

Introduction to Christian Theology

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SECTION I

Preliminary Thoughts

Definitions

The beginning of any study requires some understanding of terms. The word "theology," is actually a combination of two words, *theos* meaning God, and *logos* meaning rational expression.¹ When we apply this to Christian Theology we are exploring the rational interpretation of the Christian faith.

By definition then we understand that Theology can be understood. However, to be

¹ Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, (Scripture Press, 1987) p. 13.

understood there must be explanation and that comes from the Bible. The Christian Theology then is a study of the Bible, which is our source of explanation. A proper approach to the study of Scripture will result in the discovery, systematizing and presentation of the truths about God.²

Presuppositions

A number of different theologies exist and can be easily identified. Theologies can be classified into groups such as: by era, by viewpoint, and by emphasis. Theology can be studied based on a specific era, how people understood the revelation of God during that time period. If we focus on the viewpoint we can study the different positions people took on certain issues. And a study could be done based on a specific emphasis or theme.

Systematic theology brings together the whole picture in order to show systematically the total message of the Bible. Systematic theology may include historical backgrounds, apologetics and defense, but will focus on the total picture of biblical doctrine.

Theology is the exploring, organizing and delivery of the truths about God found in the Word of God, Historical theology looks at the ideas of people throughout history and what their positions were. Biblical theology looks at the development of revelation as given by God. Systematic theology gives us a total picture.

Whether we like it or not we all have presuppositions that we bring to any discussion. Our reasoning and thought process is governed by what we already believe to be true. The atheist, based upon his belief that there is no god, even though we may not know all the facts and information about him, will approach everything from that point of view. So it is easy to understand that the atheist and the theist will come to different conclusions about the source of life, the creation and anything supernatural. While the theist has some proof for the existence of god, he still must ultimately exercise some faith to believe god exists.

The Question of Authority

² Ibid., 13.

Those who believe in a triune god come to that belief by studying the Bible. However, they must first believe that the Bible can be trusted, is truthful and is in fact from god. Here is the basic presupposition; the Bible is the Word of God.

With the basic presupposition stated, the next big issue is the interpretation of the Bible. How the Bible is studied is also critical to the conclusions reached. If we believe that God gave the Bible to us for our instruction and learning, it seems reasonable to expect God to communicate His truth in terms and words that can be clearly understood. The interpretation must always be controlled by the concept that God communicates in a normal, plain, or literal manner.³

All Scripture is important, but the New Testament clearly is a greater priority when we are trying to discover doctrine for the church. The Old Testament was not complete and was directed primarily to the nation of Israel.

Based upon the presupposition that God exists and that He has communicated His word to man, there is the authority of God as the foundation for all that we study. Authority can and does take on different forms within the Christian community.

The liberal sees God's authority as it is expressed in "any act of God by which communication occurs between God and man."⁴ That communication can occur through human reason, feelings, or conscience. The liberal has always placed a strong emphasis upon reason. It is our ability to reason that allows us to develop concepts, which are needed for communication.

Feelings also play a large role in the liberals' theology, the emphasis being placed upon religious experience, being moved by something that made you aware of God.

Some liberal theology bases their sense of authority on conscience. Since our knowledge is limited one must rely upon moral instincts as the basis of authority.

The conservative is very different when it comes to authority. The conservative sees authority as separate and distinct from himself, not subjective but purely objective.

³ Ibid., 17

To the Roman Catholic, authority rests in the Pope and ultimately in the church itself. While the Bible is important, it is the church that must interpret the Bible in light of the traditions of the church.

The conservative Protestant rejects the liberal's humanistic approach and the Catholic's dependence upon the church as a base of authority. Orthodoxy could be defined as the elimination of anything not in Scripture, the Word of God being the final authority for faith and practice.⁵

⁵ Edward John Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 13

SECTION II

GOD

The Knowledge of God

Seeking God has been a major exercise of men from the beginning of creation. Men have sought God in many different ways and have come to many different conclusions about God. When searching the Scriptures, we discover two main thoughts, one is the incomprehensibility of God and the ability to know God. While both statements are true, they are true only in part. While we cannot fully grasp all there is to know about God, yet He is knowable on a limited level. While Job declares that we cannot know Him (Job 11:7 and Isaiah 40:18) other Scriptures state we can know Him like John 14:7; 17:3; and I John 5:20. Since God is knowable then it is reasonable to look for evidence that describes His characteristics. This evidence can be found externally in nature and within the pages of His revealed word. Anything that can be discovered about God must in fact come from Him. One of the purposes of our Lord's incarnation was to reveal God (John 1:18; 14:7).

Knowing God involves both factual and personal aspects. To know about someone is different than knowing the person on an intimate basis. God has provided many different facts about Himself, but He has also called us into a personal relationship with Him. This relationship provides the basis for clearer and deeper knowledge.

The knowledge of God has progressed down throughout history. Looking at Jewish history we can see a picture of God, but one that is incomplete. With the writing of the New Testament we gained a clearer and more complete knowledge.⁶

Man can study many subjects and gather large amounts of information, but we are limited to how much we can learn about God. Our knowledge is directly dependent upon God's revelation of Himself to us.

⁶ Ibid., 26.

The Revelation of God

The way God has revealed Himself has been identified as general and special revelations. General revelation is the evidence of the creation, including man. Special revelation includes a variety of methods used to communicate God's message to man. The special revelation was packaged in the Bible.

General revelation is wide in its scope, covering all people worldwide (Matt 5:45). People all around the globe are exposed to the general revelation of God; the sun, moon, stars, and human conscience (Romans 2:14-15). The existence of these items demands a creator. Where there is design there must be a designer. Romans 1:18-32 states that man can know about God by the existence of the things around him.

The question must be asked, "How can man, a moral, intelligent, and living being, be explained apart from a moral, intelligent, and living God?"⁷

While many things can be learned about God from general revelation, it is not enough to bring sinful man to a saving knowledge of Christ. Special revelation is needed to point people to the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Romans 10:17 says "faith come by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

The Perfections of God

In an attempt to define God, we often fail to realize that it is impossible to totally and completely define the Creator. However, it is possible to get a picture, a glimpse of the living God based upon His revelations to us. The *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, describes God as "Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth."

God's descriptions or perfections are given to us through revelation. Man does not attribute them to God; God reveals them to man.⁸ All God's revelations are, therefore, revelations of Himself in and through His attributes. Our aim must be to determine from God's words and

⁷ Ibid., 32..

works what qualities, dispositions, determinations, and powers of His otherwise unseen and unsearchable essence He has actually made known to us.⁹

The perfections of God can be identified and cataloged. We see the eternity of God, exists endlessly, both backward and forward. God is transcendent, that is He is above and separate from His creation (Isa. 40:13-14). He is immutable, unchangeable and unchanging (Malachi 3:6 and James 1:17). God is infinite, no bounds or limits upon Him. There is no limit by time or space. But it does not mean that He is fragmented and spread all over the universe, one part here and another part there. "The infinity of God must be conceived as intensive rather than extensive..."¹⁰ Holiness is certainly an attribute of God. In respect to God, holiness means not only that He is separate from all that is unclean and evil but also that He is positively pure and thus distinct from all others.¹¹ Love is one of the most well known attributes of God. The Scriptures declare that God is love, pointing to His very nature (1 John 4:8). Omnipotence means that God is all-powerful and can do exactly what He wants, when He wants (2 Cor. 6:18). Omnipresence means that God is everywhere present with His whole being at all times (Psalms 139:7-11). Omniscience means that God knows everything there is to know.

A.W. Tozer wrote about the omniscience of God; "Because God knows all things perfectly, He knows nothing better than any other thing, but all things equally well. He never discovers anything He is never surprised, never amazed, He never wonders about anything nor (except when drawing men out) does he seek information or ask questions."¹²

Righteousness is related to holiness, but it is a distinct attribute by itself. Holiness deals with God's separation; righteousness centers on His justice. Righteousness deals with the law, morality, and justice. The sovereignty of God shows the supremacy He possesses. He is the chief being in the universe, he has a plan which takes in the entire universe (Eph. 1:11). God is the only true God (John 17:3), and therefore cannot lie (Titus 1:2) and is always faithful (Rom.

⁹ Emery H. Bancroft, *Christian Theology*, (Zondervan, 1976), 68.

¹² A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, (New York,; Harper, 1978), pp.62-3.

3:4). Over and over we are told that God is one. The unity of God is clearly taught, God is indivisible (Deut. 6:4).

The Names of God

Names often say a lot about the person and God is no exception. There are several names applied to God, each with a descriptive meaning. The first is *elohim*, this term appears 2,570 times in the Old Testament. While there are several possibilities for the meaning of this title, the evidence leans toward a meaning of strength, a strong leader, the supreme Deity. *El-Shaddai* gives the picture of God as the Almighty One standing on a mountain. It was this name that God used when speaking to the patriarchs (Gen. 17:1). *El Elyon* means “the Most High God: (Gen. 14:19). *El Olam* means “the Everlasting God” (Gen. 21:33). *El Roi* means “the God who sees,” (Gen. 16:13).

The second most known name is *Yahweh*, this name occurs 5,321 times in the Old Testament. The meaning denotes God as active and self-existent. Next would be *Adonai* which is a plural form of majesty. The singular means lord, master, owner (Gen. 19:2).

Theos is the most frequent name used for God in the New Testament (Acts 12:22; 14:11). It usually refers to the one true God, but on occasion can refer to other deities.

The New Testament sees the word *kurios* used over 700 times and means Lord. Most of the occurrences appear in the Gospel of Luke (210) and Paul’s writings (275). This title would have been well received by the Greek audiences both ministered to.

Jesus was often referred to as Master, from the Greek word *despotes*. This word emphasizes authority and supremacy. And last we have the term father. This term appears only 15 times in the Old Testament, but it occurs 245 times in the New Testament.¹³

The Triunity of God

The Old Testament is very clear concerning the oneness of God. However, we see in Genesis and throughout the Old Testament references that would suggest the trinity. The New

³¹³ Ibid., 50.

Testament makes the reality of the trinity clearer.

The Old Testament uses plural names for God, like *Elohim* and God often speaks of Himself with plural pronouns (Gen. 1:26; 3:22) and plural verbs (Gen. 11:17). This shows what can only be considered as personal distinctions within the Godhead.

The New Testament offers some interesting evidence for the trinity. We find the Father is called God (John 6:27), Jesus is identified as God (Matt. 9:4; 28:18), and the Holy Spirit is recognized as God (Acts 5:3-4). In Matthew 28:19 brings all three are grouped together with one singular name.

We find the reformers and all Reformation Confessions express the teaching of the Trinity. Calvin had some trouble with this, but ultimately accepted it or at least did not deny it.¹⁴

¹⁴ Ibid., 58.

SECTION III

THE BIBLE: GOD BREATHED

Special Revelation

Nature clearly shouts to the existence of God. The very things that surround us cry out for a designer, creator. But, natural revelation is very different from special or specific revelation. Over the course of history God has used different methods to reveal His message to people. An early form of revelation was casting lots, this is not something done today, but was used early on (Proverbs 16:33; Acts 1:21-26). The nation of Israel used the Urim and Thummim, which were placed inside the breastplate of the high priest. This was used like the lot, to determine the will of God (Ex. 28:30). The Urim and Thummim were probably two special stones used for this purpose.

Dreams were another method God used to communicate, along with visions and theophanies (an appearance by the Angel of the Lord who communicated the divine message). God also used angels to speak directly to the people; the prophets did the same thing. Sometimes God would use events as a channel of revelation.

Jesus was a major way of God speaking to His creation, and finally the written word. The Bible is the most inclusive of all the methods God has used to communicate with man.

The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration

A great many theologians would say that the scriptures are inspired, but what they mean by inspired varies greatly. The bible claims to be inspired, which is the logical conclusion one would come to after studying what the Bible has to say.

The apostle Paul declares that all Scripture is inspired y God (2 Timothy 3:16). This is an all inclusive statement that takes in every word, every book, Old and New Testament alike. Paul declares that the Scriptures are God-breathed, which gives us the means of inspiration. Since the passage is passive, it means the Bible is the result of the breath of God.¹⁵

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., 69.

In I Corinthians 2:13 Paul states that God spoke to us in words. This is important when we consider the fact that some teach that God only inspired the thoughts not the words. But the only way to express a thought is with words, the words used will determine the thought presented.

A definition is required if any consensus is to be reached. Inspired can be defined as God superintended the human authors of the Bible so that they composed and recorded without error His message to mankind in the words of their original writings.¹⁶ This definition can only be applied to the original writings, not to copies or translations, regardless of their accuracy.

Defections from the Bible Doctrine of Inspiration

Not everyone would agree on the definition of inspiration as stated. One alternative view is that of **natural inspiration**. This view gives more credit to the men who wrote the books. The writers simply use their own ability and talents and did not need the intervention of God. With this position God did not breathe out the words.

Dynamic or mystical inspiration states that the writers were Spirit-filled and guided. But this position gives no special place to the Bible; it simply places it in the same category as other great works of literature. The Bible would not be considered infallible, simply a great work of literature.

Another variation is the degree theory of inspiration, which states that within the Bible some parts are more inspired than other parts. The entire Bible is inspired but not to the same degree. This theory has generally been replaced today by the partial inspiration theory. Partial inspiration says that part of the Bible is inspired and the rest is not.

The concept theory simply states that the concepts are inspired not the actual words. This position falls apart very quickly when one considers that concepts can only be presented through words. Change the words and you change the concept.

Barthian method of inspiration has been embraced by many today. Karl Barth (1886-1968) taught that the Scriptures centered on Jesus Christ. Since He is the center anything that did not

deal with Him was less inspired or important. Barth believed that the Scriptures did contain errors and only became the word of God when it personally moved you.

The Inerrancy of the Bible

Attacks on the inerrancy of the Bible have been present for a long time. The attacks seem to come in cycles and can be almost predictable.¹⁷ The importance of inerrancy cannot be overstated in determining your view of Scripture. If the critics can prove error, it weakens if not destroys the power of the message. While there are some evangelicals that do not hold to full inerrancy, but that would be the exception, not the rule.

If one holds to a partial inerrancy, then they must also admit that parts of the Bible are untrue. The question then must be asked, "If part of the Bible is not true, which parts are?" When inerrancy is rejected serious issues arise with doctrine and application. Difficult passages can simply be discarded or rejected as not accurate, if total inerrancy is discarded. The doctrine of inerrancy has been claimed as a relatively new concept. Some believe it started with B.B. Warfield at Princeton in the late 1800's. Still others say that Turretin, a Lutheran Theologian, started it a short time after the Reformation.¹⁸ However, it is clear that Jesus taught it, Paul also preached. The early church fathers including Augustine, Aquinas, and the Reformers all believed and taught inerrancy.

While there are many explanations as to the definition of inerrancy, the bottom is simply that the Scriptures tell the truth. What is recorded in them is true. If it were not true, how could the Lord state that man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4), particularly if all Scripture is breathed out by God?

Inerrancy and the Teaching of Christ

Looking at our Lord's temptation in the wilderness we see an interesting statement which addresses the question of inerrancy. When Jesus was confronted by Satan who challenged him to turn stones into bread, Jesus answered, "Man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4). Not some words, but every word was identified as from God the

Father.

Jesus spoke of events recorded in the Old Testament in a way that demonstrated complete and total trust in the accuracy of the events. He spoke of Adam and Eve, the flood, the ark as actual events, not illustrated or symbols of truth. What we see is Christ authenticating the events as factual historical happenings. Along with that Jesus added a sense of authority when He said, “and the Scripture cannot be broken “(John 10:31-35).

Problem Passages

Clearly there are some problem passages that have been difficult to explain. But, the problems are in the area of interpretation or debates over the best text type. The problems come over issues involving parallel accounts or allegedly unscientific statements.

How one approaches this issue will go a long way in determining the conclusions reached. If we have confidence in the integrity of Scripture, we will conclude the problem is with my understanding or lack of total information. If, however, I believe the Scriptures contain errors I will conclude that any problem is proof of error.

Errantists sometimes mention passages in the New Testament that could suggest a denial of inerrancy, Matthew 22:42 is one such passage. Robert Mounce said this is an example of “a kind of inerrancy that falls short of perfect conformity to what was actually said” and of problems to which only “highly fanciful” explanations could be given.¹⁹

There are a number of other passages that have been cited over the years to argue against inerrancy. However, reasonable solutions have been proposed throughout history to these problems. Some have been strengthened recently with the discoveries made in the Middle East. While the problem passages continue to be used to argue that the Bible contains errors, but all of them have reasonable answers for the critics.

The bottom line is simple, if the Bible has just one error, even a small one, then we do not have an inerrant Bible.

¹⁹ Robert Mounce, *Clues to Understanding Biblical Accuracy*, (Eternity, June 1966), 18.

The Canon

When the canon of Scripture is mentioned the main question that arises concerns that number of books contained in it. Other questions arise as well, how the books were collected and who decided to include them in the canon of Scripture is a serious concern.

The term canon comes from the Greek word *kanon* which means measuring rod of instrument. We understand it to mean a rule of action (Gal. 6:16; Phil. 3:16).²⁰ In the early church the word “canon” was used to refer to the creeds. By the middle of the fourth century it came to be used of the Bible.

In determining what is Scripture it is important to remember that men did not determine what Scripture was, but recognized and acknowledged what is true because of the intrinsic inspiration of the books as they were written.²¹

The New Testament has some 250 quotes from the Old Testament. There is nothing from Esther, Song of Solomon or Ecclesiastes, but every other book is quoted. This gives strong support for the canonicity of the Old Testament along with our Lord’s affirmation. The tests applied to writings to determine if they were in fact Scripture included the test of authority. The authority came from a lawgiver or a prophet or a leader in Israel behind them. In the New Testament an apostle’s authority was needed. Either the apostle had to write the book or give it accreditation.

Next was the test of uniqueness. To be accepted the book had to show internal evidence of its uniqueness as an evidence of its inspiration. The next step was the test of acceptance by the churches. All of this took place over a period of years with no single person determining what book should be in or out of the canon.

The Interpretation of the Bible

In order to study the Bible a systematic approach is needed, this is called hermeneutics.

²¹ Ibid., 105.

Another term associated with the interpretation of the Bible is exegesis, the actual interpretation of the Bible, discovering its meaning. Hermeneutics establishes the principles by which exegesis is accomplished.²²

Everyone who interprets the Bible has a system of hermeneutics, whether they know it or not. The results of the study will reveal what hermeneutics is being used. The basis of one's hermeneutics is very important; the presuppositions have a large impact on the conclusions.

Some approaches to hermeneutics include the allegorical method, the literal method, the semi-allegorical or semi-literal method and the theological method. Having considered the different methods available, it appears the literal method is the best approach to exegesis.

When you consider the purpose of language there is a strong argument that the literal interpretation is necessary to actually communicate clearly. All languages are designed to communicate between different individuals.

The Scriptures do not suggest or require some deeper or hidden message. Without clear and normal meaning objectivity is gone. Looking as the prophecies of the first advent of Christ we find that they were all fulfilled literally. This fact alone would strongly argue for a literal interpretation of the text.

The principles of normal hermeneutics involved determining the grammatical sense of the words as a starting point. Next we need to determine the context of the passage in relationship to what came before and what followed.

Since the human authors did not always understand what they were writing it becomes important to compare Scripture with other Scripture. When other Scripture is examined often we can see the larger and more complete message that God intended. S. Lewis Johnson summarized this point very well. "Thus the work of the biblical interpreter is not necessarily finished when he has come to the meaning intended by the original human author... The total context of a passage is necessary for its correct understanding and, therefore intention of the

²² Ibid., 110.

secondary author must be subordinated to the intention of the primary Author, God Himself. The biblical principle of the *analogia Scripturae* should have taught us that traditional expressions of the sense of the analog, teach that our first and final task is to discern God's intention in the text of Scripture. After all, is not the Bible *God's Word*?²³

Reading through the Bible one discovers a progressive revelation taking place. If this progression is not recognized eventually there will arise contradictions that cannot be answered. What God gave to one group of people may not apply to another, it is important to determine if the passage is universal or local, timeless or specific in its application.

The Doctrine of Illumination

Illumination can be applied in many different circumstances, but for this study it is simply the ministry of the Holy Spirit helping the believer to understand the truth of the Bible. We have two passages that describe this work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-15 and 1 Corinthians 2:9-3:2). The passages declare the Holy Spirit is the Teacher, and His presence in every believer guarantees this ministry to them. The unbeliever does not have the help of Holy Spirit and therefore cannot properly understand or interpret Scripture correctly. The teaching covers all truth, including things to come. The purpose in this ministry is to ultimately glorify Christ. The Holy Spirit will use those who have received the gift of teaching to promote and carry on this work.

SECTION IV

ANGELS MINISTERING SPIRITS

The Existence of Angels

For some reason this subject has been overlooked or simply ignored by many. Even Calvin was very cautious when dealing with this subject. Even today the idea of angels has been handled in such a way as to distort and minimize their existence and importance. If we look at what Scripture has to say there is no doubt about the presence of angels. The Bible speaks about angels often, in the Old Testament just over 100 times and in the New Testament about 165 times. With that many references it is impossible to deny the subject exists.

It is important to note that angels appear throughout Scripture throughout all periods, they are not limited to a specific period or place. Our Lord made many references to them during His earthly ministry.

Whether looking at the Old Testament or the New the writers were consistent in presenting angels as real, objective, existing creatures. They performed functions that could be seen and experienced; they opened prison doors, directed Philip where to go for ministry and encouraged Paul during his voyage to Rome (Acts 27:23). Angels ministered to Christ in the wilderness after His temptation. Jesus gave the account and that is all that is needed.

The Creation of Angels

According to Psalm 148:5, angels are created beings. They did not evolve from some lower or less complex form of life. In Matthew 22:30 we are told that angels do not reproduce, which limits the number of angels in existence based upon the number God chose to create. Jesus created all things, including angels (Col. 1:16). While the exact time of their creation is not given, we know that they were present when Christ created the earth (Job 38:7), so their creation had to be prior to that event.

In their original state, all angels were created holy. In Genesis 1:31 we read that all God

created was good and He was pleased with the creation. At some point there was a rebellion in heaven and Satan convinced a third of the angels to follow him. The remaining angels are still holy based upon Mark 8:38. The ones who refused to rebel are called elect angels (I Tim. 21) and the ones who rebelled are referred to as evil angels (Matt. 25:41).

Even though angels are created beings, they are different, distinct from humans (I Cor. 6:3). As created beings they are limited in power, knowledge, and activity (I Peter 1:11-12; Rev. 7:1).

The Nature of Angels

Angels possess personality and as such exhibit the quality or state of being persons.²⁴ Technically angels can be classified as personalities because they possess intellect, emotion and will. This is equally true of fallen or evil angels.

Angels have a large capacity for knowledge, but since they are created they are limited in their knowledge (Matt. 24:36). The angels are presently listed as higher than humans and possess more knowledge. They actually search the Scriptures to gain knowledge (James 2:19). Angels also gain knowledge by watching human behavior.

They are Spirit Beings

Angels, demons and Satan are all classified as spirit beings. Angels are called ministering spirits (Heb. 1:14). Demons are called evil spirits (Luke 8:2), and Satan is pictured as working in the sons of disobedience (Eph. 2:2).

It is difficult to describe spirit beings since they have different abilities and characteristics than humans. They are immaterial but are not omnipresent, the Scriptures refer to them as spirit beings (Matt. 8:16; Luke 7:21). However, they can appear to humans and when they do it is often as males. They appear in dreams and visions (Matt. 1:20).

When angels are described in the heavenly state they appear very different, they are pictured as superhuman in nature, some possess wings (Isa. 6:2).

The Lord taught that angels do not reproduce and cannot die (Matt. 22:30). While the good angels will always be with the Lord the evil angels will be cast into the lake of fire, where they will be tormented forever (Matt. 25:41).

The Organization of Angels

There is no way of knowing how many angels exist, but clearly there are a large number, whatever the number of angels it will not change over time. Some have suggested that the number of angels equals the number of humans throughout history.²⁵

The Scriptures describe an assembly and council of the angels (Ps. 89:5,7), of their preparation for battle (Rev. 12:7), and of a king over the demon-locust (Rev. 9:11). It seems clear that God has given rank to His angels as well as Satan giving rank to his.

The Ranking of Angels

While many consider there to be two archangels listed in Scripture, Michael and Gabriel, only Michael is actually called an archangel. This is the highest designation given to angels by God. There is no Scripture that speaks of archangels in the plural sense, only singular. Michael is given the responsibility of protecting the nation of Israel (Daniel 10:21). He is the head of the armies of the Lord (Rev. 12:7).

Daniel 10:13 speaks of a group of superior angels indicating a type of ranking among angels. Michael is also listed in this group of superior angels; and the apocryphal book of Enoch names four archangels, but this list is not found in Scripture.

The term rulers or principalities is used seven times by Paul, referring to an order of angels both good and evil who actively rule the universe (Rom. 8:38). Authorities or powers speaks of the superhuman authority of angels and demons in relationship to conducting the affairs of the world (Eph. 1:21).

²⁵ Ibid., 128.

Cherubim constitute another order of angels, which appear to be very high in authority (Ezek. 28:14). The holiness of God is their primary responsibility; they were the ones responsible for the guarding of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:24).

Seraphim are mentioned in Isa. 6:2,6, but not much information is available. While they seem to be similar to Cherubim, they had a different responsibility. The Seraphim are the attendants at the throne of God, where they offered praise to God. The physical appearance must be very striking having wings and a human like appearance.

Particular Angels

Michael is most well known among angels, but second in line would be Gabriel. Michael is called the archangel, which is the highest rank, but Gabriel appears to be a high ranking angel as well. While not specifically called an archangel, Gabriel has appeared during many important events in Scripture. His name means “hero of God” and his function was to bring important messages from God to individuals (Daniel 8:16).

We can distinguish different responsibilities for different angels. There are angels with power over fire (Rev. 16:5), the angel of the waters (Rev. 9:11), the angel of the abyss (Rev. 20:1-2), the angel who binds Satan.²⁶

The Old Testament mentions the angel of Yahweh, but this is a Christophany, preincarnate appearance of Christ. The Angel speaks as God, identifies Himself with God, and exercises the authority of God (Gen. 16:7-12). These appearances stop after the incarnation of Christ which helps to support this position.

The Ministry of Angels

Good angels are the workmen of God, doing His bidding throughout the universe. The primary responsibility seems to be directed to those who will inherit salvation (Heb. 1:14). In

²⁶ Ibid., 130.

relationship to God their mission is to worship and praise the Lord. They are also used as instruments of God's judgment (Rev. 7:1). Angels are often involved with new events in God's calendar, they were praising God when the earth was created (Job 38:6-7), they were involved with the giving of the law to Moses (Gal. 3:19), they were very active at the first advent of Christ (Matt. 1:20; 4:11), and they will be involved during the 70th week of Daniel, better known as the tribulation period of Revelation (Matt. 25:31; 1 Thess. 4:1).

Throughout the early ministry of Jesus, the angels were actively involved ministering to the needs of Jesus, at His birth, during the early years there is not much recorded, but certainly during his time of ministry, after his resurrection and at his second coming.

The ministry of angels also includes protection of the nation of Israel, overseeing other nations (Dan. 4:7) and the administration of God's judgments (rev. 8-9; 16).

In relationship to the church, angels are there to help individual believers (Heb. 1:124), they reveal the meaning of Scripture (Dan. 7:15-27), help with prayer requests and answers, and are instrumental in converting the lost. They have a great interest in the activities of humans, seeking to understand the grace of God at work in their lives. It is comforting to realize that God has provided these special agents to protect and watch over His people.

SECTION IV

OUR ADVERSARY THE DEVIL

Even though many refuse to believe in the literal devil, the evidence seems to be overwhelming. Looking at Scripture we find a clear and real Satan described for us. Seven books of the Old Testament teach his reality (Gen., I Chron., Job, Ps., Isa., Ezek., Zech.).

Looking at the New Testament we find every writer there affirming the reality of Satan. Even our Lord affirmed the reality of Satan and spoke often of him in the Gospels.

Satan can be seen to possess the personality traits of intellect, emotion and will. We can identify his intelligence (2 Cor. 11:3), his emotions (Rev. 12:17), and his will (Isa 14:12). References to him in the Old and New Testaments point out that he is a person (Job 1; Matt. 4:1-2). Personal pronouns are constantly used to describe Satan.

Satan is a created being, not eternal and he is a spirit being. In his original state he was among the angels known as Cherubim (Ezek. 28:14) and at one time was the chief of this group of angels.

Many different names have been used to identify him, among them are Satan (used about fifty-two times) which means adversary or to oppose (Zech. 3:1; Matt. 4:10). Sometimes he is called the Devil, this term is used about thirty-five times, meaning slanderer. John calls him the evil one (John 17:15). In the book of Revelation Satan is called the great red dragon. Many of his names are the result of his activities, such as slanderer, accuser, tempter towards the believers.

Satan is still very powerful and has great influence over the world. Some of his titles reflect this relationship over the earth. He is called the "ruler of this world" (John 12:31), he is also called the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). In the New Testament we find Satan being referred to as Beelzebub. Paul uses the term Belial as a name for Satan in 2 Corinthians 6:15. These different names strongly support the fact of his existence and his character.

The Creation and Sin of Satan

The Scriptures declare that everything was made by God through Christ and there is nothing that was not made by Him (John 1:3; Col. 1:16-17). This means that Satan was a created being, that he is not eternal and not self-existent. The exact time of his creation is not known, however, he was present in the Garden of Eden, so we know he has been present at least since then.

His Sin

Since God created Satan, his original condition was perfect and without sin. At some point we are told sin was found in him (Ezek. 28:15). This is the point where Satan's sin began. Donald Grey Barnhouse terms it as "spontaneous generation in the heart of this being in whom such magnificence of power and beauty had been combined and to whom such authority and privilege had been given."²⁷

The question of the origin of Satan's sin is important. Did God create sin when He created Satan? Is God the author of sin? One must conclude that his sin was calculated and known by God before the creation. Still, God never assumes responsibility for the commission of any sin, including Satan's.

J.O. Boswell makes this interesting statement, "According to the Bible, then, sin originated in an act of free will in which the creature deliberately, responsibly, and with adequate understanding of the issues chose to corrupt the holy character of godliness with which God had endowed His creation...Satan sinned necessarily. God is rightly angry with all sin.... The denial of free will seems to be purely arbitrary philosophical dogmatism, contrary to the biblical view. If God is rightly angry with sin, then it follows that the sinner is blameworthy-cosmically, ultimately, absolutely.... Sin must be within God's eternal decrees in some sense in which He is not the author of it... Within the decrees of God, there are decrees of the permission of those things of

²⁷ Donald Grey Barnhouse, *The Invisible War* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan., 1965), 30/

which God Himself is not the author. This is not mere permission of the unavoidable.”²⁸

Reading the New Testament, we find Satan’s sin was one of arrogance and pride, being puffed up (1 Tim. 3:6). This attitude is commonly called pride. The fact that Satan had access to God and was second only to Him makes his sin so much more heinous. The consequences of his sin have been felt in heaven and on earth ever since.

The Activities of Satan

Referring back to the many names given to Satan we get a glimpse of what he is capable of and what he is now doing. In the garden with Adam and Eve, Satan displayed some of his dirty tricks and as a result God pronounced a judgment upon Satan and stated that there would be enmity between his seed and God’s.

With our Lord’s first advent Satan did everything he could to stop the work of God and hinder the ministry of Jesus. One such result was the killing of the children under the age of two (Matt. 2:16). Satan continues to run this world but eventually Christ will return and establish this world as His kingdom and remove Satan forever.

The plan of Satan seems to be counterfeit of everything God is doing. He offers counterfeit kingdoms, gods, and rewards for those that chose to reject Christ and follow him. Dangling in the face of people the promise of wealth, power and pleasure, he ultimately delivers death and destruction. To the believer he is the tempter and the adversary, doing everything possible to destroy as many Christians as possible.

SECTION VI

DEMONS: UNCLEAN SPIRITS

The attitude toward demons has changed throughout the centuries. In the first half of the twentieth century demons were denied, the second half saw a dramatic acceptance of their existence. The acceptance can be seen in the number of books and movies promoting their

²⁸ J.O. Boswell, Basic Christian Doctrines, (New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1962), 107-9.

existence and activity.

The Testimony of Scripture

There is no question concerning demons in Scripture, they are affirmed without any reservation. Looking at the ministry of Jesus we can see a number of instances where He confronted and cast out demons (Matt. 12; 22-29; 15:22). Jesus gave His disciples power to cast out demons as they ministered to the people (Matt. 10:1). There Are no accounts where Jesus corrected anyone for believing in or talking about demons (Luke 10:17). Once again we have the authoritative voice of Jesus dealing with the issue at hand, He clearly believed in their existence and work.

The Origin of Demons

While there are several opinions about the origin of angels most have very little evidence to support them. Among the opinions we find some who believe the spirits come from deceased wicked people, some believe they are the disembodied spirits of a pre -Adamic race, and still others believe they are the offspring of the union described in Genesis 6:11-4 (between the sons of God and the daughters of men).

The likely answer seems to be that they are fallen angels who chose to follow Satan when he rose up against God. As with Satan they were forever condemned with no hope of salvation. With the fall of Satan one third of the angels fell with him, but two-thirds stayed true to God. The Scriptures speak of two groups of fallen angels, one made up of those who have some freedom and the others who are confined (2 Peter 2:4).

What are Demons Like?

Demons must be considered in the same class as angels and Satan, all three have some things in common. Demons are real; they possess intellect, emotion and will (Mark 1:24). They

understand who Jesus is and the fact of their eventual judgment. While they show great intelligence, they are not all knowing. They develop and promote false religious systems (1 Tim. 4:1-3).²⁹

Demons are called “unclean Spirits” (Matt. 10::1) and “spiritual forces of wickedness” (Eph. 6:12). These titles point to their immoral nature and activity. Immorality is whatever is inconsistent with good, but good must ultimately be defined in relation to the will of God.³⁰ At times demons have demonstrated supernatural power, beyond anything possible by humans. Their presence is limited to one place at a time, they are not infinite.

What Do Demons do?

Basically they are the messengers and servants of Satan, opposed to everything God does. It is interesting to note that God can and does use them for His purposes at times. God sent an evil spirit to stir up the people of Shechem against Abimelech (Judges 9:23). He used an evil spirit to work on Saul creating some mental problems that almost made Saul mad (1 Sam. 16:14).

Demons are very active in promoting false religions, idolatry and anything that will draw people away from the one true God. They afflict people with mental illness, physical illness, dumbness, blindness and epilepsy (Matt 9:33; 17:15-18).

²⁹ Charles Ryrie, *Basis Theology* (Scripture Press, 1987), 160.

SECTION VII

MAN: THE IMAGE OF GOD

The question of the origin of man continues to be a hot subject among intellectuals. The two main positions are “creation” and “evolution.” Evolution simply means a change in any direction. However, when this term is used in connection with the origin of man it takes on an entirely new meaning, it includes the idea of origin by natural processes, both the origin of the first living substance and the origin of new species.³¹ In relation to the origin of man, evolution teaches that he evolved over long periods of time through the action of mutations and natural selection from simpler, brute forms which in turn had evolved from other forms which ultimately came from an original single-celled creature.³²

Theistic Evolution

This position tries to combine evolution and creation into an acceptable position for both sides. Theistic evolution simply states that God created the original life and then let it evolve, directing the process as it progressed. For this position to be viable the days in Genesis must be long geological ages not literal twenty-four hour days.

Creation

This position has God creating man in His image from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life. There are variations on this position, but all who adhere to this must agree that the biblical record is factually historical and that Adam was the first man.

The Problems of Evolution

Depending upon mutations for advancement is shaky at best, mutations almost always are

¹³¹ Ibid., 171.

²³² Ibid., 172

harmful. As far as we know, no mutations have ever produced a new species or even a new organ or system in an existing species.³³ There is no evidence to support the idea that natural selection guarantees improvement. Even though mutations are rare and even though natural selection would most likely breed out a mutant from the strain, it seems likely to the common man that given enough time anything is possible.

Speaking in known scientific terms the problem concerning the second law of thermodynamics must be considered. This law states that though energy in the cosmos remains constant, the amount available to do useful work is always decreasing (and entropy, the measure of unavailable energy is increasing). Everything then, is actually; moving toward less orderliness or greater chaos.³⁴ This flies in the face of evolutionary teaching. As one evolutionist asked: "How, when no life existed, did substance come into being, which today are absolutely essential to living systems, yet which can only be formed by those systems?"³⁵

The Bible and Origins

As a revelation from God, the bible speaks with authority on every subject it touches, including science and history. While the bible is not an exhaustive history book or science book, where it speaks on history it is accurate and where it speaks on science it is correct. So when we want answers to the origin of man it is logical to look at what the Scriptures have to say. The Bible does not answer all our questions concerning the origin of man, but it does have a lot to say on the subject.

Necessary Presuppositions

We read in Hebrews 11:3 that it is by faith that we understand that the world was made by the Word of God and that what is seen was not made out of visible things. We must accept by faith what God has revealed to us since man was not present during the early part of creation. The evolutionist would also have to concede a large amount of faith in connection with their

³⁵ Harold F. Blum, *Time's Arrow and Evolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 170.

position, not faith in God's revelation, but faith in their hypothesis.

Whatever science may uncover can never be taken as absolute and final truth. The facts God has given in His word are reliable and trustworthy. The Genesis account of creation must be taken at face value, including a literal Adam and a literal temptation.

The Creation of Man

The bible clearly states that God created man by His own will and power. There was no evolutionary process involved or long periods of time. In His creation of man God used the dust of the earth and then breathed into him the breath of life. Since man was created in the image of God he stands apart from the rest of creation.

In the case of Eve, God chose a different course of action. God decided to make Eve out of the bone of Adam. God made Eve from parts taken out of Adam (Gen. 1:21-23).

When sin entered the human race, the image of God in which man was created was not lost. However, it was seriously marred by the sin that Adam committed. Throughout Scripture we are reminded that man, fallen man, is still in the image of his creator (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor., 3:18).

The Facets of Man

God united the material and immaterial to produce a single living soul. What we can see is a wide variety of features, distinct and separate yet all must work together in unity. The biblical view of man shows him to us in an impressive diversity, but never loses sight of the unity of the whole man, but rather brings it out and accentuates it.³⁶

Early Christian writers believed that they found support for a trichotomy approach to man from some New Testament passages. They concluded that man is composed of body, soul and spirit. This position makes the spirit higher than the soul, and the spirit and the soul superior to

³⁶ G.C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 200.

the body.³⁷

Man is made up of two substances, material and immaterial. Each consists of a wide variety of facets, they all join together to make up the whole of each person.

The Immaterial Aspect of Man

While there are many parts to man, collectively they make up the whole. Some features may overlap, but they are still identifiable and distinct.

When we speak of the soul in its simplest explanation it means “Life.” It identifies man as a living breathing soul (Gen. 2:7) as well as other forms of life. This would end at the time of death. In the Old Testament a soul would not exist apart from the body, this supports the unity of man’s existence.

The spirit of man is identified as only the immaterial part of man, unlike the soul which can be referenced to the whole man, material and immaterial. As a part of the immaterial aspect of man, one’s spirit is the center of different traits, emotions, and activities. This includes the act of thinking (Isa. 29:24), remembering (Ps. 77:6), humility (Matt. 5:3), grief (Gen. 26:35), jealousy (Num. 5:14) and a number of others. Even though soul and spirit can relate to the same activities or emotions, there does seem to be a distinction and contrast between soul and spirit in Paul’s writings.³⁸

The heart is a very comprehensive subject in both Testaments. The term is used about 955 times and it stands for the center and seat of life, both physical and psychological. In a few rare references the heart speaks of the physical organ that pumps the blood. In summary the heart can be described as the seat of intellectual life, the seat of emotional life, the seat of the volitional life and clearly the seat of the spiritual life.

The conscience is that part of man that tells him he ought to do what he believes to be the

³⁷ Charles E. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, (Scripture Press, 1987), 195.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 198.

right course of action. Conscience does not teach us what is right or wrong, but simply pushes us in the direction we already believe to be correct. The conscience aspect of man appears only in the New Testament. In the Old Testament conscience matters usually are spoken of in terms of the heart.

The mind is also more a New Testament idea. We understand the mind to be the understanding, perceiving, feeling, judging and determining the course of actions. The mind needs to be renewed according to the New Testament teaching in Colossians. Every thought is to be taken captive or brought under control to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). The flesh sometimes is a reference to the material part of man, but when applied to the immaterial part of man is a reference to our bent toward sin (Rom. 7:18).

The Fall of Man

There are three common views of the fall of man as recorded in the Genesis account. Some believe it is just a legend, with no factual ingredients. Others look at it as true, but not necessarily all factual, something along the lines of a "true myth."³⁹ And the third position views the account as factual and historical truth.

Accepting the third position one is then occupied with the nature of Adam both before he sinned and after. We know that Adam certainly was intelligent and had a number of special abilities that enabled him to name all of the animals and to comprehend the relationship between Eve and himself.

Regardless of Adam's abilities before the fall, one thing is certain, he was sinless. This can be seen in several different lights, but it meant that he had been able to fellowship directly with God. He had responsibilities in the garden before the fall; work was a part of his life. Satan appears suddenly in Genesis chapter three, but he probably had been present prior to this account.

The temptation of Adam was interesting from the standpoint that he was not deceived, Eve was. Why Adam failed to protect and warn his wife is a mystery. He clearly knew what he was

doing, which made the fall much worse. The price for his failure to protect his wife has been worldwide and continuing until today. God increased his responsibility to Eve and to his own work. God pronounced judgment on the serpent for its part in Satan's deception and the world has been suffering ever since.

SECTION VIII

SIN

We understand the concept of sin from a study of the words used in both Testaments. The terms cover a wide range, including eight words for sin in the Old Testament and a dozen in the New.

We can define sin by using the descriptive words for its various forms. Such a definition would be fairly accurate, but very long. We can define sin as: missing the mark, badness, rebellion, iniquity, transgression, going astray, wickedness, wandering, ungodliness, crime, ignorance and a falling away.

Christ Teaching Concerning Sin

Certainly Jesus had much to say about sin, at least two things stand out in his teaching. One is the huge number of references to the subject and second He was very specific. Jesus spoke of sin as an act of sacrilege (Mark 11:15), hypocrisy (Matt. 23:1-36), covetousness (Luke 12:15), blasphemy (Matt. 12:22-37), transgressing the Law (Matt. 15:3-6), pride (Matt. 20:20-28), fruitlessness (John 15:16), anger (Matt. 5:22), sins of speech (Matt. 5:33), showing off (Matt. 6:1-18), lack of faith (Matt. 6:25), irresponsible stewardship (Matt. 25:14-30), and prayerlessness (Luke 18:1-8).

The sins which Jesus addressed could be categorized as violations of the Mosaic Law, open sins, wrong inward attitudes and leaven (leaven of the Pharisees, of the Sadducees, and of the Herodians). Some sources of sin include Satan, the world, and the human heart, all of which had to be dealt with if a person is ever going to have proper fellowship with the Lord.

Some Sources of Sin

Jesus was often confronted with sinful acts by others and addressed the source of sin. At the heart of the problem is Satan, his program, and procedures touched Christ and impact all of us today. Satan is seen as the source of many sins along with the world's system, and the human heart, all contribute to the presence of sin.

The consequences of sin are two-fold, here and now and the yet future judgment of God. Jesus made it very clear that the only good one is God and that no human is or can be (Matt. 19:17). Sin can affect our destiny, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," (Rom 3:23). Sin affects our will by making us slaves to it (John 8:44). Sin affects the body by producing different sicknesses and ultimately physical death (Matt 8:17).

Forgiveness of Sin

We find that man is guilty before God and needs to have forgiveness. The basis of that forgiveness is Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). As a result of our forgiveness we need to be willing to forgive others as God has forgiven us (Luke 17:3-4).

The Inheritance of Sin

Inherited sin is that sinful state into which all people are born.⁴⁰ This can also be called inherited sin or the sin nature. When we speak of the sin nature we are really clarifying the issue, we have a natural bent toward sinning.

The Bible spells out the total and complete corruption of the flesh. "By nature" we are children of wrath (Eph. 2:3). Every part of our being is affected by this sin nature. Our emotions are degraded and defiled (Rom 1:21), and our will is enslaved to sin and forces us to be in opposition to the will of God (Rom. 6:20).

The result of this opposition to God is spiritual death. This is a separation from the life of

God in this present life, and eventually eternal death or the second death (Rev. 20:11-15). The only solution is to be born again with a new life from above. This can only take place through be life and reception of Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior.

The Imputation of Sin

Imputation means to assign or ascribe something to someone. It is not just a title but involvement that is at the heart of the concept.⁴¹ The Old Testament gives several examples of imputation (Lev. 7:18 and 17:4). The New Testament also offers some illustrations. Paul speaks of this in Romans 5:13, where he says that righteousness of God was imputed to Abraham when he believed and to the righteousness David knew when he confessed his sin.

Three Basic Imputations

There are three basic imputations described for us in Scripture. The first is the imputation of Adam's sin to the entire human race (Rom. 5:12). Second is the imputation of Man's sin to Christ (2 Cor. 5:19). And thirdly there is the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers (2 Cor. 5:21).

When speaking of Adam's sin, we find that the penalty connected with imputed sin (Rom. 5:13-14) is physical death. The penalty connected with inherited sin is spiritual death. The cure for the imputed sin is the imputed righteousness of Christ.

Personal Sins

In Romans 3:9-18 Paul shows that the judgment for all people is based upon the fact that all have sinned. The condemnation is universal for all have sinned, with no exceptions. The sins include not only what we have done, but also what we have failed to do. The result of our personal sins is the loss of fellowship with God. The unbeliever has no fellowship with God because of his sin, and the believer loses the joy of that fellowship when living in unconfessed known sin. The cure is confession, turning and remorse for the sins committed against a holy

and righteous God.

The Christian and Sin

Just because one becomes a born-again believer does not mean he is free from the problem of sin. While he will not be condemned eternally he is responsible to resist sin where he finds it. While some believe that it is possible to reach a point of sinless perfection in this life, which will not happen until the resurrection when God will free us from the sin nature. Living the Christian life is a challenge in a world that is opposed to the things of God. The world is not our only problem, a much larger problem is simply the flesh itself (Gal. 5:19). As if the world and the flesh were not enough to deal with we also have to deal with Satan and his demons.

SECTION IX

JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD

Christ existed prior to His coming to earth. For some it means that He existed before Creation and before time. But actually preexistence is not the same as being eternal, they are different concepts. Christ has always been, there was never a time when He was not. He made it clear that He was and is God, existing eternally, having no beginning and no end. If the eternality of Christ is denied then there is no Trinity, Christ is not completely God, and He lied.

His activity prior to the incarnation can be seen in His role as creator (John 1:3). All things were created by Him and for Him (Col. 1:16). He also is the one who is holding everything together, demonstrating His power (Col. 1:17).

In the Old Testament Jesus appeared as the *Angel of Yahweh*, where He speaks as God, identifies Himself with God, and claims to have the authority of God (Gen. 16;7-14)/

The Incarnation of Christ

This is one of those words that never appear in Scripture, but the meaning is certainly clear when John writes, "The Word became flesh," (John 1:14). He is simply saying that God took on human flesh and form. The incarnation was predicted in the Old Testament (Isa. 9:6), along with the virgin birth (Isa. 7:14).

The purpose of the incarnation was for God to reveal Himself to us (John 1:18, 14:7-11). The only way for man to see the Father is to have the Son present, personalizing the knowledge of God.

Jesus set an example for all men to follow, he offered Himself for our sin He fulfilled prophecy, destroyed the work of the devil (1 John 3:8), gained firsthand knowledge of what we go through with our struggle over temptation (Heb. 4:14-16, and ultimately to be the judge of all men.

The Person of Christ Incarnate

Jesus came into the world like no other person; He performed miracles like no other person and ultimately died and rose from the dead. The things which He did could only be ascribed to God. Jesus claimed to be God in the flesh, and was given titles that reflect deity (Matt. 26:63-64).

Jesus possessed a real body of flesh and blood. He had a human soul and spirit (Matt. 26:38), He had the characteristics of a human being and He was called by human names. Jesus never ceased to be God even though He came and took on human flesh. He was both fully God and fully man, having all the attributes of both.

Christ: Prophet, Priest, and King

As one studies the Scriptures you will find three distinct offices attributed to Christ. The first is that of Prophet, next is Priest and finally as King. Moses declared that God would rise up a prophet like himself (Deut. 18:15). The ultimate prophet was Christ Himself.

During His earthly ministry Christ functioned as a Prophet, His preaching included future events that would occur.

The prophet spoke to men from God; the priest speaks to God for men. Jesus certainly did this and is still interceding on man's behalf. Christ is pictured as Melchizedek as a priest with no beginning and no ending.

As King we see a wide range of topics that would have to be considered. A king in Israel had legislative, executive, judicial, economic, and military powers. The concept of Christ as King may center on the fact that He was promised, predicted, rejected and realized. God promised David that the right to rule would always be from the lineage of David.

The Self-emptying of Christ

The Synod of Antioch in 341 declared that Christ emptied Himself of "being equal with God" while clearly maintaining the full deity of Christ.⁴² This concept has been debated ever since and

continues to be one of major importance. The concept is called *kenosis* (from the verb in Phil. 2:7). The Bible does not state much on the subject but it is a true statement in Philippians 2:7 and it does not contradict other truths.

One misconception on this subject states that Christ surrendered some or all of His attributes of deity. Biblically this is false, and theologically it is impossible. If He surrendered any attributes, then He ceased to be God during His earthly life.⁴³ The idea that Christ disguised His deity during His earthly ministry is also in error. This position denies that Christ was God at the same time He was man. If this were true, then how could He state that all who saw Him also saw the Father?

The Sinlessness of Christ

This involves the perfect obedience of Christ to the Father and His obedience to the Mosaic Law under which He lived on earth. At every state of His life he was holy and sinless. The Scriptures declare the sinlessness of Christ and He challenged His enemies to show any sinful act on His part (Matt. 22:15).

While conservatives agree that Christ was sinless they disagree on whether He could have sinned. That He never sinned to accepted, whether or not He could sin is still a question for many.

THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF CHRIST

The Resurrection

The whole foundation of Christianity stands or falls on the issue of the resurrection. If Christ did not rise from the dead then He was a false prophet, because He predicted that He would (Matt. 20:19). The resurrection authenticates Christ as God and the message He delivered as the word of God.

The Evidences for the Resurrection

The most important evidence would have to be His appearances after the crucifixion. The fact that many different people from different walks of life saw Him is overwhelming evidence to this historical fact. The empty tomb, the drastic change of behavior for His disciples all point to a risen Lord.

The ascension of Christ was predicted in the Old Testament (Ps. 68:18) as well as in the New (Mark 16:19). However, the main account is found in Acts 1:6-11, the ascension marked the end of the earthly ministry of Christ.

The Post-ascension Ministries of Christ

When Christ left He promised to provide another comforter, which He did in the person of the Holy Spirit. He is now seated at the right hand of God the Father as King and High Priest. He is preparing a place for His followers and is making intercession daily on our behalf.

The time is coming when He will call all those who are in the grave and they will rise to meet Him in the air, joining their resurrected bodies with their spirits. He is preparing rewards for those who faithfully have served Him and He will come again and set up His earthly kingdom, sitting on the throne of David.

SECTION X

SO GREAT A SALVATION

Soteriology, the doctrine of salvation must be considered the most important subject in the Scriptures. This subject touches every soul that was ever conceived, without exception. It is the major theme of the Old and New Testaments. The subject centers on, around and in the person of Christ. This great salvation involves the three tenses of life. The moment we are saved we are delivered from the condemnation of sin (Eph. 2:8). As we go through life we are being saved from the domination of sin and we are being sanctified and protected (Heb. 7:25). And in the future we will be saved from the very presence of sin in the presence of God forever (Rom. 5:9-10).

There appear to be at least three reasons that God has provided this great salvation. First it was the best demonstration of the love of God. Second, salvation gives evidence of God's grace throughout all eternity (Eph. 2 :7), and finally to give the world a glimpse; of God who is good (Eph. 2:10).

It becomes the responsibility of all true believers to spread the good news of the gospel message to a lost and dying world. For the pastor it is even more important to make sure the message is presented in its completeness and as often as possible to as many as will hear.

Biblical Terminology

In the Old Testament salvation was seen in two aspects, deliverance from some sort of trouble and as deliverance to the Lord for His special purpose (Isa. 43:11-12). Faith was needed to accomplish both and the object of faith had to be the Lord.

In the New Testament salvation can mean cure, recovery, remedy, rescue, redemption, or welfare. This can be seen in relation to preservation from danger, disease or death (Matt. 9:22).⁴⁴ However, the true and full Christian understanding of salvation is the deliverance from judgment and eternal death, resulting in everlasting life (Rom. 5:9).

THE PASSION OF CHRIST

Due to the helpless condition of fallen man, he was unable to fix his problem of sin. God needed to step in and do for us what we could not do for ourselves. With the universal condemnation of mankind, God presented a bleak picture. However, due to the passion of our Lord, His great love for us, He stepped into the world and took our place and died for our sins. The key point is the willingness of God to die for His creation, being the sinless Son of God, Christ was more than sufficient to pay the price as the sinless lamb.

It is important to understand that the sufferings of Christ's life were not part of the atoning process. His sinless life pointed to His obedience, which in turn enabled Him to offer Himself as the spotless sacrifice for the sins of the world.

The Meaning of the Death of Christ

It is not possible to describe all aspects of Christ's life, death and resurrection, but there are some important facts that need to be understood. His death was a substitutionary act on our behalf. Man could never pay the price required for his own sin, so God in His mercy provided a substitute in Jesus Christ who did provide an eternal satisfaction for sin. Some would try to minimize or reject this concept, but clearly Jesus taught that His death was a substitution for sinners.

The death of Jesus provided for the redemption of man in relation to his sin. The Old Testament provides a picture of a kinsman redeemer who had the responsibility to protect and care for the family. Another concept is that of redeeming or payment of ransom on behalf of another. And still another concept is that of redeeming a forfeited life (Ex. 13:12). Each of these concepts speaks of a payment being made. The circumstances may change, but always there is a price that needs to be paid.

The New Testament term *Agorazo* (translated redemption) is used in the sense of buying or

gaining in the forum, a simple commercial transaction. There are three basic ideas in this sense of the word; the work of redeeming, the price that is paid (the blood of Christ), and as a result we are to serve Him (I Cor. 6:19-20).

The doctrine of redemption can be understood as redeeming people from something; the marketplace of sin. People are redeemed by something; the payment of a price, the blood of Christ. People are redeemed to something; a state of freedom from sin and are called to a life of obedience and service to the one who redeemed them, Jesus.

Christ's death provided reconciliation to the world alienated from God. Reconciliation means to change direction; this is in relationship to a holy God (Rom. 11:28). Our condition demanded a change and nothing was more important than reconciliation to our creator. In this process we see that God is reconciled to man, man is reconciled to God, and both are reconciled to each other.

Christ's death provided for propitiation in relation to God. Propitiation means the turning away of wrath by an offering. In relation to Soteriology, propitiation means satisfying the anger of God by the offering of a sacrifice, Jesus.

Some Results of Salvation

The list of benefits for our salvation is certainly large. Some of the major benefits of our salvation include justification, sanctification, reconciliation, and adoption. Justification is really central to our faith because it identifies our salvation as the product of faith and grace.⁴⁵

The meaning of justification is to declare one righteous. Both in Hebrew (*sadaq*) and the Greek word (*dikaioo*) mean to announce or pronounce a favorable verdict, to declare one righteous. This is not the same as making one righteous, but to announce righteousness. God changes sinners into righteous people by making us the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21), by making many righteous (Rom. 5:19), by giving believers the gift of righteousness (v. 17).

⁴⁵ Ibid., 298.

We can follow a five step plan of God as we study the Scripture. First there was the plan itself (Rom. 3:21), then the prerequisite (faith, Rom 3:22), followed by the price (Rom. 3:24-25), which is the blood of Christ, then the position (the believer is placed in Christ), and finally the pronouncement (Rom. 3:26).⁴⁶

Theories of the Atonement

Throughout history the subject of the atonement has generated many different ideas. Some errors continue to arise over the years. The different views can generally be cataloged under three headings. (1) Views which related the death of Christ to Satan (Origen, Aulen). (2) Views which consider His death as a powerful example to influence people (Abelard, Socinus, Grotius, Barth). (3) Views which emphasize punishment due to the justice of God and substitution (Anselm, Reformers).⁴⁷ The key factor must be the substitutionary death of Christ. It is this substitution that God's justice demands and thereby becomes the basis for the gift of eternal life to those who believe.

The Doctrine of Election

Once again we have three major views on the subject of election. There is foresight election, corporate election and individual pretemporal election. Foresight election declares that God on the basis of knowing who would believe then elects them to salvation. This is the view of a large number of evangelicals consciously or unconsciously.

Corporate election was defended by Karl Barth. He taught that election is primarily election of Christ, then the election of the community, and finally the election of individuals. His position on this point caused some to label Barth a Universalist. This is probably better explained as God electing a group, those who are in Christ, but not individuals until after they become members of

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid 299.

⁷⁴⁷ ibid., 309

the group by faith.

Individual, pretemporal election is the eternal act of God. Whereby He, in His sovereign will, and on account of no foreseen merit in them, chooses a certain number of men to be the recipients of special grace and of eternal salvation.⁴⁸

Objections to the Doctrine of Election

For some the doctrine of election amounts to nothing more than fatalism. What they fail to recognize is the intelligent, loving God who is putting everything together. Fatalism seems to ignore the process and the one behind it.

Another is the question of human freedom. This is the same objection found in Romans 9:18: why can God fault anyone since no one really resists His will if everything is part of His plan. Another issue is the source of sin; some would argue that election makes God the author. All that the Bible says about the concrete appearance of sin is that was found in Satan (Ezek. 28:15). God is not the author of sin nor is He responsible for it in any form.

The Extent of the Atonement

This subject has produced some interesting ideas such as the limited atonement. Limited atonement or particular redemption is brought up on occasion, but it is not a major cornerstone doctrine.⁴⁹ Berkhof is a common spokesman on this subject for the limited position. He states his position this way, "Did the Father in sending Christ, and did Christ in coming into the world, to make atonement for sin, do this with the design or for the purpose of saving only the elect of all men? That is the question, and that only is the question."⁵⁰

Obviously if that is the correct question, then the answer is clear: The Atonement was limited. But if the question is not correct the answer is very different. The answer to the

⁴⁸ K, Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids; Erdmans. 1941), 114.

⁵⁰ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 1941), 394

question changes when we consider that God provided payment for all men to be saved even though only the elect would benefit from it. Because some reject does not invalidate the provision or mean that the provision was not made for them.

Armenians believe in universal redemption or unlimited atonement. Calvinists hold to universal redemption with some exceptions. The five point Calvinists hold to particular redemption.

Those who hold to unlimited atonement claim that in order for anyone to preach the Gospel to all, unlimited atonement must be true. This position seems to support the idea of preaching to the entire world the message of redemption. However, there are those who preached to all and yet held to a limited atonement position, like Spurgeon.

For the limited atonement people, the idea of Christ's death being the payment for the entire world diminishes the value of Christ's death. Yet, if God designed the atonement in such a way as to place value in a universal sacrifice, then the value is realized.

The Application of Salvation

The way of salvation is important to understand and place in a logical order. However, this is very difficult to accomplish, the order can be argued. The main issue is the relationship between regeneration and faith.

There are very clear parts that can identified, such as conviction. The Lord promised that He would send another comforter (the Holy Spirit) and that He would convict the world of sin, righteousness and coming judgment (John 16:8-11). What exactly is conviction? Do not confuse conviction with conversion, they are different. Conviction deals with a person's attitude toward the evidence resented, but that does not guarantee a response.

The scope of the Holy Spirit's conviction is the entire world, all men. This involves more than just the elect. Some would exclude those who have not been exposed to the Gospel message; their conviction is from natural revelation. The conviction is in the area of sin, righteousness,

and judgment. The order is a logical one. Man needs to see his condition as sinful, be given proof that it is sin, and be presented with the results if he rejects.

Salvation also involves a call. Scripture speaks of a general call and a specific call to the elect (Matt. 22:14). This represents God's invitation to all men to respond to His grace. This is referred to as the General Call of God.

There is also the Effective Call of God. The Effective Call is only to the elect through faith which brings about their salvation (Rom. 8:30). This is a special work of God in the hearts of selected people.

Regeneration takes place when a person is born again (Matt. 19:29). This is the work of God that gives new life to the one who believes. It is strictly according to God's will (James 1:18) through the means of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5) when a person believes (1:12) the Gospel as presented in God's Word (1 Peter 1:23).

The order of regeneration to faith is very interesting, the Reformed position states that regeneration proceeds faith. While this may be a logical order it presents some difficulties. For instance, if a sinner has new life why does he need to believe?

Faith means confidence, trust, to hold something as true. Certainly the object of faith is critical to the result of any faith. Salvation is always by the means of faith, not because of faith (Eph. 2:8-9). Faith then becomes the avenue by which we receive the gift of eternal life; it is not the cause.

The Scriptures identify four different kinds of faith. There is intellectual or historical faith, received as a result of education, tradition, or events. This type of faith is not saving faith (Matt. 7:26). There is miracle faith, which is able to perform or has performed a miracle and may or may not involve salvation (Matt. 8:10-13). Next is temporary faith, which is very similar to intellectual faith. This faith changes with the conditions around the one involved. And then there is saving faith. This is a dependence upon God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves as revealed in the Word of God.

The Security of the Believer

Eternal security is the work of God which guarantees that the gift of salvation, once received, is forever and cannot be lost. The emphasis of eternal security is on God doing again what we cannot do for ourselves and protects us from anything that would separate us from the Father. Assurance is the understanding that we are in fact the children of God and thus have eternal life. Lacking assurance will alter one's life style and confidence producing anxiety and fear in the life of one who should have confidence and peace.

The Arminian view states that a person may lose his salvation. Although Arminius said: "I never taught that a true believer can either totally or finally fall away from the faith and perish; yet I will not cancel that there are passages of Scripture which seem to me to wear this aspect" (*Works*, 1:254).

The major point is the grace of God is what provides salvation; it is a gift, not earned. Since we did not earn it by our merit we cannot lose it by lack of merit. Salvation is the purpose of God and it is His desire to save some and that He will do based on His power and payment. It is the Holy Spirit that indwells the believer after he is regenerated and baptized into the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit seals the believer with the promise of God for future redemption. If salvation can be lost, then His sealing would not be until the day of redemption but only until the day of sinning, or apostasy, or disbelief. There are some problem passages, but they are minor in comparison to the amount of Scripture that speaks of our eternal redemption and security.

What is the Gospel

The content and presentation of the Gospel of grace has been confusing to many people. Many are simple overwhelmed when asked to explain to present the Gospel. One thing is certain there can be no good news unless a person feels the need for good news. The good news revolves around the issue of sin and if a person does not have an awareness of their sin there is no sense of need for the good news.

The Bible speaks of another gospel, which is really no gospel at all. Paul and John warn about those who come preaching another gospel. The Gospel message is the same for all; there is not a Gospel for children, one for teenagers and one for adults. There may be different ways to explain the Gospel, but there is only one.

The good news is simply that Christ died for the sins of the world, and all those who by faith believe and receive Him as their Savior will have forgiveness of sins and be given eternal life. Some would add baptism as a requirement for salvation, but this is not a part of the Gospel. Jesus said we are to believe and then be baptized as an outward sign of an inward change. In order for a person to come to Christ they need the convicting of the Holy Spirit to the presence of sin.

When a person is convicted by the Holy Spirit the result should be repentance, a change of mind. However, repentance does not mean that one is saved. Many people have repented of sins in their lives without ever coming to Christ for salvation. Repentance resulting in salvation means a person has had a change of mind in relationship to Christ and their sin. This is the only type of repentance that leads to salvation.⁵¹

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Who is the Holy Spirit?

He is a person who possesses intellect, emotion and will. He knows and searches the things of God (I Cor. 2:10-11); He possesses a mind (Rom 8:27); and He is able to teach people (I Cor. 2:13). He guides us into truth by hearing, speaking, and showing (John 16:13). He convicts the world of sin, righteousness and coming judgment, performs miracles (Acts 8:39), and He intercedes (Rom 8:26).

The Holy Spirit is to be obeyed (Acts 10:19-21), He can be lied to (Acts 5:3), He can be resisted (Acts 7:51), He can be grieved (Eph. 4:30), He can be blasphemed (Matt. 12:31), and

⁵¹ Ibid., 337.

He can be insulted (Heb. 10:29).

He is God

Not only is the Holy Spirit a person, but He is actually God. Proofs of personality are not proofs of deity; but proofs of Deity are also proofs of His personality. IF God is a person, and IF the Spirit is also God, then He is a Person also.

The attributes of the Holy Spirit are in fact attributes of God. While he possesses attributes that show He is a person, He has attributes that only God can possess. He was the cause of the virgin birth (Luke 1:35), the agent in the giving of Scriptures (2 Peter 1:21), and He was involved with the creation of the universe (Gen. 1:2).

The Holy Spirit in Old Testament Times

There are at least 100 references to the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, which would indicate His presence and activity during that period. The Spirit was active in the creation, the giving of the Law and additional Scriptures and He ministered to and through people in the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit indwelt some people, came upon some and enabled others for specific work.

The Holy Spirit in the Life of our Lord

Clearly the Holy Spirit was involved in the conception of our Lord in the womb of the virgin Mary, resulting in His Incarnation (Luke 1:35).

We find that Christ was filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1, He was anointed by the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:18), Christ rejoiced in the Spirit (Luke 10:21), and Christ was empowered by the Holy Spirit (Isa. 42:1-4).

The Death of Christ

Usually Hebrews 9:14 is used to support the idea that our Lord offered Himself in His death through the Spirit. There are many who would disagree and evidence does not provide a definite

conclusion. Some believe this is not a reference to the Holy Spirit, but to Christ's own spirit.

The Spirit Indwelling

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the gift from God to all believers in this age (John 7:37; Acts 11:16; Rom 5:5). If one does not have the indwelling Holy Spirit, he is not a part of the family of God (Rom. 8:9). Jude also talks about apostates lacking the spirit of God (Jude 19). The question is often raised concerning sinning Christians, does the Spirit indwell them? According to Paul in I Corinthians 6:19, the Holy Spirit does indwell sinners.

Some would say that the indwelling is not permanent and can be removed. But, according to Romans 8:9, if the Holy Spirit leaves then they are no longer Christians.⁵²

Some questions concerning indwelling involve the obedience of the believer. Acts 5:22 seems to indicate that the Spirit is given to those who obey God. There are illustrations in Scripture of the same temporary indwelling, but they appear before the Day of Pentecost. The account in Acts seems to indicate that belief and salvation occurred prior to receiving the Holy Spirit.

Another issue is the relationship between anointing and indwelling. In the New Testament Christ was anointed (Luke 4:18) and believers were anointed (2 Cor. 1:21). It appears that in the Old Testament anointing was related more to service, and the New Testament believer's anointing seems to the filling of the Spirit. All New Testament believers are permanently indwelt.⁵³

The Spirit Sealing

These are three passages that speak of the sealing of the Holy Spirit. The first is in 2Corinthians 1:22 and says, God has sealed us and given us the earnest of the Spirit. In Ephesians 1:13 we read that we were sealed with the Spirit when we believed. Ephesians 4:30

²⁵² Ibid., 356.

³⁵³ Ibid., 358.

declares that all believers are sealed by the Spirit until the day of redemption. There are no references to these particular ministries in the Old Testament.

Similar to indwelling, sealing is unique to all true believers in Christ Jesus. Paul is very clear in 2 Corinthians that there are no exceptions to this work. Like indwelling, sealing takes place at the moment of saving faith (Acts 2:38).

The sealing is the work of God on behalf of the believer (2 Cor. 1:22). The Spirit may be the Agent or the sphere of the sealing, or both. So we are sealed by the Spirit and in the Spirit. The sealing process is good until the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30). The sealing is a guarantee that God will complete the process He began in each believer.

The sealing speaks of ownership and possession; we are His when His seal is placed upon us. If we are His, we can rest secure in the fact that He will take care of His possessions.

Spirit Baptizing

The Spirit is the one who baptizes the believer into the body of Christ. It was predicted by John the Baptist during his ministry, nowhere in the Old Testament is this concept presented. The first occurrence came on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5). Later Peter called this event “the beginning” (Acts 11:15-16). The purpose of this event seems to be the joining of believers to the body of Christ.

While there has been much argument over the question of universal baptism three facts are clear. The key text in I Corinthians 12:13 clearly states that all have been baptized into one body and have all been made the drink of one Spirit. Second, if this did not occur at salvation to all who believe, there would be some saved without the Spirit. And third, if baptism needs to be repeated, then it could only happen if the individual was separated from the body of Christ and needed to be rejoined. The baptism joins the believer to the body of Christ maintaining the unity of the body of believers.

The Spirit Gifting

The giving of spiritual gifts is a clear Pauline teaching; the only other use of the term is found in I Peter 4:10. The main passage in I Corinthians stresses the giving of spiritual gifts is by the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual gifts would be any enablement for service specifically given by God. A spiritual gift is an ability.⁵⁴ We cannot say that a spiritual gift is a place of service or an office, nor is it a particular age group ministry, nor special technique, and it is different from natural talent.

We find that all believers are given some gift, some more than others and the gifts can vary. Among the gifts listed are: ministering, exhortation, giving, teaching, showing mercy, faith, and evangelism.

The Description of Spiritual Gifts

I Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11 describe the spiritual gifts that God has given. They consist of the gift of Apostleship, prophecy (Rom 12:7), miracles (I Cor. 12:28) and healing (vv. 9, 28,30) tongues and interpretation of tongues (I Cor. 12:10), evangelism (Eph. 4:11), pastor (Eph. 4:11), serving (Rom. 12:7), teaching (Rom. 12:7), faith (I Cor.12:9), exhortation (Rom. 12:8), distinguishing spirits (I Cor. 12:10), showing mercy (Rom. 12:8), giving (Rom. 12:8), wisdom and knowledge (I Cor. 12:8).

Spirit Filing

The idea of people being filled with the Spirit occurs fifteen times in the New Testament, four of them before Pentecost. There seems to be two emphases with the fillings, resulting in some very important results.

God's desire for each of His children is spiritual growth and that must be accomplished with help from the Holy Spirit. Spiritual growth involves understanding the will of God and the knowledge of God; both are accomplished through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. The believer should use the spiritual gifts given to him by the Holy Spirit in order to fulfill the work

God has given to him. To do this the believer must face the attacks of Satan and the flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:13). As one surrenders to the control of the Holy Spirit spiritual growth will follow.

The growth of the believer comes in stages and results in different levels of spiritual growth in different people. Just being a Christian for some length of time does not guarantee spiritual growth. There must be the surrender of the believer to the control of the Spirit for growth to take place. While there are different levels of maturity, no one reaches complete or total maturity in this life.

There are two aspects to the filling; one is the sovereign act of God where He fills someone for service. Then there is the constant abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. This act produces a quality of life not possible apart from the Spirit's presence. In this state the believer is commanded to be filled with the Spirit, which would indicate some responsibility on the part of the believer to respond to what the Spirit is attempting to do. A Spirit filled believer will display Christlike character in their daily lives. All of the fruit of the Spirit will be present when one is filled. Evidently there can be different levels of filling resulting in different levels of the fruit of the Spirit being present.

Paul expressed four evidences of Spirit-filling in Ephesians 5:18. Praise would be present and expressed openly, another is psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Singing and making melody in the heart is evidence of the inner attitude of worship.⁵⁵ Giving of thanks would be a part of the filling result as well as submissiveness in relationships.

There is no example of anyone praying and receiving the filling of the Spirit. The filling therefore must be accomplished by some other approach. Since filling has to do with the control of the Spirit it must therefore be related to yieldedness. When I am willing to let the Holy Spirit have control, then He can do whatever He pleases with my life.

In summary, filling is a repeated experience, it did occur in the Old Testament, but was experienced by everyone. Looking at the results of the fillings that are recorded for us it is clear

that the filling can be removed. When filling is present there is power and is evident to those around. The filling ultimately is dependent upon yieldedness to the work of the Spirit in the individual's life.

Other Ministries of the Holy Spirit

One of the main ministries of the Spirit is that of teacher. One of Christ's last promise before His crucifixion was to send the Holy Spirit and that He would teach concerning all truth.

The Holy Spirit is active in guiding the believer, leading them in the direction they should walk (Rom. 8:14). We are never alone and should take great comfort in that truth. Assurance is a vital work of the Spirit in the life of every believer. "The Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16). The Spirit assists us in our prayers, since we do not know how to pray as we should (Rom. 8:26).

History of the Doctrine of the Spirit

The early church was not very concerned with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but over the years come to appreciate the third person of the Godhead. Montanism (170 AD) moved the teaching of the Holy Spirit into the mainstream of Christian thought. Montanism (also called the Phrygian heresy) started in Phrygia through the efforts of Montanus and two women. Actually this was an orthodox movement in reaction to the Gnosticism that was gaining momentum.

Monarchianism was forerunner of Sabellianism. Monarchianism taught that the Son was just another expression of the Father; this forced the church to look hard at the relationship of the Trinity to each other. Sabellianism taught that God is a unity but that He revealed Himself in three different forms; this was the first major error concerning the Trinity. Arianism (325 AD) was an anti-Trinitarian view of the Godhead, presented by Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria.⁵⁶ All of these views were examined at the council of Nicea.

The Council of Constantinople (381 AD) had to finish what the Nicene Council failed to do,

given a clear definition of the Holy Spirit. This council settled the question of the deity of the Spirit.

Augustine (354-430 AD) formulated the final concept for the organized church. In his conception of the Trinity, the Spirit proceeds from both the father and the Son. The Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) represented the efforts of the Roman Church, Constantinople, Antioch, and Jerusalem in confirming the decisions of Nicea and Constantinople.

The Synod of Toledo (589 AD) was convened to deal with the exact relationship of the Spirit to the Father and the Son. Abelard spoke of the Trinity in ways which caused him to be charged with Sabellianism. The name of the Father, he said, stands for power; The Son, for wisdom; the Spirit, for goodness.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 AD) had the usual orthodox understanding of the Trinity. Not much was added to the debate until the Protestant Reformation in 1517 AD. Up to the time of the Reformation not much took place the attention was only to the person of the Holy Spirit. During the Reformation a look was given to the work of the Holy Spirit.

“I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH”

Central to the New Testament is the church. Christ purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). It is the object of Christ’s love, and He nourishes and protects it (Eph. 5:25, 29). The English word “church” comes from the Greek work *kyriakon* which means “belonging to the Lord.”⁵⁷ There are only two times this term is used, once in I Corinthians 11:20 and again in Revelation 1:10.

The Hebrew word *gayal* means a called out assembly and is usually translated *ekklesia* in the Septuagint. This word does not always refer to a religious assembly; it could refer to any group of people who have come together. And the Greek word *ekklesia* usually was used in reference to a political assembly, not a religious one. But, the use in the New Testament still retains the basic meaning of an assembly.

The church has two aspects to it, the universal and the local. The universal church is

composed of all true believers everywhere and from all periods. The local church generally is viewed as the local congregation which can be made up of believers and non-believers. The Roman Catholic view of the church sees it as “a divinely constituted society consisting of members from every race and nation, all holding one faith, all using the same sacraments as means of holiness and salvation, and all governed benignly by the successor of St. Peter, the Vicar of Christ, the pope...”⁵⁸

The Anglican Concept states that “the visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ’s ordinances ...” (Article XIX of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England).

The Reformed concept taken from the Westminster Confession of Faith states: “The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect.... The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel, consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children...” (chap. XXV).

The Baptist concept comes from the confession of faith of 1646 which says that “the church is a company of visible saints, called and separated from the world by the Word and Spirit of God, to the visible profession of the faith of the Gospel; being baptized into that faith” (Article XXIII).

The Distinctiveness of the Church

The church really does stand separate and distinct in the purposes of God. He promised to build His church and He is doing so today.

Jesus identified certain distinctives of his church. He stated that the church would come after His departure, it was not the same as the kingdom, which He taught, and it was different

⁵⁸C.B.Pallen, “Catholic Church,” *The New Catholic Dictionary* [N.Y.: *The Universal Knowledge Foundation*, 1929], 180-1).

from the theocracy of Israel.⁵⁹ The church did not exist in the Old Testament times; the Day of Pentecost marked the beginning of the Church age.

Jesus taught concerning the church and declared that He would be the architect of the new body. Jesus was not only the founder, but He is the foundation (I Cor. 3:11). Jesus was also the Cornerstone through His death and resurrection (Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20). He purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). His resurrection and ascension made Him the Head over the church (Eph. 1:20-23).

Principles and/or Pattern?

The question immediately comes up as to whether the bible teaches a particular pattern for all churches throughout all times. Or, does the local church have the ability to adjust to local customs and needs? The arguments for flexibility are usually historical and analogical in nature. Some would contend that the church must follow the pattern set forth in the Scriptures exactly as they are presented. There are in fact detailed passages showing patterns for the church structure.

Types of Church Government

The New Testament does not contain a formal definition of a local church. But, it does give certain features contained in the local church body. The key elements in the types of church government include several key points. However; one clear point that stands out is the exclusion of those who do not make a profession of faith in Christ. The first key element is the teaching of baptism (regardless of the mode), there is no such thing as unbaptized church members in the New Testament. The church always has some form of organization (Acts 14:23). The church is here to do the will of God, including observance of the ordinances, evangelizing, building up believers, worship, giving, ministering to all age groups, etc.⁶⁰ The specific type of organization may be debated, but the fact of organization is not.

Minimal Government

Some intentionally try to keep the church government small. This group emphasizes the use of spiritual gifts by all the members, downplays the idea of membership, and will give a prominence to the headship of Christ.

While small this group still has some organization to function by. This group would be less congregational in nature. The decision making would be more federal with one single minister. The Quakers and Plymouth Brethren favor this type of structure.

National Government

This group would function under the head of state or within the control of the states. They acknowledge and accept the right of the state to be involved within the organizational structure of the church. The Anglican Church in England and the Lutheran Church in Germany are examples of this type of organization.

Looking at the Scriptures we do not find any state involvement in church discipline. If the state were involved it seems logical that some reference would be made to the state in the Matthew 18 passage.

Hierarchal Government

In this system the clergy are organized into groups or ranks, each of which is subordinate to the one above it. The Methodists use this type of structure, but it is not as absolute as it is in the Episcopal Church. Support for this approach comes from the role of the apostles in the first century, especially Peter.

One thing is clear, we can see two offices in the New Testament, that of elder and deacons. While the office of bishop is mentioned, it is most often considered the same as the elder position.

Congregational Government

The authority for this group rests ultimately with the members of the church. This approach

has each church as a separate autonomous body. In this setting the authority is given to a few by the vote or approval of the congregation. They see the apostles as leaders over more than one body, the elders and deacons that followed them did not. After the passing of the apostles the entire church was involved with the selection of leaders (Acts 1:23, 26; 6:3, 5; 15:22). In this setting there could and often were a plurality of leadership in practice.

QUALIFIED LEADERSHIP FOR THE CHURCH

Whatever the form of government, leadership was essential to the well-being of the church body. Leadership is one of the spiritual gifts of the Spirit, obviously God saw the need in this area. The two classes of leadership are not normally debated, they are elders and deacons. The question usually asked in this area is whether or not there should be a third, bishops.

Distinctions between gift and office

The office one holds in the church should not be confused with the gift of God upon that individual. A person may have a clear spiritual gift and yet not hold any office in the church. And those who hold office should possess the gift necessary for that office.

Men and women are equally gifted by God for service, though the gifts will differ and the areas of service will vary as well. The principal offices in the New Testament churches were held by men. Today much debate is raging over the role of women and their right to hold specific offices that for centuries were limited to men.

Elders

The number of elders is often a question that arises in many churches. One group believes there should be many elders, each functioning according to their gifts, while others see the need for only one elder. In 1 Timothy 3, when Paul describes the qualifications for the bishop he does this in the singular, which would argue for a single elder or bishop. Perhaps there was one ruling elder with additional elders handling specific tasks under the ruling elder. If in fact the elder and bishop speak of the same office, then the main ministry of the elders is that of overseeing the work of the church in every aspect.

The division of authority seems to indicate that the elders handled spiritual matters and the deacons were involved with the financial and everyday responsibilities given to them from the elders.

The qualifications of an elder include: self-control, temperate, sound and sober of mind, orderly, hospitable, able and willing to teach, not given to much wine, not a brawler, not contentious, free from the love of money and not self-willed (I Cor. 7:39-40; I Tim. 5:14). In the early church the Apostles appointed the elders (Acts 14:23). How they were selected after the Apostles is not clear, Scripture does not specifically state.

Deacons

Most people would agree that there were multiple deacons present in the early church, probably due to the fact that they handled the physical aspects of the ministry, which required considerable effort.

The word deacon means to serve and it is used often in an unofficial context (col. 1:7). To be a deacon meant that you were a servant of the church who ministered to the body. The Greeks used the word to indicate a waiter, a messenger, a steward, and a servant. Like elders the deacons had to have a clear testimony and meant clear qualification is to serve (I Tim. 3:8-10, 12, 13).

Deaconesses

The question here is whether this was an office or a ministry. There are two passages that touch on this issue, Romans 16:1-2 where Phoebe is called a “deacon” or “helper” of the church at Cenchrea; and I Timothy 3:11 where a distinct group of women leaders are mentioned. Perhaps they are simply the wives of deacons.⁶¹

There is support on both sides of this issue of women deaconesses. In I Timothy the feminine form of the word is used in verse 2. In I Timothy 3:11, “likewise” introduces the women

⁶¹Ibid., 419.

as it does the deacons in verse 8, possibly indicating a distinct office for these women.

The argument used against the office of deaconess rests on several points. A Greek word for deaconess does exist, but it is not used in the New Testament. When Paul was listing the qualifications for office, why didn't he mention deaconess? If deaconess is an office in the church, the only qualifications would be found in I Timothy 3:11.

ORDINANCES FOR THE CHURCH

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are usually referred to as ordinances, some may call them sacraments. The word "sacrament" simply means to make something sacred, to dedicate to a god or to sacred use.⁶² Those who choose to call them sacraments do so because of their belief that some super natural power is connected with the practice. An ordinance is simply the idea of a symbol without any special giving of grace connected with the practice. Many consider the only true ordinances are those ordered by our Lord. The ordinances connected with Christ include baptism and the Lord's Supper and some include foot washing. A wider view would include marriage and praying for the sick (James 5). All are in agreement that baptism and the Lord's Supper qualify as ordinances of the church.

The Importance of Baptism

Looking at the life of Jesus we find that He was baptized according to the Law (Matt. 3:16). Even though the meaning of his baptism was totally different from the baptism of Christian believers, it still suggests that we should follow his example, and baptism was one of them. The Lord commanded the disciples to go everywhere preach the gospel and baptize new believers (Matt. 28:19). The early church was faithful in their adherence to this practice and baptism was an important part of all churches ever since.

The Meaning of Baptism

The Scriptures would lead us to understand that baptism is associated with the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16), with union with Christ (Rom. 6:1-10), with making disciples (Matt. 2:19), and with repentance (Acts 2:38). Baptism by itself does not forgive sins; it is a symbol of the forgiveness already appropriated by faith in the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord.

Baptism can be seen as an association or identification with someone, some group, some message, or some event.⁶³ John the Baptist associated his followers with his message of righteousness. For James and John to be baptized with Christ's baptism meant to be associated with His suffering (Mark 10:38-39).

The Subjects of Baptism

The big question here concerns infant baptism. The arguments in favor of infant baptism include the circumcision argument. There is clearly a connection between circumcision and baptism in Colossians 2:11-12. Since infants were circumcised under the Old Covenant, they should be baptized under the New Covenant. These practices show membership in the covenant, not necessarily personal faith.⁶⁴

The records seem to indicate that the early church practiced infant baptism; therefore, there is support to continue the practice. But, practices alone are not sufficient to prove a point; some wrong practices were recorded as well, including baptismal regeneration, the idea that baptism is the actual avenue of salvation.

The New Testament records whole households receiving baptism, which certainly would include the infants. However, the scriptural order is always believing, and then be baptized (Matt. 3:2-6; 28:19). This would not be possible for infants.

Rebaptism

There is only one account of men being baptized twice (Acts 19:1-5). These twelve men were baptized by John and then later by Paul after they heard about Jesus. This would also give

⁶⁴ James Buswell, A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 2:262.

support for not baptizing infants.

The Time of Baptism

The examples found in the New Testament indicate that new believers were baptized soon after their profession of faith. There is no pre-baptism school or classes, no probationary period.

The Mode of Baptism

The argument for sprinkling included the understanding that some Old Testament rites of cleansings involved sprinkling (Ex. 24:6-7), and these are called “baptisms” in Hebrews 9:10. Sprinkling is clear in the cleansing of the Spirit in Ezekiel 36:25. Even though Baptizo means to immerse it could have a secondary meaning of “bringing under the influence,” and sprinkling can best show this.

For some early Christian’s immersion was not possible (Acts 2:41, too many people; 8:38, too little water in a desert place; 16:33, too little water in a house). The fact remains that the majority of Christian Assemblies practice non-immersion.

The argument for pouring rests on the fact that pouring best shows the ministry of the Spirit coming on and into the life of a believer (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2: 17-18). The description of Jesus going into the water and coming out of the water could easily be translated “to the water” and “away from the water.” The drawings from the catacombs show the one being baptized standing waist deep and the one doing the baptizing as pouring water over the head from a container he is holding.

Baptism by immersion clearly is the primary meaning of baptize. The Greek language has words for sprinkle and pours which are never used of baptism in the New Testament. Since baptism is symbolic it stands to reason that the mode that best depicts the symbolism should be the primary application.

Triune immersion is simply the immersion of the person three times under the water; once in the name of the Father, then the Son, and then the Holy Ghost. This is to associate with the Triune God as pictured in Matthew 28:19.

The Lord's Supper

This practice was given by the Lord in connection with the Passover meal and before His crucifixion. Jesus took bread after the Passover meal and stated that this represented His body, after giving thanks they each ate a piece of the unleavened bread. Then He took the cup and said that it represented his blood which was shed for the remission of their sins, gave thanks and then each drank.

The early church often had what was called a love feast, with prayers of thanksgiving and confession of sin, reading and instructions from Scriptures.

It's Significance

This is a remembrance of Christ's death, burial and resurrection until He returns (1 Cor. 11:24). This is a summary of the gospel message to all who understand an assurance of His return (Matt. 26:29) and a time of fellowship among believers.

Requirements

The requirements for participation in this event include regeneration and repentance. A person who is not a born-again believer has no right to this practice. The believer who comes to the communion table must first examine himself and then participate (1 Cor. 5:11-13; 2 Thess. 3:6).

The Frequency

There is nothing that indicates how often we should practice communion. The Scriptures simply state that as often as we do it, we do it in remembrance of Christ. At Troas the believers seem to have included this practice at their meeting each week. (Acts 20:7).

Foot Washing

In the East foot-washing is more prevalent than other places. They did in fact wash the feet

of the disciples at the Last Supper and commanded them to do likewise (John 13:1-20). As baptism symbolizes the cleaning of sin, foot washing symbolizes the cleansing needed for fellowship.

THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH

Proskuneo is the primary word used for worship and is connected with the idea of kissing (as kissing the earth to honor the deities of the earth); then came prostrating oneself in reverence. The English word “worship” (a shortened form of worthship”) means to give worth to the object worshiped.⁶⁵

The worship in the church involves individual, corporate, public, and private service for the Lord which is generated by a reverence for and submission to Hi. Jesus declared that true worship must be in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). The spirit worship includes worship anywhere at any time, coming from the heart of the one worshiping. True worship must come from a person-to-person relationship with the one being worshiped. “In truth” means that the character or true worship must be genuine and without pretense. God hates insincere worship (Isa. 10-17).⁶⁶

The Content of Corporate Worship

There is very little written about the form and content of worship in the local church. We do have some hint as to what is acceptable before the Lord (Acts 2; 20; I Cor. 12-14). An emphasis needs to be placed upon the written word dealing with doctrine (Acts 2:42). Prayer cannot be left out and should be practiced both individually and corporately (Acts 4:24; 6:4). Singing has to be a part as well, if our total worship is going to be complete. Singing was a part of the corporate worship of the early church (Col. 3:16).

⁶⁵Charles Ryrie, Basic Theology (Scripture Press, 1987), 428.

⁶⁶

ibid., 429.

Giving is depicted as an act of worship, more is written about giving than another single part of church life. Giving is pictured as a barometer of one's love for God (James 2:15-17; I John 3:17).

Fellowship should always be an intricate part of the church body (Acts 2:42). There must be a close relationship among members if a church is going to function properly.

The Day for Corporate Worship

The New Testament church gathered together on Sunday for worship, which was the first day of the week. It is interesting to see that the early Fathers did not see the need for a strong connection between the Sabbath and the Lord's Day. They understood the moral value of the Ten Commandments, but chose to leave out the one relating to the Sabbath. Even in the Epistles all of the commandments are mentioned except the Sabbath.

OTHER MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

While the church was the primary place of worship, it also served as the place for discipline of its members, the ministry to widows, and the giving to the poor.

SECTION XIII

THINGS TO COME

Eschatology is the theology of last things. This covers the study of things yet future to our present time. This study would include the intermediate state, the resurrections, the Rapture of the church, the second advent of Christ, and the Millennium.

Many disagreements arise over the study of eschatology; as a result, many simply put aside this area of study. But, the study of eschatology can produce encouragement in the life of believers (IO John 3:3), it should be very profitable for many different needs in our life (2 Tim. 3:16-17), and gives facts about life after death (2 Cor. 5:8), gives truth about the end of history, gives proof of the reliability of Scripture.

A SURVEY OF POSTMILLENNIALISM

A Definition of Postmillennialism

Loraine Boettner gives a good explanation of postmillennialism. It is “That view of last things which holds that the kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the Gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of individuals, that the world is eventually to be Christianized, and that the return of Christ is to occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace commonly called the ‘Millennium.’ The second coming of Christ will be followed immediately by the general resurrection, the general judgment, and the introduction of heaven and hell in their fullness.”⁶⁷

Joachim of Fiore (ca. 1135-1202), Daniel Whitby (1638-1726) were early supporters of this view of history. Charles Hodge was another supporter of this position and taught that the Second Advent will be preceded by the universal diffusion of the Gospel, the national conversion of the Jews, and coming Antichrist.

⁶⁷Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1957), 14.

A SURVEY OF AMILLENNIALISM

Amillennialism teaches that there is no Millennium before the end of the world. Until the end comes there will be a corresponding development of good and evil. After the second coming of Christ at the end of the world there will be a general resurrection and general judgment of all people.

Normally, amillennialists hold a strong position on the inspiration and authority of the Bible. Among the adherents to this position are Oswald T. Allie, William Hendriksen, and Anthony A. Hoekema, all strong proponents of the infallibility of the Scriptures. Amillennialists see the church as fulfilling God's promises in an antitypical and spiritual way. The church is a heavenly, spiritual kingdom, whereas the Millennium of Premillennialism is a carnal, earthly kingdom.

Different millennial views result from different hermeneutics, that is, different interpretive principles. Premillennialists use literal or normal interpretation in all areas of biblical truth while amillennialists employ a non-literal or spiritual principle.

Up to the time of Origen (185 AD to 254 AD), most apologists were premillennial in their position. Origen, using the allegorical method of interpretation, spiritualized the future kingdom and understood it to be the present Church Age from Adam on. This view is also promoted by Augustine (354-430). Even the great leaders of the Reformation were amillennial in their positions. They basically continued to follow the lead of Rome on this subject, which followed Augustine.⁶⁸

⁶⁸Ibid., 450.

A SURVEY OF PREMILLENNIALISM

Premillennialism is the view that holds that the second coming of Christ will occur prior to the Millennium which will see the establishment of Christ's kingdom on this earth for a literal 1,000 years. It also teaches that there will be several resurrections of the dead. Eternity will begin after the literal thousand-year reign of Christ. Within this view are several different opinions as to the time of the Rapture.

All forms of Premillennialism understand that the Millennium follows the second coming of Christ. Its duration will be a 1,000 years; its location will be on this earth; its government will be theocratic with the personal presence of Christ.⁶⁹ This view separates Israel from the church. This position is arrived at by using a literal or normal hermeneutic approach to Scripture.

The early church was generally premillennial in their understanding. The reformers were generally amillennial in their position. The present time period has been the rise of Premillennialism once again.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

This covenant is very important in dealing with the subject of amillennialism and premillennialism. Amillennialists do not believe that a literal fulfillment of the promise of God to give the land back to Israel during an earthly millennial kingdom. Premillennialists, insist that since there has been no literal fulfillment of the past or present, there must be one in the future.

The Promise of the Covenant

God promised Abraham that he would become a great nation, that God would bless him, and that his name would be great (Gen. 12:2). As a result of God's blessing on Abraham the entire earth would be blessed. The promise by God that Abraham would be father to a great nation was both a personal promise and a national promise (Gen. 15:18). The land promised to Abraham was specific (Gen. 12:7, 13:15).

The description of the covenant indicates that God alone was responsible for the fulfillment of the terms of the covenant (Gen. 15:9-17). The unconditioned part of the covenant supports a premillennial position, since the land has not yet been given.

The amillennialists say that the provisions of the covenant have been fulfilled, including the land promise. They explain this by spiritualizing the land promise so that the church is the fulfillment of it.

The premillennial position states that every aspect of the covenant must be fulfilled literally. Since the covenant was unconditional; God must complete what He promised to do. Much of the covenant has been fulfilled and fulfilled literally

GOD'S COVENANT WITH DAVID

The covenant to David, like the covenant to Abraham gives strong support to the premillennial eschatological view of scripture.

The promises to David included the promise of a son who would succeed him and establish his kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12). David's house, throne, and kingdom would be established forever (v.16). This promise did not guarantee an uninterrupted period of time. This covenant was like Abraham's in the fact that it was unconditional in nature. All of the Old Testament passages that deal with the Messiah confirm the promises made to David.

The New Testament teachings did not alter the promises to David and Christ confirmed them until the end of His earthly ministry. When questioned by His disciples Jesus simply said that He could not reveal the time when the kingdom would come (Acts 1:6-8).

OUTLINE OF FUTURE EVENTS

The events surrounding the end of the church age are presented in different passages. Among the signs is an increasing in apostasy (2 Tim. 3:7). We can expect apostasy to become increasingly widespread as we draw nearer to the rapture.

After the rapture of the church there will be an ecumenical church arise. This will be an apostate religious system as described in Revelation 17 called, "Mystery Babylon." The rapture of the church would begin the development of this false system.

The word rapture means to experience a carrying away. The English word comes from a Latin word, *rapio*, which means to seize or snatch in relation to an ecstasy of spirit or the actual removal from one place to another.⁷⁰ The rapture is not the second coming of Christ, during this event Christ will come in the clouds but not touch down on earth.

The second coming is depicted in Revelation 19, where Christ will return to the earth to judge and to reign. His return is also spoken of in Zechariah 15:1-11.

THE TRIBULATION PERIOD

There is nothing in the past that comes close to this event; it is unique and special in every aspect. Two things distinguish this time from every other period in history. First, it will be worldwide in its scope. Second, the terror during this time will be like nothing ever before, men will seek to die rather than live.

The beginning of the tribulation will follow the rapture of the church, but may not be immediately after. The tribulation actually begins with the signing of the covenant between the leader of the combined nations and the state of Israel. This treaty will actually begin the seven-year tribulation period.

The tribulation is the time when God pours out His judgment against all those who have rejected the Son. These judgments are covered in Revelation 6-19, giving great details as to the events. First we are introduced to the seal judgments, there are seven of them. Out of the fifth seal a number of true believers will have been martyred. This indicates that a true witness will be present on the earth and many will respond to the message of the Gospel. The nations of Egypt and Russia seem to play a prominent role during this period. Many allegiances will be formed as the world struggles for dominance.

This period of seven years can be divided into two sections, each three and one half years. The second half appears to be more volatile than the first. The middle of this period sees the antichrist slaying the two witnesses of God, who have been ministering for the first three and a half years. Now the intensity of judgments increases and more suffering and destruction take place.

Out of the seventh seal comes the trumpet judgments, each more intense than the one before. Out of the seventh trumpet judgment comes the bowl judgments. The conclusion of this judgment signals the end of the judgments of God followed by the second coming of Christ to earth.

Armageddon is the battle that takes place when Christ comes back to earth at the end of the tribulation period. At this battle the beast will be defeated and his armies captured. He and the false prophet will be thrown into the lake of fire to be tormented forever.

THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

There are differing views as to when the rapture will take place. The positions include pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation and post-tribulation, plus the possibility of a partial rapture. The first three positions deal with the time of the rapture and the last one the extent of the rapture. The partial rapture teaches that only those who are looking for the Lord's return will be caught up; all the rest will have to go through the tribulation period.

PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE VIEW

The Pre-tribulation position states that the church (both dead and living saints) will take place prior to the tribulation period. John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) was the biggest supporter of this position. He recognized the church as a separate work of God apart from the nation of Israel. Since the tribulation period deals primarily with the nation of Israel, it fits well for the church to be removed prior to that period.

During the twentieth century the position was supported by Leon Wood, Scofield, John

Walvoord, Dwight Pentecost, J. B. Smith and Charles C. Ryrie among many. Some of the text used to support this view include: Rev. 3:10; I Thess. 1:10; John 17:15; James 5:20; I Thess. 4:1-11. Another argument involves the absence of the church from Revelation 4 through 19, which describes the tribulation in detail, but fails to mention the church. Some additional facts include the fact that the Holy Spirit or Restraint is removed before the Day of the Lord and the revelation of the man of sin (2 Thess. 2:1-9); and the need to have some human being survive the Tribulation in their earthly bodies in order to become the parents of the millennial population.

POPULATING THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

At the start of the millennium some people need to be alive and still possessing their human bodies in order to marry and have children. The millennium will have those with resurrected bodies and those without them. If only those with resurrected bodies were present there would be no death occurring during this time period, no population growth. Based upon this fact all pre-millennialists agree that some adults must survive the Tribulation, are not taken to heaven at the end of the Tribulation but enter the Millennium in unresurrected bodies and become the first parents.

The pre-tribulation position fits well into this order of events. The Rapture will occur before the Tribulation, removing all the redeemed who are living on the earth at that time. God will continue to do a work on earth with many coming to faith in Jesus during the Tribulation, including many Jews (Rev. 7:9-14). At the end of the Tribulation there will still be some believers along when Christ returns (Matt. 25:34). So the initial population of the Millennium will come from the redeemed survivors of the Tribulation, the “sheep” of Matthew 25:34.

The Post-tribulation position regarding the population of the Millennium sees the church going through the Tribulation. While many of the believers will be martyred some will survive, the 144,000 Jews are included with the church. At the end of the Tribulation all living believers will be raptured, given resurrection bodies, and return immediately to earth in the single event of

the Rapture and Second Coming.⁷¹

If this is the order of events where do the people come from to populate the kingdom? This order of events order of events eliminates all redeemed people from the earth, leaving no one to enter the kingdom. Most post-tribulationists do not attempt to give an answer to this problem.

The 144,000 Jews

Some post-tribulationists see the 144,000 Jews to be “spiritual Israel – the church.”⁷² Gundry also believes that the 144,000 might belong to the church and therefore would be saved at the beginning of the Tribulation. But, this presents a problem with the chronology of events. If they are saved in the beginning then they would also be raptured in the post-tribulation rapture, given resurrected bodies and then returned at the same time to reign with Christ. This would eliminate them as parents during the millennial period. The post-tribulationists need to have a group that is sealed in an unsaved state long enough to miss the Rapture but not long enough to miss entering the Millennium in material bodies.

The post-tribulationists must have an unconverted group of Jews, who survive the Tribulation, who are unconverted, will not be taken up with the church, but will accept the Lord at His Second Coming. This group will then go into the Millennium and be the parents of the kingdom. It is difficult to see this taking place in the order necessary to fit into the framework of Scripture.

The Sheep and the Goats Judgment

This event of the sheep and goats positioned at the time of the Second Coming by pre-tribulationists has to be placed at a later time period if post-tribulationism will fit. Since the Rapture occurs at the end of the Tribulation, at the time of the Second Coming and all the sheep are taken to heaven in that Rapture, how will there be any left to be assembled before Christ

¹⁷¹Ibid., 489.

when He comes? They would have all been gone. There will not be any righteous on the earth to separate since they will just have been removed.

It seems clear that the church is not Israel and it will not go through the Tribulation. The church will be raptured prior to the Tribulation period, many will get saved during the Tribulation period, but they are not part of the church. When the Lord returns He will bring the church with Him, separate the believers from the non-believers (sheep and goats) and those who are alive and saved at the end of the Tribulation period will enter the Kingdom in their earthly bodies.

THE MID-TRIBULATIONAL RAPTURE VIEW

This position states that the church will be raptured at the middle of the Tribulation. According to this view only the second half of the Tribulation is actually Daniel's seventieth week.

J. Oliver Bushwell, Jr., promoted this position, along with Gleason L. Archer. They place the emphasis on the second half of the seven-year period. They see the second half of the Tribulation beginning with some great event, the Rapture of the church. They use Daniel 7:25; 9:27; 12:7, 11; Rev. 11:2; 12:6, 14 as support. There is no question that Scripture does show a distinct difference between the first half and the second half of the Tribulation period. But, this does not mean that there are not any harsh judgments during the first period. None of the passages the mid-tribulationists use even mention the Rapture.

Mid-tribulationists do believe that there will be trials and judgments during the first half of the Tribulation, but these are due to the wrath of men, the judgments in the second half are the wrath of God. In order to make this position work the seal judgments would have to be placed in the second half of the Tribulation.

The mid-tribulationists use the Olivet Discourse as support for their position. It is interesting to note that the post-tribulationists use the same argument for their position. While some of the words in the Olivet Discourse are similar describing different events that do not mean both events are the same.

Mid-tribulationists argue that the seventh trumpet of Revelation 10:7 is the same as I Corinthians 15:52. If that is correct then the Rapture will occur in the middle of the Tribulation, because that is when the seventh trumpet sounds. However, the Scripture lists several different trumpets and the sounding of each is not the same event. The seventh trumpet is a trumpet of judgment, while the trumpet in I Corinthians is one of resurrection and deliverance, certainly not the same event.

THE POST-TRIBULATIONAL RAPTURE VIEW

Post-tribulationism states that the Rapture and the Second Coming are all part of the same event, which will come at the end of the Tribulation when Christ returns. The church will have to endure the Tribulation and be rescued at the end. The key parts of this position have the Rapture occurring at the end of the Tribulation, the Day of the Lord begins at the close of the Tribulation, I Thessalonians 5:2-3 comes near the end of the Tribulation, the 144,000 do not get saved until the end of the period, the Rapture and Second Coming are a single event, the living Gentiles are judged at the end of the Millennium, and the parents of the millennial population come from the 144,000 Jews.

THE MILLENNIUM

By kingdom we are referring to the rule of Christ on earth as it was promised to David (2 Sam 7:12). The kingdom was not established during Christ's first advent on earth, but will begin with His second coming.

Six times in Revelations 20:2-7 the length of the Millennium is said to be 1,000 years. This would seem to support both the literalness and the importance of this figure. While some try to see the figure as symbolic, it seems clear that not everything in Revelation is symbolic so why force the symbolism here?

The government will be Messianic and a theocracy. This is the same form of government God used for Israel in the Old Testament. During this reign Christ will sit on the throne visibly (Dan. 7:14). Jerusalem will be the center of everything during this period (Isa. 2:3). David will act as a prince under the authority of Christ the King.

The first inhabitants of the kingdom will be saved Jews and Gentiles who survived the Tribulation period. At the start of the kingdom all inhabitants will be saved. When the babies start to appear that will eventually change. While God will not tolerate any outward rebellion, still the hearts of men are sinful and disparately wicked.

Characteristics of the Millennium

During the millennium, God will combine the spiritual and the earthly in a full show of His glory on this earth. Christ will reign with absolute righteousness for everyone (Isa. 32:1). As a result, this period will see unprecedented peace. All previous enemies will be at peace and there will not be any wars (Isa. 19:23-25). Prosperity will abound throughout the world and even the desert places will be useful (Amos 9:14). No one will lack knowledge of God and His Word. Apparently sacrifices will again be given in a temple which will be built and in operation during the Millennium (Ezek. 40-48).

Future Judgments

The first one to consider is the judgment of believers works, which will take place immediately after the Rapture of the church (2 Cor. 5:10). The location for this judgment is before the Bema Seat of Christ in heaven. This judgment is to give rewards, not punishment. This judgment does not deal with the question of salvation, since only the saved will appear here.

The judgment of the Old Testament saints will come at the end of the Tribulation period, but before the start of the Millennium. This event will be coupled with the Tribulation saints at the same time. Those who survived the Tribulation will also be brought before the Lord at the end of the Tribulation, but before the start of the Millennium (Matt. 25:31-46).

Satan and his angels will be judged at the conclusion of the millennial kingdom (Rev. 20:10). The unsaved from all ages will be resurrected at the end of the Millennium and brought before the Great White Throne and judged there (Rev. 20:11-115). Everyone who appears before the White Throne judgment will be cast into the lake of fire forever.

The Bible is very clear about the fact of the resurrection. While the resurrection has many parts to it, all will be resurrected at some point, some to eternal life and others to eternal

judgment and damnation (Job 19:25; Exodus 3:6; Psalm 16:8-11; Isa 49:14; 26:19; Daniel 12:2).

The order of the resurrections puts Christ first, the resurrection of the church age saints, the resurrection of the Tribulation and Old Testament saints at the end of the Tribulation, the unsaved from all ages at the end of the Millennium.

Between Death and Resurrection

Death means separation; there is both physical death and spiritual death. The physical death is separation from the body and spiritual death is separation from God. The question must be asked, what happens between death and resurrection?

The Bible speaks of the unsaved in the Old Testament as going to Shoal to wait for their resurrection. The unsaved during the church age go to Hades to wait there for the resurrection (Luke 16:23).

The redeemed person in the Old Testament times went first to Paradise and then when Christ was raised He took them to heaven with Him. The New Testament believers go directly to be with the Lord.

Concluding Thoughts

This book was well arranged and easy to follow. The arguments were pointed and understandable, giving the reader a clear thought pattern in order to evaluate the issues. Ryrie made it clear on several occasions that he was Pre-millennial and Pre-tribulational in his personal position. I believe he (Ryrie) gave a fair presentation of the other positions that he wrote about. It was evident that the issues often were demanding of additional comments and examinations, but the intent of the book was simply to introduce the reader to these subjects without giving an exhaustive presentation on each. I found the book to be useful and valuable as a resource.