost, and no doubt the Church at Pentecost was that spoken of in [Matthew 16:18](#), but we know that Israel rejected and that God then raised up a new apostle to whom He gave the revelation of His secret purpose to call out a hitherto unannounced company of redeemed, the Body of Christ. This new Body is not Israel. It does not have twelve tribes. There will not be twelve thrones with twelve apostles judging the twelve tribes of the Body of Christ. But there will be twelve tribes in the Kingdom Church when it is established upon earth, and there will be twelve judges sitting upon those twelve thrones, exercising the authority that Christ delegated to them. There is a vast difference between a rule on a throne or a judge upon a bench and the common run of people. Rome has tried to assume this ecclesiastical authority for its popes and priests. Their mistake and that of most Protestants has been in failing to understand that the Church of Matthew 16:18 is not the Church of this dispensation, but of that of the Kingdom with which Christ so clearly identified it.

THAT THE CHURCH AT PENTECOST IS THE BODY OF CHRIST

This error has of necessity been answered in the previous argument above. The little flock or church of Israelites which Christ gathered around Him was the nucleus of the Church of which He spoke in Matthew 16:18 and it is the Church which was in existence on the day of Pentecost and the Church to which three thousand more Israelites were added on that day. The writer to the Hebrews recalls that the people of that day had tasted of the powers of *the age to come* ([Hebrews 6:5](#)). The age to come is the yet future millennial age. The Church of Pentecost is thus related to the millennial age and not to this dispensation of the mystery.

Very naturally the question will be asked, What happened to that Church? Christ stated that "the gates of hell should not prevail against His Church" (Matthew 16:18). This has been taken to mean that Satan would not be able to overthrow the Church or be able to corrupt the doctrine of the Church. But the word *hell* here is *Hades*, the place of the dead. Neither the lake of fire nor Hades are ruled over by Satan. Christ knew that many of those who were to comprise His Kingdom Church would die as martyrs, but death (Hades) would not prevail over them, for they would be raised from the dead. It will be in resurrection that the Twelve will rule with Christ in His Kingdom Church. God's purpose with that Church has not been defeated but simply delayed, and the delay, of course, was part of His purpose, while He calls out the Church of the present dispensation.

THAT THE BODY CHURCH OF ROMANS AND CORINTHIANS IS A DIFFERENT BODY FROM THAT OF EPHESIANS AND COLOSSIANS

This view is sometimes called the *Two Body Theory* and is advocated by those dispensationalists who claim that the Body of Christ of the Acts period was

identical with the Church at Pentecost and that the Church of the Mystery or the Mystery Body of Christ came into existence only after Acts 28:28. Since there is no indication in Scripture that the Body of Christ of Romans and Corinthians ceased to exist after Acts 28, there must have been two Bodies of Christ at the time Paul wrote Ephesians according to this theory. But Paul plainly states in Ephesians 4:4 there is but ONE Body. Not only does this theory contradict Paul, but it creates many other difficulties. If two different Bodies existed in Paul's day, do they still exist today? And if so, how does one tell to which Body he belongs? There is much speculation in answering these questions. Some suppose that the two bodies still exist and that membership in the Mystery Body is dependent upon acceptance of the teaching about the mystery. Others think that the Acts Body gradually died out with the death of that generation. Still others teach that members of the Acts Body became members of the Mystery Body. This is all speculation, as is the theory itself that a new Body began after the close of the Acts. We have already given evidence for the basic unity of the entire Pauline revelation, which is a sufficient answer to this argument.

THAT THE CHURCH IS SIMPLY A HUMAN ORGANIZATION

Since there are many different church organizations and denominations in the world, those who hold this view must face the question: Which one of these organizations is the true Church? Various churches and denominations have laid claim to being the only true church of Christ upon earth. However, all of these groups fail to see the distinction between the outward, human church organizations, and the inward, spiritual Church which is the Body of Christ. There is no single outward, visible true Church of Christ upon the earth, although there may be churches where all of the members are also members of the one true spiritual church.

Although ecumenism speaks a great deal about the one true church and works to bring all segments of Christendom together in one church, it is evident that its leaders give little or no place to the spiritual Body of Christ. Their whole strategy is to bring about a union of all visible church organizations under one huge religious machine.

Whether Christians intend to give the impression that the Church is a human organization, the great majority of unbelievers doubtless have this impression, and are stumbled when they discover sin, intolerance, and inconsistency in local church organizations. They do not realize that the great majority of such "church members" are not members of the Body of Christ.

This view not only leads to unscriptural religious programs for the church and often causes unbelievers to stumble, but it gives false hopes to many people. There are doubtless multitudes of people who suppose that they are saved and on their way to heaven because they have joined the church, not realizing that church organizations are not identical with the one true Church of the Bible.

THAT THE CHURCH IS ONLY A SPIRITUAL ORGANISM

In the light of what has just been said, this view might seem to be the correct one. No doubt it is much nearer the truth than the above view. But it is defective in that it assumes that an organism cannot have organization. This is the view of groups which oppose church membership, church organization, paid pastors, etc. In commenting on one of these groups Strong states:

The Plymouth Brethren dislike church organizations, for fear they will become machines; they dislike ordained ministers, for fear they will become bishops The Plymouth Brethren would "unite Christendom by its dismemberment, and do away with all sects by the creation of a new sect, more narrow and bitter in its hostility to existing sects than any other." Yet the tendency to organize is so strong in human nature, that even Plymouth Brethren, when they meet regularly together, fall into an informal, if not a formal, organization; certain teachers and leaders are tacitly recognized as officers of the body; committees and rules are unconsciously used for facilitating business.⁴⁶⁶

The idea of organization is not incompatible with an organism; in fact, every organism has organization also. We can have organization apart from organism, but there can hardly be organism apart from organization. Paul bases his whole analogy in I Corinthians 12:12-27 upon the organization within the human body, each member in its appointed place doing its appointed work. Christians who are working together for a common goal need to be organized to the extent needed to place responsibility and give needed direction.

73 THE LORD'S SUPPER -- HISTORICAL VIEWS

The subjects of the Lord's Supper and Water Baptism are usually designated as the Sacraments or the Ordinances of the Church in theological works. However, the word *sacrament* is not a scriptural term and its connotations are foreign to the Scripture. The word *ordinance*, while a Scriptural term and one which perhaps fits water baptism, is not descriptive of the Lord's Supper. It is true that the Authorized Version uses the word *ordinances* in 1 Corinthians 11:2, but the word is *paredoka*, which is translated in its other twelve occurrences *tradition*. The verb, *paradidomi*, means to deliver, and is also used in the above verse, so that Paul actually says: "keep the things delivered, as I *delivered* them to you." He uses identical expressions regarding the gospel and the Lord's Supper. Concerning the gospel he says: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received" (1 Corinthians 15:3). Concerning the Supper he said: "For I have received of the Lord that which I also *delivered* unto you" (1 Corinthians 11:23). Therefore the Lord's Supper is no more a religious ordinance than is the gospel.

⁴⁶⁶ Strong, *op. cit.*, pp. 895, 896.

The usual word for ordinance is *dogma*. Paul states that Christ "blotted out the handwriting of *dogmas*... nailing it to His cross" (Colossians 2:14), and that He abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in *dogmas*" (Ephesians 2:15). When we grasp the meaning of Christ's work upon the cross, we understand that He abolished religious ordinances as far as we are concerned. Therefore the Lord's Supper is in no sense a *dogma* or ordinance.

Neither is the Lord's Supper a sacrament. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* states:

In the Gr NT, however, there is no word nor even any general idea corresponding to "sacrament," nor does the earliest history of Christianity afford any trace of the application of the term to certain rites of the church.⁴⁶⁷

Strangely enough, the same article later on states:

In the NT the sacraments are presented as means of grace. Forgiveness (Acts 2:38), cleansing (Eph. 5:25f), spiritual quickening (Col. 2:12) are associated with Baptism; the Lord's Supper is declared to be a participation in the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16). So far all Christians are agreed; but wide divergence shows itself thereafter.

If there is no general idea of sacrament in either the Greek New Testament or early Christianity, it seems odd to state that in the New Testament the Lord's Supper and Baptism are sacraments, and stranger yet to state that all Christians are agreed that they are sacraments and the means whereby the grace of God is received. A very large segment of Protestantism denies that these two practices are a means of grace. Strong expresses this fact when he states: "In contrast with this characteristically Protestant view, the Romanist regards the ordinances as actually conferring grace and producing holiness."⁴⁶⁸

FOUR DISTINCT VIEWS ON THE LORD'S SUPPER

Transubstantiation

This is the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. It holds that when the priest consecrates the bread and wine these elements are transmuted into the actual body and blood of Christ and cease to be bread and wine. Roman theology, which spiritualizes so much of the Scripture, insists on strict literalism of the words of Christ: "Take, eat; this is my body This is my blood of the New Testament" (Mark 14:22, 24). A. A. Hodge quotes some authoritative statements of Roman doctrine:

⁴⁶⁷ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, op. cit., p. 2636.

⁴⁶⁸ Strong, op. cit., p. 930.

"Conc. Trident," Sess. 7, can. 1-If any one saith that the sacraments of the New Law, were not all instituted by Jesus Christ, our Lord, or that they are more or less than seven, to wit, Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Orders, and Matrimony; or even that any one of these seven is not truly and properly a sacrament; let him be anathema.

Can. 4.-If any one saith that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary unto salvation, but superfluous; and that, without them, or without the desire thereof, men obtain of God, through faith alone, the grace of justification (though all the sacraments are not necessary for every individual); let him be anathema.⁴⁶⁹

We believe that the literal sense of the Scripture is always to be understood if there is nothing to indicate a figurative meaning. In this case there is a great deal to indicate that Christ did not give His actual body and blood to the disciples when He instituted the Supper.

1. *He had not yet died.* He was yet in His body and His blood was yet in His veins. If He could give His literal blood without actually dying, why could He not have literally died without actually going to the Cross?

2. *The other Gospel narratives indicate a figurative meaning.* Luke 22:20 states: "This cup is the New Testament in my blood." Now it is evident that the new testament is not a literal cup, but a literal interpretation would force this meaning upon this verse.

3. *The passage in John 6, often quoted to support transubstantiation, has no reference to the Lord's Supper.* "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (vs. 53). This was spoken at least two years before the institution of the Supper. If we take Christ's words in a literal sense, "I am the bread which came down from heaven" (vs. 41), we would be forced to say that Christ's body was not flesh and blood but bread. Besides, in this context, as in almost one hundred other statements in John, eternal life is conditioned simply upon believing on Him (cf. 6:29, 40, 47). If John 6 is speaking of the Lord's Supper, then no one could have been saved until the Supper was instituted some two years later.

4. *The Scripture, as well as conscience, forbids the eating of human flesh.* The Roman Catholic must cringe at the thought of chewing and swallowing a part of Christ's physical body, perhaps an arm or ear or eye or one of the internal organs.

5. *The teaching of the epistles plainly refutes this whole idea.* Rome teaches the resacrifice of Christ in Mass. The Scripture teaches: "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

⁴⁶⁹ A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology, op. cit.*, pp. 599,600.

from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:12-14). In the light of such a plain statement and in view of the fact that the Roman Catholic *Confraternity New Testament* (1941) heads Hebrews chapter 10: "One Sacrifice Supplants Many," it is most difficult to see how this Church can claim to resacrifice Christ daily thousands of times around the world. Hebrews 9:22 in the *Confraternity* reads: "... and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness," and yet Rome claims that the Mass is a bloodless sacrifice.

6. *The testimony of our senses refutes transubstantiation.* The bread and wine have exactly the same appearance and exactly the same physical and chemical composition after the priest blesses them as they had before. If these elements ceased to be bread and wine after consecration they would of necessity change in composition.

Consubstantiation

This is the view of the Lutheran and Anglican Churches. It holds that the elements, while remaining bread and wine, also become the actual body and blood of Christ. Strong quotes an article on Luther from the *Encyclopedia Britannica*:

Before the peasant's war, Luther regarded the sacrament as a secondary matter, compared with the right view of faith. In alarm at this war and at Carlstadt's mysticism, he determined to abide by the tradition of the church, and to alter as little as possible. He could not accept transubstantiation, and he sought a *via media*. Occam gave it to him. According to Occam, matter can be present in two ways, first, when it occupies a distinct place by itself, excluding every other body, as two stones mutually exclude each other; and secondly, when it occupies the same space as another body at the same time. Everything that is omnipresent must occupy the same space as other things, else it could not be ubiquitous. Hence consubstantiation involved no miracle. Christ's body was in the bread and wine naturally, and was not brought into the elements by the priest. It brought a blessing, not because of Christ's presence, but because God's promise that this particular presence of the body of Christ should bring blessings to the faithful partaker.⁴⁷⁰

Essential to Luther's view is the interchange of the human and divine attributes. Christ's human body is ubiquitous along with His divine nature according to this view. But this view confounds spirit and matter. Christ's body, although resurrected and glorified, is still a physical body, which the disciples handled and gazed upon. Our present condition is said to be "absent from the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:6), simply because He is not bodily present. If Christ were

⁴⁷⁰ Strong, *op. cit.*, pp. 968, 969.

already present everywhere in body where would there be any place for His coming again?

Luther's view not only makes both the saved and the unsaved who may be present at the Supper to eat the actual flesh of Christ, but in fact he makes everyone everywhere to eat His body every time he eats his daily meals. It is evident on this point that Luther stuck as close to the teaching of Rome as possible while rejecting transubstantiation.

Spiritual Presence

This is the view of Calvin and the Reformed bodies. They deny any physical presence of Christ in the elements, but believe that Christ through the consecration of the elements does become present spiritually in them, and that the partaking does confer spiritual grace. Berkof in discussing Calvin's views, states:

His representation is not entirely clear, but he seems to mean that the body and blood of Christ, though absent and locally present only in heaven, communicate a life-giving influence to the believer when he is in the act of receiving the elements. That influence, though real, is not physical but spiritual and mystical, is mediated by the Holy Spirit, and is conditioned on the act of faith by which the communicant symbolically receives the body and blood of Christ.⁴⁷¹

Hodge states:

It is a very difficult matter to give an account of the Reformed doctrine concerning the Lord's Supper satisfactory to all parties. This difficulty arises partly from the fact that words have changed their meaning since the days of the Reformation Another source of difficulty on this subject is that the statements of the Reformed had for one great object the prevention of a schism in the ranks of the Protestants. They did all they could to conciliate Luther Still another difficulty is that the Reformed were not agreed among themselves. There were three distinct types of doctrine among them, the Zwinglian, the Calvinistic, and an intermediate form, which ultimately became symbolical, being adopted in the authoritative standards of the Church.⁴⁷²

Memorial

We understand this view to be the teaching of the Scripture, stripped of all of the accretions which have grown up through the centuries. This was the view of Zwingli, a Swiss reformer and contemporary of Calvin and Luther. Fisher states:

⁴⁷¹ Berkhof, *op. cit.*, pp. 653, 654.

⁴⁷² Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 626.

Zwingli, on the other hand, denied that Christ is really present in any such sense, and made the Lord's Supper to be simply a memorial of his atoning death.⁴⁷³

This is the view held by most dispensationalists. The only meaning that Scripture places upon the Supper is: "This do in remembrance of me."

74 THE LORDS SUPPER - SCRIPTURAL TEACHING

Having reviewed the various interpretations which have been placed upon the Lord's Supper by the different denominations of Christendom, it will be our purpose now to examine the Scriptural teaching to ascertain the true meaning of this observance.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE SUPPER

Four passages of Scripture relate the institution of the Supper: [Matthew 26:26-29](#); [Mark 14:22-25](#); [Luke 22:14-20](#); and [1 Corinthians 11:23-26](#). John does not mention the institution of the Supper, but he does give many details of the last passover which are omitted by the Synoptists (John 13, 14). Luke's account carefully distinguishes between the passover meal and the institution of the Supper, which followed the meal. This distinction is not as apparent in Matthew and Mark. It is important to see this distinction, for there are those who have tried to argue that what is called the Lord's Supper is but the observance of the Jewish passover. Luke also makes it plain that when Christ said: "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come," He was speaking of the paschal cup, and not the cup which He took after the paschal meal. Paul states that he received his account of the institution of the Supper by direct revelation. Luke's account is almost verbally identical with Paul's account. It is possible that Luke received his information from Paul, since he was so closely associated with him.

THE DESIGNATION OF THE SUPPER

The expression, *the Lord's Supper*, occurs but once in the Bible ([1 Corinthians 11:20](#)). However, the author of the article on the Lord's Supper in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* expresses the opinion that "the name, 'Lord's Supper,' belongs to the *agape* rather than to the Eucharist; its popular use is a misnomer of mediaeval and Reformation times."⁴⁷⁴ The *agape* or love feast was a meal which the early believers ate preceding the observance of the Supper which Christ instituted. It is referred to in [1 Corinthians 11:17-22](#). Since

⁴⁷³ George P. Fisher, *History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), p. 309.

⁴⁷⁴ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, "Lord's Supper," p. 1923.

Christ instituted His Supper at the conclusion of the Passover meal, the early Christians met for a meal first and then celebrated the Lord's Supper. Most commentators understand the name, Lord's Supper, to refer to that which Christ instituted and not to the agape or love feast.

The Lord's Supper has been called by a number of different designations:

1. *Eucharist*. This name comes from the opening words of the Supper account, *eucharistesas*, which is translated, *gave thanks* ([1 Corinthians 11 24](#)).

2. *Eulogia*. This word means *blessing*, and is taken from Paul's usage in [1 Corinthians 10:16](#), where he speaks of "the cup of blessing."

3. *Prosphora*. This word means *offering*, and was used because gifts or offerings for the poor were made at the celebration of the Supper.

4. *Communion*. This name derives from [1 Corinthians 10:16](#), "the *communion* of the blood of Christ."

5. *Breaking of Bread*. This expression is found in [Acts 2:42](#), and is thought by some to refer to the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

6. *Mass*. This term, which since the Reformation has become universal among Roman Catholics as the name for the Supper, apparently arose from the practice which grew up in the church of *dismissing* the unconverted before celebrating the Supper. *Mass* is derived from *missa*, meaning *to dismiss*.

THE MEANING OF THE SUPPER

A Memorial

The basic meaning of the Supper is expressed in the words: "This do in remembrance of me." It is the only reason given in Scripture for observing the Supper. The Scripture says nothing about the conferring of grace or the forgiveness of sins through the observance. There are various ways of remembering Christ, or of remembering any other person or thing. People often go through an old file or trunk and see something that vividly restores the memory of some past experience. A photograph of an absent or departed loved one serves the same purpose. There is nothing mysterious, magical, or supernatural about such memorials, and neither is there about the Lord's Supper. The only thing supernatural about it is the Person who is to be remembered.

To Proclaim the Lord's Death

The Supper is not only a memorial of Christ personally, but a memorial of His death for our sins. There is nothing more important in the preaching of Christ

than the fact of His redeeming death. And Paul says, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show (or declare) the Lord's death till He come." It is self-evident that His death is central in the observance, as witnessed by the symbols of His broken body and poured out blood.

To Perpetuate the Expectation of the Lord's Coming

This fact is seen in the words, "till he come." As mentioned earlier, there were two cups used when the Supper was first instituted: the passover cup and the cup of the Lord's Supper. Concerning the former Christ said: "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." Concerning the latter it is said: "drink this cup... till he come." Christ will return to earth to establish His millennial kingdom and He will at that time drink again of the fruit of the vine with His kingdom disciples. In the meantime, believers in this dispensation are to drink of the cup to remember Him until He comes. Thus, the Lord's Supper could not be a *kingdom* ordinance to be observed in the kingdom, for it will have no meaning or place after He comes. When we are with Christ or when Christ is present upon earth there will be no need of a memorial.

It is a Communion

Paul states: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? For we being many are one loaf and one body; for we are all partakers of that one loaf" (1 Corinthians 10:16, 17).

Communion is fellowship. It is a joint participation, a sharing. The first three points above have been objective: this one is subjective. There is the objective truth, of course, that wholly apart from the observance of the Lord's Supper the believer participates in the merits of the body and blood of Christ. But there is intended, no doubt, in the observance a special fellowship in and with Christ.

In the above quoted passage Paul reverses the order and speaks of the cup first and then of the bread. He does this so that he might add this truth which relates to members of the Body of Christ, "for we being many are one loaf and one body." It must be remembered that the Lord's Supper was given originally to the Israelitish disciples under the Messianic kingdom ministry, and the question might arise dispensationally, should members of the mystery Body also observe this Supper? Paul's answer is an emphatic, yes! Paul received this truth about the Lord's Supper as a part of the special revelation from the ascended Christ ([1 Corinthians 11:23](#)), and in a very unique sense the Lord's Supper involves not simply the physical body of Jesus, but His mystical Body, of which we all become members.

There is also apparently a dual reference to the body in [1 Corinthians 11:29](#). There Paul speaks of "not discerning the Lord's body." The word "Lord's" is not in the Revised text. The A.S.V. reads: "For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and

drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body." (The R.S.V., the N.E.B., Weymouth, and others read the same.) What does this mean, discerning or not discerning the body? It must have reference to the sin which the Corinthians were committing when they came together with the intention of eating the Lord's Supper. What was that sin? Paul says that there were divisions among them (11:18). There was failure to recognize their oneness in Christ: "every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry and another is drunken" (v. 21). They were not discerning the fact that they were all fellowmembers of the one Body of Christ. It is because of this sin that Paul in the next chapter goes to great lengths in explaining what is involved in being a member of that Body. Now if this fact be recognized, then 11:19 and 28 take on new meaning. Paul says: "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are *approved* may be made manifest among you," and "But let a man *examine* himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." The word *approved* is *dokimoi*, and the word *examine* is *dokimazeto*. One is the noun and the other the verb of the same stem meaning to be approved after being subjected to a test. The approved members of the congregation were those who discerned and honored the Body of Christ of which they were all members. And Paul gives his advice: Apply this test and approve yourselves before going through the motions of observing that which in reality declares your oneness in the Body of Christ, for ye are one loaf and one body. Anything that dishonors the Body of Christ also dishonors Christ Himself. It would have been bad enough had these Corinthians shared equally in a gluttonous feast in which all were full and all were drunken. They might have done this and at the same time recognized that they were all members one of another. But their sin in particular was that they denied by their actions the truth of the oneness of the Body.

Many questions have been raised about those who were weak and sickly and those that had died as a result of the Lord's discipline. Some have used this as an argument that the elements must have been changed into the actual body and blood of Christ for so severe a judgment to fall. Others have argued that since these judgments do not fall today, it is evident that the Lord's Supper is not intended for our observance in this dispensation. In answer to the first objection, suffice it to say that the bread and wine are blessed or consecrated to be symbols of the body and blood of Christ, in somewhat the same sense that a flag of red and white stripes with fifty stars on a background of blue has been dedicated to represent all that the United States of America stands for. When pieces of cloth are put together in this fashion they take on a special significance, so that any one who dishonors that piece of cloth, tramples it under foot, or burns it is in effect doing likewise to the country for which it stands. In like manner, the bread and wine in the Lord's supper are no different from any other bread and wine in their physical constituency: the difference lies in the fact that they have now been set apart to represent the body and blood of Christ. To eat and drink of these in an unworthy manner is to make one's self guilty of the body and blood of Christ.

Concerning the other objection, it should be pointed out that Paul is not saying that a person must be sinless in order to eat the Supper worthily. Every child of God, even after he has done his best for Christ, must yet feel himself unworthy. Paul is talking about the sin of [1 Corinthians 11:17-22](#). It cannot be said in churches of today, no matter how far off doctrinally they may be, believers are behaving like the Corinthians did; hence there is no basis for a comparison. Next, it is a dangerous thing, as we learn from Job, to form judgments about God's dealings with other people. God still exercises discipline over His people, but that discipline varies. It varied at Corinth: some were weak, some were sick, and some slept. Further, it seems to be a principle in Scripture that God always shows His disfavor of sin and disobedience in special ways at the beginning of a dispensation. On the day the Law was given three thousand died in judgment, yet at the time the Psalmist wrote Psalm 73, under the same dispensation, he had to say: "Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain." God reveals His will very clearly in the giving of His Word. He then leaves man to be governed by that Word. No doubt many of the sins of Christians today would have been visited with swift judgment in Paul's day, but the fact that God does not so act now does not mean that the sin is any the less displeasing to Him.

ITS RELATION TO THE NEW COVENANT

Christ said: "This cup is the new testament (covenant) in my blood." There can be no doubt but that the New Covenant was promised to and made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah ([Jeremiah 31:31](#); [Hebrews 8:8](#)). If the Body of Christ is separate and distinct from Israel, the question arises concerning our relationship, if any, with the New Covenant. The New Covenant was not made with the Body of Christ, and yet Paul in ministering to the Body calls himself an able minister of the New Covenant. Some dispensationalists cannot reconcile these facts, and because Paul does not mention the New Covenant in his prison epistles they reason that the New Covenant ministry ended at Acts 28, and that we today have no right to observe the Supper. Some dispensationalists can see all of the distinctions but never see any of the connections. When Christ shed His blood, it was the blood of the New Covenant. Paul mentions that blood four times in Ephesians and Colossians. Since Christ has shed no other blood than the blood of the New Covenant, Paul must be speaking about the same blood, although he doesn't call it by that name. Peter and John, both circumcision apostles, also speak of the blood of Christ, but they never identify it with the New Covenant. Does this mean that Peter and John were not related to that Covenant?

There are some things in the work of Christ that apply to all dispensations, and some that apply to only one or another dispensation. The first we may, for want of a better term, refer to as *doctrinal* and the latter as *dispensational*. The blood of Christ and the salvation which that blood has effected are not dispensational: it applies to the entire redemptive program of God, as is seen from [Romans 3:25](#),

26. We, as members of the Body of Christ, are related to the New Covenant only in a doctrinal sense. At the time Paul was an able minister of that Covenant, he makes it plain that this Covenant was not yet being fulfilled upon Israel. Looking forward to a future day he states: "And so all Israel shall be saved For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins" (Romans 11:26, 27). If anything is plain during the latter half of Acts it is that the New Covenant in its dispensational aspect is not being ministered to Israel, but that the great spiritual and doctrinal truths of the salvation effected by the blood of that covenant were being ministered to individual Jews and Gentiles without distinction.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

It is more in the field of Practical Theology to consider such matters as the manner and frequency of the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Suffice it to say that the Scripture lays down no set of rules. It is simply "as often as," which could be daily, weekly, monthly, or at irregular intervals. Further, it is represented in Scripture as being a public observance. Those denominations which minister the Supper privately to individuals, such as to the sick and dying, do so under the assumption that it effects the forgiveness of sins and makes the recipient ready for heaven. This, we have seen, is nowhere indicated in Scripture. Of course, there is nothing amiss in a small group visiting shut-ins who are unable to attend public worship for the purpose of having a communion service with such individuals, but such a service would not be entirely private in nature.

Some Christians have expressed concern over the fact that they do not have the feelings and emotional reactions which others claim to experience at the Lord's table. Such persons should remember that there is nothing stated in Scripture about having such reactions. Each individual is constituted emotionally different. Highly emotional people will doubtless have highly emotional experiences, but such emotions have nothing to do with the sincerity and love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

75 WATER BAPTISM

Much has already been said about the so-called sacrament or ordinance of water baptism. Roman Catholics and all evangelical Protestants profess to agree on such truths as the inspiration of the Bible, the doctrine of the Trinity, the virgin birth and Deity of Jesus Christ, man's need of salvation, the provision of salvation through the work of Christ, but there the agreement ends. How is man to receive this salvation which Christ has provided and which man so sorely needs? All sacramentarian churches reply: The grace of salvation is communicated through the sacraments. Roman Catholics are absolute sacramentarians, insisting that it is impossible to receive salvation apart from the sacraments. Others, such as the Reformed churches, teach that the sacraments are the appointed means, but that God in His sovereignty can impart salvation directly apart from the means.

We have quoted authorities of the various denominational bodies on the means of grace, so that it will not be necessary to repeat that information at this point. Suffice it to say that one of the areas of widest divergence between the various bodies of Christendom is that of water baptism. The spectrum of belief and practice goes all the way from absolute insistence on the ceremony for salvation to absolute insistence that there is no validity for the practice of the ceremony in any shape or form. The subject is thus highly controversial in nature, and any discussion of it to be profitable must be conducted in an unemotional atmosphere. Dr. Chafer's words, apparently addressed to evangelical believers, will make a fitting introduction to this most controversial doctrine:

In approaching the theme of ritual baptism it is recognized that over this subject the most bitter divisions have been allowed to arise in the church--divisions and exclusions for which it is difficult to account in the light of two facts (1) the great majority of those who are given to separations confess that there is no saving value in the ordinance and (2) all who look into it with freedom from prejudice recognize that fruitful, spiritual Christians are to be found on each side of the controversy.⁴⁷⁵

In this chapter we will discuss first the various kinds of baptism which are mentioned in the Bible; then we will try to ascertain the meaning of baptism, and finally we will consider the place that baptism has in this present dispensation of the grace of God.

THE VARIOUS BAPTISMS OF THE BIBLE

Before beginning a study of ritual baptism it should be observed that the Scriptures speak of at least twelve distinct kinds of baptism, and that only five of these have any reference to a ceremony involving the use of water or of any other physical substance. The seven baptisms which are either spiritual or figurative in nature are:

1. Christ baptizing with the Holy Spirit, ([Matthew 3:11](#)), which took place on the day of Pentecost and resulted in the enduement with miraculous power from on high ([Luke 24:49](#)).
2. Christ baptizing with fire, ([Luke 3:16](#)). From the context it appears that this baptism of fire is yet future and perhaps describes the phenomenon which will accompany His second coming ([2 Thessalonians 1: 7-9](#)).
3. The Holy Spirit baptizing believers into the Body of Christ, ([1 Corinthians 12:13](#)).
4. Christ's baptism into death upon the cross ([Luke 12:50](#)).

⁴⁷⁵ Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 34..

5. The typical baptism of Noah's ark (1 Peter 3:20, 21), the anti-type of which is Christ's death baptism, the baptism which now saves us.

6. The baptism of the children of Israel unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea (1 Corinthians 10:2). The Israelites in this baptism went through on dry land, but the Egyptians were immersed.

7. The baptism for the dead (1 Corinthians 15:29). This is a much disputed passage, but it appears from the context that Paul is speaking of baptism as a suffering of martyrdom, similar to the usage in point four above.

The five ritual type of baptisms which are mentioned in Scripture are:

1. The Divers Baptisms of the Law (Hebrews 9:9, 10). The word translated "washings" in the A.V. is *baptismos*. The Levitical ritual contained divers or various kinds of baptisms. The most common probably was the sprinkling of the water of purification according to the ordinance of the red heifer (Numbers 19). It is most important to understand that water baptism is not an innovation of the New Testament. Israel practiced many baptisms for fifteen hundred years before New Testament times. The priests were inducted into office by baptism at the laver. These were all types, looking forward to fulfillment in a spiritual reality, not in another physical ritual.

2. The Traditional Baptisms of the Jews (Mark 7:1-9), where the word translated "washing" is again *baptismos*. These baptisms were similar to those of the Law, but they were never commanded by God and, in fact, they served only to make the commandment of God of none effect.

3. John's Baptism (John 1:31 and Luke 3:3), the purpose of which as stated was to introduce Jesus as Israel's Messiah and to effect the remission of sins.

4. The Baptism of Christ by John (Matt. 3:15), which in all outward appearances was the same as point three above, but which was designed to "fulfill all righteousness." In this baptism Jesus identified Himself officially with sinful humanity. This identification was completed on the cross when He died for the sins of the whole world. He was not a sinner, but He took His place as a sinner by being baptized of John.

5. Pentecostal water baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). This baptism is called a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, just the same as John's baptism, but it is an advance on John's baptism, in that it resulted in the gift of the Holy Spirit.

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

In considering the meaning of baptism in the Scripture we will look first at the meaning of the words used for baptism, and then at the meaning of the ceremony in the sense of what it accomplished.

The Words for Baptism

There are five Greek words related to baptism which all come from the same root. Two are verbs and three are nouns. These words are used a total of 123 times in the New Testament and are translated in the following ways in the Authorized Version:

1. *Bapto*. This verb occurs three times and is always translated "dip." It is never used to describe a religious ceremony.

2. *Baptizo*. This verb is used 80 times and is always translated "baptize," except in Luke 11:38 and Mark 7:4 where it is rendered "wash."

3. *Baptistes*. This noun indicates the agent performing the baptism. It is used 14 times and in each case refers to John the Baptist.

4. *Baptisma*. This noun is used 22 times and is always translated "baptism."

5. *Baptismos*. This noun is used four times and is translated "washing" three times and "baptisms" once. Trench states that a third noun besides the last two named was used by Josephus and other writers, "baptisis," and he notes the difference in the endings of these words:

Thus, to take the words which now concern us the most nearly, *baptisis* is the act of baptism contemplated in the doing, a baptizing; *baptismos* the same act contemplated not only as a doing, but as done, a baptism; while *baptisma* is not any more the act, but the abiding fact resulting therefrom
....⁴⁷⁶

Trench points out that these latter words are exclusively ecclesiastical terms appearing only in the New Testament and in writings dependent on it. Although *baptismos* and *baptisma* do not occur in the Septuagint it should be remembered that the Holy Spirit led the writer to the Hebrews to use the former word to describe the various lustrations of the Old Testament (9:10).

According to Shedd, these nouns were coined by Jews and Christians from *baptizo* in order to denote the rite of purification. He claims that *bapto* and *baptizo* had no technical or ritual meaning in classical Greek. He gives the classical meaning of these words as "to dip into water, to sink under water, to dye or tinge in a fluid." The classical meaning would seem to favor the idea of

⁴⁷⁶ Richard Chenevix Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948), p. 370.

immersion. However, these words are not used in the Bible in their classical sense, but in a secondary ceremonial sense, and the meaning must be determined by their usage. Shedd points out that the word *pagan*s, etymologically and classically, denotes people living in villages (*pagi*) outside the large towns and cities. As Christianity spread first among the inhabitants of the cities, the villagers were unevangelized: thus "pagan" came to mean "heathen," instead of "villager." "Similarly, *bapto* and *baptizo*, which in heathenism denoted any unceremonial, non-ritual immersion into water, when adopted by Judaism and Christianity, came to have the secondary signification of a ceremonial sprinkling or affusion of water."⁴⁷⁷

James W. Dale has written what are, perhaps, the most scholarly works ever produced on the subject of baptism: *Christic and Patristic Baptism*, *Johannic Baptism*, and *Classic Baptism*. He gives voluminous quotations from Baptist writers, stating their claims that *bapto* and *baptizo* have one and only one meaning: *to dip*. He refutes this claim as he concludes his book on Classic Baptism with these words:

USAGE, the accepted arbiter, has spoken freely, and, I think, has been reported faithfully as teaching.

(1) *Bapto*, TINGO, and DIP, are words, which in their respective languages, represent, for the most part, the same identical ideas.

(2) *Baptizo*, MERGO, and MERSE, are words, which in their respective languages, represent, for the most part, the same identical ideas.

(3) These two classes of words differ from each other essentially. They are not interchanged, nor interchangeable ordinarily, much less identical.

(4) *Bapto* and *Baptizo* exhibit a perfect parallelism in their development.

1. *Bapto*; TO DIP.

1. *Baptizo*; TO MERSE.

2. *Bapto*; to dip into any coloring liquid *for the sake of the effect*; TO DYE.

2. *Baptizo*; To merse into any liquid *for the sake of its influence*; TO DROWN.

3. *Bapto*; To affect by the peculiar influence of coloring matter (*without the act of dipping*); e.g., *to sprinkle* blood; *to squeeze* a berry; *to bruise* by blows.

⁴⁷⁷ W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. II, p.582.

3. *Baptizo*; To affect by any controlling influence (*without the condition of mersion*); e.g., *to sprinkle* poppy juice; *to pour* water on hot iron; *to drink* intoxicating liquor.

The perfect parallelism of development thus exhibited, in these two words, goes far to show that the true interpretation of each has been secured.

(5) Baptism is a myriad-sided word, adjusting itself to the most diverse cases
....

(6) The master-key to the interpretation of *baptizo* is CONDITION, - condition characterized by COMPLETENESS, with or without physical envelopment.

WHATEVER IS CAPABLE OF THOROUGHLY CHANGING THE CHARACTER, STATE, OR CONDITION OF ANY OBJECT, IS CAPABLE OF BAPTIZING THAT OBJECT; AND BY SUCH CHANGE OF CHARACTER, STATE, OR CONDITION DOES, IN FACT, BAPTIZE IT.⁴⁷⁸

The inconsistency of equating *dipping* with *immersing* should be pointed out. The primary meaning of *bapto* is to dip and dip means not only to submerge an object in a liquid, but to immediately remove the object. Immerse, on the other hand, means to submerge an object with no thought whatsoever of removing it. The primary idea of *baptizo* is this latter idea, and it should be evident to baptize a person into water in the primary sense of the word would be to drown the person, and, in fact, that is exactly the frequent usage of the word in classical Greek. Baptism for the so-called Immersionist is really a two-fold work, a burying of the old man and a raising of the new man. To call himself an immersionist is only half the story. He should be called an *immerse-emersionist*. Nowhere in the Greek can a usage be found where *baptizo* contains the idea of emersion. It should be evident, therefore, that the Baptist practices *dipping*: he does not practice immersion. This distinction becomes most important when considering Spirit baptism into Christ. If the Baptist is correct in his claim that *baptizo* involves a complete submersion and a complete withdrawal, what shall we say of our baptism into Christ? It should be evident that once a person is baptized into Christ he is brought into a permanent relationship from which he will never be removed. Therefore baptism cannot mean a dipping or a putting in and a taking out.

Baptists often quote the early Church fathers to try to prove that baptism means complete submersion of the body. What they do not quote is the fact that these men held to baptismal regeneration, and that while they practiced submersion, they did it, not as a burial, but for an entirely different reason. They taught that baptism was a washing, and so that the water might do its work most effectively, they not only submerged the entire body, but they baptized the body

⁴⁷⁸ James W. Dale, *Classic Baptism* (Philadelphia: Win. Rutter & Co., 1870), p. 352.

in a naked condition. They further believed that the baptismal water first had to be washed by the Holy Spirit before it could wash away man's sins. Quotations from Jerome and Cyprian make these points plain:

How can the soul, which has not the Holy Spirit, be purged from old defilements? For water does not wash the soul unless it is first washed by the Holy Spirit, that it may be able to wash others.

For neither can the Spirit operate without the water, nor the water without the Spirit. . . but it is necessary that the water first be purified and sanctified, that it may be able by its own baptism to cleanse away the sins of the baptized man.⁴⁷⁹

It is very evident from a careful study of the "divers baptisms" of the Old Testament that none of them involved the immersion or submersion of the entire body under water, ([Hebrews 9:10](#) cf. [Exodus 24:6-8](#); [Numbers 8:7](#); [Leviticus 14:4-7](#); [Numbers 19:18, 19](#); [31:23, 24](#); [Isaiah 52:15](#); [Ezekiel 36:25](#)). Neither did any of these baptisms contain the connotation of a burial of a dead body, as demanded by Baptist doctrine. And we have already proved that the word *baptizo* does not define any particular mode, and that, in fact, it is possible to have a baptism where no physical element whatsoever is involved.

A careful study of the New Testament will produce like conclusions. The Jewish custom of baptizing their eating utensils and the couches upon which they reclined before each meal rules out both the idea of complete immersion as well as the idea of burial. It is likewise evident that there is not the slightest hint in any of the passages dealing with John's baptism that he taught or understood it to be a symbol of burial. The only hint that he might have practiced immersion is that he baptized in the Jordan river and at Aenon where there was much water ([Matthew 3:6](#) and [John 3:23](#)). Vincent points out that Aenon means "springs," and that "much water," is literally "many waters," that is, many springs of water.⁴⁸⁰ And the text makes it clear that the meaning placed on the baptism was that of purification and not that of burial. As to John's use of the Jordan river, this was probably in accord with the Levitical requirement that "a fountain or pit, wherein there is plenty of water" ([Leviticus 11:36](#)), was required to keep the water itself from becoming unclean. The impossibility of finding a place in the city of Jerusalem to baptize over 3,000 people by immersion on the day of Pentecost has been noted by some writers. The only other case where a mode might be indicated is in the case of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in [Acts 8:36-39](#), where it is stated that "they went down both into the water." It has been argued that because the eunuch went down into the water and came up out of the water he must have been completely immersed. But since they *both* went down and *both*

⁴⁷⁹ James W. Dale, *Christic and Patristic Baptism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1874), p. 492.

⁴⁸⁰ Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), Vol. II, p. 104.

came up this argument would prove that Philip was also completely immersed, which is proving a little too much.

Thus, ceremonial baptism in both the Old and the New Testaments has the meaning of a work of purification, changing the condition of the recipient from a state of defilement to one of purity. The baptism by both John and by the Twelve is called a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Saul was told, "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." This is not baptismal regeneration; rather baptism is presented as a work of faith in the Kingdom commission and ministry ([Mark 16:15, 16](#)).

THE PLACE OF BAPTISM IN THE PRESENT DISPENSATION

It is the premise of this work on Theology that the revelation of the present dispensation was committed to the Apostle Paul, and therefore that the distinctive truths for this dispensation are to be found in his epistles. A survey of his epistles indicates that he makes reference to baptism in eight different passages:

1. He refers to Israel having been baptized unto Moses ([1 Corinthians 10:2](#)). This baptism has no reference to this dispensation.

2. Once he definitely associates the name of the Holy Spirit as the One who baptizes believers into the one Body of Christ ([1 Corinthians 12:13](#)). This is a purely spiritual work and has no reference to a ceremonial.

3. Once he refers to those who were baptized for the dead ([1 Corinthians 15:29](#)). This is admittedly a problem passage upon which no doctrine can be founded.

4. Once he states that as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ ([Galatians 3:27](#)). Unless we believe in a baptismal ceremony that has the power and the efficiency to regenerate every person who is baptized, we could hardly read water baptism into this passage.

5. Only once does Paul make specific reference to water baptism ([1 Corinthians 1:13-17](#)), and although he states that he had baptized at least three people in Corinth, he plainly states that Christ had never commissioned him to practice baptism.

6. Once Paul simply states that there is one baptism ([Ephesians 4:5](#)). Since Paul speaks of two baptisms in his epistles, water and Spirit, we must decide which of these he means, when in one of his latest epistles he says that there is only one. It would seem strange indeed in this dispensation of the Spirit if the Spirit baptism had been set aside in favor of the ceremonial type, and especially

in light of the fact that Paul makes it crystal clear that the ceremonial baptism had never been committed to him.

7. and 8. In two passages Paul elucidates upon what he calls "a baptism into death." ([Romans 6:3, 4](#) and [Colossians 2:12](#)). Since these texts are of vital importance, we will quote them in full.

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein? Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection. (A.S.V.)

For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power: in whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. (A.S.V.)

The following facts should be carefully noted about these passages:

1. These passages are in the midst of doctrinal exposition dealing with deliverance through identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and are not dealing with Church administration.

2. Whatever this baptism is, it is the experience of all believers. It is one-hundred percent effective in putting every baptized person into Christ. Most sacramentarians admit that not all who are water baptized are actually put into Christ.

3. It is a baptism "into Christ." Hodge states:

In neither of these passages does Paul say that our baptism *in water* is an emblem of our burial with Christ. He is evidently speaking of that spiritual baptism of which water is the emblem; by which spiritual baptism we are caused to die unto sin, and live unto holiness, in which death and new life we are conformed unto the death and resurrection of Christ. We are said to be "baptized into Christ," which is the work of the Spirit, not "into the name of Christ," which is the phrase always used when speaking of ritual baptism. ⁴⁸¹

⁴⁸¹ A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Ass'n., 1878), pp. 607,608.

4. There is no mention of water in either of these passages. Chafer reminds us:

No ordinance is intimated in these expressions, nor is there any obligation being imposed that justifies an attempt to enact what is here set forth. This passage, with that which follows in the context, presents the central statement respecting the basis of the Christian's victory in daily life over the sin nature. This is its objective and its meaning. To discover in it only the outward form of a ritual ordinance, as many have done, is to surrender one of the most priceless assets in the whole field of Christian doctrine and by so much (for many) to abandon the hope of any life well-pleasing to God; for if this context means one thing it cannot mean the other.⁴⁸²

5. Paul states that this is a baptism into death, into His death. What does this mean? Did not Christ state that He had a baptism to be baptized with ([Luke 12:50](#))? That was a baptism into death. When the Holy Spirit baptizes one into Christ, Christ's Death baptism becomes his by virtue of that relationship. This is equivalent to Paul's statement in Galatians 2:20: "I was crucified with Christ." It is only as we receive this baptism into His death that we can say that we have been put to death with Him. The Holy Spirit, by baptizing us into Christ, baptizes us into His death.

6. Paul further states that because we are baptized into His death, we were buried with Him by this baptism into death. There are two important facts to see here. The first is that the believer is said to have been buried WITH Christ. No ceremony or act performed today which is called a burial could by any stretch of the imagination be said to be a burial WITH Christ. Christ was buried only once, and that, in the tomb of Joseph. If one was buried with Him, it must have been in that tomb where He was buried. Only the Holy Spirit could accomplish such a work as this: placing one who lives in this twentieth century back in the tomb of the Arimathean along with the dead body of Jesus, so that this one who now believes can be said to have been crucified WITH Christ, to have died WITH Christ, to have been buried WITH Christ, and as the Word goes on to say, to have been raised WITH Christ, and finally to have been seated WITH Christ in the heavenlies.

The other point concerns the word *bury*. Shedd aptly remarks:

Immersion has been supported by the equivocal rendering of the verb *sunthapto* in Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12. In Rom. 6:4 the rendering is, "buried by baptism"; in Col. 2: 12, "buried in baptism." The English word "bury" is applicable either to burial in earth or in water; but the Greek word *sunthapto* is applicable only to burial in earth. No one would render it by

⁴⁸² Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 145.

"immerse." The English word "bury" can suggest immersion, but the Greek cannot. Consequently, when a person unacquainted with the original reads in the English version of a "burial in baptism," or "by baptism," a burial in water is the only idea that enters his mind; an idea which the Greek positively *excludes*. For when a dead body is "buried" in a tomb as our Lord was, it comes into no contact with water, and is carefully protected from it. Had *sunthapto* been translated literally, by "entombed," instead of "buried," this text never would have been quoted, as it so frequently has been, to prove that Christian baptism is immersion. Christ's entombment, or burial in Joseph's sepulchre, has not the slightest connection with his baptism at the Jordan, and throws no light upon the mode in which he was baptized; and, consequently, it throws no light upon the mode in which his disciples were.⁴⁸³

It should also be noted that when Christ was buried He was not put under ground, but in a rock-hewn chamber on ground level into which one could walk. The whole idea of plunging one under water to reenact the Savior's burial is therefore inappropriate. Seiss asks:

What likeness between dipping a man in a fluid, and depositing a dead body in a horizontal excavation in the breast of declivity? *What* similarity between the wading of a living man into a stream or cistern, and the bearing of a corpse to its final resting place? *What* analogy between the hasty lifting of a strangling subject from a plunge in the water, and the triumphant resurrection of the re-animated Jesus in the strength of his own omnipotence? *What* similitude between the glorified body of the rising Savior, and the drowned and dripping aspect of the immersed subject coming up from his immersion? Could anything be more unlike than Christ, leaving His grave-clothes in His sepulchre of rock, and coming forth unaided in His incorruptible body, and a man lifted hastily from the water, the same clothing sticking sadly to him, and he looking a great deal worse than before his immersion? Is it not amazing that any human mind could have imagined that such a "sorry sight" bore any resemblance to the majestic and glorious resurrection of our blessed Lord?⁴⁸⁴

7. It is Made WITHOUT Hands: Paul states that having been baptized into Christ we have been circumcised with a circumcision made without hands. Bishop Nicholson shows that if the circumcision is made without hands, so is the baptism which follows:

The meaning is, that we are circumcised in Christ when we were thus buried in the baptism. But now, what baptism is meant? Not baptism with water, surely? For as the circumcision is spiritual, so the baptism must be spiritual. The baptism by the *Holy Ghost* is the ruling baptism of the New Testament, and is always to

⁴⁸³ Shedd, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 586.

⁴⁸⁴ Joseph A. Seiss, *The Baptist System Examined* (Philadelphia: G. W. Frederick, 1883), pp. 245,246.

be understood except where the language or context makes evident the contrary. Indeed, Rom. 6:4 shows what the baptism is, namely, the baptism into death. The being baptized into anything is the being brought under, and saturated with its influence and power. When we were circumcised in Christ, it was by means of getting under the power of His death so really and thoroughly that we were buried with Him, lying in the same grave.⁴⁸⁵

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing considerations we feel that it can be dogmatically affirmed that in Paul's major references to Baptism, namely, [Romans 6:3, 4](#); [I Corinthians 12:13](#); [Galatians 3:27](#); [Ephesians 4:5](#); and [Colossians 2:12](#), there is no reference whatsoever to ceremonial baptism, but rather to the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit. This fact is most important to grasp.

As to the practice of water baptism, Scripture indicates that explicit commands were given to the Twelve Apostles under the Kingdom gospel to practice water baptism for the remission of sins. Paul was saved under this administration of things and he was told to be baptized, washing away his sins. However, in the records in Acts of Paul's conversion and commissioning, as well as in references in Paul's epistles, there is not a word of instruction given to Paul concerning the practice of baptism, and Paul himself asserts that Christ did not send him to baptize, although he did baptize some, but he placed so little importance upon it that he could not remember which of the Corinthians he had baptized, besides the three he mentioned. And what is striking is that in none of his epistles, pastoral or otherwise, does Paul give one word of instruction to his churches, pastors, or evangelists to baptize. Further, the purpose of baptism under the Kingdom commission is not compatible with Paul's gospel of the grace of God, for Paul nowhere links salvation or remission of sins with water baptism. It would appear that water baptism was very closely associated with other accompaniments of the Kingdom gospel, such as miraculous healing, tongues, etc., and that these things were carried over into what we have called the Transition Period. Paul practiced other things during that time which Christians do not practice today, such as taking vows and circumcising Jewish believers.

In view of the fact that Paul was not commissioned to baptize and the further fact that he gives not one word of instruction to members of the Body of Christ to practice this ceremony, it is our firm conviction that water baptism has no purpose or place in this present dispensation. Water baptism has been the cause of a great deal of confusion and division among God's people who are supposed to manifest the unity of the Spirit on the basis of ONE BAPTISM. Water Baptism has divided instead of unifying. It has been emphasized almost to the exclusion of Spirit baptism. There could be no denominational divisions over a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, such as there have been over the practices of human religious leaders. It is to be hoped that Christians will more and more lay aside

⁴⁸⁵ W. R. Nikholson, *Oneness With Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1951), p. 195.

the rancor and bitterness and narrowness which have been so prevalent in baptism controversies, and more and more recognize the fact and the importance of the One Baptism of the Holy Spirit which makes all believers One as members of the One Body of Christ.

76 PAUL'S PRACTICE OF BAPTISM

The conclusion reached at the end of the last chapter naturally raises a very important question which must be answered. If Paul was not commissioned to baptize, why did he baptize? The answer to this question lies in a proper understanding of the Transition Period of the latter half of the book of Acts. Although the Transition Period has already been discussed quite fully, we will review the main points as they refer to the present question.

When Paul was saved the Kingdom commission with its command to baptize was in effect. Paul himself was commanded to be baptized. The church at Antioch, where we first find any details of Paul's early ministry, was founded by Jews who were scattered by persecution from Jerusalem. This church practiced baptism the same as did the Jerusalem church. When finally Gentiles began to come into the church it was only natural that they too should be baptized. Paul had received no command from the Lord either to baptize or not to baptize. On his journeys Paul always went to the Jewish synagogue first and it was natural that he would baptize the Jews who believed. When the Gentiles then had the message preached to them we are not to suppose that Paul separated the Jewish and Gentile believers into two groups or two churches-in fact, the secret of Paul's ministry was that God was making no difference between these two groups. But water baptism was not the only Jewish practice which was involved in Paul's ministry at this time. Schutz, in answering this question, states:

Paul baptized and permitted water baptism among his converts for the same reason that God permitted the Gentiles to exercise the sign gifts of miracles, tongues, and healing. It was "BECAUSE OF THE JEWS." During the transition period the church of God was emerging from its predominately Jewish constituency to a predominately Gentile constituency. During this transition period, which covers the last half of the Book of Acts, many things were done for the benefit of and out of deference to the Jews. Paul circumcised Timothy "*because of the Jews*" (Acts 16:1-3). Paul performed a Jewish vow at Jerusalem "*because of the Jews*" (Acts 21:20-26). The Gentiles were not to eat meat offered to idols, and abstain from blood and things strangled "*because of the Jews*" (Acts 15:29; 21:25). God gave Gentiles the sign gifts "*because of the Jews*" (1 Cor. 1:22 and 14:22). Likewise, during the transition period, it was "*because of the Jews*" that water baptism was permitted among Paul's converts

Baptism of a Gentile into Judaism would be a *sign* to Israel that he had a change of religious persuasion, for the baptism of a proselyte was the initiation rite of a Gentile into Judaism. W. F. Flemington, on page 7 of his book, *The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism*, makes this comment about proselyte baptism as discussed in the Babylonian Talmud called *Yebamoth*, "Proselyte baptism is essentially a rite of initiation into the new religion. By it a man signified that he abandoned the old life and entered into a new one." Dr. Emil Schurer says: "Again, the fourth book of the *Sibylline Oracles*, insists on converted Gentiles being baptized as an outward token of their conversion. (Orac. Sibyll. iv. 164)." (*The Jewish People in the Times of Jesus Christ*, Vol. II, p.323). Although before John the Baptist it had never been proposed that an Israelite undergo a "baptism of repentance," the Dead Sea Scrolls and other recent finds make it clear that it had long been the general practice for Gentiles to thus signify that they were now converts to Judaism. It would signify that the Gentile was severing himself from his pagan idols (1 Thes. 1:9). By being baptized it signified that he was identifying himself with Israel's one God and the inspired Scriptures. Baptism was to *signify* to the Jews that the baptized Gentile had obeyed God's call to repentance and that he had placed his faith in Jesus as the Messiah (Acts 20:21).

However, after Acts 28, when God no longer dealt with Israel as a distinct nation, there was no longer any need for the "signs." Paul no longer exercised the *sign* gift of healing (2 Tim. 4:20; 1 Tim. 5:23 cf. this with Acts 19:11, 12; and Phil. 2:25-27). Even as the sign gifts ceased, just so, water baptism ceased as a *sign* to the Jews of Gentile conversion.

Paul finally declared that there was only ONE baptism (Eph. 4:5). Those who do not understand that this one baptism excludes all others are often inconsistent in their theological reasoning. They will turn the Roman Catholic to 1 Timothy 2:5 and correctly insist that there is only *one* mediator, and since this is Christ, this excludes all others. However, when Paul says ONE baptism they often conclude that there can yet be another. There can be no doubt as to which baptism is meant in Ephesians 4:5. 1 Corinthians 12:13 says that we are put into the Body of Christ by the baptism of the Spirit. Romans 12:5 says that to be in the Body of Christ is to be "in Christ." Romans 8:1 says that if we are "in Christ" there is no more condemnation; in other words, we are saved. Ephesians 1:13 says that upon believing we were sealed in Christ with or by the Holy Spirit of promise.

If the baptism of Ephesians 4:5 is not the Spirit baptizing believers into Christ, then no one could be saved. Since there can be only ONE baptism, and since there is a baptism by the Spirit, as the operation of God unto salvation, this is the *ONLY* baptism operational today, *all other are excluded*. Why baptize with water? God is through dealing with Israel as a

distinct nation, and since Gentiles were baptized "BECAUSE OF THE JEWS" during the Acts period, it is not only no longer necessary, but it would be making two baptisms operational in this administration when God says there should be only ONE.⁴⁸⁶

Another factor which must be taken into consideration is a progress of revelation in the experience of the apostle Paul. Paul did not receive all of his revelation at one time. This is evident from Paul's own statement in Acts 26:16, where he states that at the time of his conversion Christ said unto him: "But rise, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee." And in 2 Corinthians 12:1 he says: "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord," and in this same context he tells of one of these experiences when he was caught up to the third heaven and heard unspeakable words. No doubt there was some new revelation or advancement of truth given to Paul upon the writing of each of his epistles. It would thus appear that there must have been such progress during and after the period of transition. It is certain that there were at least two baptisms, and most likely three, during the book of Acts history: Christ baptizing with the Holy Spirit, the apostles baptizing with water, and the Holy Spirit baptizing into the Body of Christ. Had there not been progress and change, how could Paul have declared at the end of the transition that there is but ONE baptism?

A further word should be said about Paul's statement that Christ had not sent him to baptize. It has been objected that Paul did not mean by this statement that he hadn't been commissioned to baptize, but because of the divisions at Corinth he was glad that he had baptized so few of them. Paul does say in I Corinthians 1:14 that he thanked God he had baptized none of them except Crispus and Gaius and the household of Stephanas, but in vs. 17 he is not simply repeating what he said in vs. 14. Here he says, "FOR (Greek *gar*) Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel." The Greek *gar*, according to Thayer means to adduce the Cause or give the Reason of a preceding statement. The reason or cause for his thanksgiving in this case was not simply that he had baptized so few, but that Christ had not sent him to baptize in the first place; hence he was glad that he had baptized so few. It is remarkable that in this large church at Corinth ([Acts 18:8, 10](#)), most of whom were converted through Paul's ministry, that Paul baptized only three or four. He apparently did not lay much stress upon baptism at that point in his ministry. Not one of the Twelve apostles could have honestly said, Christ sent me not to baptize, for that was their specific commission.

There was serious trouble in the Corinthian church also over the administration of the Lord's Supper. Paul did not deal with this problem by saying, "Christ sent me not to observe the Lord's Supper." In this case he tells us plainly that he

⁴⁸⁶ Vernon Schutz, "Why Did Paul Baptize At All," *TRUTH*, 1968, XVIII, pp. 199, 200, 208.

received the truth about the Lord's Supper directly from Christ ([1 Corinthians 11:23](#)), but he surely did not receive one word from Christ about water baptism.

It will not do to contend that all Paul meant by this statement was that preaching the gospel was the more important thing and that he delegated the less important task of baptizing to others. If Paul had delegated the baptizing to others, it would still have been under Paul's authority that the people would have been baptized. This fact is evident from John 4:1 and 2 where "Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples)." If it could be said that Jesus was baptizing when His disciples were actually doing the work, it could also be said that Paul was baptizing when he delegated this work to his helpers.

In conclusion, there seems to be no inconsistency in Paul's practice of baptism in his early ministry, even though he had not been commissioned to baptize. He practiced a number of other things which were not specifically in his commission. His ministry spanned the period during which God was setting aside those things which specifically belonged to Israel's Kingdom gospel, and ended in the full establishment of the dispensation of the Mystery. Water baptism was just one of the practices which passed with Israel's complete setting aside.

77 THE COMMISSION OF THE CHURCH

Evangelicalism places great stress upon the so-called *Great Commission*. In doing so, however, it actually stresses only one phase of that commission, and that is, the universal preaching of the Gospel. Other vital factors of that commission are either omitted or entirely neglected. It shall be our object to first examine this commission to see all that it involves, then to see whether all of this involvement concerns the Church which is His Body, and finally, if not, to ascertain just what is the commission for the Church of this dispensation.

THE COMMISSIONS TO THE TWELVE APOSTLES

The Commission of Christ's Earthly Ministry

This commission is recorded in Matthew 10, Mark 6, and Luke 9. Its main features were:

1. Disciples forbidden to go to the Gentiles.
2. Commanded to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
3. The Message: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

4. The Ministry: "Heal the sick, cleanse the leper, raise the dead, cast out demons."

5. The Means: "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat."

The purpose in thus limiting this commission to Israel was that according to God's purpose in establishing His Messianic Kingdom, Israel was to be blessed first, and then the Gentiles were to be blessed through Israel.

The Commission of Christ's Resurrection Ministry

There are accounts of this commission at the conclusion of each of the four Gospels and in the introduction to the book of Acts. It is evident from a careful comparison of these accounts that these commissions were not all spoken at the same time and under the same circumstances. Matthew's was spoken in a mountain in Galilee (28:16). Mark's was given to the eleven as they sat at meat in Jerusalem (16:14). Luke's apparently was given shortly before the ascension (24:50). John's was given on the evening of the resurrection (20:19). Luke's record in Acts, as in his Gospel, records Christ's words immediately preceding the ascension (1:8, 9). Because of these differences many dispensational expositors believe that one or the other of these commissions was intended for the Church and the others were intended for the future Kingdom. For example, A. C. Gaebelein states concerning Matthew 28:19, 20:

This is the *Kingdom* commission. In Luke xxiv we have the proper Christian mission. A time is coming when this great commission here will be carried out by a remnant of Jewish disciples, who are represented by the eleven.⁴⁸⁷

Some think that the Mark commission is the one especially for today, while others take the Acts commission as their marching orders. The fact of the matter is that when these commissions were given by Christ there had been no revelation as yet that the program of the prophesied Kingdom was to be interrupted by this present dispensation of the mystery. Therefore all of these passages must have reference to the preaching of the earthly Messianic Kingdom. There can be no doubt from the question of the Apostles in Acts 1:6 but that this was their understanding of the matter, as they asked the Lord if He would at that time restore again the kingdom to Israel. Christ did not correct them but rather told them it was not for them to know the time that the Kingdom would be restored to Israel. If the Kingdom had been set aside already and a new and different dispensation had been instituted, Christ would surely have given a different answer.

⁴⁸⁷ A. G. Gaebelein, *Gospel of Matthew* (New York: Publication Office, Our Hope, 1910), Vol. II, p. 323.

The main features of this so-called Great Commission should be noted; and here we include under this heading the various accounts of it as given in the Gospels and the Acts.

1. It was to be a universal preaching: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." "Disciple all nations."

2. It was to be carried out in a definite order: first in Jerusalem, then Judea, then Samaria, and finally unto the uttermost parts of the earth. This order is in keeping with the kingdom principle laid down by Christ in Mark 7:27: "The children (of Israel) must first be filled (before the Gentiles receive their blessing)." Peter recognized this same principle in Acts 3:26 when he said to Israel: "Unto you first" Paul also in his first recorded sermon told Israel: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you" (Acts 13:46).

3. It commanded faith and baptism for salvation. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Peter preached this message at Pentecost: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins"

4. It commanded the teaching of all things which Christ had commanded while He was on earth. This included a number of things, such as bringing sacrifices to the altar ([Matthew 5:24](#)) and obedience to those who sit in Moses' seat ([Matthew 23:2, 3](#)), which are manifestly not for obedience today.

5. It commanded the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom ([Matthew 4:23; 9:35; 24:14](#)). This is the good news, not only of the forgiveness of sins, but of God's purpose to establish a kingdom of righteousness and peace here upon the earth. This gospel, in contradistinction to the gospel for today, therefore promises those things which are mentioned in the next point.

6. It promised that miraculous signs would follow all them that believe. These signs are characteristic of that glorious kingdom which is yet to be established, when disease, demon power, and death will all be conquered and put out of the way.

Having analyzed the content of this commission, let us now look at the contemporary scene in relation to the implementation of this program. It will be discovered that several distinct positions have been taken by the various groups in Christendom.

1. There are those such as the Roman Catholics who accept all of the implications of this commission, teaching the necessity of baptism for salvation and making claims to miraculous healings at their various shrines.

2. There are others, such as the Pentecostalists, who endeavor to carry out this commission literally, teaching the necessity of the miraculous signs as evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and usually laying great stress on the necessity of repentance and water baptism for the remission of sins.

3. There are others, such as the traditional denominational churches of Christendom, which claim they are following this commission, some teaching that baptism is the appointed means of receiving salvation, but almost all completely neglecting the part about the miraculous signs which are supposed to follow those who believe. In recent years some of these denominational groups have apparently come to see the inconsistency of this and have joined hands with the Pentecostalists in seeking to revive the miraculous sign gifts.

4. There are still others, such as a large segment of Baptists, who repudiate speaking in tongues and manifesting the other sign gifts, and yet they claim to be working under this commission. They read the Pauline revelation back into this commission and claim that the commission means, "he that believeth and is saved should be baptized," instead of, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." On the other hand, those who take the commission literally insist that Paul's gospel must be interpreted in the light of the commission, so that "by grace through faith apart from works" means through water baptism and other works.

5. Finally, there are those who believe that this commission was given with a view to the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom, and that the Twelve Apostles worked under this commission in the early part of the Acts. They further believe that a different commission was given as a part of the new revelation which Paul received concerning the Body of Christ and the dispensation of the Mystery, and that this new commission is similar to the so-called Great Commission in that it is universal in character, having been "made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Romans 16:26).

It is only logical to suppose that when God changed His dispensation and introduced an entirely new and previously unprophesied order that He would reveal how this new message was to be dispensed. It would appear most illogical for the production manager of a factory to announce to his workers that an entirely new and different product was to be manufactured, but that they were to use the same plans and procedures as had been used on the former product. Undoubtedly there would be some similarities in the use of the machinery on the old and new products, but of necessity there must also be differences. The contention is here made that God did reveal to Paul, not only the new body of truth, but He also revealed the plan by which that truth was to be dispensed. Chalet expresses the same thought when he states:

The teachings of grace are perfect and sufficient in themselves. They provide for the instruction of the child of God in every situation which may

arise. There is no need that they be supplemented, or augmented, by the addition of precepts from either the Law of Moses or the teachings of the Kingdom.⁴⁸⁸

If this principle be true we should be able to find the commission for the Church which is Christ's Body in that body of truth which brings to us this new revelation. Let us then look into Paul's epistles for such a commission.

THE PAULINE COMMISSION FOR THE BODY OF CHRIST

What is probably the clearest and most cogent statement which might be called a commission for the saints of this dispensation is found in [2 Corinthians 5:14-21](#). That this commission is sufficient and complete may be seen from the following points.

Its Motivation

"The love of Christ constraineth us." This is the highest motivation in the universe. This commission is not to be obeyed simply to be loyal to our church, or to please human leaders, or merely to discharge our debt to humanity. The motive is not our love for Christ, but the love of Christ which was manifested in His death for us.

Its Scope

"For all." "Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." Christ died for all, but this fact was not clearly revealed before Christ made known this fact to Paul. Christ had said at the last supper: "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed *for many* for the remission of sins." "For many" is not the same as "for all." And the New Testament was made with the house of Israel and it is not until Paul that we learn that God has made the Gentiles partakers of the spiritual blessings of that Testament. Peter in Acts 5:31 declared: "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." It is true that the gospel of the Great Commission was ultimately to be preached in all the world, but the above references reveal an important distinction: namely, that the gospel was to Israel first and primarily, and then through Israel to the nations. Paul, on the other hand, shows that whereas the gospel was first sent to the Jews, God is now making no distinction between Jews and Gentiles, and it is now revealed that Christ died for all alike. In light of this fact it may be said that Paul's commission is more universal and all-inclusive than that of the Kingdom.

The Motivation and Scope of Paul's commission are reinforced in the verses which follow: "And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.

⁴⁸⁸ Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 207.

Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, there is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Paul's commission no longer views man on the plane of the flesh. It sees mankind as dead, where all earthly and fleshly distinctions have disappeared. But it sees all mankind as dead through Christ's death, and therefore as candidates for eternal life.

Its Ministry

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation."

It is no longer the ministry of the law, the ministry of condemnation and death ([2 Corinthians 3:7-9](#)). It is not the ministry of establishing a kingdom on earth in which Israel is the ruling nation over the other nations of the earth. It is a ministry of reconciliation which announces to a world of ruined, alienated, lost sinners, Jews and Gentiles alike, that God has been completely satisfied by the finished work of Christ, so that He can now look upon that world, no longer as alienated but reconciled, and that He can now offer reconciliation to all who will but believe the gospel.

This ministry of reconciliation could not have been offered as long as Israel and her covenants remained as the basis of God's dealings. Paul makes it very plain in Romans 11:15 that it was the casting away of Israel that brought in the reconciling of the world. As Paul develops the doctrine of reconciliation he goes back beyond Abraham and all of Israel's covenants and promises to the first man, Adam. He shows how alienation came to the whole human race through the one sin of that first Adam, and then how reconciliation has come to the whole human race through the one righteous act of the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ ([Romans 5:11-21](#), where verse 11 should read: "by whom we have now received the reconciliation").

Its Ministers

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

While God has declared Himself to be at peace with the world in this dispensation, the world in its attitude is still at enmity with God. The ministers of

reconciliation under this commission go forth as ambassadors of heaven into enemy territory to represent their homeland in the stead of Christ. In the Millennial Kingdom to which the Great Commission looks, the world will be at peace with God. The prophets are full of glowing accounts of how the Gentiles shall come to Israel's light and kings to the brightness of her rising ([Isaiah 60:3](#)), and how ten men out of all languages of the nations shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you ([Zechariah 8:23](#)).

This commission for members of the Body of Christ contains no mention of sign gifts and water baptism, which are such a prominent part of the Great Commission. But it does contain the greatest motivation, the greatest scope, and the greatest message which God has ever revealed in His eternal counsels. It is impossible for the Church today to carry out all of the precepts of the Kingdom commission, simply because it is not God's order for today. But it is entirely possible for the Church to carry out this Pauline commission, for it is God's will and purpose for today. But sad to say, the Church down through the centuries has mistakenly tried to carry out the Kingdom commission and has ended up with much confusion and division and a distorted and blurred message. We can hardly imagine how different the scene would have been had the Church truly carried out its own special commission.

Part Nine

Eschatology

INTRODUCTION

Eschatology is usually defined as *the Doctrine of the Last Things*. The name is derived from the Greek *eschatos*, meaning *last*. It would perhaps be more accurate to designate this division as *the Doctrine of Future Events*, or *the Doctrine of Things to Come*, since it includes subjects other than those connected with the final events in the divine revelation. Under this heading we shall consider the Intermediate State of the Dead, the Rapture of the Church, the Great Tribulation, the Second Coming of Christ, the various Millennial views, the Resurrection and Judgments, and the Eternal State.

The term *eschatology* is perhaps more appropriate for those theologians who are non-dispensational and who are either post- or amillennial, since both of these systems of doctrine relegate the Rapture and the Second Coming and, in fact, all other prophesied future events to a single happening which they designate as *the end of the world*, or *the general resurrection and judgment*. Postmillennialism holds that the Church will be successful in converting the world and will finally bring in a reign of peace and righteousness upon the earth, which will be terminated by the second coming of Christ and a general resurrection and

judgment of all who have ever lived upon the earth. Amillennialism denies that the Church will ever bring in a millennium upon earth, but agrees with the view that the world will come to an end at the second coming of Christ and the general resurrection and judgment. In other words, both of these systems teach that we are now in the final age or dispensation of God's dealings on this earth and that there is nothing beyond the Church Age but the final resurrection and judgment and the eternal state to follow.

In contemplating Eschatology as including all future events it is most interesting to consider the content of the doctrine as it concerned men in the various ages of human history. For Adam in innocence all of what is past human history, plus all that is yet future, would have comprised his eschatology. For Abraham the giving of the Law and the death and resurrection of Christ would have been a part of his eschatology. For those who will live during the Kingdom Age, the only revealed subject of eschatology will be the final rebellion which will be terminated by the destruction of the existing heavens and earth, the resurrection and judgment of the wicked dead, and the creation of the New Heavens and the New Earth.

With this brief introduction to the general subject in mind we will turn our attention to the Intermediate State. It will be necessary first to determine from Scripture the meaning of death, then to consider some of the unscriptural theories about death, and finally to locate the place of the dead between death and resurrection.

78 THE INTERMEDIATE STATE – The Biblical View of Death

THE SCRIPTURAL MEANING OF DEATH

Theologians usually speak of three kinds of death: Physical, Spiritual, and Eternal, the latter being equivalent to the second death of [Revelation 20:14](#). It is evident from the following sampling of Scripture passages that death does not always mean the same thing in the Bible:

Let the dead bury their dead, (Matthew 8: 22).

How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein, (Romans 6:2).

But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth, (1 Timothy 5:6).

It is thus possible to be dead and alive at the same time, but not in the same sense; otherwise language would be meaningless. Death is described in a number of different ways in Scripture.

1. *Death is a separation.* "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also," (James 2:2). Physical death is the separation of the spirit from the body. Both the body and the spirit continue to exist after the separation, although the body naturally goes through a process of decomposition unless it is preserved through some method of embalming. The spirit, as a general principle, is said to return to God who gave it ([Ecclesiastes 12:7](#)); hence it must also have existence.

2. *Death is spoken of as a putting off of a tent.* "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle (tent) were dissolved,..." (2 Corinthians 5:1). "Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle (tent) ... knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle,..." (2 Peter 1:13, 14). The tent is a temporary dwelling place. Both Paul and Peter present the view that the human body is but a tent in which the real person temporarily resides, and that death is something like breaking of camp. There is no thought in this representation of death of the cessation of existence of the real person: rather, the real person is seen as existing outside his former dwelling place.

3. *Death is said to be an exodus.* "And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease (exodus) which he should accomplish at Jerusalem," (Luke 9:30, 31). "Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease (exodus) to have these things always in remembrance," (2 Peter 1:15). When the children of Israel took their exodus from Egypt, they left Egypt behind, but they surely did not cease to exist. They entered into the wilderness, which might be considered as a figure of the intermediate state. After that they entered into the promised land, a picture of the spirit entering into the resurrection body.

4. *Death is absence from the body.* "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord," (2 Corinthians 5:8). "... whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell,..." (2 Corinthians 12:2). In both of the above verses the "I" which is out of the body or absent from the body is considered to be in existence in some other place. In the case of the Christian "I" that is absent from the body it is said to be present or at home with the Lord.

5. *Death is represented as a state of silence.* "... let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave," (Psalm 31:17). "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence," (Psalm 115:17). The human voice is silenced by death, but this does not prove that the spirit is either unconscious or unable to communicate, either with God or with others in the spirit realm. As far as this world is concerned, and communication with this world, the dead are silent.

6. *Death is said to be a condition in which there is no knowledge.* "The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything,..." (Ecclesiastes 9:5). "... for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest," (Ecclesiastes 9:12). One must be careful not to make these Old Testament statements about death contradict the more complete revelation of the New Testament. These are natural representations of death as it appears to those in the land of the living. The living have no knowledge of the activity of the dead and the dead have no knowledge of what is transpiring in this world. That these statements must be taken in this qualified sense is evident from other scriptural usage. For example, we read of a secret agreement between David and Jonathan whereby David would know whether or not it was safe for him to come into Saul's presence. Jonathan was to signal David by shooting an arrow either behind or in front of the boy who retrieved his arrows, and we read, "But the lad *knew not anything*: only Jonathan and David knew the matter," (1 Samuel 20:39). A similar statement is found in 2 Samuel 15:11: "And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem that were called; and they went in their simplicity, and *they knew not anything*." Neither Jonathan's lad nor Absalom's two hundred men were idiots or unconscious, but they knew not anything in the sense that they did not know what their master was doing. The dead know not anything in the sense that they are completely removed from the knowledge of this earthly scene. It could just as well be said that the living know not anything as far as the dead are concerned.

7. *Finally, death is represented as a penalty for sin* (Genesis 2:17; Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 6:23). The warning that God gave to Adam: "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," might better be translated, "dying thou shalt die," which means that upon committing sin the process of death would set in. James describes this process: "But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death," (James 1:14, 15).

Man, left to his own wisdom, supposes that death is simply due to physical causes, and has hopes that some day through scientific discoveries life may be extended indefinitely. The revelation from God, however, indicates that death in the human realm, at least, is the direct result of sin, and that man would have lived for ever had he not sinned (Genesis 3:22). It would appear that death existed in the vegetable and animal world before man sinned, since these forms of life were created to be food for man and other animals (1 Timothy 4:3; Psalm 104:21).

THE SCRIPTURAL MEANING OF SPIRITUAL DEATH

Death in the Old Testament almost always, if not always, has reference to its physical aspect. In the New Testament death is also used to describe man's spiritual condition by nature. This does not mean that men were not spiritually

dead by nature in the Old Testament, but that that construction was not placed upon death at that time. At least three things may be said about spiritual death.

1. *Spiritual death is the state into which man enters when he is born into this world.* "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins... even when we were dead in sins,..." (Ephesians 2:1, 5). Paul in this context is stating what man is *by nature*, that is, as born into the world. Scripture does not teach that man is born spiritually alive and then at some later date dies spiritually when he first commits an act of sin. Rather, it teaches that man is by nature a child of wrath and therefore by nature dead spiritually, (Ephesians 2:3). While Paul is no doubt speaking about physical death in Romans 5:12: "and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," spiritual death is a part of the consequence of sin, and thus spiritual death also passed upon all men through the one race sin of Adam.

2. *Spiritual death is the separation of the spiritual nature of man from the life of God.* Neither physical nor spiritual death are annihilation or cessation of existence. Both are a state of existence in which there is a separation of vital relationships. To say that man is spiritually dead is not to say that he does not possess a spirit or that his spirit has ceased to exist. Although the words *spirit* and *spiritual* in Scripture usually connote that which is Godlike, it is also true that there are wicked spirits and spiritual wickedness, (Ephesians 6:12). The natural man who is dead spiritually, is later described by Paul in these words: "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart," (Ephesians 4:18). Spiritual death is alienation from the life of God. That all men, even those that are spiritually dead, have a spirit is evident from Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 2:11: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?" It is also evident from the fact that the spirit departs from the body at death, so that it must exist in the body as long as man is alive.

3. *Spiritual death is a state in which man's spirit is actively at enmity against God.* To be spiritually dead is to be carnally minded, "for to be carnally minded is death,... because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," (Romans 8:7, 7). The contrast in this passage is between carnal mindedness and spiritual mindedness. In both conditions man's spirit is actively involved. The spirit is either completely occupied with fleshly desires or, having been renewed through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:23), it is occupied with the things of the Spirit of God.

THE SCRIPTURAL MEANING OF ETERNAL DEATH

1. *Eternal death is the final state of the unsaved.* Just as Adam is called the first man and Christ the second man, so the physical death that Adam brought upon the race may be called the first death, and that which comes as a result of

the final judgment is called the second death ([Revelation 20:14](#)). Second does not imply that there will be a third or a fourth, with further opportunities to escape the penalty of sin. The second death is plainly the final or eternal state of the unsaved.

2. *Eternal death is to be suffered in a bodily form.* Those who are in a state of physical death are at the present in a disembodied state. The saved dead will be bodily resurrected. At a later day the unsaved dead will also be resurrected and judged and will be cast bodily into the second death ([Revelation 20:6, 12-15](#)). There will be a resurrection of both the just and of the unjust ([John 5:29; Acts 24:15](#)). If the dead were either annihilated or were already in hell there would be no reason or purpose for their resurrection. We are not told what the nature of that body will be, but they are given a body in which to suffer the consequences of their rejection of the mercy and grace of God.

3. *Eternal death is a state of conscious suffering.* The fact that those who are cast into the lake of fire are said to be tormented day and night for ever and ever ([Revelation 20:10](#)), is proof that they are in a state of conscious existence. Their punishment is not eternal extinction but eternal suffering. Unbelieving minds may try to rationalize and ask how God or any one else could be happy, knowing that millions of souls are suffering eternally but this does not alter the facts of revelation. We might as well ask how God or anyone else could have been happy at any stage of human history with disease, crime, war, injustice, and death affecting all of mankind. All such questions go back to the problem of why God permitted sin in the first place. The solution has defied human wisdom.

CONCLUSION

If we define life as existence, then its opposite, death, must be defined as non-existence. But it is evident from Scripture that life is more than existence: it is a certain quality of existence. The people to whom Christ came had existence, but He said, "I am come that they might have life." Therefore, it does not follow that death is non-existence. Vine states:

Death is the opposite of life; it never denotes non-existence. As spiritual life is "conscious existence in communion with God," so spiritual death is "conscious existence in separation from God."⁴⁸⁹

Death, whether it be physical, spiritual, or eternal, is basically a separation. Sin is the cause of that separation, even as Isaiah states: "but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear," (Isaiah 59:2).

⁴⁸⁹ W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (London, Oliphants; Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1952), Vol. I, p. 276.

79 THE INTERMEDIATE STATE – Unscriptural Theories About Death

The great majority of Christians down through the centuries have held the view that the spirit or soul of man continues in a state of conscious existence between death and resurrection. There have been those, however, who have opposed this view. We shall examine four of these theories and subject them to Scriptural tests.

UNSCRIPTURAL THEORIES OF DEATH

1. *The view that death is the sleep of the soul.* This is the teaching of modern Seventh Day Adventists. No doubt numerous individuals have also held this view down through the centuries, since there seems to be a Scriptural basis for it. Jesus said: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death "(John 11:11-13). Daniel speaks of "them that sleep in the dust," (Daniel 12:2), and Paul speaks of "them that sleep in Jesus," (1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14). According to this view when a person dies he loses consciousness and has no knowledge of time or of intervening events between death and resurrection. During this interval the soul is in existence. At the resurrection the souls of the saved will be given immortality and the souls of the unsaved will be annihilated. Van Baalen quotes Seventh Day Adventist W. A. Spicer:

The state to which we are reduced by death is one of silence, inactivity and entire unconsciousness Between death and the resurrection the dead sleep The positive teaching of Holy Scripture is that sin and sinners will be blotted out of existence. There will be a clean universe again when the great controversy between Christ and Satan is ended.⁴⁹⁰

Before answering this view from the Scripture we shall look at the other false theories, as they are all answered by the same arguments.

2. *The view that death results in the dissolution of the soul.* This view was defended by Dr. E. W. Bullinger. He reasoned that when God created man He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul. Man did not have a soul but he was a soul. The existence of the soul is therefore dependent upon breath being in man's nostrils. When man gives up the ghost and breathes his last the soul dissolves or goes out of existence. Bullinger makes a sharp distinction between this view and soul-sleep. He writes:

⁴⁹⁰ J. K. Van Baalen, *The Chaos of the Cults* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), p. 142.

We must be judged only by what we actually say, not by what we have not said. One writer retorts "Oh, then you believe in the sleep of the soul!" We believe nothing of the kind. The expression is not in Scripture, and we know not what it means.⁴⁹¹

This same view was taught by Pastor Charles Taze Russell and is one of the basic teachings of Russellism and Jehovah's Witnesses. Van Baalen states:

In order to make man incapable of endless suffering Russellism has invented two arbitrary definitions. The first one is that *man is a soul, but does not have a soul*; the second, that *death means destruction*, an absolute non-existence.⁴⁹²

According to this view it would seem that man's spirit is nothing more than the breath in his nostrils. When the spirit returns to God who gave it, it is but the impersonal principle of the life being taken away from man. There is no personality left after death. But the Scripture surely teaches that man's spirit is more than the air in his nostrils. Paul states that the spirit is the knowing part of man (1 Corinthians 2:11). God is spirit, but that does not mean that He is air. Bullinger, of course, believed in a resurrection of the dead, but it is difficult to understand how there can be a resurrection when there is nothing left to be resurrected. If the person has gone completely out of existence God would have to create a new person instead of resurrecting the one who had died.

3. *The view propagated by Mary Baker Eddy in Christian Science.* She defined death as "An illusion, the lie of life in matter, the unreal and untrue; the opposite of life."⁴⁹³ This view has no Scriptural foundation whatsoever. It is based, not upon any statement of Scripture, but upon the denial of many passages of Scripture. Since Christian Science denies the reality of sin it must also deny the reality of the wages of sin, which is death. Christian Science is based upon a type of idealistic philosophy which recognizes "divine mind" as the only reality, of which all human beings are a manifestation. This all-inclusive, universal, impersonal divine mind might be likened to a great ocean and the ripples upon its surface to the individualized personalities. The passing of a person from this life would then be likened to the falling back of the ripple into the ocean with the abating of the wind. Christian Science is thus a pantheistic system which says that God is the sum-total of all intelligence in the universe and that nothing but mind has real existence. Since all is divine mind, and since God or divine mind cannot die or cease to exist, death cannot be real. Death is simply an illusion or an error of mortal mind.

⁴⁹¹ E. W. Bullinger, *The Church Epistles* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1928), p. 232.

⁴⁹² Van Baalen, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

⁴⁹³ Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1932), p. 584.

4. *The view held by Swedenborg.* Emanuel Swedenborg, a Swedish mystic and philosopher and founder of the New Jerusalem Church in 1783, held a unique view of the constitution of man. He believed that man had two bodies, an external one and an internal one, a physical body and a psychical body. At death, he taught, the physical, external body goes into the grave, never to be resurrected, while the psychical, eternal body in union with the soul migrates into the other world. A. A. Hodge states:

They teach that the literal body is dissolved, and finally perishes in death. But by a subtle law of our nature an ethereal, luminous body is eliminated out of the *psuche* (the seat of the nervous sensibility, occupying the middle link between matter and spirit), so that the soul does not go forth from its tabernacle of flesh a bare power of thought, but is clothed upon at once by this psychical body. This resurrection of the body, they pretend, takes place in every case immediately at death, and accompanies the outgoing soul-See "Religion and Philosophy of Swedenborg."⁴⁹⁴

THE SCRIPTURAL ANSWER TO THESE FALSE THEORIES OF DEATH

That death is not an unconscious state nor a non-existent state is evident from the following Scriptural evidence.

1. In the figurative use of death the spirit of the one who is said to be dead in trespasses and sins is not unconscious or non-existent. The figure must conform to the basic meaning of the literal. If physical death meant non-existence spiritual death would of necessity have to mean non-existence. Therefore the Scripture could not apply the term death to anyone who had existence if the word means non-existence.

2. Bodily death does not result in the death of the soul. Christ said: "Fear not them that kill the body, but cannot kill the soul," (Matthew 10:28). Thus far this verse proves that killing the body does not destroy the soul. It is evident that if physical death resulted in the death of the soul the words of Christ would have been meaningless. But Christ continued: "Fear him which is able to destroy both the body and soul in hell (gehenna)." This part of the verse may appear to teach that God will annihilate both the body and the soul in the lake of fire. But to begin with, no one is to be cast into gehenna until the final judgment, so that this verse could have no application to the state of the dead between death and the judgment. And further, the meaning of this statement depends upon the word *destroy*. This word is elsewhere translated die, lose, and perish. When Christ said, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which *was lost*," (Luke 19:10), He used the same word *apollumi*. He surely was not saying that he came to save that which was annihilated or which was non-existent. To read such a meaning into [Matthew 16:25](#); [Luke 15:4](#), [Hebrews 2:14](#), or any of the other passages where *apollumi* is used is to render the Scripture ridiculous.

⁴⁹⁴ A. A. Hodge, *op. cit.*, pp.564, 565.

3. The story of the rich man and Lazarus in [Luke 16:19-31](#) proves that those who have died are not unconscious. Whether this narrative relates to an actual historical event or was meant to be a parable is immaterial. If death is either unconsciousness or non-existence it could never be used as a figure in a parable to represent just the opposite. All of Christ's parables are based upon fact. A sower sows seed and grain springs up; shepherds tend sheep, and houses are built on foundations. How could Christ represent men in the state of death communicating with one another if, in fact, men do not exist or are not conscious in the state of death?

4. If death is non-existence then the Son of God must have been out of existence for three days and nights while His body was in the tomb. This might not bother Jehovah's Witnesses who deny the Deity of Christ, but for those who believe that He is the Second Person of the Godhead, it is impossible to believe that He was annihilated for three days and nights. But further, He said to the thief who died with Him: "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise," (Luke 23:43). What did the Lord mean? "Today we are both going to be annihilated?" If death is annihilation He could have said this to both of the thieves. Those who hold to soul-sleeping change the punctuation of this verse to read, "Verily I say to thee today, thou shalt be with me in paradise." But why should Christ say "today," unless He had told him something different on a previous occasion and was now telling him something different? We cannot believe that Christ would use words in such a useless and meaningless way.

5. Paul plainly states that at the present we are at home in the body but absent from the Lord, and that we are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord, ([2 Corinthians 5:8](#)). Absent from the body must describe the state of one who is dead. It could not be a description of the resurrection state, for if resurrection means anything, it means that the person will be in the body. If absence from the body meant annihilation or even to be unconsciously existing in the presence of the Lord, why would one be willing rather to choose such a condition over being consciously alive? Paul must mean a conscious presence with the Lord.

This same passage also speaks of the body as a garment with which we are now clothed. It speaks of death as being unclothed and being left in a naked condition, and then finally clothed upon with our house from heaven. For Paul death leaves the immaterial part of man in a naked condition: it in no sense annihilates or renders that part of man unconscious. In like manner we have already pointed to the fact that Peter speaks of his impending death as an exodus and as a laying aside of his temporary tent dwelling.

6. The appearance of Moses and Elijah upon the mount of transfiguration, ([Matthew 17:3](#)), is further evidence that the dead are not non-existent or

unconscious. There is nothing in the context to indicate that these two men had undergone a special resurrection prior to this event.

7. Peter speaks of those who were disobedient in Noah's day as now being "spirits in prison," (1 Peter 3:19, 20). On this passage Shedd states:

Augustine, Bede, Aquinas, Erasmus, Beza, Gerhard, Hottinger, Clericus, Leighton, Pearson, Secker, Hammond, Hoffman, and most of the Reformed theologians, explain 1 Pet. 3:18-20 to mean, that Christ preached by Noah to men who were "disobedient" in the days of Noah, and who for this cause were "spirits in prison" at the time of Peter's writing.⁴⁹⁵

Bullinger, who held to the dissolution of the soul at death, was forced to make the spirits in prison to be wicked angelic spirits whom he identified with the sons of God in [Genesis 6:4](#). He has Christ going to Tartarus after His resurrection and preaching to these sons of God, but no explanation is given of why Christ would preach only to a group of angels which rebelled in the days of Noah. Most commentators who hold that Christ personally went to Hades or Tartarus to proclaim His victory teach that he accomplished this while His body was in the grave, but Bullinger, holding as he does to the non-existent state of the soul in death, is forced to the position that Christ did this after his resurrection. Shedd's interpretation, with which we agree, is in accord with what Peter wrote earlier in his epistle, that "the Spirit of Christ was in the prophets of old," (1:11).

That death is not annihilation is proved by many of the facts already stated, as well as by what follows. Here we must distinguish two different views: that of the materialist who argues that death is the end of existence for every one, and that of the theist who believes in a resurrection. The latter view of annihilationism is sometimes known as *conditional immortality*, because it teaches that future existence or immortality is conditioned upon salvation. Only those who accept God's salvation will receive immortality. The wicked will die as mere animals and will have no further existence.

This view, by teaching that death is annihilation, must teach that the wicked are annihilated twice. If death is extinction of being, then the unsaved are annihilated when they die. Then at the Great White Throne they will be raised in the resurrection of the unjust. After that they are cast into the second death, which would be a second annihilation. We do not believe that any Scripture can be found to buttress such an idea.

And further, this view leaves no room for the punishment of the unsaved after death. This view must make the punishment to be annihilation. But the Scripture states that every man is going to be judged according to his works and rewarded or punished accordingly. Annihilation would rule out any such judgment, for it

⁴⁹⁵ W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. II, p. 609.

would impose the identical sentence upon all alike. If it be argued that Satan and the fallen angels, being spirit beings, will not be annihilated by the lake of fire, it should be pointed out that two men, called the beast and the false prophet, are to be cast into the lake of fire in a living condition at the second coming of Christ, and that a thousand years later they are still in the lake of fire and "shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever," (Revelation 19:20 and 20:10).

Some men, unwilling to accept the Scriptural doctrine of eternal punishment and knowing that the Bible plainly teaches the conscious punishment of the wicked, have invented a modified form of annihilationism. They suppose that the unsaved will remain in a conscious existence for a sufficient period of time to receive their just desserts and that they will finally become extinct through a gradual process of weakening. Such theories are based upon speculation and have no foundation in Scripture.

If there is any analogy between God's material and His spiritual creation it would be difficult to believe in the annihilation of anything or any one. Matter may have its form changed, but it cannot be annihilated. Science has given us two laws: *the law of the conservation of energy* which states that energy cannot be created or destroyed, and *the law of the conservation of mass*, which states that matter can be neither created nor destroyed. Atomic science has combined these two laws into a single one which states that the sum of mass plus energy remains constant. If all of the matter and energy which God has created remains constant and none of it can be annihilated, it is at least plausible that the same law might hold in the spiritual world.

It is not our purpose at this point to deal with the eternal state of the wicked. We have brought it into the discussion only insofar as it relates to the state of the dead. Sufficient evidence has been presented, we believe, to convince that the Scripture does not support the theories of death which have been presented in this chapter.

80 THE INTERMEDIATE STATE – The Place of the Dead

In considering the place to which the dead go it is necessary to distinguish between the Intermediate and the Eternal states. Most theologians teach that the place is different in these two states, while others make no distinction. The Scripture names several places to which the departed may go: heaven, paradise, hell, grave, sheol-hades, gehenna, lake of fire, pit, abyss. Roman Catholic theology has added to the two main places, heaven and hell, at least three more, purgatory, limbus patrum, and limbus infantum. In this chapter we shall examine in detail each of these places.

HEAVEN

Scripture recognizes three heavens, (2 Corinthians 12:2). These are usually described as the atmospheric heavens in which the birds fly, (Jeremiah 4:25 cf. Matthew 8:20, "birds of the air,"); the stellar heavens (Genesis 22:17; Matthew 24:29); and the heaven of heavens, or the dwelling place of God (1 Kings 8:27, 30). It is with the latter place only that we are here concerned. It should be stated, however, that we cannot be sure what the first two heavens were in Paul's thinking. Alford states:

What is the third heaven? The Jews knew no such number, but commonly (not universally: Rabbi Judah said, "Duo sunt coeli, Deut. x. 14") recognized *seven* heavens: and if their arrangement is to be followed, the third heaven will be very low in the celestial scale, being only the *material clouds*. That the threefold division into the *air* (nubiferum), the *sky* (astriferum), and the *heaven* (angeliferum), was in use among the Jews, Meyer regards as a *fiction* of Grotius. Certainly no Rabbinical authority is given for such a statement: but it is put forward confidently by Grotius, and since his time adopted without inquiry by many Commentators. It is uncertain whether the *sevenfold* division prevailed so early as the Apostle's time: and at all events, as we must not invent Jewish divisions which never existed, so it seems rash to apply here, one about whose date we are not certain, and which does not suit the context:--for to be rapt only to the clouds, even supposing ver. 4 to relate to a further *assumption*, would hardly be thus solemnly introduced, or the preposition *eos* used. The safest explanation therefore is, *not to follow any fixed division*, but judging by the evident intention of the expression, to understand a *high degree* of celestial exaltation.⁴⁹⁶

It is significant that in the Old Testament there is no revelation of souls going to heaven at death. The only inhabitants of heaven are God and the angelic beings. There is no doubt a dispensational significance to this, for God's promise to Israel was not to go to heaven but to inherit the earth. Long life upon the earth was the indication of God's blessing (Exodus 20:12). The Body of Christ, on the other hand, has been given no promise of earthly inheritance: rather, our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20); we are seated in the heavenlies in Christ (Ephesians 2:6); and although there is no direct statement that we will go to heaven at death, we are told that we will depart to be at home with the Lord, (2 Corinthians 5:8) and we know that the Lord is at present in heaven.

Although the righteous dead go directly to heaven they go in a disembodied state. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:1-8, describes three states in which the believer may exist: (1) "we that are in this tabernacle," our present state of existence in the body; (2) "unclothed . . . naked," the state of being absent from the body in death and being present with the Lord; and (3) "clothed upon with our house which is from heaven," the resurrection state. In vs. 4 he apparently makes

⁴⁹⁶ Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, Vol. II, p. 710.

reference to the rapture of living saints at the time of Christ's coming, when mortality will be swallowed up of life.

There is a theory that the saved dead receive a temporary body at death, which is laid aside when the resurrection takes place. Chalet holds this view:

... the human spirit earnestly desires not to be unclothed or disembodied but to be clothed upon; and to this end a body "from heaven," eternal-with respect to its qualities as any body from heaven must be--awaits the believer who dies. He will thus not be unclothed or bodiless between death and resurrection of the original body which will be from the grave. The body "from heaven" could not be the body which is from the grave, nor could the body from the grave serve as an intermediate body before resurrection. Apart from the divine provision of an intermediate body, the believer's desire that he should not be unclothed or bodiless could not be satisfied.⁴⁹⁷

The *Scofield Reference Bible* sets forth this same view in a footnote on page 1299. The intermediate body theory creates a number of problems. If the believer receives an eternal body at death, what need is there for another eternal body in resurrection? And if the intermediate body is eternal, would not the believer have two eternal bodies after the resurrection? It is true that Paul did not desire to be unclothed, but that does not mean that this might not be his lot. In saying that he did not desire to be unclothed, Paul was simply saying that his desire was not to die but to be alive at the Lord's coming. The fact is that Paul did die and was thus unclothed. We believe that the resurrection body can be said to be both from heaven and from the grave. The resurrection body is surely represented as a heavenly body in [1 Corinthians 15:35-50](#), and yet it is said to come forth from the grave. In like manner the Kingdom of Heaven originates in heaven and comes from heaven, and yet it will be an earthly kingdom on earth.

PARADISE

Paradise is mentioned only three times in the Bible. Christ told the thief: "today shalt thou be with me in paradise," (Luke 23:43). Paul was "caught up into paradise," (2 Corinthians 12:4). And the promise is "to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God," (Revelation 2:7). Paradise, according to Vine⁴⁹⁸ is an oriental word, first used by Xenophon, denoting the parks of the Persian kings. The translators of the Septuagint used it for the garden of Eden ([Genesis 2:8](#)) and in other passages ([Numbers 24:6](#); [Isaiah 1:30](#); [Jeremiah 29: 5](#); [Ezekiel 31:8, 9](#)).

Two main views are held concerning paradise. One is that it is simply a synonym for heaven. The other is that paradise was originally the garden of

⁴⁹⁷ Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 414, 415.

⁴⁹⁸ W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Vol. III, p. 158.

Eden, that after Adam sinned it was moved to become one of the compartments of sheol and was equivalent to Abraham's bosom, ([Luke 16:22](#)), the place where the righteous dead were carried and where Christ's soul went while His body was in the grave. Some further hold that Christ in His victory over death took paradise with all of its inhabitants to the third heaven.

SHEOL-HADES

The Old Testament *sheol* is the equivalent of the New Testament *hades*. Sheol is translated *hell*, *grave*, and *pit*. Hades is translated *hell* and *grave*. Those who teach soul-sleep claim that sheol-hades always means the grave and that the soul sleeps with the body in the grave. Shedd is representative of the view that sheol-hades is the lake of fire.⁴⁹⁹ For him there have always been only two places for the dead to go, heaven and hell, and that the only difference between the intermediate state and the eternal state is that the former is a disembodied state and the latter is an embodied one. Besides his dispensational handling of a number of proof texts, Shedd's view is open to the objection that he has the unsaved cast into the lake of fire at death, which is before their judgment, whereas the book of Revelation makes it plain that the unsaved dead are first raised up, then judged, and then cast into the lake of fire. Also Shedd equates hades with the lake of fire, whereas Scripture states that at the consummation hades is going to be cast into the lake of fire. Another objection to Shedd's view is that the Old Testament represents the saints going to sheol, (cf. [Genesis 37:35](#)). Jacob was surely not expecting to meet his son in the lake of fire.

A view which escapes these objections is that sheol-hades is simply the unseen world (this is the literal meaning of hades), and that this unseen world is divided into two parts, paradise or Abraham's bosom and another part for the unsaved dead. As explained earlier, some men believe that the upper compartment of hades was vacated at the resurrection of Christ. Chafer holds this view in common with Scofield.⁵⁰⁰

The story of Dives and Lazarus in Luke 16 supports the view that there were two compartments in the habitations of the dead separated by a great impassable gulf, with joy and bliss in one and misery and suffering in the other. The prophecy that Christ's soul was not left in hades (Acts 2:27) surely is evidence that Christ's soul went to hades. But Scripture in no place teaches that Christ went to the lake of fire or that He suffered in the place where Dives was. There must have been, therefore, another place in hades to which His soul descended. It would appear that as far as the unsaved are concerned there has been no change in their state since the death of the first one. There seems to have been a change brought about by the resurrection of Christ which affects the state of the saved dead, but whether this is a change of actual location or a

⁴⁹⁹ W. G. T. Shedd, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 610-633.

⁵⁰⁰ Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 413, 414. *Scofield Reference Bible*, pp. 1098, 1099.

matter of more complete revelation is not clear. Of one thing we may be sure: the saved dead are now with the Lord awaiting resurrection.

Bullinger is representative of those who hold that sheol-hades is a generic designation for the grave and the grave only.⁵⁰¹ While no doubt sheol and hades are used for the grave, this usage does not mean that the grave exhausts the meaning of the words. We who believe that departed saints are consciously present with the Lord often speak of such ones as being in the grave. We often use a part for the whole. We say, He was buried, when we mean his body was buried. We say, He is now with the Lord, when we mean his spirit is now with the Lord. Luke tells us there were 276 *souls* on board ship ([Acts 27:37](#)), when he means there were that number of persons.

That sheol-hades means more than the grave seems evident from a number of facts, some of which have already been pointed out. The prophecy concerning Christ that His soul was not left in hades, neither did His flesh see corruption, definitely distinguishes between Christ's soul and His body. His body did not see corruption in the grave and His soul was not left in hades. The consciousness and activity in hades of which Christ spoke in Luke 16 is proof that hades is more than the grave. Although sheol is usually represented as a place of darkness and gloom, there are passages which speak of consciousness and activity there, (cf. [Isaiah 14:9-11](#); [Ezekiel 32:21](#), where *hell* is sheol). The fact that Christ descended into the lower parts of the earth ([Ephesians 4:9](#)) would seem to include more than being placed in Joseph's tomb. And if Christ did anything during the three days and nights His body was in the tomb, it is evident that hades is more than the grave. If Samuel actually appeared to Saul ([1 Samuel 28:15-20](#)), Samuel must have had conscious existence. The appearance of Moses and Elijah on the mount of transfiguration was not the result of resurrection, and if not, it is evident that God is not the God of the dead but of the living ([Matthew 22:32](#)). And if departed saints are now present with the Lord they are somewhere besides in the grave.

BOTTOMLESS PIT, ABYSS

A number of Hebrew words are translated *pit*. Korah and his sons "went down alive into the pit" (Numbers 16:33). The Psalmist cried: "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit?" (Psalm 30:9). The pit in the Old Testament seems to be synonymous with the grave and sheol. The book of Revelation mentions the bottomless pit or abyss nine times. It is a place where demon spirits are imprisoned and where Satan will be chained for a thousand years. Nothing is said of any of the dead of humanity occupying this pit. Peter says of the angels that sinned that God "cast them down to hell (Tartarus)", (2 Peter 2:4). No human dead are associated with this place.

GEHENNA, LAKE OF FIRE

⁵⁰¹ *The Companion Bible*, Appendix 131, p. 163.

These two terms are synonymous. This is the real and final hell of the Bible. It was prepared for the Devil and his angels ([Matthew 25:41](#)). This place has no relationship to the intermediate state, since no one has yet been cast into it. The beast and the false prophet will be the first to be cast into it, as far as revelation gives us knowledge. More will be said of this place in considering the final state of the unsaved.

PURGATORY, LIMBUS PATRUM, LIMBUS INFANTIUM

Whereas the previous five places mentioned are Biblical terms, these three are peculiar to Roman Catholic theology. The word *limbo* or *limbus* means *edge*, and describes a place on the edge or border of hell. It is the teaching of the Roman Church that the Patriarchs went to the Limbus Patrum to await the coming of the Messiah to redeem them. Christ supposedly delivered them from the place and took them to heaven. Limbus Infantum is the place where all unbaptized infants go at death. Since Rome teaches the absolute necessity of baptism for salvation, unbaptized infants could not be saved. Original sin shuts out these infants for ever from heaven and from the vision of God, but since they have no personal sins for which to suffer they are exempted from the fires of hell. Hodge quotes Cardinal Gousset:

We will go still further, and say with St. Thomas, that although unbaptized infants are deprived forever of the happiness of the saints, they suffer neither sorrow nor sadness in consequence of that privation.⁵⁰²

Purgatory, as the name implies, is a place of purging or purifying. It is supposedly a place where penitent souls, by the ministry of Suffering, are purified from venial sins and the temporal punishment due to remitted mortal sins, before they can be admitted to the presence of God. In order to understand the doctrine of purgatory one must understand first the following teachings of Rome. God's forgiveness through the work of Christ covers only the penalty of eternal death. The Christian must make satisfaction for all sins committed after baptism. This satisfaction must be complete and perfect before he can enter heaven. Satisfaction can be made by penance and good works in this life, and if not completed in this life, it must be accomplished through suffering in the fires of purgatory after death. The sufferings of those in purgatory may be alleviated or shortened by the prayers of the saints and especially by the sacrifice of the Mass. The Mass is a propitiatory sacrifice for securing forgiveness from post-baptism sins and is applied according to the intention of the officiating priest. Therefore the Mass may be said for the benefit of the soul in purgatory. The Church has complete control of the Treasury of Merit and at the discretion of the clergy may apply the merits of Christ and the saints to souls in purgatory to lighten their punishment. This Treasury of Merit consists of the value of all of the good works of Christ and of the saints which were over and above what was

⁵⁰² Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 747.

required of them. Since there is no way of knowing the duration of the residence in purgatory, the living are admonished to continue indefinitely paying for masses to be said in behalf of the dead. It goes without saying that purgatory is for only those who are assured of reaching heaven in the final analysis. All who die in mortal sin will suffer eternally in hell without any hope of paying for their sins.

What authority does Rome have for its doctrine of purgatory? There is no direct authority from the Scripture, but since Rome claims that its oral tradition is on an equal par with Scripture authority, it has no need to appeal to Scripture. Rome appeals to the fact that the Jews and some in the early church said prayers for the dead, which takes for granted that the dead need our prayers. Reference is made to 2 Maccabees 12:43 where Judas Maccabeus sent 2,000 drachmas of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice, to be offered for the sins of the dead. However, these dead soldiers were guilty of idolatry and according to Roman doctrine they died in mortal sin and therefore went to hell where prayer could be of no avail.

Rome also appeals to certain passages of Scripture. Matthew 5:25, 26 is said to support the teaching of purgatory: "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." To begin with, this passage is not speaking about future punishment, and even if it were it would be saying that man can atone for his sin, and that therefore in time all men would be saved, after they had paid the last farthing. The truth is that Christ did pay the last farthing and that is the only reason any man can be saved.

Appeal is also made to [1 Corinthians 3:12-15](#) where the fire is to try every man's work. However, in this passage the fire is not applied to the person, but to his works. Even though all of his works are burned, he himself is saved. The only thing he suffers is loss of reward. Reward depends upon work, but salvation depends upon grace alone. What is spoken here takes place as an event at the judgment seat of Christ, not at the death of the individual.

But not only is the doctrine of purgatory not taught in the Scripture, it is diametrically opposed to teaching of Scripture. The only purgatory in the Bible is the cross where Jesus died for the sins of the world. Hebrews 1:3 states that Jesus, "when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." And as the same writer points out in 10:10-14, He sat down because He had perfectly finished the work of sin-bearing: "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God."

Paul makes it plain in his epistles that salvation is in no degree by works. Such passages as [Romans 3:24; 4:1-8; 5:1, 19; 8:1, 33, 34; 11:6; 1 Corinthians 5:8;](#)

[Galatians 3:21](#); [Ephesians 2:8, 9](#), and a host of others cannot co-exist with the doctrine of purgatory.

In conclusion, we believe that the Scripture plainly teaches that all of the dead are in a conscious but disembodied state between death and resurrection. The unsaved of all dispensations are in hades and will remain there until the final resurrection after the Millennial reign of Christ. The righteous dead are at home with the Lord awaiting their resurrection in due order as will be pointed out in coming chapters.

81 CHRIST'S COMING FOR THE CHURCH

We believe that one of the distinctive dispensational truths revealed to and through the Apostle Paul as part of the revelation of the Mystery is the fact that Christ will come in the air to rapture the Church out of this world before He comes back to earth the second time to establish His Millennial Kingdom. Most dispensationalists recognize this distinction. And most dispensationalists believe that this coming in the air will precede that time of trouble which Christ called *the Great Tribulation*, ([Matthew 24:21](#)). All dispensationalists believe that the second coming of Christ to earth will follow the Great Tribulation and will precede the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom. Hence all dispensationalists are Premillenarians, but not all Premillenarians believe that the rapture of the Church will occur before the Great Tribulation. Some believe that the rapture will occur in the middle of the Tribulation period, while others teach that it will occur at the end of that period. These three views are known as the Pre-, the Mid-, and the Posttribulation Rapture theories. Before discussing the time of the Rapture, however, we must first establish the fact that such a rapture is taught in the Scripture and that it is distinct from the second coming of Christ.

The central passage on Christ's coming in the air to rapture the Church is [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#). This passage reveals the following facts:

1. There will be a coming of the Lord at some future date.
2. The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.
3. The dead in Christ will first be raised and then the living saints will be caught up (raptured) with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And so we shall ever be with the Lord.
4. This truth is introduced as a special revelation, for Paul states: "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord."

5. There follows after this in the next chapter the truth concerning the second coming of Christ back to earth which will bring sudden destruction to the ungodly. Thus, in the context the apostle seems to make a distinction between Christ's coming in the air, which is represented as affecting only those that are in Christ, and His coming back to earth in judgment which affects mainly those which are out of Christ.

Our plan will be first to establish the distinctiveness of Christ's coming in the air, then to show the purpose of that coming, then to discuss the manner of that coming, and finally to ask concerning the imminency of that coming.

THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF HIS COMING IN THE AIR

The second coming of Christ is always represented as a coming all of the way to the earth. The prophet Zechariah predicted the exact place to which He would come: "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east," (14:4). When Christ ascended from the mount of Olives, the angelic messengers declared: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven," (Acts 1:11). But when Christ comes for the Church which is His Body He comes only in the air (Greek *aer* or atmosphere), and not to the earth.

At His coming in the air the resurrected saints along with the living ones will be caught up from the earth to meet the Lord in the air, whereas at the second coming there will be no rapture, but instead the saints will remain on the earth in their natural bodies to be incorporated into the Millennial Kingdom, ([Acts 15:16](#); [Revelation 5:10](#) cf. [Matthew 6:10](#)).

His coming in the air will be for members of the Body of Christ where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, whereas His second coming to earth will be primarily for fulfilling His covenants with the nation of Israel, ([Romans 11:26, 27](#)).

There is nothing but comfort and hope expressed concerning His coming in the air, whereas His second coming to earth is surrounded with fearful and terrible portents and judgments, ([Matthew 24:27-31](#); [Luke 21:20-28](#)). He will come in flaming fire to take vengeance upon them that know not God, ([2 Thessalonians 1:7-10](#); [2:8-12](#); [Matthew 24:39](#); [25:31-46](#)).

The truth concerning His coming in the air is the subject of a special revelation, as mentioned earlier. Paul calls it a mystery, a previously unrevealed truth, in [1 Corinthians 15:51](#), whereas the truth concerning His second coming to earth occupies the central place in all of Old Testament prophecy. There must be a difference between that which was not before revealed and that which was so abundantly made known in all of the prophets.

At His coming in the air the bodies of the living saints will be changed into glorified, immortal bodies without going through the process of death, whereas at His coming back to earth the people will be left in their natural bodies to live upon the earth. However, the curse will be lifted from nature and mankind will again enjoy great length of life and freedom from disease and trouble, ([Isaiah 65:19-21](#); [Ezekiel 36:22-38](#). The prophets are full of such predictions).

The second coming of Christ to earth will be preceded by spectacular signs in the heavens and on earth, ([Matthew 24:29-31](#); [Luke 21:25-28](#); [Acts 2:19-21](#); [Revelation 6-19](#)). There are no signs to herald Christ's coming for His Church. The impression is given that this event will happen in a split second of time, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, so that the ungodly will not even recognize what has happened. But not so with the second coming: "every eye shall see Him" at that event ([Revelation 1:7](#)).

THE PURPOSE OF HIS COMING IN THE AIR

The Body of Christ is not as yet complete. It is in a state of growth. New members are being added to it as sinners are being saved through belief of the gospel. The time will come when the full complement of members will have been added. The Body of Christ has its citizenship in heaven, not upon the earth as the Millennial saints will have. Therefore when the Body has been completed Christ will come to gather together in one all of the members, the living and those that have died, and to transport them to the place of their inheritance in the heavens. This is the purpose of His coming in the air.

This is in sharp contrast to His purpose in coming back to earth. That purpose is at least two-fold: to execute judgment upon the ungodly and to fulfill His covenant promises to His chosen nation of Israel. There is nothing in this purpose which primarily concerns the Body of Christ. Of course, the members of the Body will reign with Christ and will be manifested with Christ in His glory when He takes His rightful place as King of kings and Lord of lords. As joint-heirs with Christ the members of the Body will share all things with Christ, and in this sense will have a relationship with Christ in His second coming, but the purpose of that coming concerns Israel and not the Body of Christ.

In our study of the Heavenly Sanctuary we saw how there was a heavenly counterpart of principalities and powers to the earthly kings and princes. Satan and his hosts at the present time occupy this heavenly sphere and it is there that believers have their warfare, ([Ephesians 6:12](#)). After the Body of Christ is raptured to heaven war breaks out in heaven and Satan and his angels are cast out, ([Revelation 12:7-12](#)). Although it is not specifically stated it would appear that the Body of Christ will be given that position once held by angels of ruling with Christ in the heavenly sphere. Paul states that we are to judge angels, (1 Corinthians 6:3), and that we will reign with Christ, (2 Timothy 2:12).

THE MANNER OF HIS COMING IN THE AIR

It has already been hinted that one of the differences between the coming of Christ in the air and His coming to earth is that the former will be a rather secret event experienced only by the members of the Body, whereas His second coming to earth will be a public event witnessed by every eye. There is difference of opinion on this point, depending upon the time at which the Rapture is thought to take place. Those who place the Rapture before the Tribulation usually consider it to take place rather secretly and unobserved by the world. Some writers refer to it as the Secret Rapture. The view that it is secret is based upon Paul's words relating to it: Behold, I show you a mystery or secret. The truth of the rapture is a secret; there are no signs accompanying it; it concerns only the members of the Body; it takes place in the twinkling of an eye; the saints are removed from earth to heaven so that there will be no trace of them left on earth to behold. All of this logically adds up to the view that the Rapture will be secret as to manner.

On the other hand, those who are post-tribulationists and thus believe that there is only one future coming of Christ and that the Rapture is simply the first phase of the second coming, must believe that the Rapture will be a public display viewed by the entire world, for if anything is taught in the Scripture it is that Christ's coming back to earth will be open and apparent to all. Posttribulationists believe that as Christ descends from heaven to earth He will snatch the Church up from the earth while He pours out His wrath on the ungodly and that He will continue on His way bringing the Church back to earth. In pages to follow we will show why such a position is dispensationally untenable and how it confuses the Body of Christ with the nation of Israel.

The Scripture does not state that the Rapture will be secret in the sense of not being observed by the world at large, neither does it state that it will be public. If we believe in a pretribulation rapture there are good reasons to believe it will be secret in manner. If we believe in a posttribulation rapture we are almost forced to believe it will be very public.

THE IMMINENCY OF HIS COMING IN THE AIR

By imminency we mean that it is an event which could take place at any moment without the fulfilling of prior prophecies. We have stated that the purpose of the Rapture is the corporate gathering of the Body of Christ at its completion. This, as far as revelation is concerned, is the only thing that must be fulfilled before the Rapture can occur. From God's foreknowledge this might happen before these words get into print or it may be a hundred or more years hence. But from man's point of view he may expect this event at any moment, since there are no signs or events which are scheduled to occur first.

The second coming of Christ back to earth is not imminent in this sense. It is evident from our Lord's teaching in Matthew 24 and from the entire book of Revelation that a future period of seven years must first run its course with the fulfillment of dozens of prophecies before Jesus Christ can return. It will only be after the appearance of certain signs at the close of that period of tribulation that Christ's coming to earth can be said to be imminent. In other words, since the Tribulation has not yet commenced, we can dogmatically state that Christ's coming to earth cannot occur for at least seven years. But no such assertion can be made concerning the rapture of the Church.

Some dispensationalists who have taught the imminency of Christ's coming for the Church have been inconsistent in their use of Scriptures and have therefore left themselves wide open to their critics. Thiessen, for example, states:

How can we watch and look for His return, if there is even a single event that is predicted to precede Christ's return?⁵⁰³

And what Scriptures does he quote to prove his point? [Matthew 24:42, 43; 25:13; Mark 13:35](#), along with some from Paul. But if one reads the context of these passages in the Gospels he is struck by the fact that they are filled with signs and prophecies which must be fulfilled before Christ can return. In Matthew 24 Christ is answering the question of the disciples: "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?" And before Christ says anything about His coming He asserts that Daniel's prophecy concerning the abomination of desolation must first be fulfilled and the great tribulation must run its course, and then He says, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days... shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven... and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," (vs. 29, 30). Surely Thiessen could not have chosen a passage which was more detrimental to his argument than this one for a pretribulational coming of Christ. He chose to quote only a verse out of the whole chapter that said to watch, with the argument that one couldn't watch if there was anything predicted to precede Christ's return. The solution to this problem is that the Lord told them that after certain events were fulfilled, then they were to watch. In Luke 21:28 Christ said: "And when these things begin to come to pass, THEN look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

Dwight Pentecost is somewhat more consistent in his statements on imminency. He states:

Many signs were given to the nation Israel, which would precede the second advent, so that the nation might be living in expectancy when the time of His coming should draw nigh. Although Israel could not know the day nor the hour when the Lord will come, yet they can know that their redemption draweth nigh through the fulfillment of these signs. To the

⁵⁰³ Thiessen, *op. cit.*, p. 484.

church no such signs were ever given. The church was told to live in the light of the imminent coming of the Lord to translate them in His presence.⁵⁰⁴

Pentecost quotes Thiessen and a few passages of Scripture which we do not feel refer to Christ's coming for the Body, which somewhat weakens his argument. If we recognize the distinctiveness of the revelation given to Paul concerning the Body of Christ and the rapture of that Body as being a mystery never before revealed, and do not confuse this truth with that of the Kingdom and the coming of Christ to earth, we can maintain the imminency of His coming for us.

82 THE TIME OF HIS COMING FOR THE CHURCH

The subject of this chapter does not concern the date of Christ's coming for the Church, for no one but God knows that. Rather, the subject concerns when Christ will come in relation to the period of the Tribulation. Three views have been espoused: Pretribulation, Midtribulation, and Posttribulation. Besides these three views is another, known as the Partial Rapture theory, which holds that only the more spiritual believers will be raptured before the tribulation and that the carnal believers will be left on earth in a sort of purgatory to be purified by the tribulation fires. It will be well to discuss this latter view first, and then proceed with the Pre-, Mid-, and Post-views.

THE PARTIAL RAPTURE THEORY

This theory is basically a Pretribulation view of the rapture, but it concerns more the subjects of the rapture than it does the time. Pentecost states that this view has been held by such men as R. Govett, G. H. Lang, D. M. Panton, G. H. Pember, J. A. Seiss, and Austin Sparks.⁵⁰⁵ It is also a popular view among holiness people who teach eradication of the old nature and sinless perfection as prerequisites for participation in the rapture.

A partial rapture based upon a defective understanding of the doctrine of sanctification is sufficiently answered by our comments on sanctification and eternal security. The view in question is supported, however, by certain proof texts which are misapplied dispensationally or which confuse salvation and rewards and the standing and state of the believer.

Appeal is made primarily to passages which contain admonitions to watch or look for the coming of Christ. Note the following:

⁵⁰⁴ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Dunham Publishing Co., 1966), pp. 202,203.

⁵⁰⁵ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Dunham Publishing Co., 1966), p. 158.

Matthew 24:41-42. "Two women shall be grinding at the mill: the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." There is no idea of a rapture in this passage. The rapture is a part of the mystery truth concerning the Body of Christ which as yet had not been revealed. Verse 39 shows that the one who was taken away was not raptured but was taken away in judgment, even as the unbelievers were taken away in the flood. This will take place at the end of the tribulation at the coming of the Son of man to earth.

Matthew 25:1-13. The parable of the wise and foolish virgins, which ends: "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Again, this is the coming of the Son of man in relation to Israel at the end of the tribulation and therefore could have nothing to do with a rapture before tribulation. It is certain that our Lord will never say to part of the Body of Christ what He said to the foolish virgins: "Verily I say unto you, I know you not." The partial theory is supposed to teach that the ones left behind to go through the tribulation will be purified, but this passage would have them among the unsaved.

Luke 21:36. "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." This warning comes at the conclusion of the Olivet discourse which plainly teaches that the tribulation will take place before this coming of the Son of man back to the earth. The escape, therefore, could not be from the tribulation, but from the "snare" which shall come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. This Scripture is cast in the same setting as the two previous ones.

Hebrew 9:28. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." There is no contrast in this passage between those who are looking and those who are not looking. Believers are the ones who are looking for Christ, as Paul states in [Philippians 3:20](#) and [Titus 2:13](#). The Hebrews writer states that Christ is now appearing in the presence of God *for us*, and it is the same ones in verse 28 to whom He will appear the second time. All who have availed themselves of the work of Christ are the ones who are looking for Him. The picture here is that of the High-priest coming out of the sanctuary on the day of Atonement, (Leviticus 16), having accomplished the work of making atonement for the sins of the people.

2 Timothy 4:8. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." There is nothing here to suggest a partial rapture. Instead, Paul is saying that the Lord has a reward, a crown of righteousness, for those who love His appearing. It is even doubtful whether Paul is contrasting believers who love and who don't love His appearing. It would appear that all believers are those who love His appearing.

In conclusion it may be well to consider a few of the logical consequences of this teaching of a partial rapture.

It absents part of the Body of Christ from the judgment seat of Christ which occurs between the rapture and the second coming to earth. But Paul makes it plain that there will be those at the judgment seat whose works will all be burned and who will be saved, yet so as by fire, ([1 Corinthians 3:12-15](#)).

It involves the Roman Catholic idea of purgatory, where the believer has to suffer for his sins before he is fit for heaven, and to that extent it denies the finished work of Christ in behalf of every believer.

It fails completely to recognize dispensational distinctions between Israel and the Body of Christ, thereby confusing the rapture of the Church with the second coming of Christ to earth. It also necessitates the mixing of the part of the Body which is left behind with the saved company of Israelites during the tribulation period.

It can find no means of getting this "left behind" part of the Body of Christ to heaven to join the other members of the Body after the tribulation. There is no Scripture that speaks of any such event.

PRE-TRIBULATIONAL RAPTURE

At the outset of our discussion of this subject of the time of the Rapture, it should be understood that there is no positive statement that the rapture will occur before, in the midst of, or at the end of the tribulation. Such a statement from Scripture would settle the question once and for all. We must rely, therefore, on the accumulative evidence of numerous arguments, none of which by themselves is conclusive. If it be argued that the Scripture does not say the Church will be raptured before the tribulation, it may be answered: neither does it say that the Church will be raptured in the midst or after the tribulation. Since this theology is based upon belief in a Pretribulation rapture, we will present what we believe to be Scriptural arguments in favor of this view, and then later show why we believe the conclusions of the Mid- and Post-tribulation views are in conflict with Scripture.

The dispensational thesis upon which this theology is based, that of the distinction between Israel and the Body of Christ, between the prophesied Kingdom purpose of God and the unprophesied mystery purpose, demands a pretribulation rapture. The Body of Christ is not a subject of Old Testament prophecy, but the Tribulation is one of the major themes of prophecy. Since the people and the events of the Tribulation are clearly predicted and not one word is included about the Body of Christ, it would be only logical to conclude that the Body has no place in the Tribulation, especially in view of the fact that there is no

statement to the contrary in Scripture. If the Church is to be the main participant in the Tribulation it is more than passingly strange that in the pre-written history of that period much is said of Israel but not a word is mentioned about the Body of Christ.

Those who would place the Church in the Tribulation must either deny the basic dispensational distinctions between Israel and the Body or teach that God carries on two separate and distinct dispensational purposes concurrently. If God is not carrying on two dispensations at one and the same time, and the Church is God's evangelizing agency during the Tribulation, then all who are saved during that period become members of the Body of Christ. That means that the 144,000 of the Twelve Tribes of Israel and all of the saved out of the tribulation ([Revelation 7:14](#)) are Body members who will be raptured at the end of the Tribulation. This would leave only the unsaved upon the earth, who are all to be destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming. Thus there would be none left upon the earth in their natural bodies. Those returning with Christ would all be in resurrection bodies and the Millennial Kingdom would be identical with the Body of Christ. This practically denies the whole idea of a Millennial Kingdom, which is basically the view that God will finally establish a kingdom on this earth over the nations of the human race in their natural bodies. This idea that the Millennial Kingdom would consist entirely of saints in their resurrection bodies is unthinkable in view of the fact that at the end of the thousand years there is to be a great rebellion against Christ led by Satan, ([Revelation 20:7-9](#)).

It would seem that the only escape from the above conclusion would be to hold that God will do that which He has never done and concerning which there is no revelation that He will ever do, and that is, to carry on two distinct dispensations at the same time. This would mean that members of the Body of Christ would change their message to the gospel of the Kingdom, ([Matthew 24:14](#)), and that from the beginning of the Tribulation all who are saved by the preaching of the Church no longer become members of the Church, but become subjects of the Millennial Kingdom. And to escape the predicament stated above of having the earth completely depopulated at the rapture, it would have to be concluded that the rapture would include only members of the Body, and that all who had been saved by the preaching of the Body members during that time would be left on earth after the Rapture.

If it be argued that God was carrying on two dispensations concurrently during the Transition period of the latter half of the Acts, it should be noted that at whatever time God began forming the Body of Christ, every one who was saved after that time became members of the Body. The transition involved only the outward religious program from the law, the temple, the ordinances, the sign gifts to the permanent program for the Body of Christ. God was not carrying on the distinct Kingdom dispensation and a Body dispensation at the same time.

There is nothing in the divine purpose of the Tribulation which concerns the Body of Christ. God's purpose in the Tribulation is two-fold. First, it is a time of chastening for the nation of Israel to bring that people to repentance and to prepare them for receiving their promised Messiah. It is distinctly called "the time of Jacob's trouble," (Jeremiah 30:7). See also [Deuteronomy 30:1-3](#); [Isaiah 61:2, 3](#); [Zechariah 12:10](#); [Isaiah 54:7-17](#); [Jeremiah 30:11](#). Second, God's purpose is to punish the nations, not only for their sins, but for their treatment of His chosen people, ([Isaiah 63:1-6](#); [Ezekiel 38:14-23](#)). The Old Testament prophets are full of these two themes concerning the Tribulation but they are completely silent concerning any purpose of God with the Body of Christ.

The Tribulation is a time when God's wrath will be poured out and Paul makes it clear that we of this dispensation have been delivered from the wrath to come, (1Thessalonians 1:10). Both the Mid- and the Posttribulationists recognize the fact that the Church will not endure the wrath of God, but the former argues that there will be no manifestation of the wrath of God until the second half of the seven year period, generally called *the* Tribulation. The latter group argue that the wrath all during the seven years is the wrath of Satan, and that the wrath of God is not poured out until the very end of the seven year period, at which time the saints will be raptured to escape the wrath and to meet the Lord in the air as He descends to earth. If it can be proved that the wrath of God is manifested all during the seven year period, it will, from this point of view, prove that the Church must be raptured before the wrath begins, that is, before the tribulation period begins.

It is a truth generally accepted by all Premillenarians that the seven year period, the last week of Daniel's seventy week prophecy, begins in Revelation 6, where we are introduced to the four horsemen of the Apocalypse in the opening of the seven-sealed book. When the sixth seal is opened there are terrible signs in the heavens and men of all classes try to hide themselves in the caves and dens of the earth, crying out to the mountains and rocks: "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" The expression, "is come," is in the aorist tense. It does not mean that it is near or about to come, but that it has already come and is now present. This is surely long before the end of the seven year period. In fact, a seventh seal has to be opened, which introduces another series of seven great judgments of God under the form of the sounding of trumpets. In considering all that will happen under the seven seals and the seven trumpets it is extremely difficult to imagine that all of these visitations upon mankind are simply the wrath of the Devil, and that God has not brought any of these judgments to pass.

The sounding of the seventh trumpet signals the second coming of Christ. What follows in chapters 12 to 19 of Revelation is a reenactment from a different point of view of what has taken place in chapters 6 to 11. This is evident from 11:15: "The kingdoms of this world are become (have become) the kingdoms of

our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." In the second half of the book we read about the seven vials of the wrath of God ([15:1-16:21](#)). It would appear that these seven vial judgments must cover a considerable period of time and cannot be limited to one day at the very end of the seventieth week. Surely the evidence is very strong from Revelation that both the wrath of Satan and the wrath of God are in evidence all during the entire seven years, and if the Church cannot be on earth in the midst of God's wrath, then it cannot be on earth during that whole seven year period.

We have previously pointed out the distinctions between the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of the Grace of God. The Gospel of the Kingdom is based upon God's covenant with David to establish David's throne and kingdom here on earth under the rulership of the Messiah. This is not God's message for this dispensation. However, if the Church is to be on earth during the Tribulation, we must ask: What gospel will the Church be preaching? Christ made it clear that the Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world at the end of the age, that is, during the Tribulation. Since there is no instruction in the revelation for the Church that it is to change its message to that of the Kingdom at some time in the future, we must conclude either that the Church will not be in the Tribulation, or if it is, that a new revelation must be given and a new and different commission be given to the Church.

Christ gave His disciples a great deal of instruction concerning the persecutions they could expect during the Tribulation and what they should do when they saw the Abomination of desolation set himself up in the holy place. In this whole context, such as in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, Christ says nothing about a rapture of the disciples. Posttribulationists have tried to read a rapture into Matthew 24:31: "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." But this gathering of the elect of Israel is not a rapture to heaven. It is a regathering of the dispersed of Israel back to their own land of Palestine as predicted by the prophets, (cf. [Jeremiah 29:14](#)).

If Paul knew that his converts were to go through the Tribulation, we would surely expect that he too would have told them how to cope with the awful problems which would confront them in that time of trouble. It is true that Paul does tell his converts that they shall suffer persecution and tribulations in this world, ([1 Thessalonians 3:4](#)), but he never states that they shall go through the Great Tribulation.

There are certain events which apparently transpire between the Rapture and the Second Coming which necessitate a time interval between these two events. The principal event which concerns the Body of Christ is the judgment seat of Christ where all of the members of the Body will have their works tested and where each one will receive his rewards. This judging and rewarding must take place before the saints can reign with Christ. The Post-tribulation view makes the

Rapture and the Second Coming one event and thus leaves no place for the judgment seat of Christ. The Pre-tribulation view leaves at least seven years for this judgment and other events to transpire.

Paul states that before the man of sin can be revealed there must first come a departure. (Some think that this is a departure from the faith; others that it is the departure of the Body of Christ.) He then proceeds to state that the revelation of this man of sin is at present being held back by some restraining power, ([2 Thessalonians 2:3-12](#)). There are those who believe that this restraining power is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church, and the removal of this Restrainer, which is necessary before the Anti-christ can be manifested, occurs at the time of the Rapture. If this exegesis is correct, the Rapture must occur before the beginning of the Tribulation.

Numerous other arguments have been advanced for a Pre-tribulation rapture which do not bear as much weight as the ones given above. In fact, Pentecost lists some twenty-eight reasons for Christ to come before the Tribulation.⁵⁰⁶ The reasons which have been given, if considered together, constitute a very strong presumptive evidence for a Pretribulation rapture of the Church.

THE MID-TRIBULATION RAPTURE VIEW

The belief that the Church will be raptured after enduring the first half of Daniel's seventieth week is based upon the postulate that none of the events of the first three and one-half years of that period is an act of God's wrath. The wrath comes only in the latter three and one-half years. Therefore there is nothing to hinder the Church from partaking of the first half of the week. Some advocates of this view claim that only the second half of the week should be designated as the Tribulation. Others call the first half the Tribulation and the second half the Great Tribulation. All Midtribulationists agree that the first half contains only the wrath of man and the wrath of Satan.

A number of Scriptural arguments are given to support this view.

It is argued that Peter could not have believed in an "any-moment" or imminent coming of Christ, or even that Christ could have come in his lifetime, since Christ told him he would live to old age and die a martyr's death, ([John 21:18, 19](#)). This argument is based on the supposition that Christ began the Church with Peter at Pentecost, but as we have already shown, when Christ spoke these words He was presenting the program for the earthly kingdom. In that program there was the possibility that these disciples would go through the Tribulation and be alive when the Lord returned to earth to establish His kingdom. That whole program was suspended with Israel's rejection of the offered Kingdom in the early chapters of Acts, and a new dispensation and program was instituted under the administration of the apostle Paul. The Rapture was not even a part of the

⁵⁰⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 193-218.

Kingdom program, and therefore this argument about Peter's age and death can have no bearing upon the Rapture question.

It is argued that the "last trump" of I Corinthians 15:52 is the same as the sounding of the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:15. An integral part of this argument is that this seventh trumpet closes the first three and one-half years of the tribulation period. In the first place, there is no intimation in Paul's statement of a series of trumpets. *Last* can mean last in point of time as well as last in sequence. There is a trumpet connected with the consummation of the Body program on earth, and there is a series of trumpets connected with Israel's Kingdom program. It is only through a non-dispensational confusing of the Body and Israel that these two trumpets can be made synonymous. But aside from this, there is no reference to a rapture at the sounding of the seventh trumpet. And from the context it is evident that the seventh trumpet sounds, not in the middle of the seven year period, but at the end, for it is plainly announced that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and that the resurrection of the Old Testament saints has come, which is to occur at the end of the Tribulation, ([Daniel 12:1, 2](#) cf. [Revelation 20:4, 5](#)).

A necessary part of the argument for a midtribulation rapture is that between Revelation 6 and 12 there is not one visitation of the wrath of God. Harrison, for example, denies that there is any element of God's judgment in the seven *Seals* and the seven *Trumpets*. The Seals, he says, are simply the reaping of what man has sown, and the Trumpets are the product of Satan's activity, which God permits, much as He permitted Satan to afflict Job.⁵⁰⁷ This view is completely untenable in the light of the positive statements that the day of God's wrath had already come even before the sounding of the first trumpet. Also, the angels who sound the trumpets are not Satan's angels. These angels "stood before God," and God gave them the trumpets, and everything that happened when those trumpets sounded was the activity of God. These trumpets do not represent Satan persecuting God's people, as in the case of Job, but God punishing the ungodly, partly by miraculous cosmic acts and partly through Satan's wrath.

Mid-tribulationists argue that the Rapture is represented by the ascension of the two witnesses in Revelation 11:12. This view is untenable for several reasons. First, this occurs before the sounding of the seventh trumpet, which is supposed to mark the point of the rapture. Next, these two witnesses are two individual men. They could not represent the whole body of Christ. Further, these two witness for three and one-half years in the city of Jerusalem and have power to kill their enemies, to shut heaven, to turn water into blood and to smite the earth with plagues. Will any mid-tribulationist admit that this is to be the role of the Church? Finally, there is no rapture of living saints in this context. Rather, these two witnesses are killed and their dead bodies lie for three and one-half days in the streets of Jerusalem, after which they are raised from the dead and

⁵⁰⁷ Norman B. Harrison, *The End* (Minneapolis: Harrison Service, 1941), pp. 87, 88; 104, 105.

taken up to heaven. There is not the slightest resemblance here to the Rapture of which Paul speaks.

In conclusion it should be observed that the Mid-tribulation view is a compromise between the Pre- and the Post-tribulation views, and to that extent it denies dispensational principles; it overlooks the fact that the Church of this dispensation is a mystery; and it confuses Israel and the Body of Christ. As noted earlier, any view which puts the Church in the Tribulation must either blend Israel and the Church into one and the same group, or it must hold that God is carrying on two separate and distinct dispensations at the same time. Harrison appears to hold the latter view, for he states:

To think of the Ages as abruptly abutting each other is fatal. To carry that conception over into the series that make up the endtime is equally fatal. In actuality they overlap, which may lead to an ultimate blending.

Speaking of the two ages, Church and Jewish: at its inception, 30 A.D., the Church paralleled for 40 years the Jewish age, till the later closed with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. This argues for a similar overlapping at the close of the Church Age. If, for the moment, we think of the Church continuing up to the Tribulation, the time from which our Lord has promised to keep her, realizing that Israel will have been restored as a nation for three and one-half years prior to the Tribulation setting in. . we again have the same overlapping.⁵⁰⁸

While we recognize a transition from Israel's outward kingdom program to that of the Body of Christ during the latter half of the Acts, we do not believe that God's redemptive program was being carried on with these two distinct groups or churches at one and the same time. Such a program would mean that some who believe during the prophesied Tribulation period would become members of the Body to be raptured at the end of the first three and one-half years, and that others would become identified with Israel and would be left on earth to go through the remainder of Daniel's seventieth week.

THE POST-TRIBULATION RAPTURE VIEW

Of necessity much has already been said to refute the Posttribulation position. Most of the arguments in favor of a Pretribulation rapture are also arguments against a Posttribulation one, and a number of the arguments against a Midtribulation view are also arguments against the Posttribulation position. In general those who believe that the Church will go through the entire Tribulation period are anti-dispensational in their approach. There are some dispensationalists, however, who do hold to this position, and it is important to understand the basis of their interpretation.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 50, 87, 88, 104, 105.

First, there are those who hold the extreme view that the Body of Christ did not have its beginning until after Acts 28, which view necessarily relegates the early epistles of Paul to a former dispensation. And since the Rapture is taught in one of those early epistles (1 Thessalonians), it follows that the Rapture is not for the Body of Christ. This group would therefore associate the Rapture with the Kingdom ministry and place it at the end of the Tribulation. Some who hold this view speculate that the Body members will be raptured before the Tribulation, basing this idea upon Philipplans 3:14 (the high calling, which they translate, "the upward calling"), while others teach that the members of the Body will all die and then experience a special resurrection, based upon Philipplans 3:11 (the *exanastasin ten ek nekron*, "the out-resurrection out from among the dead").

There are a few dispensationalists who insist that there has been but one Church throughout the ages, which has existed under several different administrations or dispensations. They hold that the *mystery* of Paul's epistles is simply the fact that at this time God is doing something He never did before, making Jews and Gentiles equal members of the Church. The Church will apparently undergo another change of dispensation in the Tribulation and will become the millennial kingdom or church of which the Old Testament prophets spoke. This view is almost identical with that of Covenant theology. The only difference is that these advocates of this view call themselves dispensationalists, whereas Covenant theologians do not. One distinction upon which almost all dispensationalists would agree is that Israel and the Body of Christ are two separate and distinct entities. The view under consideration practically denies this distinction.

By far the majority of Posttribulationists base their arguments upon a denial of the dispensational principle of interpretation. For them the Church is spiritual Israel. There is no distinction to be made, and therefore the people of God who are depicted in Scripture as being in the Tribulation must be the Church. They claim that the Pre-tribulation view could not be correct since it is not the historic view which has been held by the church in all ages. They seem to forget that a number of cardinal Scriptural truths fell into discard for centuries, only to be brought back to light by the Reformation. The question is not, What saith Church History? but, What saith the Scripture? Some of them claim that the whole of the seventy-week prophecy of [Daniel 9:24-27](#) has been completely fulfilled, so that there is no future seventieth week yet in store. This they do by what is called spiritualizing the Scripture. But perhaps their strongest argument concerns the time of the resurrection.

Loraine Boettner, a militant Postmillennialist, states:

It should be said further in regard to Dispensationalism that while historic Premillennialism has held that the Church will go through the Tribulation,

Dispensationalism holds that the Church will be raptured and so taken out of the world before that event⁵⁰⁹

Boettner refers to Alexander Reese's book, *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, and says:

Reese insists that the Dispensationalists wreck their system by placing the resurrection of the Old Testament saints at the time of the rapture. According to Dispensationalists the Church did not even exist during Old Testament times. The question arises, therefore, How can those Jews, long after their death, be incorporated into the Church to which they never belonged?⁵¹⁰

It is to be freely admitted that there have been inconsistencies in some dispensational interpretations. Unless God had fully inspired men to bring back this truth after centuries of being neglected, it is inconceivable that the doctrine could have been restored perfectly and completely by one man or in an instant of time. Surely the Reformers did not work out to every one's satisfaction every detail of the doctrine of justification. It is true that many dispensationalists have been inconsistent in placing the resurrection of Old Testament saints at the same time as the 'Rapture before the Tribulation. Reese seems to think that he has demolished the whole system of dispensationalism and the Pre-tribulation Rapture, when all he has done is to prove one point of inconsistency, and in so doing, he has done a service to dispensationalists. But many dispensationalists saw this inconsistency before Reese pointed it out, and placed the resurrection of the Old Testament saints where it belongs, at the end of the Tribulation. Pentecost, for example, states:

In reply to the conclusion of Reese it need only be pointed out that many present day pretribulation rapturists do not agree with the position of Darby that the resurrection at the time of the rapture includes the Old Testament saints. It seems better to place the resurrection of these Old Testament saints at the time of the second advent But, if one separates the resurrection of the church from the resurrection of Israel, there is no strength left in Reese's argument It does seem strange that Reese, who argues that Darby is wrong so frequently, insists that he is infallible on this point as to the relation of Israel's resurrection to that of the church.⁵¹¹

The early dispensationalists fell into numerous inconsistencies, chiefly because they read the Body of Christ or the Rapture back into many of the parables of Christ. If the Body of Christ and the truth of this present dispensation were secrets first made known to Paul; if Scofield's dictum is true that "In his

⁵⁰⁹ Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), pp. 5, 6.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁵¹¹ Pentecost, *op. cit.*, pp. 173, 174.

(Paul's) writings alone we find the doctrine, position, walk and destiny of the church," then to read these truths back into former Scriptures can result only in inconsistency. Scofield himself reads the true Church, the one body, back into the parable of the pearl of great price ([Matthew 13:45, 46](#)).⁵¹² Reese quotes William Kelly to the effect that the Rapture of the true Church is to be found in the parable of the wheat and the tares.⁵¹³ If this is the Rapture Reese has a clear proof that it will be posttribulation, for the Lord said, "Let both (the wheat and the tares) grow together until the harvest," and the harvest is without doubt at the end of the Tribulation. As pointed out previously, some dispensationalists have read the rapture into the "one taken and the other left" of Matthew 24:40, 41. None of these inconsistencies of individual dispensationalists, however, disproves the basic tenets of dispensationalism, and neither does any such inconsistency overthrow the doctrine of the Pretribulation Rapture of the Body of Christ.

"ANY MOMENT RAPTURE THEORY"

Some Pretribulationists have labelled their view as "the any moment rapture," stating that the rapture could occur at any moment. To say that the rapture could have happened or could happen at any moment is to say that it could have happened in Adam's day, or during the lifetime of the patriarchs, or during the earthly ministry of Christ, or at any time during the past nineteen hundred years. Such a statement practically denies the fact that God has a plan and a purpose which He is carrying out in time. Of course, Pretribulationists who use this "any moment" expression do not actually deny God's predestination, but they have chosen an expression which can be so interpreted and one which does not express what they are trying to say. What they mean to say is that they do not know when the rapture will occur, but that as far as God has revealed they know of no particular event which must precede the rapture.

One who lives in the vicinity of the San Andreas fault might say that he could expect an earthquake at any moment, but if he knew anything at all about seismology he would know that an earthquake could occur only when certain stresses and pressures reached a critical point. Just so, the rapture cannot occur until every one of God's purposes with the Body of Christ for this present dispensation is completely fulfilled. We know now that the rapture could not have occurred during the past nineteen hundred years from the simple fact that it did not occur. It will occur at exactly the time God has foreordained and no man knows whether that might be tomorrow or a hundred or a thousand years hence. It is not correct to say that the rapture could happen at any moment: it can happen at only one moment which has been predetermined in the plan of God.

⁵¹² *Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 1017.

⁵¹³ Alexander Reese, *The Approaching Advent of Christ* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, N.D.), pp. 96, 97.

It is very easy to prove from Scripture that the rapture could not have happened at any moment, and opponents of the Pretribulation view suppose they have demolished the view by disproving the "any moment" idea. Of necessity the rapture could not have occurred before the Body of Christ began. And if we confine ourselves to the life of Paul there are numerous evidences that it could not have occurred at any moment in Paul's experience. Paul was told at the time of his conversion how many things he must suffer for the sake of Christ and how he would bear witness before kings and the Gentiles. There could have been no rapture until Paul had carried out the commission which was given to him. And when he was arrested and imprisoned in Jerusalem the Lord appeared to him at night and said: "Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." (Acts 23:11) This revelation makes it certain that there was to be no rapture until after Paul had testified at Rome. But in these and other contingencies which we may find in Scripture there is not an iota of evidence to disprove a Pretribulation rapture.

While revelation was still in progress during apostolic times facts were made known from time to time of events which were to transpire in the immediate future. Such revelations necessarily implied that the rapture would not occur until after such events transpired. But revelation has now ceased. God is no longer speaking by direct revelation, but only through His Word. And the Pretribulationist contends that there is nothing revealed in that Word to indicate that the prophecies of the Great Tribulation must first be fulfilled before the rapture can occur. The rapture cannot occur until the last member of the Body of Christ has been added and God's purpose is complete, but it can occur before the Great Tribulation because there is nothing in that period of time which concerns God's purpose with the Body of Christ. If Paul knew that members of the Body were to go through the horrors of Antichrist's reign, if he knew that the Body would someday come into a mixed dispensational program where God was carrying on two diverse programs at once, it is unthinkable that he would not have given some warning and some instruction for the behavior and ministry of that time. The fact that he did not and the fact that there is no statement to the effect that the members of the Body are to undergo the rigors of the Great Tribulation are very strong evidences of a Pretribulation rapture.

83 THE MILLENNIUM

Millennium is the Latin word for one thousand years. The Greek word for one thousand is Chilioi. The teaching that there will be a literal kingdom of one thousand years upon the earth is called Millennialism or Chiliaism. The expression "thousand years" occurs six times in [Revelation 20:1-7](#), as follows:

Satan is bound for a thousand years, (vs. 2).

Satan to deceive the nations no more until the thousand years are fulfilled, (vs. 3).

Martyrs of the Tribulation live and reign with Christ a thousand years, (vs. 4, 6).

Rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years are finished, (vs. 5).

When the thousand years are expired Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, (vs. 7).

Since this expression of a thousand year reign of Christ is mentioned only in the Book of Revelation which abounds in figures of speech, it has been argued by many commentators that the thousand years must be spiritualized or understood in a figurative sense. These views will be considered in detail in the chapters on Post and Amillennialism. This chapter will be devoted to Scriptural proof that the second coming of Christ will result in the establishment of a literal kingdom upon this earth which will endure for a thousand years.

OLD TESTAMENT EVIDENCES

Almost all commentators will admit that the Old Testament contains promises, which the people of Israel believed would give them a literal kingdom of long endurance upon the earth. Those who oppose millennial truth claim that the Jews were materialistic in their literal interpretation of the Scriptures, and that the course of events in the New Testament proves that the kingdom must be interpreted to be a purely spiritual kingdom which Christ established and of which He is now the King. Let us see how plain and clear the promises are for a literal kingdom.

The Promise of a Land

This promise begins with Abraham, to whom God said: "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (Genesis 15:18). Abraham's seed did literally possess part of this land, but they have never possessed all of it. Their failure was due to disobedience, but God further promised that after He had scattered Israel among all nations for their disobedience, He would again gather them and bring them back into the land that their fathers possessed and multiply them above any thing in the past ([Deuteronomy 30:1-6](#)). Is it possible to interpret these promises as partly literal and partly spiritual? If there is a spiritual interpretation, what does the river of Egypt and the river Euphrates mean in a spiritual sense, and what is the authority for such an interpretation?

When God promised to make a new covenant with Israel and Judah in Jeremiah 31:31-34, He stated:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the city shall be built to the Lord from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner. And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath. And the whole valley of dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate toward the east, shall be holy unto the Lord; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever (vs. 38-40).

If these words must be spiritualized to refer to something in heaven, who is to tell us where the valley of dead bodies and of ashes is in heaven, or just what is represented by the tower of Hananneel or the hill Gareb, or the horse gate, or the brook Kidron? We could understand if men declared that they did not believe what the prophet wrote, but it is beyond comprehension how one can declare in one and the same breath that this is the inspired and infallible word of God, but that it doesn't mean what it says. Amillennialists speak of the natural world as though it is something evil in itself or it is something in which God has no interest. God is the Creator and Sustainer of the natural world, and while it has fallen under the curse at present it is His will to bring it into subjection to Himself, (Psalm 8:3-6). The Psalmist declared: "Thou hast put all things under his (man's) feet," but the writer of Hebrews declares: "But now we see not yet all things put under him" (Hebrews 2:8). The "not yet" of this verse says two things: the putting of all things under Jesus Christ has not yet taken place, and all things will yet be put under Him. The Millennium is the only time in prophecy when this Scripture could be fulfilled.

The Promise of a King and a Kingdom

The Davidic Covenant, recorded in II Samuel 7, contains the following statements: "I will set up thy seed after thee I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.. . thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more." The Amillennialist must say that the throne of David is the throne of God, for he is forced to teach that Christ being now seated on the right hand of the throne of God is seated on David's throne. But if the throne of God is the throne of David now, it must have been the same in Old Testament times. Hence another question intrudes itself: was King David sitting upon the throne of God where Christ is now sitting?

It is necessary to turn to the New Testament to clinch this argument. Surely if the Old Testament must be spiritualized, the New Testament can be trusted to state the facts as they really are. The angel Gabriel told Mary concerning her Son: "He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever" (Luke 1:32, 33). The New Testament still insists that Christ is to take the throne of David and reign over the house of Jacob. Even

after the resurrection and the ascension, Peter declares the same truth ([Acts 2:30](#)). Now it is evident that if Christ is sitting upon the throne of David now in heaven, the throne and the kingdom of David must be fully established, as the Amillennialist contends. But what are we to do with the statement in Acts 15:16 that at the present time the tabernacle of David is fallen down, and that Christ will return to build again the ruins thereof and to set it up? If Christ was sitting upon the throne of David in Acts 15, surely James did not know anything about it. And strangely enough, none of the Apostles corrected him.

The Promise of a Nation

God declared through Jeremiah: "If those ordinances (of the sun and moon) depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me forever" (Jeremiah 31:36). Ezekiel contains the promise: "And I will make them (Judah and Israel) one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all. . . and they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt, and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore" (37:22, 25, 28). God has stated these promises concerning the nation of Israel in such clear, detailed, unmistakable language that it would seem that only a deliberate attempt to distort the meaning could succeed in reading any other sense into the passage. How could any further comment or explanation make it any plainer than the way God has stated the facts?

EVIDENCES FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT

Of necessity some references have already been made to the New Testament evidences. But there are others from this portion of the Bible which indicate that the Jews were not mistaken in expecting a literal kingdom on earth in which God would fulfill all of the promises of the Old Testament.

Christ is born to be King of the Jews ([Matt. 2:2](#)). Amillennialists teach that God is through with the Jews and that He has given the promises of the Old Testament to the Church which is spiritual Israel. But here Christ is King, not of Israel, but of the Jews.

Christ taught His disciples to pray: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Therefore, while Christ was on earth the kingdom had not yet come, and the prayer, if answered, would result in God's will being done here in the earth as it is in heaven. It should be evident that at no time in the past has this heavenly condition prevailed upon earth. Did the Lord teach His disciples to pray for something which He knew could never come to

pass? Or was He also a believer in the so-called mistaken Jewish concept of a literal kingdom here on earth?

Christ promised His apostles: "In the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). Whatever the regeneration is, it is that which will come when Christ sits in the throne of His glory. Are we to understand this to refer to His sitting at the right hand of God after His ascension into heaven, as the Amillennialists teach? If so, we must say that at the time Christ sat down in heaven the Twelve were seated upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. The fact is, however, that the Twelve were hiding behind locked doors or sitting in jail cells. Not even the wildest flights of imagination could picture the Twelve as having fulfilled this promise of Christ. If His promise is ever to be fulfilled it must be in the future. There is no place for it in the Amillennial scheme, but there is in the Premillennial one. The regeneration here refers to that time of renewal and restoration predicted by all of the Old Testament prophets, which we call the Messianic or Millennial Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ taught in the parable of [Luke 19:11-27](#) that He was going into a far country, not to establish a kingdom, but to receive the authority for a kingdom, and then to return and establish it. This is exactly what Premillennialism teaches. Both Amillennialism and Postmillennialism teach that Christ's coming will result in the end of human history upon the earth: Christ taught that it would result in the establishment of His kingdom.

In the Olivet discourse Christ stated that Jerusalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles "UNTIL." (Lk. 21:24). Is this Jerusalem on earth or in heaven? If this city is trodden down UNTIL a certain time, there must of necessity come a time following that when the city will not be trodden down. History will witness that there has never been a time since then up to the present when the city has been free from Gentile domination. But Christ taught, just as did the Old Testament prophets, that the times of the Gentiles, that is, the times of Gentile domination of Jerusalem, would not continue for ever but only UNTIL. It would be ridiculous to refer Jerusalem in this context to the heavenly city; therefore, if this Scripture teaches anything, it teaches that the earthly Jerusalem is to be restored.

One of the clearest New Testament evidences for a literal earthly kingdom is found in Peter's sermon in [Acts 3:19-21](#). He tells the men of Israel that if they will repent of their rejection of Jesus Christ God will send Him back, whom the heavens must retain until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. Here the sending back of Christ to this earth is associated with the restoration of all things that the Old Testament prophets predicted. Amillennialism teaches that whatever it was the prophets predicted is being fulfilled now in heaven in a spiritual sense. Premillennialism agrees with Peter's statement.

Paul teaches in Romans 11 that at that time only a remnant of Israel was being saved, so that he could say that Israel as a nation was blinded and fallen and had become enemies of the gospel. Now it would hardly do for the Amillennialist to spiritualize Israel here to mean the saved members of the Body of Christ. All must agree that Paul is talking about actual Israelites in the flesh. But Paul declares that "if the fall of them (natural Israel) be the riches of the world and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?" Paul here speaks of a future fulness of this Israel which is now fallen and diminished. There is no place for this in the Amillennial scheme. Paul continues by stating that he does not want us to be ignorant of this secret and that this blindness of Israel is only partial and temporary, and that when God's present purpose with the Gentiles is fulfilled, all Israel, that is, Israel as a nation, will be saved. This salvation of Israel will take place when the Deliverer comes out of Zion and turns away ungodliness from Jacob. Paul bases this statement upon God's covenant with Israel. Regardless of the interpretations of modern theologians, there can be no doubt but that Paul believed that God would honor the covenants of promise to save Israel and restore to them their kingdom!

Although many other evidences might be given from the New Testament, only one other will be given here. Revelation 5:10 states that the saints are going to reign on the earth. Amillennialism claims that the saints will never reign *on the earth*. Hence to avoid contradiction "on earth" must be spiritualized to mean "in Heaven." But the word "heaven" is also used in the same context. If earth means heaven, what does heaven mean? The so-called spiritualizing interpretation robs Scripture of any positive meaning. If earth means heaven or Israel means the Body of Christ or the throne of David means the throne of God, what does hell mean, or sin, or salvation, or virgin birth or a host of other basic Bible doctrines?

It is true that the thousand-year duration of the kingdom is mentioned only in Revelation, but this does not invalidate the whole Kingdom concept. It is also true that Revelation employs numerous symbols and figures of speech, but these are clearly indicated. For example, John saw seven stars in Christ's right hand and seven golden candlesticks ([Rev. 1:12,16](#)). Are we to take these literally or figuratively? How can we tell? John interprets for us: "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches" (vs. 20). When it comes to stating the duration of the Tribulation this is given in days, and months, and years, and in each case the time agrees with Old Testament predictions. It would appear that if John wanted to make it absolutely clear that he meant three and one-half literal years he could not have chosen a better way than to express it also as 1260 days and 42 months. And if he meant three and one-half literal years in Chapter 11, why did he not mean 1000 literal years in Chapter 20?

84 THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST TO EARTH

No one can successfully deny that the Scripture teaches a future coming of Christ to earth. However, some have denied that this coming of Christ is to be understood as a literal, bodily coming of the same Jesus who once lived upon earth. Numerous unscriptural theories have been advanced. For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses deny that Christ arose bodily from the dead, and therefore they must deny that His future coming will be a visible, bodily appearance. In fact, they teach that the second coming of Christ has already taken place. They claim that John 14:19 teaches an invisible return: "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more." It is true that the world has not seen Him since His death, but this passage does not say that the world will never see Him again. In fact, the Scripture states that every eye shall see Him when He comes again ([Revelation 1:7](#)). We are told that He will come again in like manner as the disciples saw Him go into heaven ([Acts 1:11](#)).

Others have argued that the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost fulfilled the promise of His coming again, but this theory is untenable because many predictions of His coming again were made after the day of Pentecost, and besides, none of the events predicted to occur at His second coming took place at Pentecost. Others have tried to reason that Christ comes again at the conversion of the sinner or at the death of the saint. Such strange notions could be held only by one who is ignorant of the great bulk of prophetic teaching in the Scripture or by one who denies the validity of such Scriptural teaching. [For a more extended discussion of such aberrations of this doctrine see George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1952), Vol. II, p. 164-170; L. W. Munhall, *The Lord's Return* (Grand Rapids: Dunham Publishing Co., 1966), p. 371.]

In this chapter we will consider first the Fact of a future coming of Christ to earth, the Purpose of that Coming, the Manner of that Coming, and finally the Time of that Coming.

THE FACT OF A FUTURE COMING OF CHRIST TO EARTH

We have already pointed out the fact that there is to be a future coming of Christ in the air to receive the Body of Christ into its heavenly inheritance. This coming at the time of the Rapture is often confused with the second coming back to earth. Since Christ had never come in the air it would be inaccurate to speak of His second coming in the air. In this treatise we have reserved the term, *the Second Coming*, to Christ's coming back to earth.

The exact expression, "the Second Coming of Christ," does not appear in Scripture. However, there are such expressions as: "I will come again" (John 14:3); "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in

like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11); "He shall send Jesus Christ" (Acts 3:20); "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer" (Romans 11:26); "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels" (2 Thessalonians 1:7); "When he shall come to be glorified in His saints" (2 Thessalonians 1:10); "the brightness of his coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8); "who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:1); "he shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28); "Be patient... unto the coming of the Lord" (James 5:7); "there shall come in the last days scoffers.. . saying, Where is the promise of his coming" (2 Peter 3:4); "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints" (Jude 14); "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him" (Revelation 1:7); "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

Although there has been great disagreement concerning the time of the second coming, very few theologians or commentators have denied that the Bible plainly teaches a literal coming again of Christ to earth. Berkhof does mention several writers who have denied that a literal second coming is taught. For example he quotes William Newton Clarke, *Outline of Christian Theology*.

No visible return of Christ to earth is to be expected, but rather the long and steady advance of His spiritual kingdom If our Lord will but complete the spiritual coming that He has begun, there will be no need of a visible advent to make perfect His glory on earth.⁵¹⁴

Such writers, of course, can find no Scripture to support their views. The "if" in the above quotation is not a part of Scripture.

THE PURPOSE OF THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

To glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. The Second Coming is preeminently the time when Jesus Christ will be revealed to the universe as King of kings and Lord of lords. Revelation 5:13 pictures every creature in heaven, on earth, and under the earth ascribing honor and glory to Christ.

To fulfill the covenant promises to Israel. There are dozens of Old Testament promises which can be fulfilled only by the return of Christ to earth. What might be called the all-inclusive promise to Israel is the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom with all of its attendant blessings. Before that Kingdom can become a reality Christ must return to take His place on David's throne. The promise of the land and the Kingdom is based upon unconditional covenants with Abraham and David, and not upon Israel's merits. In fact, when the kingdom is finally established God will say: "I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen " (Ezekiel 36: 22).

⁵¹⁴ Berkhof, *op. cit.*, p. 705.

To put the world in subjection under man. This was God's purpose from the beginning, but the first man failed and the purpose will never be realized by fallen man. But Jesus Christ is a Man, and when He returns God will put all things in subjection under His feet ([Hebrews 2:7, 8](#) cf. [I Corinthians 15:24-27](#)).

To judge the ungodly. There will be a series of judgments which will include Satan, the Beast and the False Prophet, the followers of the Beast, and the nations ([Revelation 20:1](#); [Romans 16:20](#); [Revelation 19:19-21](#); [2 Thessalonians 2:8](#); [Matthew 25:31-46](#)).

To raise the righteous dead and reward them. ([Revelation 11:18](#); [20:4-6](#); [22:12](#); [Matthew 16:27](#)). These are the dead of former dispensations and of the Tribulation martyrs. The dead members of the Body of Christ will have been raised at the time of the Rapture.

To give a final dispensational test of man. Man in his natural state will for the first time since the Fall be placed in a perfect environment. Satan will be imprisoned and Christ will be reigning in holiness and righteousness. Mankind will not want any good thing. After living in this perfect environment for one thousand years, those who were born during the millennial reign will be put to the test when Satan is loosed from his prison. Great multitudes of those who gave only lip service to Christ will follow Satan in rebellion against Christ, and thus prove the incurable depravity of human nature even under the most ideal conditions. God has stated man's depravity in His Word but man denies it. God demonstrates in each dispensation of His dealings that depravity under every imaginable circumstance.

THE MANNER OF THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

It will come suddenly. The word "sudden" is used to describe His coming in [Malachi 3:1](#); [Mark 13:36](#), and [I Thessalonians 5:3](#). Christ likened His coming to a flash of lightning in [Matthew 24:27](#). Such expressions prove that His coming will be a distinct event and not a process, and that it will be visible and literal. There will be a process of events following His coming, but the coming itself will be a distinct event.

It will be unexpected. This is a further inference from the fact that He will come suddenly. Although there will be many signs to herald His coming, the great majority of people will be oblivious to them. This will no doubt be due to the fact that their minds will have been blinded by believing in the Devil's lie, and that God will have sent them strong delusion ([2 Thessalonians 2:11](#)). Christ likened His coming in this respect to that of a thief, at a time when it is least expected. (cf. [Matthew 24:43](#); [Luke 12:39](#); [I Thessalonians 5:2, 3](#); [2 Peter 3:10](#); [Revelation 3:3](#); [16:15](#)). In the Thessalonian passage Paul states: "For when they shall say,

Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

It will be personal. The One who comes in the Second Coming will be the identical Person who came to earth the first time. "This same Jesus ... shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). "He shall send Jesus Christ who before was preached unto you" (Acts 3:20). This fact precludes any theory that the coming of the Holy Spirit is to be understood as the second coming of Christ.

It will be physical. That is, Christ will come in His human body and nature, which are in a glorified state, but none the less human. Jesus Christ is still *the man* at God's right hand (1 Timothy 2:5). Again, it will be "the same Jesus" who ascended into heaven (Acts 1:11). Some have tried to argue that the coming (*parousia*) is simply the spiritual presence of Christ, but Berkhof says: "It is true that the word *parousia* means *presence*, but Dr. Vos correctly pointed out that in its religious eschatological usage it also means *arrival*, and that in the New Testament the idea of *arrival* is in the foreground."⁵¹⁵ He also points out that the other words that are used in the New Testament for His coming point to a coming which can be seen. The Book of Revelation states: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him" (1:7).

It will be glorious. "And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30). "And then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (2 Thess. 2:8).

THE TIME OF THE SECOND COMING

The Second Coming is related to the "times and seasons" of prophecy. The Apostles along with the other Jews had supposed that the kingdom would be established at His first coming (Luke 19:11), but Christ had corrected their thinking on this point by showing them that He must first die before the Kingdom glory could come (Luke 24:25-27; 1 Peter 1:11). It was only natural then, now that Christ had fulfilled His sufferings to ask: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Christ did not say that He would never restore this kingdom to Israel, as Amillennialists teach, but He said: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." Christ could not divulge this knowledge as yet, because the Kingdom was yet to be offered to the nation. Israel must have the opportunity to accept or reject. By the time Paul wrote his first epistle Israel had had that opportunity and had rejected. Therefore Paul could write: "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you" (1 Thessalonians 5:1).

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 705,706.

Israel's prophetic history is broken down into definite time periods. Of special interest to the second coming is Daniel's prophecy concerning the seventy heptads or weeks of years which were determined upon Israel ([Daniel 9:24-27](#)). This prophecy shows that from the order to restore and rebuild Jerusalem to the death of Messiah would be sixty-nine weeks 7×69 or 483 years). Sir Robert Anderson in his book, *The Coming Prince*, has worked out the chronology of this period. Thus, a Jew could have known ahead of time when the Messiah would come and be put to death. The prophecy leaves one week, or seven years, yet to be fulfilled before the consummation, the setting up of the kingdom which is the main subject of Daniel's prophecy. We know now that God has interrupted this prophetic time sequence by injecting the dispensation of the mystery after Israel's rejection of her King and Kingdom, and that when this purpose is completed God will again take up His dealings with Israel. When this occurs and the Tribulation begins, it will be possible to know that the Second Coming will occur within seven years.

Its nearness will be manifested by signs. In the Olivet discourse Christ declared: "When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled." The condition involved was whether or not Israel would accept the Messiah.

No one knows the day or hour of His coming. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matthew 24:36). A careful observer in the time of the Tribulation who observes the signs will be able to know the approximate time of the Lord's coming, as is evident from Scriptures already considered. However, no one will be able to determine the exact day and hour of the day in which the Lord will come. A few, like the wise virgins will be ready and prepared and watching; others will be caught off guard ([Matthew 25:1-13](#)). Among the Gentiles, apparently, the great majority will be scoffers, like those of Noah's day ([2 Peter 3:3, 4](#) cf. [Matthew 24:37-39](#)).

As long as the Body of Christ is in the world we can be sure that the second coming is at least seven years in the future, for the Scripture plainly predicts seven years of Tribulation which must precede the Second Coming.

85 WORDS USED FOR THE SECOND COMING

Several words are used in the Greek New Testament to describe both Christ's coming in the air for His Body and His Second Coming back to earth to establish His Kingdom. Since attempts have been made to make some of these terms apply exclusively to one or the other of these comings, it is doubly important to know and understand these words.

PAROUSIA

This is a compound of *para*, "with," plus *ousia*, "being," thus denoting a being with or a presence. In usage it denotes both an arrival and a consequent presence with. Its antonym is *apousia*, (being away from) and is translated absence in [Philippians 2:12](#). Parousia is translated in the A.V. *coming* and *presence*. It is used in a non-eschatological sense of the coming of Stephanas ([1 Corinthians 16:7](#)), the coming of Titus ([2 Corinthians 7:6](#)), Paul's bodily presence ([2 Corinthians 10:10](#)), Paul's *coming* and *presence* ([Philippians 1:26; 2:12](#)). Eschatologically it is used seventeen times of the coming of Christ and once of the coming of Antichrist ([2 Thess. 2:9](#)).

Parousia is used of the coming of Christ in the following passages:

Coming of the Son of man-Matthew 24:3, 27, 37, 39.

They that are Christ's at His *coming*--1 Corinthians 15:23.

Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ-1 Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23.

Coming of our Lord--2 Thessalonians 2:1.

Brightness of His *coming*--2 Thessalonians 2:8.

Coming of our Lord--James 5:7, 8; 2 Peter 1: 16; 3:4; 1 John 2:28.

Coming of the day of God--2 Peter 3:12.

The attempt has been made by Post-tribulationists and Amillennialists to make all of the above passages refer to one and the same coming of Christ, since the same word is used. This would mean that there is only one coming of the Lord in the future, which in turn would prove the Pretribulation rapture teaching to be false. Extreme dispensationalists, who place the beginning of the mystery Body of Christ after Acts 28 also use this argument, since the word *parousia* does not occur in the Prison epistles of Paul. They argue that the church of the Acts period will be raptured at the end of the Tribulation (but since none of the Acts saints are now alive, there would be no one on earth to be raptured), and they say that the Mystery Body saints will either be raptured or out-resurrected ([Philippians 3:11](#)) before the Tribulation.

However, the fact that *parousia* is used of the coming or presence of Stephanas, Titus, Paul, and the anti-christ is proof that it is not a technical term in Scripture for a singular coming of Christ. Since Christ will come for the Body and be present with the Body, and since He will come to earth and be present on earth, the word *parousia* can be used with equal fitness for either event.

Vine states: "When used of the return of Christ, at the Rapture of the Church, it signifies, not merely His momentary coming for His saints, but His presence with them from that moment until His revelation and manifestation to the world."⁵¹⁶

APOKALUPSIS

This is a compound word of *apo*, from, plus *kalupto*, to cover, meaning to uncover or reveal. This word *revelation* is used in a number of different senses in the New Testament. Vine lists eight.⁵¹⁷ The two major uses are for the divine impartation of knowledge ([Ephesians 3:3](#)) and the revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ at His second coming. Hence, the final book of the Bible is called the Apocalypse or Revelation of Jesus Christ.

Because of its use as the name of the book which sets forth as none other does the Second Coming of Christ, the attempt has been made to also limit its application to this one event. A concordant study of both the noun and the verb will show that the word is used of a number of other things besides that of the coming of Christ; hence, any attempt to so limit its use is futile. The word *Apokalupsis* can apply equally to the revelation of Jesus Christ to the Body as well as to the whole world at His second coming.

This word is used of the coming again, either at the Rapture or at the Second Coming, in the following passages:

Luke 17:30: "in the day when the Son of man is *revealed*."

1 Corinthians 1:7: "waiting for *the coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2 Thessalonians 1:7: "when the Lord Jesus *shall be revealed* from heaven with His mighty angels."

1 Peter 1:7: "That the trial of your faith... might be found unto praise and honor and glory at *the appearing* of Jesus Christ."

1 Peter 1:13: "the grace that is to be brought unto you at the *revelation* of Jesus Christ."

1 Peter 4:13: "when His glory *shall be revealed*, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

Revelation 1:1: "The *Revelation* of Jesus Christ."

⁵¹⁶ W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, (London, Oliphants; Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1952) Vol. I, p. 209.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 292, 293.

Closely associated with the truth of the Lord's coming are the following passages:

Romans 8:18: "the glory that *shall be revealed* in us."

Romans 8:19: "*the manifestation* of the sons of God."

1 Corinthians 3:13: "because it *shall be revealed* by fire."

2 Thessalonians 2:3, 6, 8: "that man of sin *be revealed*... that he *might be revealed* in his time... then shall that wicked one *be revealed*."

EPIPHANEIA

The transliteration of this word is *epiphany*, and means literally "a shining forth." It is used of the advent of the Savior when the Word became flesh (2 Timothy 1:10): "But is now made manifest by *the appearing* of our Savior Jesus Christ;" hence the Feast of Epiphany, commemorating the coming of the Magi as being the first manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles.

It is also used of the appearing of Jesus Christ when He comes in the air:

1 Timothy 6:14: "keep this commandment... until *the appearing* of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2 Timothy 4:1, 8: "who shall judge the quick and the dead at his *appearing* and his kingdom ... all them also that love his *appearing*."

It is also used to portray the brightness of His second advent:

2 Thessalonians 2:8: "shall destroy with the *brightness* of his coming" (literally, "shall destroy with the epiphaneia of his parousia").

Titus 2:13: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious *appearing* (epiphaneia of the glory) of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ."

There is a question of whether the blessed hope is the Rapture and the appearing of the glory is the Second Coming, or whether it is to be understood as the blessed hope, even the appearing of the glory. Although the Rapture and the Second Coming are two separate events involving primarily two separate groups of saints, it should be remembered that the Body of Christ will be manifested with Christ when He comes in His glory.

PHANERO-O

Vine says of the word:

To be manifested, in the Scriptural sense of the word, is more than to appear. A person may appear in a false guise or without disclosure of what he truly is; to be manifested is to be revealed in one's true character; this is especially the meaning of *phanero-o*. See, e.g., John 3:21; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:10, 11; Ephesians 5:13.⁵¹⁸

The word is used in relation to Christ's future coming as follows:

Colossians 3:4: "When Christ, who is our life, shall *be manifested*, then shall ye also *be manifested* with him in glory."

1 Peter 5:4: "And when the chief Shepherd *shall be manifested*, ye shall receive a crown of glory."

1 John 3:2: "It doth not yet *appear* (it has not yet *been manifested*) what we shall be: we know that, when he *shall be manifested*, we shall be like him."

ERCHOMAI

This is the usual verb meaning to come. It is used quite a number of times in reference to His coming again: [Matthew 23:39; 24:30, 42, 44; 25:13, 31; 26:64;](#) [Mark 13:26;](#) [Luke 12:40; 18:8; 19:13, 23; 21:27;](#) [John 14:3; 21:22, 23;](#) [Acts 1:11;](#) [1 Corinthians 4:5; 11:26;](#) [2 Thessalonians 1:10;](#) [Hebrews 10:37;](#) [Jude 14;](#) [Revelation 1:4, 7, 8; 3:11; 16:15; 22:7, 12, 20.](#)

CONCLUSION

After a careful study of the above words, we must conclude that the distinction between the coming of Christ at the time of the Rapture and His coming back to earth cannot be established simply by the words that are used. We believe, however, that sufficient evidence has already been given to prove the distinction between the two comings.

86 OTHER MILLENNIAL VIEWS

THE AMILLENNIAL VIEW

Much has already been said about the Amillennial view as a matter of necessity in dealing with the fact that there will be a millennium. As to the historical basis for Amillennialism, Berkhof has this to say:

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 65.

Some Premillenarians have spoken of Amillennialism as a new view and as one of the most recent novelties, but this is certainly not in accord with the testimony of history. The name is new indeed, but the view to which it is applied is as old as Christianity. It had at least as many advocates as Chiliasm among the Church Fathers of the second and third centuries, supposed to have been the heyday of Chiliasm. It has ever since been the view most widely accepted, is the only view that is either expressed or implied in the great historical Confessions of the Church, and has always been the prevalent view in Reformed circles.⁵¹⁹

Shedd charges:

Premillenarianism was the revival of the pseudo-Jewish doctrine of the Messianic kingdom, as this had been formed in the later periods of Jewish history by a materializing exegesis of the Old Testament That it could not have been the catholic and received doctrine, as proved by the fact that it forms no part of the Apostles creed, which belongs to this period, and hence by implication is rejected by it Alford (On Rev. 20:4, 5) is greatly in error, in saying that "the whole church for three hundred years from the apostles understood the two resurrections in the literal premillenarian sense."⁵²⁰

While Church History is an important and necessary discipline, it should be remembered that Scripture alone is God's Word, and that regardless of what churches have taught down through the centuries, the Scriptures still remain the final court of appeal. We do not ask, "What saith the Apostles creed" (which, by the way, was not framed by any of the apostles, being a product of the second century); or "what saith the Post- or Anti-Nicean Fathers," or "What saith the Westminster, or the Augsburg, or the Helvetic Confession," but, "What saith the Scripture." The confessions and the creeds are at variance in many particulars, so that they cannot be received as infallible. Christ did not tell the Jews to search the Midrash or the Talmud, but the Scriptures.

It is a generally acknowledged fact that there is somewhat of a gap in Church History between the Apostles and the early Fathers. Fisher says: "The truth is that the lives of most of the Apostles, as well as the circumstances of their death, are involved in the deepest obscurity."⁵²¹ And it must also be admitted that the early Fathers departed quite a bit from Pauline doctrine. Most of them taught baptismal regeneration. It is conceivable that they could have also departed from other Scriptural doctrines.

From the Amillennialist's standpoint it would seem that Revelation 20:4-6 is the crucial Scripture, for if it can be proved that there are in fact two future bodily

⁵¹⁹ Berkhof, *op. cit.*, p. 708.

⁵²⁰ Shedd, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 642,643.

⁵²¹ Fisher, *History of the Christian Church*, p. 33.

resurrections separated by one thousand years, Amillennialism is proved false. Hence, if they can find some other interpretation for this passage they feel that they have proved their point and that everything else can be dismissed as a *pseudo-Jewish materializing exegesis of the Old Testament*.

Shedd explains this passage as follows. John saw *the souls* of them that were beheaded. Had John intended to say that the first resurrection was a bodily resurrection he would have said that he saw *the bodies* of them that were beheaded. They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. John says nothing about them rising from the dead. Therefore, he states: "The Revelator, in vision, sees the martyrs and other witnesses for Christ as disembodied spirits dwelling in paradise, and describes them not as rising, but as 'living and reigning,' with Christ for a thousand years. This 'living and reigning,' he calls 'the first resurrection.'⁵²² The reign of the martyrs for one thousand years he describes as a "reign in the heavenly paradise with Christ in His spiritual reign, during that remarkable period of the triumph of the gospel upon earth which is denominated the millennium."⁵²³ Regeneration is a spiritual resurrection and the millennium is now taking place in heaven, according to this view. And only those who have shown eminent devotion and spirituality, even unto martyrdom, are sharing this millennial reign in heaven at the present time.

Shedd continues his exposition: "In Revelation 20:5, it is said that 'the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.' The remainder of the believing dead do not 'live (and reign with Christ)' until the final consummation at the end of the world. The martyrs are honored above the mass of believers, by a co-reign with the Redeemer during the millennium. The church generally does not participate in the triumph of its Head until after the millennium and final judgment."⁵²⁴

We cannot accept this so-called spiritualized interpretation for the following reasons.

1. John seeing the souls instead of the bodies of the martyrs is not a valid argument. Soul is often used in Scripture for the person, whether embodied or disembodied (cf. [Acts 27:37](#)). Even if soul is taken to mean a disembodied soul, it could just as well be understood in the sense that John saw them as such as the subjects of the resurrection which was about to take place.

2. While it is true that Scripture speaks of regeneration as a giving of life and a quickening from the dead, it is doubtful that it ever uses the word *resurrection* (which means a standing upright) for regeneration. Theologians use the expression *spiritual resurrection*, but the Bible does not. Resurrection refers to the body.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, p. 643.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, p. 644.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 645.

3. This view has only the eminently spiritual and devoted saints living and reigning with Christ at the present time. This must then mean that the remainder of those saints who have died are not living. Does this mean that all of the *average saints* are spiritually dead or unconscious, and only the eminent ones are spiritually alive? What other conclusion can be drawn?

4. John saw these dead as a completed company at the beginning of the thousand years and the first resurrection as an event. This view makes the first resurrection a long process which has already lasted almost two millennia, and has the martyrs of the entire dispensation reigning anywhere from one year to two thousand years, whereas the Bible has them all reigning for the same period of time.

5. Since this view states that only the martyrs share in the first resurrection, and that the first resurrection is synonymous with regeneration, what are we to do with all of the non-martyrs who have been regenerated? If regeneration is resurrection then all who have been regenerated must have experienced this spiritual resurrection. How then can it be limited to just the martyrs?

6. Also, since this view states that only martyrs share in the first resurrection which is spiritual, and all the remainder of the Church must await the second resurrection which is bodily, how are we to understand the statement: "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power?" The plain implication is that the second death will have power over those who do not share in the first resurrection. But we are forced by Amillennialism to believe that the great majority of the members of the Body of Christ will have no part in the first resurrection.

7. A further self-contradiction in this type of interpretation is seen in the fact that those who are in the first resurrection are excluded from those in the second. "The rest of the dead" excludes those who are in the first resurrection. If the second resurrection is bodily, then the martyrs are excluded from a bodily resurrection.

8. The Amillennialists cannot give a satisfactory explanation of other concomitants of this first resurrection. For one thing, Satan is said to be bound and cast into the abyss for a thousand years "that he should deceive the nations no more." The only explanation of this that Shedd gives is this: "The binding of Satan, he (Augustine) says, is spiritual, and the reign of Christ on earth is spiritual."⁵²⁵ The New Testament epistles flatly contradict the idea that Satan is now bound in any sense of the word. Peter surely knew nothing about this spiritual binding of Satan when he wrote: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). And Paul declares that Satan is "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that NOW worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2), and that the spiritual warfare of the believer is not against flesh and blood but against the wiles of the devil and all of his cosmocrats (Ephesians 6:11, 12). And the Book of Revelation itself indicates that sometime between John's writing of it and the events portrayed in Chapter 20 Satan is not only not bound but is displaying perhaps the greatest effort he has ever made when he wages war in

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 645,646.

heaven and is cast out into the earth ([Revelation 12:7-12](#)). It is very difficult to understand how any one who has read the history of the past nineteen hundred years, or for that matter, for the past nineteen years, could accept a doctrine which necessitates the belief that Satan has been bound all of these centuries and is no longer able to deceive the nations; and yet, this is what Amillennialists must believe.

9. The Amillennial view raises havoc with the chronology of Revelation. Regardless of the symbolical language of the book, when things are related in a certain order of occurrence, no one has the right to change that order. The fact of the matter is that in Revelation the simple order of events is as follows:

- The Second Coming of Christ
- The battle or Armageddon
- The binding of Satan
- The first resurrection
- The Millennium
- The Second Resurrection
- The Final Rebellion and Doom of Satan
- The Great White Throne Judgment
- The New Creation

The Amillennialist must place the binding of Satan, the first resurrection, and the Millennium at the Cross. Such handling of this inspired portion of God's Word should convince any sincere person that there is something radically wrong with any system of interpretation which necessitates such action.

10. The treatment of other passages is equally unsatisfactory. For example, on the passage: "in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28), Shedd simply makes the dogmatic statement: "This certainly is to be interpreted metaphorically, not literally."⁵²⁶ Metaphorically, when is the "when" of this verse? What is the regeneration? Who is the Son of man? What is the throne of His glory? What does it mean to sit or to judge? and who are the twelve tribes of Israel? One would probably find as many interpretations as there are interpreters, simply because any interpretation other than the literal leaves one to his own imagination.

COMMON GROUND BETWEEN PRE- AND AMILLENNIALISM

Both systems recognize that the preaching of the gospel will not result in the conversion of the world. Says Berkhof:

The fundamental idea of the doctrine (Post-Millennialism), that the whole world will be gradually won for Christ... so that the Church will experience a season of unexampled prosperity, *just before the coming of the Lord*, --is not in harmony with the picture of the end of the ages found in Scripture.⁵²⁷

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 644.

⁵²⁷ Berkhof, *op. cit.*, p. 718.

Both agree that conditions in the world will grow worse and worse as the end of the age approaches. Berkhof states:

It (the Bible) stresses the fact that the time immediately preceding the end will be a time of great apostasy, of tribulation and persecution, a time when the faith of many will wax cold, and when they who are loyal to Christ will be subjected to bitter sufferings, and will in some cases even seal their confession with their blood.⁵²⁸

Both agree that the coming of Christ is possible in the near future. Here the agreement would be more with Posttribulationists, for both would say that the signs which are omens of His coming must first be fulfilled.

THE POSTMILLENNIAL VIEW

Briefly stated, the Postmillennial view is the belief that the church of this dispensation will finally convert the world and thus bring in so-called millennial blessings, after which Christ will return, bring an end to the world, and then bring in the consummation through a general resurrection and a general judgment. Postmillennialists differ on certain details, but all agree that there will be a millennium on earth before the second coming of Christ. Hodge states his type of Postmillennialism in these words:

Prophecy sheds a sufficiently clear light on the future to teach us, not only that this alternation is to continue to the end (alternation between times of depression and seasons of exaltation and prosperity), but, more definitely, that before the second coming of Christ there is to be a time of great and long continued prosperity, to be followed by a season of decay and suffering, so that when the Son of man comes he shall hardly find faith on the earth. It appears from passages already quoted that all nations are to be converted; that the Jews are to be brought in and reingrafted into their own olive tree; and that their restoration is to be the occasion and the cause of a change from death unto life; that is, analogous to the change of a body mouldering in the grave to one instinct with joyous activity and power. Of this period the ancient prophets speak in terms adapted to raise the hopes of the Church to the highest pitch This period is called a millennium because in Revelation it is said to last for a thousand years, an expression which is perhaps generally understood literally. Some however think it means a protracted season of indefinite duration, as when it is said that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years. Others, assuming that in the prophetic language a day stands for a year, assume that the so-called millennium is to last three hundred and sixty-five thousand years.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 718.

During this period, be it longer or shorter, the Church is to enjoy a season of peace, purity, and blessedness such as it has never yet experienced.⁵²⁹

Strong, another Postmillennialist, states his belief:

We may therefore best interpret Revelation 20:4-10 as teaching in highly figurative language, not a preliminary resurrection of the body, in the case of departed saints, but a period in the later days of the church militant when, under special influence of the Holy Ghost, the spirit of the martyrs shall appear again, true religion be greatly quickened and revived, and the members of Christ's churches become so conscious of their strength in Christ that they shall, to an extent unknown before, triumph over the powers of evil both within and without In short, we hold that Revelation 20:4-10 does not describe the events commonly called the second advent and resurrection, but rather describes great spiritual changes in the later history of the church, which are typical of, and, preliminary to, the second advent and resurrection, and therefore, after the prophetic method, are foretold in language literally applicable only to those final events themselves.⁵³⁰

Strong states: "our own interpretation of Revelation 20:1-10 was first given for substance, by Whitby."⁵³¹ Daniel Whitby (1638-1726), a Unitarian minister, is generally credited as the inventor of the Postmillennial view. Walvoord says of him:

He was a liberal and a freethinker, untrammelled by traditions or previous conceptions of the church. His views on the millennium would probably have never been perpetuated if they had not been so well keyed to the thinking of the times. The rising tide of intellectual freedom, science, and philosophy, coupled with humanism, had enlarged the concept of human progress and painted a bright picture of the future. Whitby's views of a coming golden age for the church was just what people wanted to hear.⁵³²

Postmillennialism has suffered great set-backs in the face of two World Wars, continuing cold wars, threats of nuclear destruction of the human race, and environmental pollution. The world at large is very pessimistic about the future of the human race. However, there are those in liberal Christian circles who are still entertaining the hope of bringing about utopian conditions through ecumenism and their activist movements of forcibly overthrowing the establishment and bringing in a new social order. Marxianism, operating on the principle of dialectical materialism, hopes to bring about a synthesis which will produce the

⁵²⁹ Hodge, *op. cit.* Vol. III, p. 858.

⁵³⁰ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 1013.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1014.

⁵³² John F. Walvoord, "The Millennial Issue in Modern Theology," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 106:44, January, 1948.

same results. Neither of these systems can be called Postmillennialism, for they are not based upon the Bible and have no place for the second coming of Christ. But they do represent the vain hope of mankind that man will finally be able to bring about millennial conditions apart from Christ.

The Postmillennial view must be rejected for the following reasons:

1. Its advocates admit that it was first taught in the seventeenth century. It is surely not taught in Scripture. Scripture must be allegorized and spiritualized and distorted to make it fit in with this scheme.

2. The Scripture indicates that just the opposite conditions will exist in the last days: perilous times, apostasy, etc. ([1 Timothy 4:1-3](#); [2 Timothy 3:1-13](#)).

3. The Scriptures are made ridiculous. Just as an example, consider the binding of Satan for a thousand years in the abyss that he should deceive the nations no more ([Revelation 20:2, 3](#)). What does this mean? According to Matthew Henry:

A prophecy of the binding of Satan for a certain time, in which he should have much less power and the church much more peace than before. The power of Satan was broken in part by the setting up of the gospel kingdom in the world; it was further reduced by the empires becoming Christian; it was yet further broken by the downfall of mystical Babylon; but still this serpent had many heads, and, when one is wounded, another has life remaining in it.⁵³³

4. Postmillennialism has no Scripture to support its teaching. Chafer states:

Doubtless the stress upon Bible Study of the present century has served to uncover the unscriptural character of this system. Its advocates have not been able to meet the challenge made to them to produce one Scripture which teaches a millennium before the advent of Christ, or that teaches an advent of Christ after the millennium.⁵³⁴

87 THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

Although most of the world religions have taught the existence of the soul after death, Christianity is unique in its teaching of the resurrection of the body. Many religions have taught that the body is a prison of the soul, that the body is evil, that it is the cause of sin, and that redemption consists in being freed from the body. All of this is contrary to Scriptural teaching concerning man. Apart from his

⁵³³ Matthew Henry, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testament* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., N. D.), Vol. VI, Revelation, Chapter 20.

⁵³⁴ Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 281.

body man is an incomplete being. God's salvation provides redemption not only for the soul, but for the body also. Believers already possess the salvation or redemption of their soul, but they are waiting for the redemption of the Body. This redemption of the Body will be realized in resurrection at the time of Christ's coming.

In this chapter we shall look first at the Fact of the resurrection and then consider the Nature of the resurrection body.

THE FACT OF THE RESURRECTION

The major teaching on this subject is to be found in the New Testament Scriptures. We read that our Savior Jesus Christ "hath abolished death, and hath brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). The great central truth of the New Testament is the resurrection of Christ, apart from which His death would have no saving significance. By His resurrection from the dead He abolished death. The word *abolished* (*katargeo*) is the same word as used in 1 Corinthians 15:26: "The last enemy *to be destroyed* is death." It means to render inoperative or rob a thing of its power. Christ arose having the keys of hades and of death ([Revelation 1:18](#)). He rendered death inoperative when He arose and He will yet render it so in behalf of all of the saved when they are raised.

Old Testament Teaching Concerning Resurrection

Prophecies concerning the resurrection of Christ. Paul declares: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he arose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4). Thus it is clear that His resurrection was the subject of Old Testament prophecy. Peter quotes from Psalms 16:8 and explains:

Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hades, neither his flesh did see corruption (Acts 2:30, 31).

Paul quoted from both Psalm 16 and Psalm 2 in preaching the resurrection: "God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (Acts 13:33-37). See also [Acts 26:6-8](#).

Prophecies concerning resurrection in general. One of the earliest references to resurrection is Job 19:25: "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he

shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

Christ quoted Exodus 3:6 in proof of the resurrection: "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:31, 32).

According to [Hebrews 11:19](#) Abraham believed that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead when he was ready to offer him up.

Isaiah plainly speaks of resurrection in 26:19: "Thy dead men shall live; my dead bodies shall rise." This passage is related to the Tribulation which is clearly referred to in the next two verses.

The valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37) has been interpreted both as a resurrection of the bodies of the Israelites and as a national restoration. Whichever is the correct interpretation, the idea of a bodily resurrection is plainly taught.

One of the clearest passages in the Old Testament is Daniel 12:2: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Immediately preceding this is the statement: "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time," which can be none other than the great tribulation of [Matthew 24:21](#).

In the Old Testament there is predicted the resurrection of both the saved and the unsaved, but there is no distinction in time; just as the first and second comings of Christ are predicted as though both would be fulfilled at once. For example, in Luke 4:17-20, Christ read from Isaiah 61:1, 2, which predicts both comings in the same sentence, but Christ stopped reading in the middle of the sentence and closed the book. He read only about the acceptable year of the Lord, which referred to His first coming and omitted the day of vengeance of our God, which refers to His second coming.

New Testament Teaching Concerning Resurrection

The word "resurrection" (Gr. *anastasis*) is used forty-two times in the New Testament. Forty-eight times the word "raised" is used to denote the resurrection. Nine times the word "raise" is so used; eighteen times the word "rise"; twenty-six times the word "risen"; and once the word "rising." This makes one hundred and forty-four times at least that resurrection is referred to in the New Testament by these six words. This shows the great emphasis upon resurrection in the New Testament.

That the Greeks were ignorant of the idea of resurrection is seen from the fact that Paul preached Jesus and Anastasis ([Acts 17:18](#)) and the Greeks supposed that Anastasis was another god; for they said: "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods." Even the apostles did not appear to understand much about resurrection at first, for as they came down from the mount of transfiguration Jesus told them to tell no man what they had seen until He was risen from the dead, and they questioned "with one another what the rising from the dead should mean" (Mark 9:10).

The Sadducees denied both resurrection and the existence of the spirit ([Matthew 22:23-31](#); [Mark 12:18-23](#); [Luke 20:27-36](#); [Acts 23:8](#)). Apparently the great majority of the Jews of Christ's day believed in the resurrection of the body. When Jesus told Martha that her brother would rise again, she replied: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (John 11:24).

Jesus plainly taught that there would be both a resurrection of life and a resurrection of damnation ([John 5:28, 29](#)). In verse 25 He said: "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." Then He said: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice." Shedd and other Amillennialists, make the resurrection of verse 25 to refer to the spiritual work of regeneration, and that of verse 28 to the general resurrection of both saved and unsaved at the end of the world.⁵³⁵ Amillennialists press the point that Christ did not indicate a long period of time between the resurrection of the just and the unjust. But neither did He say there would not be. Chafer explains:

Christ's germinal teachings are usually expanded in the epistles and Revelation. According in 1 Corinthians 15:20-26 the universal character of resurrection is again asserted, but with the added truth that there are companies in resurrection with intervals between. Christ is first raised as First-fruits; then they that are Christ's at His coming, which means that at least nineteen hundred years intervene; and finally the end of the resurrection program, with a millennium between, in which all contrary authority is put down forever (cf. Rev. 20: 1-6, 12-15).⁵³⁶

Berkhof says:

It is a pure assumption that the resurrection of believers will be separated by a long period of time from the end. Another gratuitous assumption is that "the end" means "the end of resurrection." According to the analogy of Scripture it points to the end of the world, the consummation, the time when Christ will deliver up the kingdom to the Father and will have put all enemies under His feet.⁵³⁷

⁵³⁵ Shedd, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 644.

⁵³⁶ Chafer, op. cit., Vol. IV, pp. 375, 376.

⁵³⁷ Berkhof, op. cit., p. 726.

Berkhof argues that the words "afterwards" and "then" do not necessarily mean that a long period of time intervenes between events, but in reply it must be said that these words do not forbid a period of time intervening. There is nothing to indicate that even Paul knew how long a period would intervene. This is simply progressive revelation. Until the Revelation was given, no man knew how long the end would be after the second coming of Christ. Amillennialists speak as though the teaching of two resurrections contradicts teaching elsewhere that there would be a resurrection of the just and the unjust, when, as a matter of fact, it simply complements this teaching.

Paul shows that if there is no resurrection, then Christ is not risen, our preaching is in vain, our faith is vain, we are false witnesses, we are yet in our sins, the dead in Christ have perished, and we are of all men most to be pitied" (1 Corinthians 15:12-19). There were almost five hundred witnesses still alive who actually saw Christ in His resurrection body, and Paul himself was the last one to see Him. It has been said that the change of Saul the persecutor to Paul the apostle of grace is one of the greatest proofs of the resurrection of Christ, and therefore of resurrection in general. (For further proofs of the resurrection of Christ refer back to the chapter "The Resurrection of Christ.")

THE NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION BODY

It will be a spiritual (pneumatikos) body in contrast with our present natural (psuchikos) body (1 Corinthians 15:44). There is a difference between pure spirit and a spiritual body. Christ had a spiritual body in resurrection, and yet He declared that "a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39). The present body is an animal body, the life of which is dependent upon the soulish principle. The resurrection body will be controlled and energized by the spirit.

It will be a body like unto Christ's own body of glory (Philippians 3:21). We are told a few things about the nature of His body in those Scriptures depicting his post-resurrection ministry (Luke 24:13-51; John 20:19-29).

It is a real body, not merely a phantasm. Christ's body could be seen and felt and could partake of food (Luke 24:39-43). His Body bore the marks of the crucifixion.

It is apparently a bloodless body. There is no mention of blood but there is of flesh and bones. Paul states that flesh and blood shall not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:50). The life of the present natural flesh is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11). The life of the resurrection flesh will be in the spirit.

The composition and behavior of its particles will apparently be different from anything man has thus far learned about matter. Scientists tell us that all matter,

including our bodies, is composed of protons and electrons in constant orbital motions which are separated by relatively large distances, so that high speed particles (cosmic rays, for example) can pass through our bodies without actually striking any part of it. If God has made nature thus, it is no great stretch of faith to believe that God can make a body such as Christ had, which could appear in a room when doors were closed and locked, or which could ascend up into heaven.

It is an incorruptible, glorious, powerful, spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:42-44). Paul compares the bare seed of grain which is planted in the earth to the natural body which dies and is buried. In this analogy the resurrection body is like the beautiful green living plant which springs up. He doesn't exactly describe the resurrection body: he simply says that "God gives it a body as it hath pleased Him" (1 Corinthians 15:38).

It is apparently an adaptable body. It is not dependent upon food for existence; yet the Savior could eat physical food. Some resurrection saints will be upon earth during the millennium, as Christ Himself will be, and others will be in heaven, as Christ has been for the past two millennia. Whatever the conditions, the resurrection body will adapt to the environment.

Christ said that in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are equal to angels (Luke 20:35-36). The inference is that sex is related only to the natural body and not to the spiritual body. This being the case there will be no generation in the resurrection life.

There will be recognition of persons. Christ spoke of seeing Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God (Luke 13:28).

Although our resurrection bodies will be like Christ's body, there will be this difference. Christ's body did not see corruption. Our bodies will see corruption. Some have been buried, others have been burned, or blown to bits. It is not necessary to suppose that the actual particles which composed our natural bodies will be brought back together in resurrection. The actual particles in our bodies are constantly changing, so that they might have been in numerous human bodies in the course of history. Strong has a rather humorous reference to this fact. He quotes from the Providence Journal:

"Who ate Roger Williams?" When his remains were exhumed, it was found that one large root of an apple tree followed the spine, divided at the thighs, and turned up at the toes of Roger Williams. More than one person had eaten its apples. This root may be seen today in the cabinet of Brown University.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁸ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 1019.

88 THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

The expression "the judgment seat of Christ" occurs only in Paul's epistles. It is a translation, not of the usual word for judgment (*krisis*), but of the Greek *Bema*, meaning first a step, the space a foot covers ([Acts 7:5](#)), and then a raised place mounted by steps or a platform used as the official seat of a judge. It is used in the Gospels and Acts of the judgment seats of the Roman officials, and in Romans 14:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:10 of the judgment seat of Christ. In both of these passages there is the identical statement: "We must all stand or appear before the judgment seat of Christ." Since this is set forth as a future judgment, and since both Postmillennialists and Amillennialists believe in only one future judgment which they call *the general judgment*, they must make the judgment seat of Christ to be synonymous with the final judgment of [Revelation 21:11-15](#). Premillennialists, on the other hand, associate the judgment seat of Christ with those who are involved in the Rapture of the Church before the Millennium.

THE SUBJECTS OF THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

Paul states that *we* must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Paul's epistles are addressed to members of the Body of Christ. It is therefore certain that he is saying that all members of the Body of Christ must appear there, but there is nothing in the context of these passages to indicate that all humanity without exception must so appear. Twelve times in verses 1-9 of 2 Corinthians 5 Paul uses the word "we" and to make any one of them mean all humanity would mean endorsement of Universalism. Surely the "we" of verse 10 is the same "we" of the previous nine verses.

That unbelievers will not appear before the judgment seat of Christ is clear from those Scriptures dealing with the relation of the believer to the subject of judgment. Paul made it clear that there is now no condemnation (*katakrima*) to those who are in Christ, and Christ stated that those who believe in Him would never come into judgment (*krisis*). The plain teaching of the Scripture is that the penal judgment for sin will never fall upon a believer, for the simple reason that it has already fallen in all of its completeness upon the believer's Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ. The believer will never be brought into a judgment, such as the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 21:11-15, where the penalty of sin is meted out upon unbelievers, and where the consequences of the judgment will be eternal separation from God in the lake of fire. The whole purpose of the death of Christ, as far as the believer is concerned, was to deliver him from such a judgment. It should be remembered that the purpose of the final judgment is not to discover who is saved and who is lost, but to mete out the just punishments to those who are lost.

THE PURPOSE OF THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

To Reward the Believer

Although Paul uses the exact expression, the Bema of Christ, only twice, it is evident that he refers to this event many times in his epistles. One of the outstanding passages is [1 Corinthians 3:9-15](#). Here Paul is apparently speaking primarily about Christ's final appraisal of the work of ministers of the gospel but the general principle holds true for the life and ministry of all believers. This passage states that the believer's work, not the believer himself, will be subjected to the test of the fire: "the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide... he shall receive a reward." Although the Christian life is a rewarding experience, in the truest sense of the word the Christian has not yet received his reward. The Scripture indicates that believers will be rewarded for faithfulness in the following areas:

Faithful stewardship of the mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 4:1-5). This stewardship concerns the special revelation of the mystery which was committed to the Apostle Paul. The Twelve had the stewardship of the Kingdom committed to them. Both Romanism and Protestantism have sadly confused these two stewardships. Ministers of the Word who are wrongly applying truth intended for the Messianic Kingdom to the Church of this dispensation can hardly be called faithful stewards of the mysteries of God. Such men are not building gold, silver, and precious stones upon the foundation which Paul, the masterbuilder, laid ([1 Corinthians 3:10](#)). Reward in this area requires more than simple sincerity. Accuracy, careful handling, right division of the Word: all of these are essential to faithfulness as a steward of the mysteries of God.

Faithful stewardship of worldly possessions (2 Corinthians 8, 9). The Israelites were subjected to a ten percent income tax, better known as the law of the tithe. Believers in this present dispensation are not under the law, but it is generally conceded that if the law required one-tenth of one's income, the believer under grace should be constrained by the love of Christ to give at least that much or more. Paul does not lay down any percentage. He simply states that sparse sowing will result in a sparse harvest and that every man should give "as he purposeth in his heart... not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." Some have been entrusted with very little of this world's goods, but "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."

Faithfulness in soul-winning. Paul said of those whom he had led to Christ: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" ([1 Thessalonians 2:19](#)). The Old Testament contains a similar promise of reward for Israel ([Daniel 12:3](#)).

Faithfulness under suffering and trial. Again, Paul says: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" ([2 Timothy 2:12](#)), and "if so be that we suffer with him, that

we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:17). The Lord promised similar reward to His earthly disciples in [Matthew 5:11, 12](#); [Luke 6:22, 23](#).

Faithfulness toward all men. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:9, 10).

The Scripture in general speaks of the nature of the reward under the figure of a crown (*stephanos*). There is another word translated *crown* (*diadema*) which always refers to kingly dignity ([Revelation 12:3](#); [13:1](#); [19:12](#)). *Stephanos* means a garland or wreath of leaves which was placed upon the head of the victor in athletic contests, or was given as a token of public honor for distinguished service. Paul contrasts the corruptible crown which the athlete receives with the incorruptible crown which the believer will receive at the judgment seat of Christ ([1 Corinthians 9:25](#)); he speaks of the crown of righteousness which the Lord will give to all those who love His appearing ([2 Timothy 4:8](#)); he thinks of his converts as being his crown ([Philippians 4:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:19](#)). A crown of life is mentioned in [James 1:12](#) and [Revelation 2:10](#). It is evident that the Scriptures do not mean that a literal wreath is to be given to the faithful to be placed upon their heads, although Revelation 4:4 might seem to contradict this. However, the twenty-four elders are ministers of the heavenly sanctuary and not redeemed sinners who have been rewarded with crowns. The Revised Version reading of Revelation 5:8-10 makes this fact clear. Had the Scripture said that we are to receive a crown of gold we might well take it to be a literal crown, but a crown of righteousness, or of life, or of rejoicing must be understood in a figurative sense.

It is not clear exactly what the nature of these various crowns will be. It will no doubt be a mark of abiding distinction. As with so many other things which concern heaven and the life to come, God has not been pleased to reveal many details about the nature of our reward, but He has said sufficient to motivate the believer to the highest and most heroic service possible.

To Bring Everything to Light

Paul could say: "I know nothing against myself" ([1 Corinthians 4:4](#)), but he continued: "yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." It is essential for the rewarding of every believer that every hidden thing be brought to light. In that day it may be discovered that those most highly praised of men are the least worthy of praise. We may have supposed that we were in the will of God in a certain matter, but that day may show that we were not. We may have completely forgotten a simple word of testimony which we gave for Christ, but in that day

discover that it resulted in the salvation of one who later became a missionary greatly used of God.

To Eliminate Every Unworthy Thing

"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." Much of so-called Christian service is done in the energy of the flesh; much of it is for the praise of man. Everything that is unworthy of Christ will be burned up so that all that remains will be to the eternal praise of Christ. It should be noted that it is possible for all of a believer's works to be burned without the loss of salvation. Salvation, being by grace and not by works, cannot be affected either positively or negatively by the character or amount of works.

To Glorify Christ

Since the judgment seat of Christ will eliminate everything which has been done for the praise of men, and since only that which has been done for the praise of Christ will be rewarded, the ultimate effect of this judgment will be to bring praise and glory to Christ. Paul makes it clear that God accomplishes His work through us in such a way "that no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Corinthians 1:29). A man who is given a million dollars to be used in the relief of the needy is to be praised for faithfully administering that fund, but his faithful administering serves only to bring ultimate praise to the one who made it all possible in the beginning. So it is with our service and our rewards. It will all be to the praise of His glory ([Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14](#)).

THE TIME OF THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

Paul informs us that Christ will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom ([2 Timothy 4:1](#)). "His appearing" has reference to the time of the rapture of the Body of Christ. Thiessen also quotes such passages as Revelation 11:17, 18; 22:12; and Matthew 16:27 to support this point,⁵³⁹ but it should be pointed out that these Scriptures refer to the time of Christ's return to earth after the Tribulation and not to the time of the Rapture. Christ will reward the Old Testament and Tribulation saints when He returns to earth, but before this He will reward us when we meet Him in the air.

OTHER SCRIPTURES REFERRING TO THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

Besides the main passages already mentioned ([Romans 14:10](#); [2 Corinthians 5:10](#); [1 Corinthians 3:9-15](#)), reference is made to this judgment in the following passages:

⁵³⁹ Thiessen, *op. cit.*, p. 458.

1 Corinthians 5:5--Here the incestuous person is delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of Jesus Christ. This one is saved, yet so as by fire.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27--The possibility of ending in the race as one disapproved (not a castaway, as in the A.V.), equivalent to having one's works burned by the testing fire, was a constant concern of Paul to so run the race as to obtain the prize.

1 Corinthians 11:31-33--There is only an indirect reference here to the judgment seat of Christ. "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." The believer has the opportunity to settle his accounts with the heavenly Father in this life. If he doesn't the Lord must exercise His judgment in the form of chastisement and this will doubtless bring loss of reward at the Bema of Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:58--After relating the glorious truths of the Rapture, Paul encourages the believer to always be abounding in the work of the Lord. Why? Because he knows that his labor is not in vain in the Lord. The Bema of Christ is the guarantee of this.

Ephesians 6:8, 9--At the Bema of Christ masters will have no advantage over slaves. There will be no respect of persons there.

Philippians 3:13, 14--Paul is here seen pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ, to be realized at the Rapture and the judgment seat of Christ.

Colossians 2:18--Paul enumerates in this chapter a number of things which may beguile the believer of his reward.

Colossians 3:24, 25--This passage reminds us that the believer who does wrong shall receive for the wrong which he has done. There will be loss of rewards but not of salvation.

In conclusion, it is most important to recognize the fact that the penal judgment for sin was borne completely by Christ and that none of it will ever fall upon the believer. The only judgment the believer will undergo is not designed to determine his eternal destiny, but his place of reward in his state of eternal life.

89 JUDGMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SECOND COMING

There are several distinct judgments which are said to occur in close relation to the second coming of Christ. Some of these judgments occur during the Tribulation period; others occur at the First Resurrection at the end of the Tribulation, and others at the very beginning of the Millennial Kingdom.

JUDGMENT OF MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT

"Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters" (Revelation 17:1). There has been much speculation concerning the identity of Babylon in this context. Some take it to be Rome as the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church. Alexander Hislop, for example, states "There never has been any difficulty in the mind of any enlightened Protestant in identifying the woman 'sitting on seven mountains,' and having on her forehead the name written, 'Mystery, Babylon the Great,' with the Roman apostacy."⁵⁴⁰ Joseph A. Seiss, on the other hand, gives evidence which proves to his satisfaction that Rome is not meant. He states: "Rome never was 'Babylon' in the sense of being 'the mother of the harlots and the abominations of the earth.' Her place in the chart of time renders that impossible."⁵⁴¹ In speaking of the views of others Seiss says:

Most of them say it is the city of Rome; some say it is Jerusalem; and a few say it is the island of England, which they take as the great center of an unclean system of union between Church and State. My own impressions are that a literal city is contemplated in the vision, but we must look for it in a different region of the world. However much Rome, Jerusalem, or states having national churches may be involved, they do not, and it is hard to see how they possibly can, fill out the picture of this final Babylon... there seems to be reason for the belief that the literal Babylon will be restored⁵⁴²

Wm. R. Newell argues that the Woman is Roman Catholicism and the great city is literal Babylon.⁵⁴³ This position is difficult to understand in the Light of Revelation 17:18: "And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth."

However we interpret this vision of the Apocalypse, it is certain that during the great Tribulation God is going to judge the false, idolatrous religious systems which competed for the souls of men, and He is going to smash the great

⁵⁴⁰ Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons* (London: Partridge Publishers, 1929), pp. 1, 2.

⁵⁴¹ Joseph A. Seiss, *Lectures on the Apocalypse* (New York: Charles C. Cook, 1917), Vol. III, p. 115.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 139, 140.

⁵⁴³ W M. R. Newell, *The Revelation* (Chicago: Grace Publications, Inc., 1941), pp. 263-269.

godless commercial enterprises which have been motivated by the love of money. The harlot and her great Babylon must be destroyed to make way for the other woman (redeemed Israel--[Revelation 12:1](#)) and her city (the new Jerusalem - [Revelation 21:2](#)).

JUDGMENT OF ISRAEL

God has executed numerous judgments upon the nation of Israel in the past, such as in the Babylonian captivity and the destruction of the temple by the Roman Titus. The prophets are full of warnings of impending judgments upon that nation. Some have been fulfilled; others await fulfillment during the great Tribulation, which is especially *the time of Jacob's trouble* ([Jeremiah 30:7](#)). It appears that there will be a regathering of Israel to their own land ([Deuteronomy 30: 1-8](#); [Isaiah 11:11, 12](#); [Jeremiah 23: 7, 8](#); [Ezekiel 37:21-28](#); [Matthew 23:37; 24:31](#)). This movement has, of course, already begun. These Israelites will return to their land in spiritual blindness and unbelief. In the judgments which God will bring upon Israel in the Tribulation He will purge out the rebels from their midst and will sanctify Himself in the eyes of the heathen and will cause Israel to know that He is indeed the Lord. These and other facts are clearly stated in [Ezekiel 20:33-44](#). Both [Ezekiel](#) and [Malachi](#) use the image of the refiner's furnace to depict the severe judgment of the Lord in purifying the Nation in that day ([Ezekiel 22:17-22](#); [Malachi 3:2-5](#)).

Chafer presents the idea that Old Testament Israelites will be resurrected to take part in this judgment. He states: "... the nation Israel must be judged, and it is reasonable to believe that this judgment will include all of that nation who in past dispensations have lived under the covenants and promises. Therefore a resurrection of those generations of Israel is called for and must precede their judgment."⁵⁴⁴ He seems to be saying that every Israelite, saved or unsaved, who ever lived under the covenants, will be resurrected and judged along with the living Israelites of the Tribulation. This view raises some serious questions. What will happen to the unsaved who are resurrected at that time? There is no intimation of a resurrection of the unsaved until after the thousand year Kingdom in the Revelation. Elsewhere Chafer teaches that the Old Testament saints will be raised at the time of the Rapture along with the Body of Christ. "The saved of this and past ages will be raised at the coming of Christ to receive His own ([1 Corinthians 15:23](#); [I Thessalonians 4:16, 17](#))."⁵⁴⁵ It is difficult to see how the Old Testament saints will be raised and taken to heaven at the beginning of the Tribulation, and then be raised again during the Tribulation along with all the unsaved Israelites of past ages.

The Scripture is clear that there will be no resurrection of the unsaved until the time of the Great White Throne Judgment. It is also clear that there will be a resurrection of Old Testament and Tribulation saints at the end of the Tribulation

⁵⁴⁴ Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 406.

⁵⁴⁵ Chafer, *Major Bible Themes* (Philadelphia: Sunday School Times Co., 1926), p. 295.

([Daniel 12:1-3](#); [Revelation 11:18](#); [20:4](#)). This is called the first resurrection, not because these are the first to be resurrected, for before this Christ and then the whole Body of Christ have been resurrected, but because it is the first of the two mentioned in the Revelation. There will be a judgment and rewarding of the Old Testament saints at this resurrection which will occur at the Second Coming of Christ to earth, according to Revelation 11:18. We agree with Chafer that the Old Testament saints whose expectation was to inherit the Messianic Kingdom will have this hope realized in resurrection. Having saints in resurrection and in natural bodies living together in the Kingdom poses a problem, but it should be remembered that Christ will eat and drink in the Kingdom in His resurrection body.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE BEAST AND THE FALSE PROPHET

This judgment occurs at the second coming of Christ as these two great political and religious leaders of the world mass their armies against Jerusalem ([Zechariah 14:1-3](#); [Revelation 16:13-16](#); [19:17-21](#)). Christ destroys these armies by the brightness of His coming and takes the Beast and the False Prophet and casts them both into the lake of fire. As far as we have any record in the Bible, these are the first to be cast into this place which has been prepared for the Devil and his angels. Although Satan is chained in the abyss at this time, his final judgment does not come until after the thousand year Kingdom has run its course.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS

It appears that although the armies of the nations are destroyed as Christ comes in flaming fire, the nations themselves will not be destroyed. According to [Matthew 25:31-46](#), after Christ returns to earth and sits upon the throne of His glory, He will gather all nations before Him. The nations will be judged, according to this context, upon the way in which they have dealt with the Lord's brethren according to the flesh, that is, with Israel. It should be remembered that in the beginning when God gave up the Gentile nations and chose Abraham and his seed as His people, He promised not only to bless Abraham and his seed, but "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee" (Genesis 12: 1-3). Thus it is that Christ pronounces the curse upon those nations that have mistreated "these my brethren" (Matthew 25:40).

God has judged nations in the past. Old Testament history is replete with instances of God's judgment upon [Babylon](#), [MedoPersia](#), [Greece](#), and [Rome](#). His judgment of nations does not necessarily affect the personal salvation of people within those nations. There may have been some saved people in Babylon when it was destroyed. And there doubtless will be some saved people in those nations which will be classified as "goats" in this coming judgment. God is going to save Israel as a nation, but there will be many apostate rebels in Israel who will be destroyed. In the present dispensation God's direct dealings are with individuals

and only with nations in a providential way. In Old Testament times He dealt with the nations directly as well as with individuals and He will do so again in the coming Kingdom. The "sheep" nations do not receive personal salvation simply because they were kind to the Jews, for no sinner will ever be justified by his works: these nations are permitted to enter into the earthly Kingdom of Christ as nations because of their treatment of Israel. As to individuals, no doubt all out of every nation who oppose and reject the Lordship and Kingship of Christ will be destroyed from off the face of the earth.

Postmillennialists and Amillennialists confuse this judgment of the nations with the final judgment at the Great White Throne. There is no other place in their scheme of eschatology for a judgment. Berkhof objects to making this a separate judgment before the millennium on the basis that Scripture speaks of *the day* and not *the days* of judgment, that some passages associate both the just and the unjust appearing together in judgment, that the judgment of the wicked is presented as a concomitant of the parousia, and that God never judges nations as nations where eternal issues are involved, but only individuals.⁵⁴⁶ All of these objections are meaningful to an Amillennialist but they pose no problem for the Premillennialist. To begin with, *the day* of judgment of which Berkhof speaks is the judgment of the dead. This judgment of the nations is plainly a judgment of that one generation of people who are still alive upon the earth when Christ returns. There is not a dead one involved. As to both the just and the unjust appearing together in the same judgment, it is admitted that they do in this particular judgment, and further, we have seen that this particular judgment is a concomitant of the coming of the Lord. We have already commented on the fact that God does not judge nations as nations on eternal issues.

There is one problem, however, concerning this judgment. As a result of the judgment we read: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:46). It appears upon the surface that the unrighteous depart immediately into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels (vs. 41). There is apparently no place in the scheme of the book of Revelation for the casting of these people into the lake of fire before the millennium. However, it is not necessary to suppose that they are immediately cast into that place. They are judged as to their fitness to enter the earthly kingdom, and being found unfit are destroyed. They are then in the realm of the dead and will be in that company to be raised after the thousand years have expired ([Revelation 20:5](#)).

90 UNIVERSALISM AND CONDITIONAL IMMORTALITY

Universalism, the doctrine that all will finally be saved, has taken on numerous forms. It has usually resulted from a direct rejection of Scriptural teaching on the subject. Shedd remarks that "Universalism has a slender exegetical basis. The

⁵⁴⁶ Berkhof, *op. cit.*, pp. 730, 731.

Biblical data are found to be unmanageable, and resort is had to human sentiment and self-interest. Its advocates quote sparingly from scripture.⁵⁴⁷

There is another form of Universalism which has had a much greater appeal to Bible-believing Christians, which is known as Universal Reconciliation. On the surface this system of teaching claims the utmost accuracy in its translation of the Scripture (*The Concordant Version*), pretends to be the only one that truly exalts the work of Christ (by showing that through his death all without exception will be reconciled to God), and has the further appeal that a dispensational approach to the Scriptures is employed. This school of thought is headed by Mr. A. E. Knoch, editor of *The Concordant Version*. There are several basic tenets in his system, of some of which the average reader would not be immediately aware. Basic to this teaching are the following points:

1. The absolute predestination of God. This means that everything that comes to pass is the direct will of God. God is the author and originator of sin. The following quotations from the notes in *The Concordant Version* on John 9 will make this evident:

Evil and sin are not outside of God's plan. They are essential to the highest happiness of the creature and the greatest glory to the Creator This is true of all evil and all sin. God has introduced it into the world in order that He may display His attributes in coping with it and in removing it when its mission has been accomplished God's heart would always remain hidden apart from evil and sin It is useless for us to blame our parents for our sin, for they also inherited it. Even Adam could point to Eve and Eve to the serpent. We should rather thank God for it, and rejoice in the glory that it brings to God.⁵⁴⁸

2. Satan did not fall but was created by God as an evil spirit. Again quoting from *The Concordant Version* on John 8:

All sin, in the Scriptures seems to be traced back to the Slanderer or Satan. Adam sinned at his suggestion. He is the father of all that is false. Being a creature of God, it has been a perplexing problem to account for him without incriminating God Himself. It is usual to insist that he was created perfect and, at a later stage, fell into sin. But this is no real relief. The impulse to sin, in that case, came from without instead of within, and it, in turn, demands an explanation. The Slanderer sinned from the beginning. He was a murderer from the beginning. The Scriptures plainly teach that he was created a Slanderer and a Satan.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁷ Shedd, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 674.

⁵⁴⁸ A. E. Knoch, *The Sacred Scriptures - Concordant Version* (Los Angeles: The Concordant Publishing Concern, 1926).

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

3. Since God is the author of sin, and since He created Satan as a devil and a deceiver, and since He sent Satan purposely to deceive our first parents and cause them to sin, God is directly responsible for the sins of all mankind. Therefore God is responsible for saving all mankind, and even Satan himself. Although Mr. Knoch talks about salvation by Grace, his system requires that God save His creatures as a matter of justice.

4. In order to satisfy justice God sent His Son to die for the sins of the world. The Son is not God but is the first being which God created. It is God's will that only a limited number of sinners be saved in this dispensation. The lost die in unbelief and are in unbroken oblivion until the great white throne. There they will be judged, then gently and painlessly lulled into oblivion again for the duration of the age of the new heavens and the new earth, after which they will be revived and reconciled to God, that God may be all and in all.

5. Basic to this scheme is the view that the Bible never speaks of eternity. The Hebrew and Greek expressions which are translated *for ever* and *ever*, and *eternal* are said to mean limited periods of time. Thus the so-called punishment of the wicked is only for a limited period, after which they will be saved.

6. The name, Universal Reconciliation, comes from Mr. Knoch's translation of Col. 1:20: "through Him to reconcile the universe to Him.. ."

Having given these six tenets of Universal Reconciliationism we will proceed to give a brief Scriptural answer to each in order.

1. Such passages as Ephesians 1:11: "according to the purpose of him who worketh *all things* after the counsel of his own will," are forced to support the idea that God created the Devil as a devil, that he causes man to commit every sin that has ever been committed; in fact, that *all things* in the above verse is a universal all without exception. More will be said about the word *all* under number 6. It would seem that just one verse, such as James 1:13, would be sufficient answer to this whole contention: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." If Mr. Knoch and his followers are right on this point, then Adam was right in blaming God for his sin. There is surely nothing in the context of Ephesians 1:11 to suggest that the Apostle means that God works sin; in fact, just the opposite is the case: He is working to the end that "we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." And instead of thanking God for sin and rejoicing in it, we should do as every man of God in Scripture did: "I will be sorry for my sin" (Psalm 38:18).

2. Knoch appeals to John 8:44 as proof that God created Satan as a devil: "He was a murderer from the beginning." But what beginning was this, the beginning of Satan or the beginning of human history? The word *murderer* is the key here. It is the word *anthropoktonos* meaning man-slayer. Satan could not have been a

manslayer before there was a man to slay. Therefore the beginning refers to Satan's tempting of Adam and leading him to sin. Christ spoke of Satan's fall ([Luke 10:18](#)), which would have been impossible had Satan been created a fallen creature. Such passages as [Isaiah 14:12-20](#) and [Ezekiel 28:11-19](#) could only refer in their ultimate sense to Satan-Lucifer, the shining one; the covering cherub; the one who was perfect in his ways from the day that he was created until iniquity was found in him.

3. Although Mr. Knoch does not state that God is forced to provide salvation in order to maintain His justice, this is the only logical conclusion which can be drawn from his premise. Grace means that God was not necessitated or obligated in any way to provide salvation for any of His creatures. He provided none for the angels which fell and yet He is infinitely just and righteous.

4. The Deity of Christ, which is denied by Knoch, has been fully expounded under the section on The Person of the Savior. Knoch's contention that it is God's will for only a limited number to be saved in this dispensation is contradicted by Paul's words, which Knoch uses elsewhere to try to prove his universalism: God "will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Peter likewise states: "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Both of these passages express God's will for this present dispensation, but Knoch admits that not all are saved in this dispensation. Knoch has to rip these verses out of their context and make them apply only to a time thousands of years in the future. Knoch further contends that the New earth and heavens will come to an end, along with the life of the believer and the punishment of the unbeliever. The Scriptures, on the other hand, present these things as abiding, unchanging, and as long-lasting as God Himself ([1 John 2:17](#); [2 Peter 3:13](#)).

5. The Concordant group teaches that all time is comprehended in five eons or ages:

(a) The eon of the original creation, from creation to the restoration of creation in Genesis 1:3-17.

(b) The pre-Noahic eon, from Adam to the flood.

(c) The present evil eon, from the flood to the second coming of Christ.

(d) The millennial eon, the thousand year kingdom.

(e) The eon of the new heavens and the new earth.

While Knoch admits that God and the creation will no doubt continue to exist after the end of the fifth eon, he denies that the Bible contains any revelation about eternity. What is usually called *eternal life*, he calls *eonian life*, or life for the age. He contends that wherever the Hebrew *olam* or the Greek *aionios* occur we are to understand a limited period of time with a beginning and an ending. It is upon this premise that he argues that everlasting or eonian punishment will come to an end. Of course, he does not believe that the unsaved will be suffering punishment all during the eon, for he teaches that the lake of fire is oblivion:

rather, he holds that the unsaved will be in oblivion all during the fifth eon. He likewise holds that *eternal* or *eonian* life will come to an end, although he believes there will be some kind of existence after that. So also at the end of the eons God will cease to be the *everlasting* or *eonian* God.

In deciding the actual meaning of these words it is a matter of pitting one man against all of the recognized authorities on the Greek language. Among other boasts which are made for the Concordant Version in its foreword is this one:

This plan gives the Scriptures to the people, and removes the necessity of relying on human learning or authority in matters of gravest moment, where it is of supreme importance that they procure the counsel of God, unclouded by creeds and traditions which corrupt the current texts.... It is a supreme satisfaction to know that any fact in divine revelation can be checked at will.⁵⁵⁰

The student is thus told that he can throw away all lexicons and grammars and other authorities and rely solely upon the Concordant Version to learn any fact of divine revelation. For such as submit to this dictum no answer can be given. But for those who still have an open mind the standard lexicons are most revealing on this point.

Of special interest is the statement from *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, by Moulton and Milligan, which gives the meaning of the vernacular Greek of the first century as illustrated from the Papyri. Under *aionios* it is stated:

Without pronouncing any opinion on the special meaning which theologians have found for this word, we must note that outside the NT, in the vernacular as in the classical Greek (see Grimm-Thayer), it never loses the sense of *perpetuus* In general the word depicts that of which the horizon is not in view, whether the horizon be at an infinite distance, as in Catullus' poignant lines-

Nobis cum semel occidit brevis lux,
Nox est *perpetua* una dormienda,
or whether it lies no farther than the span of a Caesar's life.⁵⁵¹

Thus it is clear that any first century reader of the New Testament would have understood *aionios* to mean perpetual or eternal. It is true that *aion* may mean a person's life-span or age, but it is equally true that it may mean time extended indefinitely. All of the lexicons bear out this meaning. In fact, our English word *eternal* is derived from the Latin *aeternus*, *aevum*, meaning *age*, the equivalent of the Greek *aion*.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵⁵¹ James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), p. 16.

It is very important to have a proper concept of time and eternity. Space, matter, and time are all involved in creation. It would seem impossible to have any one without the others. Before God created there was no space, matter, or time. As long as creation endures all three of these things will endure. There can be no end to time without the blotting out and reducing to nothingness of everything that God has created. Before time began, God existed as a timeless Being. The beginning and the end are the same to Him. But God's creatures exist in time and as long as they exist time will exist. Methods of measuring time may change, but essentially time is the possibility of one thing happening after another. It is impossible to conceive that a time will ever come when there will be no succession of events. With this fact in mind, the only way man can express eternity is to speak of time rolling on in endless succession, and this is exactly what the Scripture does when it uses such expressions as *the eons of the eons*. Needless to say, the statement in Revelation 10:6, "that there should be time no longer" does not mean that time itself was to cease, but that there should be no further delay.

6. Finally, what is the meaning of the expression: "to reconcile all things unto himself... whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven?" Does this mean that finally every one including Satan will be brought into a saving relationship with God? The word *all* is seldom if ever used in an all-inclusive, universal sense. Even in a passage like [I Corinthians 15:27](#) Paul has to explain that there is an exception. It is not true that all without exception have sinned, for Christ did not sin. When God speaks of the restoration of all things ([Acts 3:21](#)), He limits the all to those things which were spoken by the prophets. In [Colossians 1:20](#) He limits the all things that are reconciled to things in heaven and things in earth. He says nothing here about things *under the earth* (cf. [Philippians 2:10](#)). And further, He does not say He is going to reconcile *all people*, but *all things*, and He does not say that He is going to *save all people*, but that He is going to *reconcile all things*. When Christ said that He would draw all men unto Himself ([John 12:32](#)), the context makes it clear that He meant *all men without distinction* and not all men without exception, for certain Greeks wanted to see Him but until His death on the Cross His ministry was only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Again in [Ephesians 1:9, 10](#) the gathering of all things together in Christ is limited to things in heaven and things in earth.

An example of how the Concordant Version translates inconsistently in order to keep from contradicting its own teaching is seen in its handling of Matthew 17:11, where Christ said: "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things." If the *all* of Colossians 1:20 means all without exception why does it not mean it here? Why put the *universe* there and only *all* here? The answer is simple. Elias is coming at the beginning of the Millennium to restore all things, but according to Concordant teaching the universal restoration is not to take place until after the Millennium and the eon of the new heavens and new earth. It would not do to have two universal restorations.

On the other side of the ledger are the many statements concerning the plight of the unsaved. "The wrath of God abideth on him" and "He shall not see life" (John 3:36). Will final salvation be the end of the unbeliever according to [2 Corinthians 11:15](#); [Philippians 3:19](#); [Hebrews 6:8](#); [1 Peter 4:17](#)? No, even after the new heavens and new earth appear we read: "But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

CONDITIONAL IMMORTALITY

In general, those who teach conditional immortality agree with Universal Reconciliationists up to the point where unbelievers are cast into the lake of fire. Here their philosophy and outlook change. The second death is annihilation and a point of no return. When man sinned he became mortal. No man has immortality by nature. Receiving immortality is conditioned upon receiving salvation. Thus only the saved have immortality and will live on for eternity. The unsaved will die as animals. They will receive eternal punishment (by being annihilated), but they will not be punished eternally.

This type of teaching has the same appeal as committing suicide does to the one who thinks to end it all. Hell is no longer a place of punishment; it is simply the executioner and in an instant it is all over. This teaching also appeals to those who cannot understand how people could be happy in heaven if they knew others were suffering in hell. To destroy all of the ungodly with one fell swoop and get them out of the way seems to solve the problem.

Actually the problem is not with immortality. Mortality and immortality have to do with the body, not simply with continued existence. The believer at present has mortality. At the time of the rapture he will put on immortality ([1 Corinthians 15:53](#)). But we have shown in a previous chapter that should the believer die before the Rapture occurs his spirit and soul will continue to exist in a conscious state with Christ. The unsaved dead are likewise in a conscious state in hades. Thus it is that the doctrine of conditional immortality or annihilationism is almost always associated with the teaching that death is unconsciousness, soul-sleep, extinction, oblivion, or annihilation. Some may suppose that the sinner will suffer for a time in the lake of fire to pay for his sins before he is annihilated, but then the question arises: If the sinner has paid for his sins, why annihilate him? For one who believes that death destroys the sentient part of man's being, it is not a big step to embrace annihilationism. Conversely, for one who believes that man maintains some form of conscious existence in the state of physical death, there is very little likelihood that he will see any rationale in the doctrine of conditional immortality.

91 THE FINAL RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT

Of necessity much has already been stated in distinguishing the various resurrections and judgments of the Scripture. With evidence previously given it should not be necessary here to do more than state the fact of the final resurrection and judgment and to then enlarge upon this theme. This truth is set forth in its clearest details in Revelation 20:5, 11-15:

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hades delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every man according to their works. And death and hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

A GENERAL RESURRECTION

This final resurrection and judgment may be called *general* only in the sense that it includes all of the unsaved dead of all time. There is no record that any unsaved dead are either raised or judged prior to this, but there is great evidence that all of the saved dead are raised and judged before this. Whereas it is very important to know *the when* of these various resurrections and judgments, the all important truth is the fact that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust, and that every man will someday have to give account to God. Upon this fact all orthodox theologians are agreed, but as we have seen, those who do not recognize the dispensational principle throw all of these distinct events into one great final assize.

A LITERAL OR SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION?

Our first great concern is to make sure what is meant by "the first resurrection" and "the rest of the dead." Amillennialists go to great extremes to spiritualize these expressions. Hodge goes so far as to suggest that just as John came in the spirit of Elijah, "we should understand the Apostle here predicting a new race of men were to arise filled with the spirit of the martyrs..."⁵⁵² He does not venture a guess as to the meaning of "the rest of the dead." Berkhof says of the first resurrection: "In all probability the expression refers to the entrance of the souls

⁵⁵² Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 842.

of the saints upon the glorious state of life with Christ at death,⁵⁵³ thus making the first resurrection to be death. Shedd makes the first resurrection to be synonymous with the regeneration of the soul, and then he says of the rest of the dead: "The remainder of the believing dead do not 'live [and reign with Christ] ' until the final consummation at the end of the world. The martyrs are honored above the mass of believers, by a co-reign with the Redeemer during the millennium. The church generally does not participate in the triumph of its Head until after the millennium and final judgment."⁵⁵⁴ But if the first resurrection is spiritual and means the regeneration of the soul, how does it happen that only the martyrs take part in it, and the great majority of the regenerated ones are classified as the rest of the dead? Every attempt to spiritualize the first resurrection has resulted in multiplied contradictions and confusion. Taken at its face value this passage tells us that the righteous dead are literally resurrected at the beginning of the thousand years, so that *the rest of the dead* must refer to all of the unrighteous dead who are left in the grave. If this is true, then it is an established fact that all of the unsaved dead will appear before the great white throne, and that none of the righteous dead (barring the death of righteous people during the millennium) will be there.

NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION BODY

The question then arises, What will be the nature of the resurrection body of the unsaved? Will it be different from that of the saved? The unsaved will be cast bodily into the lake of fire. Will their bodies be destroyed in the fire so that they go back into a disembodied state? Shedd says in answer to these questions:

That the resurrection body of both the good and the evil will have the common characteristic of being destitute of fleshly appetites and passions, and will be a "spiritual" in distinction from a "natural" body, is proved by Matt. 22:30, "They neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God," 1 Cor. 15:50, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God;" Rev. 7:16, "They hunger no more, neither thirst any more."⁵⁵⁵

Shedd goes on to say that while the resurrection bodies of the saints will be celestial, glorified, and resplendent, those of the unsaved will not be. He seems to take the view, therefore, that essentially all resurrection bodies are alike but that those of the unsaved will not manifest the glory of those of the saved.

Strong quotes Phelps, who expresses somewhat the same view:

The bodies of the wicked live again as well as those of the righteous. You have therefore a spiritual body, inhabited and used, and therefore

⁵⁵³ Berkhof, *op. cit.*, p. 727.

⁵⁵⁴ Shedd, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 645.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid*, Vol. II, p. 652.

tortured, by a guilty soul,-a body, perfected in its sensibilities, inclosing and expressing a soul matured in its depravity.⁵⁵⁶

Those who believe in any form of annihilation of the unsaved dead must logically think of the resurrection bodies of the unsaved as simply the restoration to the natural body which man presently possesses, since they suppose that the body is burned up and destroyed as soon as it touches the lake of fire. There are others who suppose that the body is destroyed but that the soul continues on in a disembodied state, as it had done previously before resurrection.

Thiessen rather wisely states:

Thus it is clear that the unsaved too will be raised bodily. Curiosity would indeed pry into the nature of this resurrection body, but the silence of Scripture on this point indicates that we should be content with such things as have been revealed, and leave the question where the Scriptures leave it, i.e., unanswered.⁵⁵⁷

SUBJECTS OF THE FINAL RESURRECTION

Although we do not understand the exact nature of the resurrection body of the unsaved or of the environment in which they stand when earth and heaven have fled away, we do know that all of the unsaved dead will stand before God in this final judgment. The question may be asked, Will there not be saved ones also in this judgment, since it is stated that the book of life is opened and only those whose names were not found written there were cast into the second death? The answer to this question depends largely upon our view of life in the Millennium. There will be death in the millennium, but if only the unsaved meet death during that time, there will be only unsaved people left in the state of death at the end of that period, since all of the righteous dead were raised at the second coming of Christ. Since there is no mention of any righteous ones being found in this final resurrection, it would seem safe to conclude that there are none. And surely if all of the saved of all ages were present at this judgment, as Post- and Amillennialists insist, we could expect to read at least one word about them, but instead there is only the account of the condemnation of the wicked.

THE JUDGE

The Judge, of course, is God, but Scripture indicates that it will be God the Son who will be the final judge. Only the omniscient God is capable of passing final judgment and determining the eternal consequences of men's actions. But this judge will not be some far-off Deity, separated by an infinity from finite man: He will be the God-man, Christ Jesus. Although Christ said: "I judge no man" (John 8:15), He did not mean that He would not in the future judge men, for He

⁵⁵⁶ Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 1034.

⁵⁵⁷ Thiessen, *op. cit.*, p. 493.

also stated: "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22). Peter declared of Christ: "And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and the dead" (Acts 10:42). Paul testified to the same things: "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). Every knee will bow and every tongue will someday confess, not simply that God is God, but that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father ([Philippians 2:10](#)).

THE JUDGMENT

The wages of sin in this present state of existence is death ([Romans 6:23](#)). The final penalty to be meted out to the unsaved who have experienced the first death is the second death. The execution of the penalty upon the unsaved as a result of their judgment is the casting of them into the lake of fire which is the second death. But what is the meaning of this? Men have tried in every conceivable way to ameliorate the final state of the unsaved by appealing to the love, the mercy, the compassion, the kindness, and the justice of God, trying to convince themselves and others either that the lake of fire is simply a figure of speech or that it is a painless oblivion. For example, A. E. Knoch, who holds out the hope that after the lake of fire experience all rational beings will be raised up and reconciled to God, has this to say about the lake of fire:

The means for this is the lake of fire. Let no one shrink with horror at this fact, as though it entailed excessive suffering and agony. A death by fire is not necessarily painful The lake of fire is not presented as a place of suffering, but a place of death, in connection with the great white throne judgment, Every court has some means of inflicting the extreme penalty, such as hanging or electrocution. They use the least painful process. The lake of fire is the executioner of the great white throne. Death should be instantaneous and almost painless.⁵⁵⁸

This quotation shows to what lengths men will go in order to circumvent the plain teaching of the Bible. What a meaningless and useless exercise on the part of God this is to take the dead who are already out of existence according to Mr. Knoch, and bring them back into existence simply for the purpose of painlessly putting them out of existence again. And what shall be said of his statement that the lake of fire is not presented as a place of suffering when we read that Satan, and the Beast, and the False Prophet shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever ([Rev. 20:10](#)), as well as all of those who receive the mark of the Beast ([Revelation 14:10, 11](#))? And we might further ask whether our Lord told the people that God would make the punishment of the ungodly as painless as

⁵⁵⁸ A. E. Knoch, *The Unveiling of Jesus Christ* (Los Angeles: The Concordant Publishing Concern, N.D.), p. 529.

possible, or whether He threatened weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and everlasting punishment ([Matthew 13:42; 25:30, 46](#))?

There has been much speculation as to the nature of the fire. Hodge says:

There seems to be no more reason for supposing that the fire spoken of in Scripture is to be literal fire, than that the worm that never dies is a literal worm. The devil and his angels who are to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, and whose doom the impenitent are to share, have no material bodies to be acted upon by elemental fire.⁵⁵⁹

Berkhof says:

Some deny that there will be a literal fire, because this could not affect spirits like Satan and his demons. But how do we know this? Our body certainly works on our soul in some mysterious way. There will be some positive punishment corresponding to our bodies.⁵⁶⁰

Of one thing we may be sure: whatever the nature of the fire, whether literal or figurative, it represents a suffering comparable to that inflicted by literal fire upon our natural bodies. There are many kinds of fire known to man, all the way from a flame which can be held in the hand without discomfort to the 16 million degree heat of nuclear fusion. God can undoubtedly prepare a fire which can affect the spirit beings like Satan and the resurrection bodies of the unsaved the same as natural fire affects our natural bodies.

The duration of the punishment is said to be for ever and ever. Since there are those who contend that the words translated *forever* and *eternal* in Scripture do not mean everlasting, it will be necessary to look more closely at these words in order to establish the doctrine of eternal life and eternal punishment. Almost all of the New Testament statements on this subject are based upon the noun *don* (age) or the adjective *aionios*. *Aion* is used 104 times in the New Testament and is translated *forever* 53 times, *world* 40 times, *everlasting* once, *never* 6 times, *ages* twice, *eternal* twice. *Aoinios* occurs 71 times and is translated *everlasting* 25 times, *eternal* 43 times, *forever* once, *since the world began* once, and *before the world began* once.

The primary meaning of *aion* is age or a human lifetime. There is no doubt but that this word and its Hebrew equivalent, *olam*, may represent a limited period of time. The bondsman was to serve his master forever (for *olam*, Exodus 21:6), which means, of course, as long as the servant lived. Human beings do die, but if the servant in this case never died, his servitude would never end. Therefore the context must determine to a large extent the meaning of this word. Take, for example, the statement of Gabriel to Mary concerning the child she was to bear:

⁵⁵⁹ Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 868.

⁵⁶⁰ Berkhof, *op. cit.*, p. 736.

"He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever (into the aions), and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:33). Here it is very evident that "unto the aions" means time without end. Even Knoch is forced to translate this: "He shall be reigning over the house of Jacob for the eons, and of His kingdom there shall be no consummation," and his theory forces him to conclude that the reign of Christ will be "a long but limited period," but His "kingdom itself is endless." Thus Knoch is faced with the ridiculous situation of Christ's kingdom going on for ever and ever but without any subjects or any king; for he plainly declares that the life of the subjects of that kingdom, and the length of the reign of Christ are both limited and will come to an end.

In order to have a proper concept of time it is necessary to understand that time is a necessary part of creation, just as space is. Space and time cannot exist independently. There was no space or time before creation, and as long as creation lasts space and time will last. As long as there is the possibility of the succession of events there will be time. Our only concept of eternity is duration infinitely extended. And what better way to express this concept than that which the Bible employs: using the word which indicates an indefinite period of duration, and then multiplying that word in such expressions as, "for the ages of the ages," or "in the ages to come?"

Cremer shows how the word *aion* developed to mean eternity:

In early Greek especially, and still also in the Attic, *aion* signifies the duration of human life as limited to a certain space of time From this original limitation of the conception to human life, it may be explained how it sometimes denotes the *space* of a human life, a *human generation*,.... Accordingly, the expansion of the conception to time unlimited (eternity *a parte ante* and *a parte post*) was easy, for it simply involved the abstraction of the idea of limitation, and thus the word came to signify unlimited duration.⁵⁶¹

The New Testament also uses other words to express the idea of endlessness or eternity. There is the adverb *pantote*, meaning always, ever: "so shall we *ever* be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17); "seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). Another adverb is *aei* which signifies continuous time, unceasingly, perpetually, from which the adjective *aidios* is formed: "even his *eternal* power and Godhead" (Romans 1:20).

Knoch's theory of Universal Reconciliation stands or falls on the meaning of *aion*. We believe that there is overwhelming evidence both from Scripture and from Greek usage to prove that God is eternal, that the new life in Christ Jesus is eternal, and that the punishment of the unsaved is eternal. If any one of these is

⁵⁶¹ Hermann Cremer, *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1954), pp. 74, 75.

limited in duration, so also are the others, for exactly the same expressions are used to describe the duration of each.

That there will be degrees of punishment of the unsaved is plainly taught in the Scripture: hence, the lake of fire could not mean annihilation, for there can be no degrees of non-entity. The fact that every man will be judged according to his works ([Revelation 20:12](#)), is sufficient proof of degrees of punishment. Christ laid down a principle of God's judgment in Luke 12:47, 48: "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required."

Any attempt to minimize God's judgment of sin only serves to minimize the importance and degree of the sufferings of Christ to satisfy God's holiness. If the punishment for sin is simply the painless snuffing out of existence, then surely all that Christ needed to suffer was no more than that. We cannot comprehend all of God's ways, and we may have the natural desire to see all men finally saved, but we cannot contradict the plain teaching of the Word of God. Judgment is God's strange work ([Isaiah 28:21](#)), but as we understand the Scripture, there is nothing awaiting those who have rejected God's grace and mercy but eternal separation from God in a state of conscious suffering.

92 THE CONSUMMATION

By the Consummation is meant the eternal state. It is the final picture that the Bible gives of the state of creation after the whole drama of God's redemptive program has been completed. It is, we believe, what Paul calls "the dispensation of the fulness of the times" (Ephesians 1:10), when God heads up in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. It is synonymous with the new heavens and the new earth for which Peter was looking ([2 Peter 3:13](#)), and which are seen in Revelation 21 and 22. The Consummation will come after the last enemy, death, is completely robbed of its power ([1 Corinthians 15:26](#)).

A number of questions naturally arise about the consummation. What relationship will the Persons of the Godhead have to the Creation? What dispensational distinctions will exist, if any, in that day? Where will the dwelling place of the redeemed be? There are two significant passages in the New Testament on the Consummation, one from the pen of Paul and the other from that of John. Paul's treatment deals with the first question raised.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE PERSONS OF THE GODHEAD IN ETERNITY

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

The end or consummation in this passage is the time of the final resurrection and judgment, when the last enemy to be destroyed is cast into the lake of fire. It is the end of the old creation and the beginning of the new. It comprehends the millennial reign of Christ during which He has put down all rule and authority and has put everything in subjection under His feet. His reigning up to this point has been called His mediatorial reign. The mediatorial form of His kingdom will continue only as long as there are powers yet to be subjected. When the last enemy has been subdued there will no longer be a need for this kind of rule, just as we would see no need of a police force in that place where thieves do not break through and steal. When this condition finally prevails, the Son will deliver up the kingdom to God the Father and He will be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all. On this last point commentators have given a variety of views.

Chafer gives an extended quotation from George N. H. Peters in which a number of views are discussed. Peters concludes:

One thing must be self-evident to the believer, that this passage, so difficult of interpretation (universally so acknowledged), ought not to be pressed against the testimony of a *multitude* of other passages, either to the separation of the Christ, or to the diminishing of any honor, etc., conferred upon Him. The *honor* of both the Father and the Son are identified with the perpetuity of this Theocratic Kingdom, for it is just as much the Father's Kingdom as it is the Son's-the most perfect union existing between them constituting a *Oneness in rule and dominion*.⁵⁶²

In other words, the reign of Christ will not come to an end, nor will His kingdom come to an end. "He shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:15), and "of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:33). It is only that the form of reign will change. Neither will the Son be any less God than He now is. Peters quotes Bush who shows that the expression (*tote kai*) "then also" means, then, just as now, the Son will be subject unto the Father. That God may be all in all as translated by Alford: "that God (alone) may be all things in all.--i.e. recognized as sole Lord and King."⁵⁶³

⁵⁶² Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 376.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 375.

DISPENSATIONAL DISTINCTIONS IN ETERNITY

It should be evident that many of the dispensational distinctions to be found in the Bible concern differences in the outward religious program of the various peoples of God. In eternity we are not to suppose that some will be under innocence, others under law, etc. All of these different systems will have been fulfilled and done away. The only distinctions which will continue on into eternity will concern the different companies of the redeemed, which will undoubtedly maintain their identity. For example, during this present dispensation God is calling out the Church which is the Body of Christ. This Body will not be complete until the time of the Rapture. Surely it will not be dissolved and lose its identity at the moment it is completed. Nor will the Body of Christ be dissolved at the end of the Millennium. There is every reason to suppose that the Body of Christ will have an eternal relationship as such to Christ. The Body members were chosen and predestinated before the foundation of the world and are a part of God's eternal purpose ([Ephesians 1:4, 5; 3:11](#)). If this distinction is maintained there is no reason to suppose that Israel will not also be preserved in its identity throughout eternity. God promised through Jeremiah: "If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever" (ch. 31:36). The very fact that the gates of the eternal city, the New Jerusalem, bear the names of the twelve tribes of Israel is sufficient proof that Israel will be a distinct people in eternity. Just as the personal identity of every child of God will be maintained in eternity, so the identity of the various companies of the redeemed will be, and yet all of them together will comprise the one great family of God.

THE DWELLING PLACES OF ETERNITY

Most theologians recognize but two destinations in eternity: heaven and hell. However, Scripture speaks not only of these two, but of a city which comes down out of heaven, and also of a renewed earth. Shedd has a short chapter on Heaven as the home of the redeemed in which he states: "this world is not to be either annihilated or destroyed, but renovated for the abode of the redeemed."⁵⁶⁴ He gives no explanation of this but it would appear that he is saying that heaven is going to be on the renovated earth.

Berkhof mentions the new heavens and the new earth and the new Jerusalem, and then states: "Scripture gives us reasons to believe that the righteous will not only inherit heaven, but the entire new creation, Matthew 5:5; Revelation 21:1-3."⁵⁶⁵ He apparently feels that all of the redeemed will have access to all of God's universe with heaven as their permanent address.

⁵⁶⁴ Shedd, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 665.

⁵⁶⁵ Berkhof, *op. cit.*, p. 737.

Strong answers the question: "Is this earth to be the heaven of the saints?" with these two statements:

First, -that the earth is to be purified by fire, and perhaps prepared to be the abode of the saints,--although this last is not rendered certain by the Scriptures.

Secondly,--that this fitting up of the earth for man's abode, even if it were declared in Scripture, would not render it certain that the saints are to be confined to these narrow limits (John 14:2). It seems rather to be intimated that the effect of Christ's work will be to bring the redeemed into union and intercourse with other orders of intelligence, from communion with whom they are now shut out by sin (Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 1:20).⁵⁶⁶

Chafer, Thiessen, and others who recognize the dispensational principle understand that there will be redeemed companies in heaven, in the New Jerusalem, and on the new earth, although not all are agreed just who will inhabit each. Thiessen says of the New Jerusalem, "it would seem to be the home of the Church," and that "Perhaps this is the city that Abraham looked for,"⁵⁶⁷ although he does not believe that Abraham is a member of the Church. Chafer teaches that the Church is the Bride and that the city is called the Bride "probably because she has some superior right to it." However, in correspondence to [Hebrews 12:22-24](#), he teaches that besides the Church there will be in the city the company of just men made perfect, which would include Israel.⁵⁶⁸ He says that the city is to be considered as "something apart from heaven," and yet he says that "heaven will be, as now, the abode of the saints, while earth (the new earth) will be the abode of men." But if the saints of Israel and of the Body are in the New Jerusalem it is not clear what saints will be left to inhabit heaven.

Bullinger teaches that the nation of Israel is the wife of Christ during the Millennium ([Revelation 19:7](#)) and that afterwards in the New Creation the Israel of "the heavenly calling" (Hebrews 3:1) will be the Bride, the New Jerusalem, which will take the place of the millennial Jerusalem on earth.⁵⁶⁹ The Body Church will be in heaven, and the redeemed nations will inhabit the new earth.

SUMMARY

In order to arrive at a proper understanding of the various relationships which will prevail in the Consummation it is necessary to have a broad perspective of Scriptural facts.

⁵⁶⁶ Strong, *op. cit.*, pp. 1032, 1033.

⁵⁶⁷ Thiessen, *op. cit.*, p. 517.

⁵⁶⁸ Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 367.

⁵⁶⁹ *Companion Bible*, Appendix note 197.

1. The Church which is the Body of Christ is not the Bride, the Lamb's wife, of [Revelation 21:9](#). If there is any identification of the Bride it is with the Twelve Tribes of Israel (21:12). It is true that all of God's saints in all dispensations have a love relationship with the Lord, which can be likened to the love between man and woman, which consummates in the marriage relationship. Old Testament Israel had such a relationship ([Isaiah 54:4-6](#); [Hosea 2:2, 7, 16, 19, 20](#)). The members of the Body have such a relationship ([Romans 7:4](#); [2 Corinthians 11:2](#); [Ephesians 5:23-33](#)). These Scriptures show similarities but they do not prove identity. All non-dispensationalists, recognizing, as they do, only one Church throughout all dispensations, naturally make this one Church to be the Bride. And rather strangely, most regular dispensationalists do the same thing. Scofield, for example, argues that Israel in the Old Testament is the wife of Jehovah and that the Church is the Bride of Christ,⁵⁷⁰ thinking thereby to relieve Christ of a bigamous situation of having two brides or wives. But in his footnote in his *Reference Bible* on page 1145 he argues that Christ is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. Chafer takes the same position.⁵⁷¹

2. The Church which is His Body is the fulness of Christ ([Ephesians 1:23](#)). The fulness or *pleroma* is that which fills up to completion, the complement. Christ, the Head, and the Church, the Body, make up the *Mystical Christ*. Redeemed Israel will be the Bride of Christ. It should be evident from this that in the final consummation there will be a very close relation between the Christ, of which the Church is a part, and Israel the wife. Husband and wife are separate and distinct in one sense; yet in another they are one. True dispensationalism will recognize both the distinctions and the unity.

3. In the unit on Angelology it was shown that Scripture teaches that there is a heavenly counterpart for the governments of this world. Satan's principalities and powers have usurped this position and at present exercise their control of worldly governments. But the day is coming when there will be war in heaven, and Satan, "which deceiveth the whole world," will be cast out into the earth with all of his angels ([Revelation 12:7-9](#)). It is thought by many that the members of the Body of Christ, during the Millennium and perhaps throughout eternity, will occupy this sphere once held by Satan and his hosts. The Church will share in the heavenly reign of Christ over His Kingdom.

4. The Body of Christ is ever to be with Christ ([1 Thessalonians 4:17](#)). Christ and the members of His Body will have glorified, resurrection bodies which will not know the limitations of space and matter which we experience today. Christ will reign upon the throne of David during the Millennium, but this does not mean that He will be sitting upon a throne in Jerusalem twenty-four hours a day for one thousand years. There will doubtless be frequent communication between heaven and earth in that day ([John 1:51](#)), and wherever Christ goes the members of His Body will accompany Him. In the Consummation, after the

⁵⁷⁰ *Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 922.

⁵⁷¹ Chafer, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 13-17.

Millennium, Christ will have His throne in the heavenly City ([Revelation 21:22; 22:3](#)). If the Body members are to reign with Christ it is only logical to suppose that they will be with Christ. To be with Christ means to be in the heavenly city, although it does not mean to be confined to that city.

5. It is probably a mistake simply to call Israel the Bride of Christ. The Bride is identified in [Revelation 21:9, 10](#) as being that great city, the holy Jerusalem. Israel's name is on the gates of the city, but the city itself comprehends more than Israel. No doubt the patriarchs who lived before Israel became a nation will also be in the city. Paul speaks of the *Jerusalem above* as the mother of all believers ([Galatians 4:26](#)).

6. The Scripture states that the holy city descends out of heaven from God, but it nowhere states how far it descends. Many think that it will rest upon the earth, although it must be admitted that a cube, or as some think, a pyramid, 1,500 miles in size, setting upon an earth 8,000 miles in diameter, presents a rather odd geographical phenomenon. While everyone in that day will be in glorified bodies which will not be subject to the same laws of nature as our present bodies, there is no reason to suppose that God will completely revolutionize the laws which govern the stellar universe. Some think that the city will be a kind of satellite to the earth. It will either be in close proximity or upon the earth, for "the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it" ([Revelation 21:24](#)).

7. The Scripture just quoted indicates that there will be nations and kings upon the new earth. There is no statement of Scripture which informs us of what happens to the people of God who are on earth at the end of the Millennium when the old earth is destroyed by fire, whether in a miraculous way they will be preserved in their natural, physical bodies, or whether they will be glorified. And there is no revelation of the kind of bodies which men will have in the new earth. Speculation would be worthless. There will be an abiding new earth populated with redeemed nations, and a heavenly city with its redeemed inhabitants, and a glorified Savior reigning over all with the members of His Body.

CONCLUSION

Thus God's wheel has turned full circle from the Original Creation to the New Creation. God's great plan of the Ages has been completed. The sovereign God has accomplished His eternal purpose. The mystery of sin and suffering has found its ultimate solution. The Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, has been glorified, as the only One worthy of praise and honor, even as every creature in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea were heard, saying, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

John heard that great voice out of heaven saying: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and

God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." And he that sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new."

But immediately following those words of the happy ending of God's great drama of redemption come these words of warning: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

We must confess and conclude with Paul: "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen."

It is the author's prayer that this volume may serve to bring glory to God and that whatever it contains of human wisdom which is foolishness with God may be blotted out of the minds of those that read.