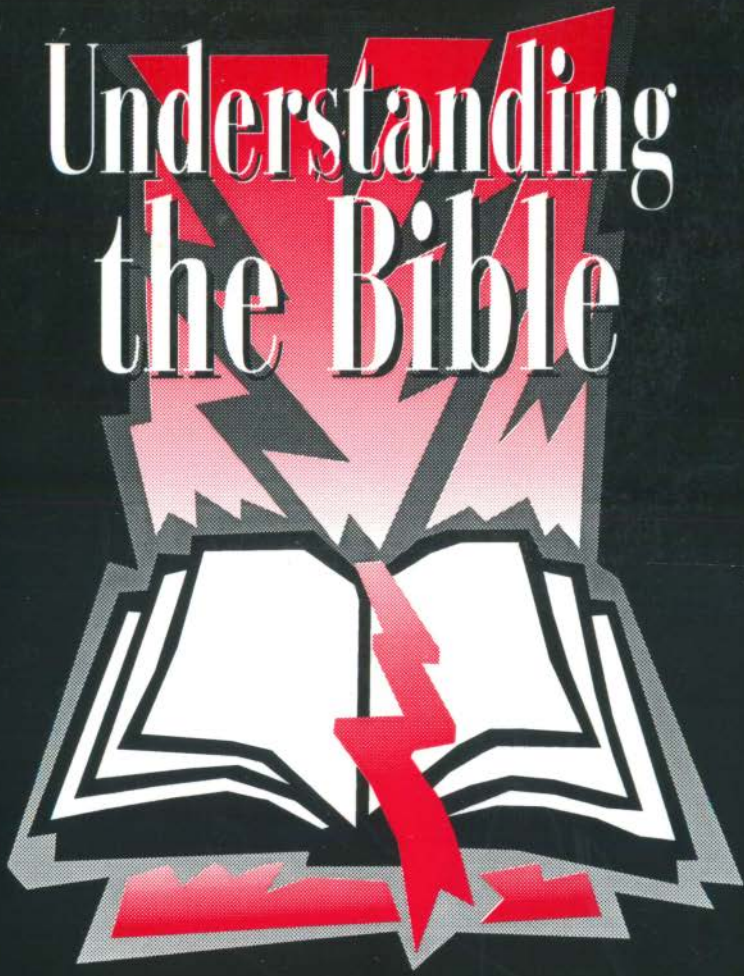


Understanding the Bible



Essays in Theology & Apologetics

Robert J. Dunzweiler

Understanding the Bible:
Essays in Theology and Apologetics

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Late Emeritus Professor
of Systematic Theology

Biblical Theological Seminary
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Interdisciplinary Biblical
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Hatfield, Pennsylvania

vii *Understanding the Bible*

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Essays in Theology and Apologetics*

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Biographical Sketch
Robert John Dunzweiler
(1931-1996)

Robert John Dunzweiler was born in Philadelphia on June 12, 1931. As a teenager, he trusted Christ's finished work on Calvary for his eternal salvation. Until then, he had planned to be an engineer, but Christ changed his goals. He graduated from Northeast High School in 1949.

After a year at Albright College, where he encountered the challenges of theological liberalism, Bob went south and completed his Bachelor of Arts degree at Bob Jones University in 1953. He then returned north, where he studied at Faith Theological Seminary just outside Philadelphia, completing his Bachelor of Divinity degree there in 1956.

Thereafter, Bob served Christ in several capacities. He was ordained to the ministry at the Faith Bible Presbyterian Church of Villanova and served as pastor of the West Philadelphia Bible Presbyterian Church from 1957 to 1960. He also began his teaching career, first as an instructor and then as an assistant professor at Faith Theological Seminary from 1956 to 1971. During these years he also worked on his Master of Sacred Theology degree at Faith, completing the degree in 1969.

Bob was one of the founding faculty of Biblical Theological Seminary in 1971. For the next twenty-five years until his death, he served as associate professor of systematic theology and apologetics at the seminary, in Hatfield, Pennsylvania. During this time, he was also interim pastor at Graterford Bible Fellowship Church, at Royersford Bible Fellowship Church, and he preached the Word regularly as pulpit supply in numerous churches. Bob was also active in Bible conference work, guest lectureships and a writing ministry that included more than twenty-five articles in various publications. He was the editor and annotator for an

edition of Calvin's *Institutes*.

Bob served as acting dean at Biblical Seminary from 1973-74, and then as academic dean from 1974 to 1987, during which time he pursued doctoral work in educational administration at Lehigh University. Beginning in 1988, he was chair of the division of historical and theological studies at the seminary.

Bob married Ruth Eunice Franks on June 30, 1962 at the First Baptist Church of Flushing, NY. He had earlier met Ruth's sister Lois in California while serving on one of Faith Seminary's gospel teams. Lois was married, but Bob told her it was a shame she didn't have a twin sister. She did! Ruth was an elementary school teacher with a degree from Barrington Bible College and an MEd from the State University of New York. The Dunzweilers initially made their home in the gatehouse of the Elkins Park campus of Faith Seminary, before moving to Lansdale with the formation of Biblical Seminary. During that time they had three daughters Deborah Ruth, Patricia Ann, and Katherine Grace.

Besides his enjoyment of family, teaching, and preaching, Bob liked reading, woodworking, model building, hiking, fossil collecting, golf and table tennis. Bob was an Associate of the Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, to which he contributed several research reports, and a member of the Evangelical Theological Society.

During his teaching career, Bob's speciality was systematic theology, with a substantial dash of apologetics. A regular elective was Evolution and Special Creation. Another course that had great impact on his students was God and Human Suffering, taught from the perspective of his years of health difficulties. During 1996 the Lord allowed him to live out what he taught. In January he was diagnosed with liver cancer. In May he gave the commencement address at Biblical Seminary, completing forty years of teaching. On December 17, he entered into the presence of his beloved Lord and Savior.

Table of Contents

1 -- Understanding the Bible	1
I. Prolegomena/Introductory	13
2 -- Revelation, Inspiration, Infallibility, Inerrancy: What Do They Mean?	15
3 -- Revelation: The Word that Discloses God's Glory	31
4 -- Are the Bibles in Our Possession Inspired?	49
II. Theology Proper	83
5 -- The Trinity: Fides Quarens Intellectum	85
6 -- A Proposed Creationist Alternative to Evolutionism	105
III. Redemption	153
7 -- Some Implications of the Meaning of the Incarnation	155
8 -- Regeneration and Indwelling in the OT Period	173
9 -- Saul and the Witch of Endor: A Classic Study in Spirit Mediumship	195
IV. Eschatology	215
10 -- The Intermediate State	217
11 -- Some Observations Pertaining to Eschatology	239
12 -- Hell: Some Observations on the Views of John Stoll, Clark Pinnock, and Edward Fudge	243
V. Ecclesiology	257
13 -- Baptism: A Consideration of the Scriptural Mode	259
14 -- Tongues: Glossolalia and Its Relevance Today	279
VI. Apologetics	285
15 -- Steps Toward a Personal Christian Apologetic	287
16 -- Man and Man Alone: Secular Humanism	295

Chapter One

Understanding the Bible

The Bible was written to be understood. But by whom? There is a sense in which non-Christians can understand the things spoken of in Scripture. They can study the meanings of the words used, the ways in which words are joined to form statements, even the structure and content of paragraphs. They can study the history, the prophecy, the poetry, even the theology of the Bible. But in a very crucial sense, the spiritual understanding of all of these things is closed to them.

Paul expresses this truth in 1 Cor 2:14, where he says, "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." The difficulty is with the effects of sin upon the non-Christian's understanding. Between the non-Christian's mind and the truths of Scripture there stands the fact of sin!

The Christian, however, is in a completely different position. Those who savingly believe in Christ are addressed by the apostle John in the following terms: "But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth." (1 John 2:20-21). John again writes: "And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him." (1 John 2:27).

The "Holy One" of whom John is speaking is undoubtedly God, and probably refers to the Holy Spirit. The anointing spoken of, which is given to all believers, is a gift of spiritual enlightenment or understanding which enables the believer to perceive and discern truth. In the context of these verses, this anointing operates to enable the believers whom John is addressing to distinguish true doctrinal views from false views concerning the Person of Christ.

Step One:
Clearing Away Some Misunderstandings

Some misunderstandings have arisen about John's assertions that believers "know ... the truth," "have no need for anyone to teach (them)," and are taught "about all things" by this anointing. Some have understood these statements to mean that by virtue of the indwelling Holy Spirit they are able to know all truth by direct revelation from God, and therefore have no need of any other teachings, including those of Scripture! This understanding is completely false, since God himself, in the Person of the Holy Spirit, has "breathed out" Scripture so that "the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Others have understood these statements to mean that by virtue of the indwelling Spirit of God, they are able by themselves to understand all things recorded in Scripture, and therefore all human teachers are unnecessary and undesirable, including those pastor-teachers whom Christ has given to the Church! This understanding is partially false, since Christ has given gifted men to His Church for "the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ." (Eph 4:11-12).

If these misunderstandings are either wholly or partially false, then what can John's statements mean? What can he mean when he says that by the anointing of the Holy One the children of God know "the truth"? He is probably referring to those truths concerning Christ and His salvation which John had communicated to these believers, and those truths which they knew from the Old Testament (e.g., that Jesus was the Christ or Messiah, as specified in 1 John 2:22). By the anointing which they had from the Holy One, these believers had a spiritual understanding of these truths. They knew the truth.

But what can John mean when he says that the anointing which is remaining in them teaches them about "all things," and that they have no need of any man to teach them? Here we must make a distinction between an infallible divine Teacher and fallible human teachers. The pastor teachers whom Christ had given to His Church are needful, but are fallible and human. They can be of great help to believers in their understanding of Scripture, but they can also be mistaken, and they can sometimes mislead the people of God. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit is

infallible and divine. He is the only ultimate Teacher, and the only authoritative interpreter of Scripture. He never makes a mistake, and He never misleads believers in their understanding. No human teacher had the right to claim to be the final authoritative interpreter of truth. Believers have no need of such a human teacher, for they have the anointing of the indwelling Holy Spirit. They stand directly before God, and are responsible to learn God's truth from the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture. Since the Holy Spirit is both the infallible Author of Scripture and the infallible Interpreter of Scripture, He is the one to whom believers should ultimately look for spiritual enlightenment and understanding of the Bible.

These considerations suggest four summary principles:

- (1) All believers have an infallible divine Teacher, the Holy Spirit.
- (2) Thus, no believer has need of an infallible human teacher to provide him or her with a final authoritative interpretation of the truth of Scripture.
- (3) The Holy Spirit has given all believers the gift of spiritual understanding.
- (4) Believers exercise the gift of spiritual understanding through a prayerful study of and meditation upon the truths of Scripture, the meanwhile looking to the Holy Spirit as their infallible Teacher and Interpreter.

This fourth principle may be undergirded with three references from Psalm 119:

Verse 99 -- "I have more insight than all my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my meditation."

Verse 18 -- "Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Thy law."

Verse 130 -- "The unfolding of Thy words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple."

The first step toward a proper understanding of the Bible involves the clearing away of certain misunderstandings, the first of which is that anyone can understand the Bible. Only a person who has been born again by the Spirit of God can have a true, spiritual understanding of Scripture.

The second misunderstanding involves the drawing of certain implications from the Holy Spirit's indwelling ministry in the believer. This ministry must always be seen not apart from, but in close connection with, the truth revealed in Scripture. The Spirit teaches through Scripture. This being true, all believers who wish to have a proper understanding of the Bible have need of prayer for the Holy Spirit's quickening of the gift of spiritual understanding which He has already given to all believers, as well as for guidance of their thought processes as they read and study the Word of the living God.

However, having now said this much, we must ask the question, "Doesn't this place a great deal of emphasis upon the individual's own interpretation of Scripture? Is there not a danger here of getting into purely subjective understandings of the Bible?" This question happily suggests the next step in understanding the Bible, the question of the limits on the right of private interpretation.

Step Two: Limits on the Right of Private Interpretation

In step 1 of this series we discovered that the Bible teaches that only a person who has been born again by the Spirit of God can have a true, spiritual understanding of Scripture; and that no believer has need of an infallible human teacher to provide him with a final authoritative interpretation of the truth of Scripture. It was further affirmed that all believers have an infallible divine Teacher, the Holy Spirit, who has given to all believers the gift of spiritual understanding. This gift is exercised through a prayerful study of, and meditation upon, the truths of Scripture.

However, these considerations raised the question of the limits of the "right of private interpretation." To what extent may the interpretation of Scripture be seen as the right of each individual believer? How far can a born-again person be entrusted with the task of properly interpreting Scripture?

The leaders of the Reformation affirmed the principle that every individual in the church possesses the right of private judgment, which means that every individual Christian has the right to investigate and to interpret the Word of God for himself. They did not view church councils and creeds as having no value; they simply held that the interpretations of church councils have authority only to the extent that they are in harmony with the teaching of Scripture as a whole, and that such harmony must be judged by each individual for himself. This conviction is well-expressed in the Second Helvetica Confession of AD 1566, Chapter II:

Wherefore, we suffer not ourselves, in controversies about religion or matters of faith, to be pressed with the bare testimonies of fathers or decrees of councils; much less with received customs, or with the multitude of men being of one judgment, or with prescription of long time. Therefore, in controversies of religion or matters of faith, we can not admit any other judge than God himself, pronouncing by the Holy Scriptures what is true, what is false, what is to be followed, or what is to be avoided.

At this point, however, some reader may recall 2 Pet 1:20 and ask, "How does that verse fit in with the right of private interpretation?" This question is very much to the point, since the verse reads, "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation." What can we say to this? Does this not deny the right of private interpretation?

I must confess that, as a young Christian, I thought that verse 20 meant that no one should place his or her own interpretation upon a verse or passage of Scripture, but should seek the Spirit's interpretation. Although this is in principle what should be done, in actual practice this came to mean that I would adopt the interpretation of some well-known or persuasive Bible teacher or commentator. But later I came to see that this verse speaks not of the *reader's* interpretation but of the *writer's* interpretation.

Literally verse 20 states, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture *comes into being* by one's own interpretation." The reason why this does not occur is given in the next verse: "For not by the will of man came prophecy at any time, but being borne up by the Holy Spirit, men

spoke from God..." Peter's reasoning may be clearly seen by identifying the parts of his argument: *Reason* -- because men spoke from God as they were borne up (in their writing) by the Holy Spirit; *Conclusion* -- therefore no prophecy comes into being by one's own interpretation. Peter is telling us of the godly men who wrote the prophecy of Scripture; and he says that because the Spirit bore up and carried along these men as they wrote, no portion of Scripture has been conditioned or modified or distorted by the fallible human interpretation of its authors. The infallible Word of God is not conditioned by the fallible opinions of men!

Thus this verse does not deny or even relate to the right of private interpretation. It speaks of the original writer's interpretation, not of the reader's. The Christian who reads the Bible, seeking to understand what the Spirit has revealed, may depend upon the understanding of some other human beings, or he may investigate and interpret the Bible for himself. The latter expresses the principle of the right of private interpretation.

It should be emphasized that Christians, employing the right of private judgment, do not place themselves *over* Scripture, as though they were judges of the Word of God: rather, they place themselves *under* the judgment of Scripture, recognizing that the Supreme Judge is the Holy Spirit himself speaking in Scripture, and that they are merely discerners of what the Spirit has said in His Word. This emphasis suggests the thought that perhaps Christians do not have an *absolute* liberty to interpret the Bible, but they have liberty only within the limits of certain laws or guiding principles. And that brings us back to the question, "Are there limits to the right of private judgment?" To this question we must answer that there are at least four principles which limit this right.

1. The principle of the Bible's self-interpretation

Many times the Bible provides us with interpretive principles by the manner in which speakers or writers clarify the meaning of a word or statement, quote from another place in Scripture, identify the fulfillment of a prediction, or allude to another scriptural doctrine. In such cases we are not free to place our own construction upon the particular Scripture at hand, but must accept the construction which the Holy Spirit has placed upon the verse or passage.

For example, in Rom 13:8 Paul writes. "... he who loves his neighbor has

fulfilled the law." Of which law is he speaking -- human law, natural law, Roman law, the Mosaic Law, God's moral law, or the law of Christ? We are not free to speculate as to which of these meanings (or some other) might best fit the context, for in the next verse the Spirit of God through Paul has identified this "law" as the second table of the Ten Commandments. Verse 9 states, "For this, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" This is what is meant by observing the principle of the Bible's *self-interpretation*.

2. The principle of the integrity of the authors of Scripture

A second principle which limits the right of private judgment concerns the necessity of attempting to discover the intention of the writers of the Bible. We must ask what the writer meant when he wrote a particular statement. We are not free to impress upon the author's words what we think he should have meant or what we would have meant, but are free only to attempt to understand what he meant. And the best method of discovering the author's meaning is by carefully studying the actual words which he wrote!

In connection with this principle, we do not seek to be creatively constructive, but receptively reconstructive of the author's intended meaning. This does not rule out the possibility that the Spirit of God had an even richer and fuller meaning than that which was in the mind of the human author; it simply stresses the idea that the basic meaning of the text is that which the author intended. That is what is meant by maintaining the *integrity of the author*.

3. The principle of the logical integrity of the Bible

A third principle which limits the right of private judgment is both a deduction from God's nature and an induction drawn from scriptural data. God is a unity. The Father is true and faithful. The Son is called the truth. The Spirit is the Spirit of truth. Since God is truth and God is a unity, truth is therefore a unity: coherent, self-consistent, non-contradictory. When God (who is truth) speaks, He speaks truth. When God revealed himself at various times and in diverse manners, He revealed truth concerning himself. This self-consistent, coherent truth was

recorded in Scripture; and Scripture itself teaches that it was recorded accurately and faithfully; i.e., *truly*. As a result we have a body of divinely inspired truths, a "perfect treasure of heavenly instruction," in which no single Scripture or group of Scriptures contradicts any other Scripture. This does not rule out the concept of scriptural paradox (apparent but not genuine contradiction), nor does it rule out some doctrinal constructions which are built solidly upon scriptural data but contain aspects which (in our present state) appear incomprehensible (e.g., the doctrine of the Trinity, in which three distinct Persons are one divine Being). It should be stressed that this principle does not attempt to force God to conform to a man-made system of logic; it simply applies to Scripture the conviction that the law of contradiction is simply the expression, on a created level, of the internal coherence of God's own nature. Thus we may speak of the unity, the self-consistency, and the coherence of Scripture, which taken together comprise the principle of *logical integrity*.

4. The principle of the redemptive purpose of the Bible

This concerns itself with the need to relate all of our interpretations to the purpose of God in giving us His inspired Word. Since the Fall of the entire human race in Adam, God has been revealing His nature and His will to specially chosen persons by means of special acts of revelation. He has revealed himself as a holy and just, all-knowing and all-powerful God. He has revealed His works of creation and preservation. And He has revealed His will, directed to man's obedience. But most importantly, He has revealed himself as a God of mercy and grace; and He has revealed His plan of redemption, reaching its full accomplishment in the incarnation, atoning death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. All of Scripture appears to be built around this wonderful plan of salvation; and Jesus Christ and His redemptive work is at its center. This being the case, it is necessary to understand any given portion of Scripture in relation to God's *redemptive purpose* as an organic whole.

These four principles, then, provide some limitations to the right of private interpretation. If these principles seem too restrictive, too confining, too narrow for the free working of the Spirit of God, it should be remembered that the Holy Spirit is the ultimate Author of Scripture, that He has revealed *His* meaning by self-interpretive explanations, that *He* guided the human authors of Scripture so that their words should convey the thought

He wished conveyed, that *He* is the Spirit of truth and will not lie or contradict himself, and that *He* has been pleased to testify of Christ and His redemption in all the pages of sacred Scripture. Thus, as we seek to understand the Bible within the limits of these principles, we shall discover that Scripture, instead of being restricted, will be freed to the greatest extent and degree to speak the message which the Spirit would communicate to those who have ears to hear.

However, this raises another question. If these principles are applied to Scripture under the providential guidance of the Holy Spirit, does it follow that every particular matter contained in Scripture will be equally clear and plain to all believers? Or will some things require time and careful study before they open themselves to our understanding? This suggests the next step in understanding the Bible, the question of the Perspicuity or Clarity of Scripture.

Step Three: The Perspicuity of Scripture

The Reformers of the sixteenth century enumerated four major attributes of Scripture: necessity, authority, perspicuity, and sufficiency. The word "perspicuity" means "clarity, plainness to the understanding"; and Scripture claims this quality for itself. For example, Ps 119:105 says, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path." Verse 130 of the same says, "The unfolding of Thy words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple."

Why then have so many sincere Christians found some portions of Scripture difficult to understand? Why have some believers thrown up their hands at the complexity and intricacy of some sections of the Bible? Using terms which describe the light-admitting qualities of materials, why do many Christians find some portions of the Bible transparent, some translucent, and some virtually opaque?

The problem with the concept of perspicuity as we have thus far defined it is that only part of the biblical teaching has been taken into account, a practice that frequently leads to distortion of the truth. There are other Scriptures which bear on the doctrine of perspicuity. For instance, Peter in his second epistle says "our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them

of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction" (2 Pet 3:15b-16). Peter here asserts that some parts of Scripture are hard to understand.

But how can Scripture both be clear and plain to the understanding, and contain some things that are difficult to understand? As Louis Berkhof states in his *Summary of Christian Doctrine* (Eerdmans, 1956), p 22:

They [the sixteenth-century Reformers] did not deny that it [the Bible] contains mysteries too deep for human understanding, but simply contended that the knowledge necessary for salvation, though not equally clear on every page of the Bible, is yet conveyed in a manner so simple that anyone earnestly seeking salvation can easily gather this knowledge for himself, and need not depend on the interpretation of the Church or the priesthood.

The Westminster Assembly, meeting in London in 1647, gathered the scriptural truths into a doctrine of perspicuity in their *Confession of Faith*. Chapter 1, section 7, states:

All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear to all: yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.

This statement distinguishes between the entire content of Scripture and those truths in Scripture which are necessary for salvation. It denies total or equal clarity of the entire content of Scripture both objectively (in itself) and subjectively (to the reader). Objectively, it denies that all parts are equally clear and plain in themselves. Subjectively, it denies that all parts are equally clear to all readers. This statement also affirms sufficient clarity of the truths in Scripture which are necessary to salvation, both objectively (in themselves) and subjectively (to the reader). Objectively, it affirms that these truths are sufficiently clear for the normal understanding, and that they are all revealed in one place or

another in Scripture. Subjectively, it affirms that these truths are sufficiently clear for both the educated and uneducated, using "ordinary means." These ordinary means include the hearing or reading of Scripture; the use of ordinary mental processes, including simple knowing, thinking, and reasoning; and the accompanying illumination by the Holy Spirit of the spiritual understanding.

If this doctrinal statement is a true representation of scriptural truth, then what does the apostle John mean when he says (1 John 2:27) that "His anointing (i.e., the Holy Spirit's gift of spiritual understanding) teaches you about all things"? In the context of this verse, we discover that John is making a contrast between fallible human teachers and the infallible divine Teacher, the Holy Spirit. John tells his spiritual children that they have no need of final authoritative human interpreters of Scripture, for they have the indwelling divine Interpreter of Scripture. It is not true that the Holy Spirit is able to teach them authoritatively about some things, but that they need authoritative human teachers to teach them the other (perhaps more advanced) things in Scripture; rather the Holy Spirit is their authoritative Teacher in all things. Thus the emphasis is not upon the all-inclusiveness of the teaching which the Holy Spirit's anointing imparts to believers (so that they know everything about everything), but rather the all-sufficiency of the Holy Spirit's anointing to enable believers to understand what God has revealed, so that they have no need of any self-proclaimed infallible human teachers.

This suggests a principle which brings together scriptural statements, doctrinal formulations, and the experiences of believers in regard to the perspicuity of Scripture. Although scriptural truths necessary to salvation are sufficiently clear so that persons with no education in the Scriptures can understand these truths at a very basic and simple level, the other truths of Scripture (together with deeper levels of understanding of the truths necessary to salvation) vary in clarity, both in themselves and to various readers. Consequently the understanding of these truths is dependent upon (1) study, (2) careful observance of the principles of interpretation inherent in Scripture itself, (3) attempts to discover the teachings of individual Scriptures and the teaching of Scripture as a whole, (4) examination of the insights of creeds of godly councils and the writings of godly individuals to whom God has given large measures of understanding, (5) careful thought, and (6) fervent prayer for the further illumination of the Holy Spirit.

What this principle practically implies is that understanding of the Bible beyond the truths necessary to salvation is a *process*. Just as there is a progress in revelation from the first book of the Bible to the last, so there is to be a progress in our understanding of revelation from the first moment of our new life in Christ to the completion of our present earthly existence. Such progress requires application and work and patience.

As stated, the principle suggests that perspicuity does not mean that all problems and difficulties in Scripture have simple solutions. Some godly men have spent a lifetime of study in the Scriptures, and still confess that they do not fully understand many portions. This can be frustrating to a young Christian, especially if he or she has been led to believe that all of Scripture is equally clear and plain. How can such frustration be relieved? By placing the stress upon how much the believer (with application and work) *can* understand, rather than upon how much he or she *cannot* understand.

A real-life incident in the experience of D. L. Moody may serve to illustrate and underscore this point. When Moody on one occasion was accosted by a woman who asked in a complaining tone, "Mr. Moody, what shall I do about the hard things I can't understand in the Bible?" he replied, "Madam, have you ever eaten chicken?" Somewhat nonplused by this seeming irrelevancy, she answered, "Yes, but I don't see ...". "What did you do with the bones?" interrupted Moody. "I put them on the side of my plate," she responded. "Then put the difficult verses there also," advised Moody, "for there's more than enough food to digest in the rest of what you can understand."

Here we have the doctrine of perspicuity. When we come to Christ for salvation, we have a sufficient understanding of the truths necessary for salvation. As we progress in the Christian life, we come to understand more and more of God's truth, especially as we study His Word, and seek yet more light from His Spirit. One day we shall understand all that glorified (yet finite) saints can understand of the truth of God. Then all things will be open and clear; and we shall fully know the truth. Until that time may God grant us a great love for His Word, as we seek to understand and obey it!

Part One:

**Prolegomena
or
Introductory Matters**

Chapter Two

Revelation, Inspiration, Infallibility, Inerrancy: What Do They Mean?

When I was a teenager things were much simpler. I grew up in the city of Philadelphia, and knew what hoagies and submarines were. I will admit that one time in downtown Baltimore I saw a sign advertising "heroes." and was puzzled for a short while. But when I learned what heroes were, I quickly assimilated that bit of information. I will also admit that when I traveled to Boston with my drum and bugle corps for the national competition and heard about "tonics" and "frappes" I was stumped until some admiring girl spectators explained what these exotic words meant. And then I understood immediately. Ah. things were much simpler when I was young!

Nowadays things seem to have become much more complicated. Take, for example, this present subject. When I was a greenhorn in college, I knew what inspiration and infallibility and inerrancy meant, and all my classmates also knew what they meant. We had to know because we were asked questions about these things on tests! Today a number of evangelical Christians don't seem to know what they mean. Or at least some Christians mean something quite different from what other Christians mean when they use these terms.

By the way, lest any of you become so distracted wondering what the terms "hoagies," "submarines," "heroes," "tonics," and "frappes" mean that you miss the rest of what I hope to communicate in this paper, permit me to translate for those of you who need translation. Hoagies. submarines and heroes are (large, Italian) sandwiches, tonics are soft drinks like Coke or Seven-Up, and frappes are thick milkshakes.

But to get back to the topic at hand, let us expand the subject matter a bit to include a few other terms like "verbal" and "plenary" in association with inspiration. And let us ask not only what these terms mean and have come to mean, but also what are some of the problems which some evangelicals have been having with these terms and meanings. Accordingly, I propose that we take up the following terms in this order: (1) "revelation," (2) "inspiration," (3) "verbal inspiration," (4) "plenary inspiration," (5) "infallibility," and (6) "inerrancy."

Revelation

The term "revelation" signifies a meaningful unveiling or unfolding or disclosing of truth. When a person reveals himself, he communicates something meaningful and true about himself. A person may tell us something about himself by actions or by words. When we consider the question of the knowledge of God, we discover that He has done both: He has revealed Himself in His works and in His words. We call God's self-disclosure in his *works* of creation and providence "General Revelation." We call God's self-disclosure in various supernatural modes "Special Revelation." This latter kind of revelation -- Special Revelation -- always includes God's *words*: i.e., events of revelation are always accompanied by statements of interpretation.

Special Revelation has both an objective and a subjective side -- or, to put it another way, Special Revelation is both historical and personal. And it has occurred in two distinct phases. Phase one includes God's special self-disclosure to men before and during the process of the writing of Scripture. During this phase, God's objective revelation of Himself and His Will to men was both direct and indirect: direct, through various supernatural modes (including the incarnation of our Lord), and indirect, through His written Word, as it grew book by book. During phase one God's subjective revelation of Himself and His will to men was both direct and indirect: direct, through the life-giving and transforming work of His Spirit: and indirect, through His Spirit's illumination of men's minds to understand His written Word.

Phase two of the occurrence of special revelation involves God's special self-disclosure to human beings *after* the process of the writing of Scripture was completed. During this phase God's objective revelation of Himself and His will to human beings has been only indirect, through His written Word. However, during this second phase God's subjective revelation of Himself and His will to human beings has continued to be both direct and indirect: direct, through the life-giving and transforming word of His Spirit: and indirect, through His Spirit's illumination of men's minds to understand His written Word.

Although not everything found in Scripture is a record of a previously-occurring objective event of revelation in some supernatural mode (for example, Scripture records the sinful words and deeds of wicked men), yet

because everything included in Scripture has been selected under the guidance of divine inspiration, and because even the sins of men are interpreted within a context of divine redemption and divine judgment, therefore Scripture in its entirety is an objective, historical Special Revelation from and of God. Every bit of God's Revelation in Scripture tells us something about God's nature, God's will, or God's works!

Inspiration

Although Louis Gausses and B. B. Warfield (together with a number of other writers) give good definitions of inspiration, the definition proposed by Francis L. Patton (in a slightly modified form) seems to be most helpful. This definition states:

Inspiration is a special act of the Holy Spirit by which He guided the writers of the books of sacred Scripture, so that their words should convey the thoughts He wished conveyed, should bear a proper relationship to the thoughts of the other books of Scripture, and should be kept free from error in thought, fact, doctrine and judgment.

Upon analysis, we notice five emphases in this definition:

- (1) Inspiration is more than an expression of man's natural gifts: it is more than providential guidance or illumination: it is a special extraordinary act of the Holy Spirit.
- (2) Inspiration is essentially guidance of the human faculties of the human writers: it is not dictation of divine words to them.
- (3) Inspiration extends to both thoughts and words.
- (4) Inspiration is organic: it not only employs the human authors as instruments or organs to write God's Word, it also relates each individual thought to the entire organism or body of thought in Scripture.
- (5) Inspiration guarantees that the Scriptures, as they came from the pens of their human authors, were free from error.

Verbal Inspiration

This term simply means that inspiration extends to, and includes, the very words of Scripture. This concept stands in opposition to the theory that inspiration supplied the thoughts, but the choice of words to express those thoughts was left to the discretion of the human author.

One problem which has been raised in opposition to verbal inspiration has been put this way: "How could the words of Scripture come from both God and man, if man is a free agent? If every word of Scripture has come from God, then is not dictation implied if not necessitated?"

There are really two parts to this problem. The first part is the question of how God can work through a human being in such a way as to guarantee that God's purposes will be fulfilled, while at the same time allowing scope for the expression of that human being's personality traits, background, level of education, natural and spiritual abilities and gifts, and communication style. This is a difficult question, but even if we are not able to explain the "how," we know that God has done this many times, even accomplishing His purposes through men who do not consciously desire to do His Will. For example in Isaiah 44 and 45, we see that God can perform His good pleasure through an unbeliever even while that unbeliever is expressing his own will in actions. The passage (44:28-45:1,5) reads:

It is I who says of Cyrus, "He is my shepherd!
And he will perform all my desire."
And he declares of Jerusalem. "She will be built."
And of the temple, "Your foundation will be laid."
Thus says the Lord to Cyrus his anointed.
Whom I have taken by the right hand,
To subdue nations before him,
And to loose the loins of kings:
To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut...
I am the Lord, and there is not other:
Besides me there is no God.
I will gird you, though you have not known me.

Precisely *how* God does this we are not told, but *that* He does it is abundantly clear. How Cyrus as a free agent can do his own will and at

the same time accomplish the purpose of God is not explained, but it surely happened.

Similarly, precisely how men, being borne up and carried along by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God (2 Peter 1:21), while at the same time expressing their distinctive vocabularies and grammar, and employing distinctive types of discourse, is not explained. But that they did so is apparent, both from scriptural teaching and from the characteristics of the biblical materials themselves.

The suggestion that an inspiration which would extend to the words of Scripture would violate man's freedom, frankly raises some serious theological questions. Is God in control of the universe or not? Is God omnipotent or not? If God can truly reveal Himself to man in a meaningful way by the medium of language, can He not also guarantee that man will truly record that revelation in language, without changing any thought or fact or teaching?

This suggestion that verbal inspiration violates man's freedom seems to breathe more of the spirit of human autonomy than the spirit of human freedom! The question must be asked: Who controls the process of God's communication of a knowledge of Himself and His will to man? Is it God or man? For example, does *man* control the manner and extent to which God *reveals* Himself, or does *God* control it? Hebrews 1:1-3a states:

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And he is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.

Does *man* control the manner and extent to which God's revelation is *recorded* in Scripture, or does *God* control it? 2 Peter 1:20-21 answers:

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

Does *man* control the manner and extent to which God's revelation in Scripture is *preserved* uncorrupted, or does *God* control it? Matthew 5:18 asserts:

For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away,
not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the
Law, until all is accomplished.

Does *man* control the manner and extent to which God's revelation in Scripture is *received* and spiritually *understood*, or does *God* control it? I Corinthians 2:12-15 affirms:

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the
Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things
freely given to us by God, which things we also speak,
not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught
by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual
words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the
Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him. and he
cannot understand them, because they are spiritually
appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet
he himself is appraised by no man.

Now having said these things concerning God's control over the process of communication of His Word to man, we must also affirm that the biblical writers achieved their highest degree of freedom when they were under the complete control of the Spirit of God. 2 Corinthians 3:17 tells us that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." The biblical writers under the supernatural control of the Holy Spirit experienced tremendous freedom, not to write their own personal speculations about God, or to interpret truth according to their own bias, or to make blunders or errors in attempting to convey truth, but rather to express their personalities and personal styles while truthfully recording what God wished recorded. As Gaussen put it in his *Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*:

In the operations of the Holy Ghost, while causing the
sacred books to be written, and in those of the same
divine agent while converting a soul, and causing it to
advance in the ways of sanctification, man is in different

respects entirely active and entirely passive. God does all there; man does all there ... as Jonathan Edwards put it, "God producing all, and we acting all."

But what about the second part of this problem, that which claims that verbal inspiration logically implies dictation? If every word is breathed by God and had its origin with God, at what point does that word take on human characteristics of style, limitations of vocabulary, and such? Gaussen writes:

It would ... be holding a very erroneous language to say certain passages in the Bible are man's, and certain passages in the Bible are God's. No, every verse without exception is man's; and every verse without exception is God's, whether we find him speaking there directly in his own name, or whether he employs the entire personality of the sacred writer.

The mistake has frequently been made of confusing the extent of inspiration with the mode. If we speak of *verbal* inspiration, we are speaking of the extent, not the mode. Verbal extent (i.e., that inspiration extends to the words) may be achieved by either of two modes of inspiration, the organic mode or the dictation mode. The organic mode holds that inspiration is infallible, supernatural guidance of the human faculties of chosen men. It allows for differences of vocabulary, grammar, types of discourse, and general style. The dictation mode holds that inspiration is infallible, supernatural control of the human, mechanical reproduction of divine words. It does not provide room for human differences of style, etc., since every word is dictated by God.

Both of these modes yield a verbal extent of inspiration. Both methods guarantee a Scripture in which the very words are inspired. However, since there are two modes which lead to a verbal extent, it is logically invalid to turn it around and say that a verbal extent requires the dictation mode, since a verbal extent could equally imply the organic mode. To illustrate: a flat wall may be painted with a brush or a roller. The result is the same: the wall is painted. But to turn it around and say that because the wall is painted, therefore it must have been painted with a brush, is simply poor logic! Thus dictation is not implied when we affirm that every word of Scripture has come from God.

Plenary Inspiration

The term "plenary" means "full" or "complete." In combination with the term inspiration it means that the whole Scripture and every part of it is inspired. There are several objections to this concept, five of which are frequently repeated.

Objection 1: "There is no biblical basis for the concept."

But what then is the meaning of Paul's statement in 2 Timothy 3:16 that "All Scripture is inspired by God"? Is this not all of Scripture and every part of it?

Objection 2: "How can two conflicting ideas in Scripture both be inspired?"

But do they conflict in reality or only on the surface? Are they problems to be worked through and patiently thought about until they yield to a solution? Sometimes younger biblical scholars seem to be impatient and a little too quick to draw conclusions. *Premature closure is not the hallmark of scholarship.* Some Bible students have studied problems for many years before a satisfying solution is found. Some problems must wait until glory. Others need to be worked at, then left for a while, then worked at again. Biblical scholars and theologians could learn something from the methods of research scientists in this regard.

Objection 3: "How can materials of such different value be equally inspired?"

This question betrays a confusion between inspiration and value, and the question of degrees of each. In regard to the Holy Spirit's special act in the original writing of Scripture, there are no degrees of *inspiration*. Either a particular Scripture is God-breathed or it is not. However, in regard to the *value* of Scripture, this would depend on the value of the thing to which the Scripture refers. Spiritual realities, promises, needs, or conditions are more valuable than physical objects, needs, promises, or conditions. Just as the preservation of the soul is more valuable than preservation of the body, so the promise of salvation in John 3:16 is more valuable than the promise of physical prosperity to some Bible character. Likewise, Scriptures dealing with truths essential to salvation are more

valuable than Old Testament genealogies of obscure names. Of course, *all* of Scripture is profitable and valuable, but some Scriptures are more valuable than others. And it is at that point that we may properly speak of degrees of value, but not degrees of inspiration.

Objection 4: "Why are some of the writings of the prophets and apostles not included in Scripture?"

Those extra-biblical writings referred to by biblical writers, and those which commonly fall into the categories called "apocrypha" and "pseudepigrapha" were not recognized by the Jews as belonging to the Old Testament, or by Christians as belonging to the New. Jesus placed His stamp of approval upon the Jews' three-fold division of the Old Testament, and upon the books recognized by them as Scripture, both by quoting from these books, and by quoting no other books as Scripture or as authoritative. The books which the Holy Spirit inspired were recognized by godly men to be Scripture; other books were not so recognized, and were not included in Scripture.

Objection 5: "Why are there duplicate sections in Scripture? Why are whole passages repeated?"

There is no question that this is occasionally the case. And all of them are not there as duplicates simply for emphasis, although this may sometimes be true. Sometimes a passage is found in a historical setting, as for example, David's song in 2 Samuel 22, following his deliverance by the Lord from the hand of all his enemies, including Saul. Then David's song is duplicated in Psalm 18. But what could be more natural than to find David's song in its proper historical setting, and then to find it again in a collection of songs in one scroll, conveniently grouped with the other songs that formed the sacred hymnal of Israel? The two accounts are obviously for different purposes! Another substantial case of duplication occurs in 2 Kings 18:13-20:19 and Isaiah 36-39, but again the accounts serve different purposes. In 2 Kings, Isaiah's narrative forms part of the history of Judah. In his own book Isaiah's narrative is included as an illustrative appendix to his earlier prophecies, to show that just as predictions related to the near future had been fulfilled, so God's people could have confidence that predictions related to the distant future would also be fulfilled.

Infallibility

G. C. Berkouwer, in his book *Holy Scripture*, defines inerrancy to mean "an accuracy of all matters discussed in Scripture." He rejects this concept of inerrancy, yet he strongly affirms infallibility.

Clark H. Pinnock, in his monograph *A Defense of Biblical Infallibility*, published in 1967, defines "infallible" as "incapable of teaching deception." He says that "Inspiration involves infallibility as an essential property, and infallibility in turn implies inerrancy." He also states that "Infallibility is a necessary, not merely an optional, inference from the Biblical teaching about inspiration. It is an intrinsic property and essential characteristic of the inspired text." More recently Pinnock has raised serious questions about his own views of inerrancy and its relationship to infallibility, and he no longer links infallibility with inerrancy.

Paul D. Feinberg, in his paper "The Meaning of Inerrancy," delivered in October, 1978 at the Chicago Summit Conference on Inerrancy, states that according to the definition in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "infallibility" means "the quality or fact of being infallible or exempt from liability to err," or "the quality of being unfailing or not liable to fail; unfailing certainty." Feinberg asserts that from the standpoint of definition only "it would be difficult to maintain a clear distinction between this term and inerrancy." He notes that more recently, however, infallibility has been "a term championed by those who would support what has been called limited inspiration or what today we might better call limited inerrancy." He says, "those who often advance this word to the exclusion of inerrancy would at least defend the inerrancy of Scripture in areas that are 'revelational,' 'soteriological,' or 'matters of faith and doctrine.'"

As an example of this use of infallible in combination with a doctrine of limited inerrancy, Feinberg cites Stephen C. Davis, and his book *The Debate About the Bible*, in which Davis says that infallibility means that the Bible is not false, or will not mislead us on matters of faith and practice. However, John H. Gerstner, in his article in *The Foundation of Biblical Authority* states that "Davis' own infallibilist position self-destructs, for he admits that his Bible may even err on any crucial doctrine (though he hopes not and thinks it will not), and he admits that ultimate

reliance for truth is on his own mind, Scripture notwithstanding." That kind of infallibility we do not need!

"Infallibility" is a good word. However, whenever we see it or use it, we should realize that, in the present climate of discussion it can mean, on the one hand that the Bible is "incapable of error," or on the other hand that the Bible "will not fail to achieve the goals and purposes which God intended for it." The first definition affirms inerrancy; the second does not deny inerrancy but does not require it.

James Montgomery Boice, in the preface to *The Foundation of Biblical Authority*, sounds a warning note. He says:

other persons will argue that infallibility is a better word than inerrancy for describing the soundest evangelical position on Scripture Unfortunately, the majority of those who choose infallible rather than inerrant do so because they want to affirm something less than total inerrancy, suggesting erroneously that the Bible is dependable in some areas (such as faith and morals) while not being fully dependable in others (such as matters of history and science).

But whose word shall we believe -- the word of twentieth-century scholars admittedly writing without benefit of inspiration, or the word of a first century apostle writing by divine inspiration and carried along by the Holy Spirit? The twentieth-century scholars express their opinion that the Bible is not fully dependable in some areas. The first-century apostle, speaking from God, says "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable." Whose word shall we believe? The question is obviously rhetorical!

Inerrancy

In his paper, "The Meaning of Inerrancy," Paul Feinberg proposes a definition of this term. He says:

Inerrancy means that when all facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything that they affirm, whether that has to do with doctrine or

morality or with the social, physical, or life sciences.

This definition is more positive and comprehensive than the statement on Scripture found in the Lausanne Covenant, which asserts that the Bible is "without error in all that it affirms." As such I believe Feinberg's definition has distinct advantages.

However, once we have confessed that the Scriptures are inerrant, i.e., wholly true and without error in everything that they affirm, we must make some qualifications. Kenneth S. Kantzer, in his article in *The Foundation of Biblical Authority*, points out that some people draw unnecessary implications from inerrancy. He says:

The word inerrancy is ... by no means free from ... abuse and ambiguity. As applied to biblical inspiration, it is used by some to mean: a) exact and precise language throughout the whole of Scripture, b) literal interpretation of Scripture, or c) dictation methodology for the production of Scripture.

Kantzer asserts that inerrancy does not include these concepts in its meaning.

Paul Feinberg also mentions some misunderstandings of inerrancy. He enumerates eight qualifications of the concept:

1. Inerrancy does not demand strict adherence to the rules of grammar.
2. Inerrancy does not exclude the use of either figures of speech or literary genre.
3. Inerrancy does not demand historical or semantic precision.
4. Inerrancy does not demand the technical or observational language of modern science.
5. Inerrancy does not require verbal exactness in the citation of the Old Testament by the New.
6. Inerrancy does not demand that the sayings of Jesus contain the exact words of Jesus, only the exact voice (i.e., sometimes we find direct quotations, sometimes indirect discourse, and sometimes free renderings, but the meaning of our Lord's words is captured in the words of

the writer).

7. Inerrancy does not guarantee the exhaustive comprehensiveness of any single account or of combined accounts where those are involved.
8. Inerrancy does not demand the infallibility or inerrancy of the non-inspired sources used by biblical writers.

However, in spite of these important qualifications, Clark Pinnock, in an article in *Biblical Authority*, edited by Jack Rogers and published in 1977, states that he is not comfortable with the term inerrancy, although he says that he still holds it. But the manner in which he qualifies the term seems to dilute it considerably. For example, he asks seven questions about inerrancy, as follows:

"Question One: Is inerrancy scriptural?" He says that inerrancy is a possible inference from the Bible, but not the only one. We may "choose to draw" the inference or not.

"Question Two: Is inerrancy a logical corollary of inspiration?" (i.e., does inspiration logically require inerrancy?). Pinnock says that it does not.

"Question Three: Is inerrancy meaningful?" He says it is not very meaningful and often misleading to many evangelicals.

"Question Four: Is inerrancy as epistemological necessity?" (i.e., must the Bible be inerrant in order for us to know that its teachings are true?). He says that such an argument weakens the evangelical view.

"Question Five: Is inerrancy theologically decisive?" Pinnock claims that our focus should be "upon the saving truth of the Bible to bear witness to Christ," not upon "the precise accuracy of minor details." The emphasis, he says, should be upon "the self-evident authority of Scripture, preached in the power of the Spirit."

"Question Six: Is inerrancy critically honest?" He claims that preoccupation with artificial attempts to harmonize stock problems has prevented evangelicals from handling "newer issues" and from "getting ahead in biblical interpretation."

"Question Seven: Ought inerrancy to be the test of evangelical

authenticity?" Pinnock quotes Lindsell, who says that no one who rejects biblical inerrancy has any right to claim the "evangelical badge," and Pinnock states that he regards this view as unjust and extreme, and urges charity toward those who hesitate over inerrancy because of honest questioning.

To be quite fair, we must point out that Pinnock, while holding to a very qualified inerrancy, sees that there are "flaws and potential dangers implicit in any case for biblical errancy." He asks, "What is there to prevent these evangelicals (who hold to biblical errancy) from handling the Bible like liberals do?" As examples of evangelicals who have handled the Bible using liberal methodology, he mentions Dewey Beegle, in his book *Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility*, and Paul K. Jewett, in his book *Man as Male and Female*.

Clark Pinnock believes that the answer to the issue of errancy versus inerrancy is the moving of the Spirit of God in mighty power through the church, bringing reformation and revival. Instead of "our strenuous, rationalistic efforts to make the case for the Bible air-tight," and our "obsession with the inerrancy of biblical details," we will have "an overwhelming sense of the power and authority of God speaking through the Word by the Spirit."

Now although this kind of rhetoric is powerful, and seems to sweep away all the troublesome problems (as fresh sea-breezes sweep away sultry air and troublesome mosquitoes and gnats), yet upon analysis this "solution" turns out to be even more troublesome than the problems. The sea-breezes develop into a gale, and the gale turns into a hurricane!

It is not a problem of either/or: *either* the Bible is inerrant, *or* the Spirit moves through the church in mighty power. Rather it is one of both/and: God has *both* given us a true revelation of Himself, causing this revelation to be truly recorded in Scripture so that Scripture is God's Word of truth, *and* God's Spirit wields this true sword of the Word and powerfully applies its truth to the minds, hearts and wills of the lost and of His people, transforming and reviving them and reforming the church in accordance with His perfect will!

Pinnock's view on inerrancy is frankly disturbing, as are the views of Jack B. Rogers, Donald K. McKim, and David A. Hubbard, all of whom are

opponents of biblical inerrancy. One of the reasons these views are disturbing is that the matter of inerrancy is vitally related to the question of the authority of Scripture. Gleason L. Archer, in his article in *The Foundation of Biblical Authority*, speaks of this issue under the heading "Inerrancy Essential for Biblical Authority." Archer writes:

We are faced with a basic choice in the matter of biblical authority. Either we receive the Scripture as completely reliable and trustworthy in every matter it records, affirms, or teaches, or else it comes to us as a collection of religious writings containing both truth and error.

If it does contain mistakes in the original manuscripts, then it ceases to be unconditionally authoritative. It must be validated and endorsed by our own human judgment before we can accept it as true. It is not sufficient to establish that a matter has been affirmed or taught in Scripture; it may nevertheless be mistaken and at variance with the truth. So human judges must pass on each item of teaching or information contained in the Bible and determine whether it is actually to be received as true. Such judgment presupposes a superior wisdom and spiritual insight competent to correct the errors of the Bible, and if those who would thus judge the veracity of the Bible lack the necessary ingredient of personal inerrancy in judgment, they may come to a false and mistaken judgment -- endorsing as true what is actually false, or else condemning as erroneous what is actually correct in Scripture. Thus the objective authority of the Bible is replaced by a subjective intuition or judicial faculty on the part of each believer, and it becomes a matter of mere personal preference how much of Scripture teaching he or she may adopt as binding.

In contrast to the view of the bible as capable of error in matters of science, history or doctrine, ... we find that the attitude of Christ and the apostolic authors of the New Testament was one of unqualified acceptance

... Despite all the imperfections of the human writers of

Scripture, the Lord was able to carry them along into his infallible truth without distortion or mistake.

Both Christ and the apostles affirm, then, that what the Bible says, God says. All these passages add up to this: that accuracy inheres in every part of the Bible, so that it is to be received as infallible as to truth and final as to authority This, then, is what the Scriptures teach concerning their own infallibility. Not only are they free from all error; they are also filled with all authority, and they sit in judgment on man and all his intentions and thoughts.

Brothers and sisters, we are engaged in a life-and-death struggle for the Word of God. We live in a time when it is becoming more and more difficult to stand in absolute loyalty to the revealed, verbally and plenary inspired, infallible and inerrant sacred writings called Scripture. If the present division among evangelicals grows even further (it is already alarmingly large!), and if the growing tide against the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture continues to advance, then humanly speaking I anticipate great and widespread harm for the whole cause of Christ. Should the Lord delay His return, will He at His coming find those who still believe that the Bible is *God's Word*, is *truth*, is *perfect*, is *forever settled in heaven*, is *unable to be broken*, and is *God-breathed*? Oh, I pray that among the remnant of those who firmly believe these things, He will find all of us here today!

Chapter Three

Revelation: The Word That Discloses God's Glory

A consideration of the modern liberal and conservative understandings of the biblical and theological concept of revelation, presented at the 12th Theological Institute of Biblical Theological Seminary, June 8-10, 1983.

Permit me to begin with a quotation from Leon Morris' book *I Believe in Revelation*, published in 1976:

In the face of a widespread denial of the reality or the relevance of revelation, it is plain that Christians today must do some hard thinking. We can no longer take revelation for granted. Should we reject the whole traditional idea of revelation? Or the ways in which it has been formulated? If so, what do we put in its place? If not, what are we to say of the forceful criticisms that are being put forward? Such questions cannot simply be glossed over.¹

To what widespread denials and forceful criticisms is Morris referring? What is it in these denials and criticisms that should cause Christians to do some hard thinking? Why can we no longer take the traditional idea of revelation for granted? And how do the traditional (conservative) and the modern (liberal) views of revelation differ?

For a statement of the traditional conservative view of revelation, let us go back to Benjamin B. Warfield's article "Revelation," which appeared first in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* in 1915, and later was reprinted under the title "The Biblical Idea of Revelation" in *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*. Warfield writes:

Revelation ... is the correlate of understanding and has as its proximate end just the production of knowledge, though not, of course, knowledge for its own sake, but for the sake of salvation. The series of redemptive acts of

God, accordingly, can properly be designated "revelation" only when and so far as they are contemplated as adapted and designed to produce knowledge of God and His purpose and methods of grace.^2

Further on in this article Warfield says:

The terms ... employed in Scripture to express the idea [of revelation] ... are... the common words for disclosing, making known, making manifest In the English Bible (AV) the verb "reveal" occurs about 51 times, of which 22 are in the Old Testament and 29 in the New Testament. In the Old Testament the word is always the rendering of a Hebrew term גָּלַהּ [galah] or its Aramaic equivalent גִּלַּהּ [gelah] ... When applied to revelation, it seems to hint at the removal of obstacles to perception or the uncovering of objects to perception. In the New Testament the word "reveal" is always ... the rendering of a Greek term ἀποκαλύπτω [apokalupto] ... which has a very similar basal significance with its Hebrew parallel ... On the face of the English Bible, the terms "reveal," "revelation" bear therefore uniformly the general sense of "disclose," "disclosure.^3

Warfield concludes by saying:

The Scriptures themselves represent the Scriptures as not merely containing here and there the record of revelations -- "words of God," ... given by God, but as themselves, in all their extent, a revelation, an authoritative body of gracious instructions from God.^4

Note in these quotations the emphasis upon revelation as producing knowledge, revelation as disclosure, and revelation as instructions from God.

For a statement of the modern liberal view of revelation, let us look at the words of John Baille in his book *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought*, published in 1956. Baille says:

The revelation of which the Bible speaks is always such as has place within a personal relationship. It is not the revelation of an object to a subject, but a revelation from subject to subject, a revelation of mind to mind.⁵

If we consult Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* ... we shall be told that in the Old Testament "revelation is *not* the communication of supranatural knowledge, and *not* the stimulation of numinous feelings ... it does not itself consist in these things but is quite essentially the *action* of Yahweh, an unveiling of His essential hiddenness, His offering of Himself in fellowship." While in the New Testament, "revelation is likewise understood, not in the sense of a communication of supranatural knowledge, but in the sense of a self-disclosure of God."

The recovery of this fundamental insight is the first thing we notice as running broadly throughout all the recent discussions, marking them off from the formulations of earlier periods.⁶

The Bible does indeed speak of saving knowledge, but this is no mere knowledge *that*, and no mere knowledge *about*; it is a knowledge *of*. It is what our epistemologists call knowledge by acquaintance as distinct from merely conceptual knowledge. God does not give us information by communication; He gives us Himself in communion.⁷

For another statement of the modern liberal view of revelation, let us note the emphases of Wolfhart Pannenberg, in his introductory article to *Revelation as History*, published in 1986. Pannenberg says:

If we study contemporary dogmatics for the meaning of the concept "revelation," we find a confusing variety of meaning Yet over and above all of these distinctions is the present consensus that revelation is, in essence, the self-revelation of God.

Revelation is not God's making known a certain set of

arcane truths, but -- as Karl Barth puts it -- the self-disclosure of God. From its beginnings, Christian theology was aware that in every revelation God's prime disclosure is of himself. The new stress is the exclusive use of the term "revelation" to mean the self-disclosure of God, without any imparting of supernatural truths.⁸

Self-revelation is thus so strictly understood that it is not longer permissible to think of a medium of revelation that is distinct from God himself.⁹

One can think of revelation in the strict sense only if the special means by which God becomes manifest, or the particular act by which he proves himself, is not seen as distinct from his own essence.¹⁰

Of course, this emphasis on revelation's being a self-disclosure of God *Himself*, rather than a disclosure of information or knowledge or truth or doctrine *about* God is not new. We can trace it through a number of books, including Karl Barth's *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (1928), Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, I/1 and I/2 (1936, 1956), H. Richard Niebuhr's *The Meaning of Revelation* (1946), Emil Brunner's *Revelation and Reason* (1946), Brunner's *The Christian Doctrine of God* (1949), C. H. Dodd's *The Authority of the Bible* (1947), Paul Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, Volume 1 (1951), John Baille's *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought* (1956), William Temple's *Nature, Man and God* (1964), F. Gerald Downing's *Has Christianity a Revelation?* (1964), John Macquarrie's *Principles of Christian Theology* (1966), A. O. Dyson's *Who Is Jesus Christ?* (1969), James D. Smart's *The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church* (1970), Christopher Evans' *Is "Holy Scripture" Christian?* (1971), and James Barr's *The Bible in the Modern World* (1973). However, although this emphasis is not new, the consensus regarding this emphasis among contemporary liberal scholars does appear to be new.

The liberal view of revelation as God's self-disclosure locates the revelation in a subjective experience in which the transcendent God Himself breaks into history and confronts the individual in a here-and-now existential moment. In that moment the individual experiences God without capturing or possessing Him (thus he cannot walk away from this

experience saying "I hold Truth" or "I have in my possession truths about God"). In that moment, the individual *knows* God, not with *conceptual* knowledge, but with knowledge of *acquaintance* (thus he cannot walk away from this experience saying "I possess knowledge about God"). In this experience he receives no information about God, no conceptual knowledge about God, no teaching concerning God, and no truth concerning God. Rather he *knows the Truth*; i.e., God *Himself*! This is revelation, and *only this* is revelation!

Does this view of revelation have relevance for the doctrine of inspiration? Yes, it has direct relevance. According to this view, the writers of Scripture experienced the revelation of God, and attempted to give witness to that experience. But when they turned from the "I-Thou" relationship, the subject-subject relationship of revelation, and attempted to say something meaningful *about* this experience, they moved to a subject-object relationship, an "I-it" relationship in which God became an object instead of a subject. They attempted to speak *about* God, and in doing so they were really speaking *about* revelation rather than revealing God (how could they reveal God in any case; only *God* can reveal God). In speaking *about* God, they were providing their readers with information, conceptual knowledge, doctrines, and truths about God; they were not communicating *revelation*.

Thus this liberal view of revelation reduces the Bible to a collection of human witnesses of divine revelation; an anthology of human attempts to say something meaningful about the subjective experience of God's self-disclosure of Himself. As such, there can be no simple identification of revelation with the total content of Scripture. In fact, there can be no identification of revelation with Scripture at all, either as a whole or in part. Since the Bible is a record of human witnesses to divine revelation, there is no revelation in the Bible at all! The older maxim -- "What the Bible says, God says" -- must be replaced by the maxim -- "The Bible is the word of man about the Word of God." According to this view of revelation, the Bible is a purely human book; it contains no revelation of God whatever. However, the Bible is unique in that it witnesses to revelation, to the experiences of individuals to whom God disclosed Himself. However, the Bible's witness is a human activity and as such is characterized by human fallibility and error through and through.

How does the doctrine of inspiration fit into this view of revelation and of

Scripture? Here inspiration is viewed as divine assistance given to the Biblical writers to communicate to the world the illumination which they had received in the experience of revelation. Illumination is used in this view to mean "that guidance of the minds of men who receive revelation so that they interpret what they receive as revelation." To put it another way: God is on the sending end of revelation, humans are on the receiving end; when God discloses Himself to an individual He also illumines that person's mind so that he or she can perceive God's self-disclosure as a genuine revelation.

Seen in this light, inspiration becomes a divine assistance given to the Biblical writers to communicate their fallible human witness to divine revelation.

What a depressing view! God can reveal *Himself* but He cannot communicate to man any truth or item of information concerning Himself! God can reveal *Himself*, and give us a *knowledge of acquaintance* of Himself, but He cannot communicate *conceptual knowledge* of Himself. Man can thus know God without knowing anything *about* God. Without knowing one single item of information or one single truth about God, man can know God!

And when man attempts to say something about this knowledge of God, he can say nothing about God that can be called knowledge or truth or revelation; he can only witness to his experience of God's self-disclosure. Even though God has illumined his mind to recognize the reality and meaning of God's revelation of Himself, man still cannot say anything meaningful about the content of revelation. And even though God assisted the Biblical writers in their attempts to communicate to the world their witness to divine revelation, this inspiration produces nothing more than the fallible words of human beings trying to say something about the transcendent, unspeakable, ineffable self-disclosure of God!

Again I say, what a depressing view! God does not have the power to communicate something true about Himself to man in such a way that man can grasp it! God does not have the power to infallibly guide man in committing revealed truth to writing! God can reveal *Himself* (whatever that means!), but He does not have the power to reveal to man any idea of *who* He is or *what* He is like, or what He wants us to *do*!

Not only is this view depressing and baffling, it is also foreign to the ideas of revelation and Scripture which we find in the Bible itself! If the Bible is Christianity's source-book, then we should expect to find these so-called "Christian" views of revelation and inspiration in the Bible. To the contrary, we find that these ideas, rather than being taught in the Bible, are not found there at all. In fact, upon scrutiny we discover that the Bible teaches, not that God reveals an unmediated knowledge of Himself, but rather that God discloses Himself through events and words, through mighty acts and the meanings of these acts, through symbols and their interpretation, and through names which God gives to Himself. And it is precisely through these means that God reveals Himself!

But now, having said all this, we must renew our earlier question: What is it in these denials and criticisms of the traditional conservative view of revelation that makes Leon Morris feel that Christians must do some hard thinking and make some sort of informed response to this modern liberal consensus? Are there some new concepts and emphases that should cause conservative Christian scholars to review, enlarge, and expand their concept of revelation? After all, the subjectivism of Barthianism has been around for some sixty years, and many Christian scholars have thoroughly analyzed and critiqued it. What could be new?

One question which has been raised is this: Can it properly be called revelation if it is not received and, at least to some extent, understood? Baillie points up this question:

It is not enough to think of God as giving us information by communication, but ... we must rather think of Him as giving Himself to us in communion. Two things are implied in this ... first.. What is fundamentally revealed is God Himself, not propositions about God ... second God reveals Himself *in action* -- in the gracious activity by which He invades the field of human experience and human history which is otherwise but a vain show, empty and drained of meaning ...

... Other sacred books are composed mainly of oracles which communicate what profess to be timeless truths about universal being or timeless prescriptions for the conduct of life and worship. But the Bible is mainly a

record of what God has done.¹¹

We must, however, think very carefully what we mean when we say that revelation is given in the form of events or historical happenings. For it is not as if all who experience these events and happenings find in them a revelation of God. The question thus arises as to whether even such events as are in themselves "mighty acts of God" can properly be spoken of as revelation if, in fact, there should be nobody to whom they reveal anything. To take the human analogy, do all my efforts to make myself plain amount to a real self-disclosure, if no one succeeds in grasping what is in my mind? Surely not. We must therefore say that the receiving is as necessary to a completed act of revelation as the giving. It is only so far as the action of God in history is understood as God means it to be understood that revelation has place at all. The illumination of the receiving mind is a necessary condition of the divine self-disclosure.¹²

The prophets and apostles all believed that only by God's own aid they were enabled to interpret His mighty acts. "Surely," says Amos, "the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets." This enablement, this illumination, is what is meant by inspiration. The concept of inspiration is thus the necessary counterpart of the concept of revelation.¹³

Our study has thus led us to the conclusion that revelation is always given us through events; yet not through all events, but only through such as appear as God's mighty works; and through no event in its bare character as occurrence, but only as men are enabled by the Spirit of God to apprehend and receive its revelatory power.¹⁴

From a conservative point of view, I believe it is meaningful to ask this question: If God has disclosed true knowledge of Himself, can this knowledge properly be called revelation unless a person who is capable of receiving and understanding this knowledge actually receives and understands it? That is, we can see how there can be such a thing as

objective knowledge unknown to a given person (for example, in books or computer storage systems), but it is difficult to see how it can be called *revelation* if it is not communicated to, and received and understood by, a knowing subject.

Permit me to illustrate the point. If an important message containing new data is placed before a person who is blind and deaf in the form of a sound motion picture, does any communication take place? Even though the message is objectively up there on the screen in the form of light images, and objectively there in the room in the form of sound waves, is there any information which gets through subjectively to this blind and deaf one? And if not, can we properly speak of the message as a *revelation* to that person?

Leon Morris addresses this issue. He says:

It must be emphasized ... that revelation is in the nature of a gift Revelation is an act of God, not man. All that man can do is to receive what God proffers.

This does not mean that man's part in the revelatory process is unimportant. Unless he receives the revelation humbly and with faith revelation does not take place. We ought not to think of it as something given objectively in such a way that it cannot but be seen and recognized for what it is. It can be misunderstood. It can be rejected ... Men may ... reject the revelation either in nature or in Scripture or in both. Without faith there is not perception of revelation. Not everyone who looks at nature or reads the Bible is convinced. This does not leave the reality of revelation in uncertainty. It is the perception of the revelation that is at stake, not the revelation itself. God has spoken whether they hear or whether they forbear. But unless men come in humble faith they will still miss the wonderful thing that God is saving to them.^15

On the one hand we can affirm that revelation is objective and historical: on the other hand we can affirm that revelation is also subjective and personal. It would seem that if a disclosure is to be revelation in the fullest sense, it must be understood. If something is revealed to me

objectively, but I do not understand what it means, then is it revelation in the fullest sense? Has any communication taken place? If the Holy Spirit does not illumine what has been objectively revealed, how can I understand the truth? And is not understanding part of the concept of revelation in its fullest sense? These considerations, emphasizing the personal and subjective dimension of revelation, would appear to establish a warrant for the careful study of Scripture as a book of revelation, so that by exegesis and interpretation, explanation and application, men might understand the revelation that God has been pleased to make of Himself.

A second question which has been raised is this: Has all revelation occurred in the past? Does God reveal Himself to men in the present? Once again, John Baillie addresses this issue:

God reveals Himself to me only in so far as I apprehend Him. Such apprehension, however, must be a fact of my own present experience or nothing at all, and that is why more than one of the writers whom we have been quoting insist that "all revelation is the present moment."

... *through* the past God reveals Himself to me *in* the present. This could not be unless He had revealed Himself to others through that past while for them it was still present. Had there been no contemporary prophetic interpretation of God's dealings with Israel, and no contemporary apostolic interpretation of the Gospel history, I should not at this distance be finding the presence of God in them at all On the other hand, I could not know that God had revealed Himself to the prophets and apostles through these events, unless through His revelation of Himself to them He were now revealing Himself to me. I could know indeed that they claimed to have received such a revelation, but I can know that their claim is justified only if, as I read what they say, I too find myself in the presence of God

This would hold good even if, as so often in traditional theology, the *truth* revealed were believed to consist in propositional *truths*, and the authenticity of the past

revelations believed to be guaranteed by external proofs, such as accompanying miracles and fulfilled predictions whose validity must be evident to all observers; but it holds all the more now that this kind of guarantee carries so little conviction among us.^16

From a conservative stance, James I. Packer speaks to this question. He writes:

The history of salvation (the acts of God) took place in the context of the history of revelation (the oracles of God). But the epoch of revelation ended with Christ and the apostles: how, then, does God reveal Himself to us today? By saying to us the same things that He said to others long ago, only now in direct application to ourselves, in the situation in which we are.^17

The Christian studying the recorded words of God will often feel that what God said to someone thousands of years ago speaks to his own condition so perfectly that it might have been written specially for him. (And so, of course, it was! -- for, just as every Christian can truly say, with Paul, that Christ, "loved me, and gave Himself for me" [Gal 2:20], so he can truly say that God "loved me, and wrote this book for me." What God caused to be written for the Church in general ... He caused to be written for each Christian individually. The devotional maxim that one should read the Scripture as one would read a personal letter from one's best friend, rests not on pious fancy, but on the hardest theological fact.)^18

The Bible as a whole, viewed from the standpoint of its contents, should be thought of, not statically, but dynamically; not merely as what God said long ago, but as what He says still; and not merely as what He says to men in general, but as what He says to each individual reader or hearer in particular. In other words, Holy Scripture should be thought of as God *preaching* -- God preaching to me every time I read or hear any part of it -- God the Father preaching God the Son in the power of

God the Holy Ghost.^19

A third question which has been raised is this: Must revelation be exhaustive in order to count as divine disclosure? Can revelation which is partial nevertheless be genuine? Among others, Wolfhart Pannenberg raises this issue. He says:

Every activity and act of God can indirectly express something about God As acts of God, these acts cast light back on God himself. That does not of course mean that they reveal God ... for every individual event which is taken to be God's activity illuminates the being of God only in a partial way Thus no one act could be a full revelation of God. The isolated conception of a single divine action as the revelation of God most often leads to a distorted view, to an idol."

Here we must raise a counter-question: Is a full self-disclosure of God required if it is to count as a revelation? And if so, what counts as self-disclosure? For example, does God's revelation of His nature in the form of attributes count as a self-disclosure? Not if what we call God's attributes or characteristics are simply qualities which *we* conceive of and then ascribe to God. Not if God's self-disclosure must be a complete self-disclosure of the entirety of God's essence, so that a partial self-disclosure is no disclosure at all. Not if the revelation of *some* divine attributes, not being exhaustive of God's being, is no revelation at all!

Conservative theology holds that when God tells us something about His nature in terms of His attributes or perfections, He is telling us something meaningful about Himself. He is not simply telling us something which He *wants* us to believe, or something that is *good* for us, or something by which He wishes to *regulate* our lives so as to accomplish His purposes. He is telling us who and what He really is! When the Westminster divines formulated their answer to question 4 of the *Shorter Catechism* they were attempting to gather up the truths given in God's revelation of Himself, and express them in a brief, but not exhaustive summary. They said "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth."

When conservative theologians attribute characteristics to God, they are

not creatively constructing and ascribing to God qualities which they believe He has; rather they are attempting to receptively reconstruct the perfections of God's nature by attributing to God what He attributes to Himself.

But now what can we say to this insistence that a self-disclosure must be complete if it is to be a revelation of God at all? This is a very peculiar concept. For when we reflect about the nature of knowledge in general, we recognize that no human being knows *anything* completely or exhaustively. Even the model "renaissance man," who was conversant in every field of knowledge, knew no one field exhaustively. And no "modern man," even the most brilliant and erudite, knows even *one area* of one field in its fulness or completeness. No human being knows everything about any thing or any person. Our knowledge, whether of things or persons, is always partial, never exhaustive. In fact, we do not know even *ourselves* exhaustively!

Confining our answer to the realm of personal knowledge of persons (since God's self-disclosure is the subject at issue), does this liberal contention mean that, since we can never know a person *exhaustively*, we cannot know that person at *all*? If a person does not disclose himself or herself exhaustively, but only partially, does this mean that we cannot say that that person has revealed himself or herself to us, and that therefore we cannot *know* him or her? Further, since a person does not even know himself exhaustively, how is it possible for him to reveal himself exhaustively, so that other persons can know him personally?

This claim that revelation of God must be exhaustive if it is to disclose God *Himself* thus reduces to absurdity. We know many persons personally who do not know themselves exhaustively. We know them only partially, only to a certain degree; but we know them nonetheless. Although God knows Himself exhaustively (i.e., He knows Himself, both factually and personally, through and through); and although He reveals Himself only partially, condescends to our creaturely limitations, and "lisps with us as with small children"; yet through the revelation of His nature and by His Spirit He gives us an understanding so that we can know Him and do know Him, partially yet truly.

A fourth question which has been raised is this: Must revelation, in order to be a genuine self-disclosure of God, be exclusively personal and

non-conceptual? And further, how does the conceptual knowledge of God given in Scripture relate to my personal knowledge of and relationship to God?

In response to these questions, let us first attempt to get clear on the two categories of knowledge being referred to. And let us apply both categories to the knowledge of *persons*.

Knowledge of persons is of two basic kinds. First, there is *factual* knowledge, which can also be called cognitive or conceptual knowledge. The contents of this kind of knowledge is information -- facts and truths about persons. It is possible to have a great deal of factual knowledge about persons whom we have never met, with whom we have never had any contact. On the basis of such knowledge, it is even possible for historians to write extensive biographies of people who died long before the historians began their research.

The second kind of knowledge is *personal* knowledge, which can also be called knowledge of acquaintance or knowledge of personal relationship. The contents of this kind of knowledge is also information -- but it is information that has been set within the framework of personal relationship, and that has (at least in part) been communicated by the living person who is known. To know persons personally we must have personal contact with them and must get to know them. If we experience a large amount of contact with them, we get to know them rather well, provided that they "open up" to us and reveal themselves as they really are. Such personal knowledge usually includes recognition of a person's appearance, or his name, or at least some of the person's characteristic attitudes, beliefs, or traits and behaviors -- i.e., something of his personality.

Both kinds of knowledge of persons -- factual knowledge and personal knowledge -- are capable of various degrees. We may have only a passing factual acquaintance with the life of a historic personage, or we may know more about that person than anyone else in the world, with various degrees between. Likewise, we may have only a passing personal acquaintance with someone, or we may know that person more closely, more deeply, more intimately than anyone else in the world, with various degrees between. In addition, we may acquire or forget factual knowledge about persons, and we may get to know persons better or grow apart and

become strangers to them.

Applying these distinctions to the knowledge of God, we can say that it is possible to have a great deal of factual knowledge about God without knowing Him personally. In James 2:19 we are told that the demons believe that there is one true and living God, and that they shudder! Presumably they know something about God's majesty or His holiness, or His coming judgment that makes them tremble. In Mark 5:7 we read that the demons possessing the madman of Gadara knew that Jesus was the Son of God. But they did not know Him in a relational sense. In John 7:27-29 some of the Jews of Jerusalem, when they heard Jesus, said, "We know where this man is from." Jesus cried out, "Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, but I know him." These Jews had a degree of factual knowledge concerning Jesus, and they certainly had some factual knowledge concerning God as He was revealed in the Old Testament, but they did not have a personal knowledge of God. On the other hand, the Bible teaches that it is possible to have personal knowledge of God. And the reason why this is so is that God has revealed Himself!

In Hebrews 1:1-3 we read "In the past, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word." Among the various ways in which God spoke in the Old Testament period were: revelation by theophanies, including the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, the shekinah glory, the glorious aftermath, and appearances of the Angel of the Lord; revelation in altered states of consciousness, including visions, trances, and dreams; revelation by means of Urim and Thummim and the lot; revelation by means of miracles; revelation by audible speech from God; revelation by prophetic declaration through human instruments; and revelation through the sacred writings of Scripture. All of these modes of special revelation can be subsumed under one title: that of Word. Of course, the preeminent revelation which God has given of Himself is His incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. In John 1:18 we read, "No one has ever seen God, but God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, has made him known."

But now we must ask: Is it possible for man to know (both factually and personally) the God who has spoken His Word, the God who has revealed Himself? Jeremiah 9:23-24 tells us:

This is what the Lord says, "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom, or the strong man boast of his strength, or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice, and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord.

In Matthew 11:27 Jesus says, "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." In 1 John 5:20 we read: "We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true -- even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life." And in 1 John 4:7 we read, "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God." These Scriptures tell us that it is possible for human beings to have personal knowledge of God in the special sense of knowledge of saving relationship. Through God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ some human beings have been born of God and given an understanding so that they might know God in this special sense.

Given this background and this understanding, what can it mean to talk about revelation as a self-disclosure of God Himself, rather than as a disclosure of information about God? The God of the Bible is described as a Spirit. This means two things: God is a personal being, and God's substance is not material or physical. He is also described as invisible to human eyes. In addition, He is said to be omnipresent, to fill heaven and earth, to be everywhere at the same time. How is it possible for a personal being who does not have a physical body, who is invisible, and who is everywhere at once, to reveal *Himself*, and yet communicate *no information* about Himself? What conception could we possibly form of such a God? What are we to think of such a God without a known nature, without a face, without even a name! How are we to worship or serve such a God, since we do not know who or what He is, what He is doing,

or what His will is for us?

The God who discloses *Himself*, but discloses nothing *about* Himself, is an *unknown God*! In fact, the God who discloses nothing about Himself is a philosophical abstraction, an empty concept, a form without content. And He is certainly not the God of the Bible, who speaks and makes Himself known! As Paul on Mars' Hill did not hesitate to declare to the philosophers and citizens of Athens their unknown god, revealing Him to be the creator, the sustainer, the ruler, the redeemer, and the judge, so God's Word in the Bible unhesitatingly declares to modern liberal theologians their unknown god, revealing His nature, His works, and His will!

Earlier, as part of the fourth question, we asked how the conceptual knowledge of God given in Scripture relates to my personal knowledge of and relationship to God. We have found that God has disclosed to us His Word concerning His nature, His works, and His will. Now we also discover that our personal knowledge of saving relationship to Christ is mediated by the Holy Spirit through His revelation of the truths concerning Christ's person and redemptive work. Through His quickening work and through His Word the Holy Spirit unites us to Christ through faith, and in doing so He brings us into vital union with all of the saving benefits Christ has purchased for us. Thus personal knowledge of Christ is *acquired* via factual knowledge of God's revealed truth. Is this personal knowledge of Christ also *maintained* by the same means? It would appear so. Thus our fellowship with Christ, our continuing personal relationship with Christ, our ongoing experience of Christ, is maintained by the Holy Spirit via factual knowledge of God's Word as to who Christ is and what Christ has done, is doing, and will yet do. As we steep ourselves in God's Word, seeking always to understand, trust in, and obey that Word, we shall come to know God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit more fully, more deeply, more intimately, until at last our faith is exchanged for sight, and we see Him whom, having not yet seen, nevertheless we love, in whom believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

This mention of the word "glory" prompts me to take a fleeting look at the title of this paper -- "Revelation: the Word that Discloses God's Glory" and to ask: Why the inclusion of "glory" in the title? Actually, the concept of glory seems to be a particularly happy one to summarize the

various aspects of God's self-disclosure. If God's glory be understood as the magnificence, the brightness, the splendor of the expression of God's divine nature, then God's attributes can be seen as expressions of various aspects of God's nature, and God's works and will can be seen as reflections of various aspects of God's nature. And thus the inclusion of "glory" in the title seemed appropriate, and still seems so. Accordingly, revelation is *the word that discloses God's glory*. May it accomplish that end in our lives!

Reference Notes

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Chapter Four

Are the Bibles in Our Possession Inspired? Two Studies on the Inspiredness of the Apographs

Part One: The Inspiration and "Inspiredness" of Scripture: A Proposal

The Concept of Inspiration

Inspiration as a theological term pertaining to the inscripturation of revelation has been defined in a variety of ways. Some, such as Theodore Parker and Francis W. Newman, have defined it as such natural insight into religious things as is common to all men. Others, such as W. N. Clarke and Olin C. Curtis, have held that inspiration is such spiritual exaltation and insight as is common to all Christians. Still others, such as Augustus Hopkins Strong and James Orr, have advocated the view that inspiration is a supernatural exaltation and guidance of the human faculties of chosen men, which guidance is sometimes infallible and sometimes fallible. Yet others, such as Charles Hodge, William G. T. Shedd, Benjamin B. Warfield, Lewis Sperry Chafer and Louis Berkhof, have proposed the idea that inspiration is infallible supernatural guidance of the human faculties of chosen men. And finally, there have been a few, such as G. Voetius and the authors of the Swiss Formula of Consensus of 1675, who have asserted that inspiration is infallible supernatural control of the human mechanical reproduction of divine words. These views, calling attention primarily to the *mode* of inspiration, have respectively been called the Intuition View, the Illumination View, the Dynamic View, the Organic View, and the Dictation View.

One definition of inspiration, expressive of the Organic View, states that:

Inspiration is a special act of the Holy Spirit by which He guided the writers of the books of sacred Scripture, so that their words should convey the thoughts He wished conveyed, should bear a proper relationship to the thoughts of the other books of Scripture, and should be kept free from error in thought, fact, doctrine and judgment.

It is instructive to note that in this definition inspiration is a special, extraordinary, supernatural act of the Holy Spirit; and that this act pertains to the writers of sacred Scripture at the time of their writing. As such, inspiration refers to the sacred writings as originally penned (the autographs), and says nothing about subsequent copies, versions or translations (the apographs, as they are called). Although this view of inspiration was commonly held by evangelical Christians in the first half of the twentieth century (with some exceptions), it may no longer be taken for granted as *the* view of those who profess to be evangelical.

In recent years we have seen much controversy among evangelicals on the question of the nature and extent of inspiration. This polemic has been stimulated and abetted by such works as Dewey Beegle's *The Inspiration of Scripture* (1963), H. M. Kuitert's *Do You Understand What You Read?* (1970), Beegle's *Scripture, Tradition and Infallibility* (1973), and G. C. Berkouwer's *Holy Scripture*, published in English translation in 1975. In addition, we have seen several crucial exchanges on the subject in the *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* and the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. Echoes of the deep cleavage among evangelical leaders over inerrancy are still reverberating from the Wenham Conference on Scripture, held some years ago on the campus of Gordon-Conwell School of Theology. And now our attention to the divergence among evangelicals on inspiration and inerrancy is once more directed by Harold Lindsell's book *The Battle for the Bible*, published in 1976.

The issue has become so sharp that Lindsell raises the question of whether the term "evangelical" should be redefined. He says:

Is the term "evangelical" broad enough in its meaning to include within it believers in inerrancy and believers in an inerrancy limited to matters of faith and practice? ... It seems to me that those who believe in inerrancy are left with little choice except to stand for a definition of "evangelical" that includes in it the notion of biblical inerrancy.¹

Now if a concept of inspiration which implies inerrancy is such a crucial issue to evangelical Christianity, we ought to be able to find it in Scripture. Let us then proceed to the Scriptures themselves, to discover what

the Bible tells us concerning the nature and extent of its own inspiration. By way of format let us consider what the Bible says concerning the *elements* included in the act of inspiration, and what it says concerning the *effects* resulting from the act of inspiration.

The Elements included in the Act of Inspiration

1. The first element may be expressed as follows: all Scripture is God-breathed, i.e., has come from God's mouth. This element is found in 2 Tim 3:16. There we read. "*pasa graphe theopneustos kai ophelimos pros...*" there has been much controversy concerning the grammar of this verse, let us examine it in detail. The subject of the sentence is *graphe*, which means "something written." The English word "scripture" also means "something written," but it has come to mean in contemporary usage "the sacred writings of a religion," or "a body of writings considered as authoritative." As B. B. Warfield points out, however, *graphe* is used in the New Testament to denote "the sacred writings of the Old and New Testaments," or as we call them, "the Scriptures," not merely "something written," and certainly not "the sacred writings" of another religion. Since *graphe* is modified by the adjective *pasa*, whatever the verse is stating about *graphe*, it is stating about "all" or "every" sacred writing of the Old and New Testaments.

Following *graphe* there are two adjectives, the syntax of which has occasioned problems for translators. These adjectives are *theopneustos* and *ophelimos*. *Theopneustos* means "God-breathed" and *ophelimos* means "profitable" or "valuable" or "useful" or "beneficial." But what is the grammatical arrangement of these adjectives? Should the translation read (with both adjectives attributive): "All God-breathed and profitable Scripture (is) for teaching, etc."? Or should it read (with one adjective attributive and one predicate): "All God-breathed Scripture is profitable for teaching, etc."? Or should it read (with both adjectives predicate): "All Scripture (is) God-breathed and (is) profitable for teaching, etc."? The first translation is extremely awkward, since "profitable" is a word which seems to need completion ("profitable" for what purpose or end?), and the completion words, which follow in the prepositional phrases "for teaching," "for refutation of error," etc., are separated from the word "profitable" by the word "Scripture." The second translation, though possible, is in need of justification, since it makes one adjective attributive and the other predicate. The third translation, which renders both adjectives

as predicate, would appear to be both smooth and consistent -- "All Scripture (is) God-breathed and (is) profitable for teaching, for refutation of error, for correction of faults, for discipline in righteousness."

Taking this third translation, then, as the best rendering of the Greek text, we learn that all Scripture, i.e., every part of the Old and New Testaments, is God-breathed. The meaning of the word *theopneustos* does not appear to be that God took human words or human instruments and breathed into them (which could be inferred from the word "inspiration"), but rather that God-breathed and from His mouth came Scripture. This conception builds upon a phenomenon which would commonly have been known in the first century -- that of exhaling air in speaking.

2. The second element included in the act of inspiration may be expressed as follows: the men who wrote Scripture were borne up, carried along, in their writing, by the Holy Spirit. This element is found in 2 Pet 1:21, where we read, "For not by the will of man came prophecy at any time, but being borne up (or carried along) by the Holy Spirit, men spoke from God." That this does not refer to oral prophetic declarations may be seen from verse 20, where the *propheteia* of which Peter is speaking is the written *propheteia*, the *propheteia graphes*, the "prophecy of Scripture." Among other things, this verse tells us that the initial impulse to set down such events and such interpretation of events in the history of revelation as God wished recorded, and the subsequent enablement and guidance to select such events and such interpretation of events in the history of revelation as God wished included both came from the Holy Spirit of God. On the one hand, prophecy did not come by the will of man; on the other hand, men spoke from God as they were borne up and carried along by the Holy Spirit.

3. The third element included in the act of inspiration is this: that in one sense the men who wrote Scripture did not write from themselves, but from God. This element is also found in 2 Pet 1:21, at the end, where we read that *elalesan apo theou anthropoi* -- "men spoke from God."

4. The fourth element included in the act of inspiration is this: that in a different sense, the men who wrote Scripture did write from themselves. This element has reference to all of those aspects of writing included under the general term "style." A writer's style marks his writing as peculiarly his. In this regard the writers of Scripture display variegated

styles, evincing their social, cultural, educational and vocational backgrounds. They employ varied vocabularies, use different grammatical constructions, prefer distinct types of discourse (narrative, descriptive, explanatory or argumentative), and even display differing degrees of psychological and emotional depth. Thus their writings reveal something of the human authors, as well as something of the divine Author of Scripture. This element may be found in many instances, both in the Old and New Testaments.

The Effects Resulting from the Act of Inspiration

Earlier we proposed that the Bible also has something to say concerning the effects resulting from the act of inspiration. Let us proceed to these.

1. The first effect may be expressed thusly: all Scripture is the Word of God. 2 Tim 3:16 tells us that all Scripture is God-breathed. The effect of God's breathing out of Scripture is that all of Scripture is His Word. This seeming truism takes on meaning as we consider one important fact: Scripture includes statements made by Satan, by demons, by ungodly men, and by godly men speaking foolishly, as well as the record of ordinary, garden-variety history. But (and this is what is important) as a result of inspiration all of Scripture is the Word of God! The apostle Paul echoes this effect when he tells the believers at Corinth, "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment" (1 Cor 14:37).

2. The second effect may be expressed thusly: all of Scripture is profitable for the complete equipping of the man of God for life and godliness. This effect is found in 2 Tim 3:16-17, where we read that "all Scripture (is) God-breathed and (is) profitable for teaching, for refutation of error, for correction of faults, for discipline in righteousness, that the man of God may be fully qualified, having been equipped for every good work." This matter of profitableness occasions a question which frequently has arisen in recent discussion of Scripture: are there degrees of profitableness? And if so, are there degrees of inspiration?

This question may be highlighted by two quotations from Dewey Beegle's *The Inspiration of Scripture*. He states:

Some of the great hymns are practically on a par with the

psalms, and one can be sure that if Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, Augustus Toplady, and Reginald Heber had lived in the time of David and Solomon, and been *no more inspired than they were in their own day* [Beegle's italics], some of their hymns of praise to God would have found their way into the Hebrew canon.^2

Beegle states further:

Undoubtedly, God's Spirit spoke in this vital way to the troubled soul of George Matheson (the Scottish minister who wrote "O Love That Will Not Let Me Go". This is the kind of inspiration of which the psalms were made. There is no difference in kind. If there is any difference, it is a matter of degree.^3

At this point I should like to introduce some distinctions regarding the question of degrees -- distinctions between inspiration, authority and value. With respect to *inspiration*, I would propose the disjunctive: either Scripture is inspired (i.e., God-breathed), or it is not. Either men spoke from God, or they did not. In the nature of the case, degrees of inspiration are not possible. With respect to *authority*, I think we must make a distinction between the authority of historical truth and the authority of contemporary normativeness. With regard to the authority of historical truth, we must say: either this account in Scripture is historically true (i.e., factual), or it is not; there are no degrees involved. With regard to the authority of contemporary normativeness, I believe we must say: either this law, exhortation, teaching, or example is binding upon our obedience today, or it is not; there are no degrees involved. With respect to *value*, I believe it is permissible and proper to speak of degrees in Scripture. I believe that although no portion of Scripture is more inspired than another, and although no portion is more authoritative than another (either historically or normatively), yet some portions of Scripture are more valuable than others. I believe that a portion which states a basic condition of salvation is more valuable than one which mentions an obscure personage in a tribal enumeration. However, I recognize that certain portions of Scripture could be more valuable or less valuable, depending upon the context and need. Therefore I would understand 2 Tim 3:16 to mean that some portions of Scripture are profitable for teaching, some for refutation of error, some for correction of faults, and

some for discipline in righteousness.

3. The third effect resulting from the act of inspiration is this: not one truth of Scripture can be set aside, nullified or omitted. This effect is found in John 10:34-36, which reads, "Jesus answered them, 'Is it not written in your law, I said, you are gods?' If he called them gods to whom the word of God came, and the Scripture is not able to be set aside, are you saying to the one whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming!' because I said I am the Son of God?"

This reference to the "law" is found, not in the first division of the Old Testament (the Torah), nor in the second division (the Prophets), but in the third division (the Writings), specifically in Psalm 82. The implication is that all of the Old Testament had the force of law, i.e., was binding upon the faith and obedience of the Israelite.

In Psalm 82 we find God judging the human judges of Israel who are perverting judgment. Because they are doing this, all of the fundamental structures of society are out of order. God commands these judges to judge righteous judgment; and He warns them that, although He has called them gods, yet they will die like men. The Psalmist calls upon God to intervene and judge the earth righteously.

Jesus uses this portion -- part of verse 6 -- to argue for the propriety of calling himself the Son of God. Properly understood, this is not a clever bit of sophistry on Jesus' part in an attempt to avoid the charge of blasphemy. It is rather a traditional argument, employing an appeal to incontrovertible authority. Jesus was simply saying, "If it is proper for God to call human judges 'gods' (because they stand in the place of God, judging in the name of God, and exercising the divine prerogative of life and death), is it not more proper that I, who really am God, should call myself the Son of God?" Thus Jesus uses Ps 82:6 to support the propriety of his own title, the Son of God; and in doing so, he lays down a principle which the Jews would not dare to controvert: the Scripture is not able to be set aside!

4. The fourth effect resulting from the act of inspiration may be stated as follows: in the act of its inscripturation, no portion of Scripture has been conditioned, as to its truth, by the fallibilities of its human author. This effect is found in 2 Pet 1:20, where we read: "Knowing this first, that no

prophecy of Scripture came into being by one's own interpretation." The reason why this does not happen is given in verse 21: "For not by the will of man came prophecy at any time, but being borne up by the Holy Spirit, men spoke from God." This argument may be expressed as follows: "Because prophecy did not come by the will of man, therefore no prophecy comes into being by one's own interpretation." Or, to put it another way, "Because men spoke from God as they were borne up by the Holy Spirit, therefore no prophecy comes into being by one's own interpretation."

I must confess that, as a young Christian, I was led to think that verse 20 meant that no one should place his own interpretation upon a Scripture verse or passage, but should seek the Holy Spirit's interpretation. In practice, this came to mean that I would accept the interpretation of some well-known Bible teacher or expositor. But I came to see that this verse speaks not of the reader's interpretation, but of the writer's interpretation. It tells us that no Scripture portion has been conditioned by the human author's interpretation. Thus, the infallible Word of God is not conditioned by the fallible words of men!

5. The fifth effect resulting from the act of inspiration is this: the truths of Scripture are more certain than the observations of empirical experience. This effect may be found in 2 Pet 1:16-19, where we read: "For we were not depending upon pseudo-intellectual myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but became witnesses of that one's majesty. For (he) was receiving from God the Father honor and glory, such a voice being borne to him from the Majestic Glory, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And we heard this voice borne from heaven when we were with him in the holy mountain. And we have more certain the prophetic word, to which you do well to pay close attention, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts."

The "power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" in this context appears to refer to Christ's first coming, and to that specific event in our Lord's ministry when he was transfigured before Peter, James and John. Peter says that they did not build their accounts of Jesus on sophistical myths, but saw his majesty and heard the voice of God giving Jesus honor and glory. Yet, Peter says, the prophetic word is more certain, more firm, better established, more sure than even these observations based on

empirical experience. Sense experience may deceive, the prophetic word will not; sense experience is of a private nature, the prophetic word is open, publicly available to Peter's readers; sense experience is in this case unique and unable to be repeated, the prophetic word records for all time this wonderful self-revelation of deity. To this prophetic word, Peter exhorts, they should pay close attention.

We have briefly noted what Scripture itself asserts are the elements included in the act of inspiration, as well as the effects resulting from the act of inspiration. These data would appear strongly to argue for the organic view of inspiration defined earlier. But now we must ask a further question.

What is the Relevance of Inspiration to the Apographs?

This question prompts us to return to the implications of a statement made near the outset of our discussion. We said that inspiration, as a supernatural act of the Holy Spirit, refers to the sacred writings as originally penned, and says nothing about subsequent copies, versions or translations. But now we must ask, "Is this statement strictly true, in all senses?" That is, if we grant that inspiration is a unique act, referring only to the autographs, does this act have any implications for copies, versions and translations, i.e., implications for the apographs of Scripture which we presently possess?

The usual answer given by evangelical writers to this question (and it has been given times without number) is that, as a result of inspiration we can be sure that what we have is the Word of God, that it is true, and that it is authoritative. Some would add, "and that it is infallible." The reason only some would add this clause is that the word "infallible" has been undergoing a development in meaning. To some Christians "infallible" means "without error." To others it has come to mean that "God's purposes in giving us Scripture will not fail to be secured." Those who take this latter meaning would view the apographs as infallible. They would employ a different term to mean "without error," namely the word "inerrant." All evangelicals would agree that the apographs are not inerrant. And all would agree that the apographs are infallible in the latter sense of the term.

But now we must ask, "How can apographs of Scripture be considered the

Word of God, true, authoritative, and infallible (in the sense of being unable to fail to secure God's purpose), if those apographs are not inspired?" That is, if God has revealed himself inerrantly; and if He caused his revelation to be inerrantly inscripturated; and if these are the bases for our ability to say that the Scripture which God gave to us was the revealed, inspired Word of God written, and was true, authoritative, infallible and inerrant; then can we remove the factors of inspiration and inerrancy from the apographs and still retain the other important characteristics of Scripture in the Bibles which we presently possess and use? For example, is it possible for us as Christians to say, concerning the English Bibles which we have, "This is the Word of God?" Is it possible for Christian ministers to preach and teach the *truth* from an uninspired and errant apograph? And can we speak, on the basis of that kind of apograph, with the authority of God?

To illustrate this problem, permit me to quote from two evangelical writers. James M. Gray stated:

The record for whose inspiration we contend is the original record -- the autographs or parchments of Moses, David, Daniel, Matthew, Paul or Peter, as the case may be, and not any particular translation or translations of them whatever. There is no translation absolutely without error, or could there be, considering the infirmities of human copyists, unless God were pleased to perform a perpetual miracle to secure it.^4

And Adolph Saphir stated:

I do not say that the Bible *contains* the Word of God. I say that the Bible *is* the Word of God. I think it is a most erroneous and dangerous thing to say that the Bible contains the Word of God. The Bible with its history, with its laws, with its poetry, with its maxims, with its biographies, with its epistles, with everything that is in it, is the Word of God.^5

How, we may ask, can James M. Gray deny that the apographs are inspired or inerrant, and Adolph Saphir affirm that the apographs are, in their entirety, the Word of God? (That is, I am assuming that Saphir was

referring to something he had -- the apographs -- and not to something which he did not have -- the autographs.)

A Proposed Solution

Permit me to suggest a way out of this difficulty. I would propose a theological construct, the essence of which is this: that the term "inspired" include two subcategories -- inspiration as an act, and "inspiredness" as a quality. Inspiration would refer to the act of the Holy Spirit, operative only in the original inscripturation of revelation; "inspiredness" would refer to a unique quality, inherent in the autographs in a primary, immediate, absolute sense, but also retained in the apographs in a derived, secondary, mediate and relative sense. To put it another way, as a result of the *act* of inspiration, the *quality* of "inspiredness" would be found in the autographs absolutely and in the apographs relatively. Thus the term "inspiration" would refer only to the originals, whereas the term "inspiredness" would refer both to the originals and to the copies of Scripture. The larger category "inspired" would then include both autographs and apographs, both the originals and copies of them.

This theological proposal (if it could be supported) would permit us to consider those copies, versions and translations which we possess to be the Word of God, true, authoritative, infallible and inspired (in the sense that they would be characterized by the quality of "inspiredness"). But can it be supported? Or is this only a theological curiosity, created by a feverish mind and nurtured by a strong psychological frame of desire?

The answer, interestingly, lies in the Scripture references at which we have already looked. Let us examine a few of them a bit further, and ask some pointed questions concerning them.

In 2 Timothy 3:15 we discover that Timothy had known from childhood the Holy Scriptures which were able to give him the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. These were the Scriptures which, in verse 16, Paul says are God-breathed (or inspired) and profitable to adequately equip the man of God. Now when Paul spoke of the Holy Scriptures which Timothy had known from childhood, of which Scriptures was he speaking? If 2 Timothy was written in AD 63, and if (for argument's sake) Timothy was only 25 years old at the time, then Timothy would have been born in AD 38, eleven years before the first book of the

New Testament – Galatians -- was even written, in AD 49. Timothy had been raised in Judaism by a Jewish mother. The "Scriptures" on which he had been nourished were undoubtedly those of the Old Testament. Now we must pointedly ask, "What Scriptures of the Old Testament did Timothy's mother and grandmother have in their synagogue (or perhaps, if they were very fortunate, in their possession) -- the originals or copies?" The overwhelming probability is that they were copies -- apographs. Yet Paul says that these apographs are able to give the knowledge of salvation (verse 15); and he goes on to say that all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable. It would not make a great deal of sense for Paul to have said that the Scriptures which Timothy did *not* have -- the autographs -- were God-breathed and profitable to equip him for every good work. I believe that Paul was saying that the Scriptures which Timothy *did* have were God-breathed and profitable to equip him for every good work. That is, I believe that the copies of the Old Testament books available to Timothy in AD 43 (when he was, say, five years old), and the copies of those New Testament books which had thus far been written, put into circulation, and made available to Timothy in AD 63 -- in other words, whatever books could properly be called Scripture -- were inspired, in the sense that they carried in them the quality of "inspiredness."

In John 10:35, Jesus referred to Psalm 82, argued for the propriety of calling himself the Son of God on its basis, and said "the Scripture is not able to be set aside." Now if not one truth of Scripture can be set aside, nullified or omitted, to what Scripture was Jesus referring? To the *autograph* of Psalm 82? Or to the copies which the Jews had in the temple and in their synagogues, whose words they could check and read for themselves? Most probably the apographs. Incidentally, this text would argue not only for the "inspiredness" (and thus the truth and divine authority) of copies, but would also argue for the uncorrupted preservation, in the apographs, of the truths of the autographs, in spite of errors of transmission.

In 2 Peter 1:19 Peter says that "we have more certain the prophetic word." I believe that Peter was referring to the Old Testament Scriptures, which predicted the first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet the prophetic word which Peter had was not the originals, but copies. However, in verses 20 and 21 Peter is referring to the manner in which the prophecy of Scripture originally came into being; and I believe he is there speaking of the autographs, not of copies. And yet both are inspired. The autographs

had the quality of "inspiredness" because of the Holy Spirit's unique act of inspiration; the copies had the quality of "inspiredness" because they were derived from the autographs. In spite of the fact that the inscripturated revelation was transmitted across centuries, copied, translated, and marred by copyists' errors, its truths were preserved in such a way that Peter could tell his readers to pay the closest attention to that prophetic word which was available to them.

Implications of This Proposal

It is well to consider carefully the implications of a proposal before hurrying to adopt it. In connection with this proposal I would suggest two implications.

The most obvious is that the term "inspiration" represents an absolute concept, whereas "inspiredness" represents a relative concept. To the degree that copies, versions, translations and paraphrases diverge from the text of the autographs, to that degree is "inspiredness" diminished. Someone will say, "But we do not have the text of the autographs." This valid objection establishes a warrant for the exacting task of textual (or lower) criticism, in which we attempt to discern which words of Scripture are attested by the best textual evidence. Having undertaken this task (which must be renewed from time to time), the question may then be asked, "Can apographs move so far from the best attested text that they no longer retain the quality of 'inspiredness'?" This could happen, particularly at specific points where apographs have deliberately emended the text, or have selected a dubious reading in order to support a theological bias. However, unless the apograph as a whole has corrupted the content of the best attested text so badly that the text is no longer recognizable, some degree of "inspiredness" would probably remain in the apograph. Nevertheless, a distinction would need to be made between an essentially trustworthy copy of Scripture, and an essentially untrustworthy one; the difference being that an essentially trustworthy copy would be one which, with confidence, one could commend almost indiscriminately; and an essentially untrustworthy copy would be one which one could not commend at all, or about which one would have great reservations.

A second implication of this proposal is that we can have not only a tremendous confidence in the fact that we possess copies of Scripture which are as provably close in accuracy to the originals as those copies of

the Old Testament which the apostles had; but that we can also be assured that what we have is the inspired, true, authoritative, infallible, trustworthy, and powerful Word of the living God! May the divine Author of Scripture himself fill us with this confidence and this assurance!

**Part Two:
Inspiration, "Inspiredness"
and the Proclamation of God's Word Today:
A Modest Second Step**

The Problem Illustrated

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

2 Tim 3:16-17

It seems eminently fitting that the apostle Paul, having written these tremendous words concerning the inspiration and profitableness of Scripture, should go right on to write:

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

2 Tim 4:14

Here Paul charges Timothy to preach *the word*, to preach *sound doctrine*, and to preach *the truth*. The connection between the last two verses of chapter 3, and the first four verses of chapter 4, seems unavoidable: because all Scripture is inspired and profitable, therefore preach the word!

Of course it should be recognized that the Scripture which Timothy had in

AD 63 (at the time of writing of 2 Timothy) included copies of the Old Testament books, copies of those New Testament books which had thus far been written, put into circulation, and made available to Timothy, and perhaps the original of Paul's first epistle to Timothy, together with the original of this second epistle. It should also be recognized that the claim of inerrancy is not made for copies of Scripture, but for the originals.

This distinction between inerrant originals and errant copies has occasioned considerable discussion, both concerning the value of the doctrine of inerrancy (since we do not possess the originals), and concerning our ability to say that we are proclaiming the word, sound doctrine and truth today (since we possess only errant copies). This discussion, which has been going on for some time, has acquired a new impetus and urgency in recent years, in part because of the cleavage which has surfaced between "inerrantists" and "errantists" in the evangelical camp.

An illustration of this discussion appears in the exchange, in editorials and letters, between Dr. Lester De Koster, editor of *The Banner*, and Dr. Edwin H. Palmer, late Executive Secretary of the New International Version Translation Committee. The exchange was occasioned by Dr. Palmer's statement in the January 1977 issue of *The Outlook*, as follows:

To be very clear, let me assert with all the force that is in me that the King James Version that Dr. De Koster has on his table is *not* the infallible, inerrant Word of God. And no translation of the Bible is without error -- not even the best of them all, the New International Version! All translations without exception have errors in them.

(Dr. Palmer wrote these words in an article defending Harold Lindsell's *Battle for the Bible* against criticisms by Dr. De Koster.) Dr. De Koster subsequently sent a letter to the editor of *The Outlook* which appears in the June 1977 issue, together with Dr. Palmer's reply. Dr. De Koster asked four questions, and Dr. Palmer addressed three of them. Permit me to quote the exchange:

1. "Can Dr. Palmer be serious?"

Answer: "Yes, I am. I will say again what I believe: the Bible which Dr. De Koster has on his table is not, I repeat, not the infallible, inerrant Word of God. And it is

most important to realize this. Yes, I am serious."

2. "Does the Christian Reformed Church base its synodical decisions, sermonizing, consistorial decisions, and Christian life on an errant and fallible Bible?"

Answer: "No, it does not. It bases them on the inerrant, infallible Word of God -- the originals. It has always distinguished between the autographa and the apographa, between the original writings that the Holy Spirit inspired and the countless copies and translations that are based on the original.... Only what was written by men inspired by the Holy Spirit is infallible. Only what Jeremiah, David, Paul and Peter actually wrote is inspired."

3. "When the Belgic Confession characterizes Scripture as 'this infallible rule' (Art. VII) does it really mean, *that* infallible original now lost?"

Answer: "Yes. It cannot be the King James that added to the original and now says 'nephews' when 'grand-children' are meant (1 Tim 5:4)."

Dr. De Koster reported and commented on this exchange in the August 19, 1977 issue of *The Banner* in an editorial entitled "Really Incredible?" In the August 26 issue he set Dr. Lindsell in opposition to Dr. Palmer by several quotations from *The Battle for the Bible*. On page 36 Dr. Lindsell states:

Any student of lower criticism admits there have been copyist's mistakes, but a copyist's mistake is something entirely different from an error in Scripture. A misspelled or a misplaced word is a far cry from error, by which is meant a misstatement or something that is contrary to fact.

And on page 37 Dr. Lindsell adds: "Textual problems today in no way make the doctrine of biblical inerrancy impossible."

In the September 2, 1977 issue of *The Banner* Dr. De Koster addressed an Open Letter to the Reformed Fellowship (the publishers of *The Outlook*), applying Dr. Palmer's view to the task of preaching. He wrote:

I set this open question to you, Brethren, in the context of Preaching. For the doctrine of Scripture is tested by the doctrine of Preaching.

Is Preaching Possible?

Only, if the Bible open on the pulpit *is* the Word of God, and thus inspired, infallible, inerrant.

Yes, there are only two choices: either, (1) the Bible on our pulpits, and elsewhere, *is* the inspired Word of God, or (2) it is the uninspired word of man.

If you deny the first choice, as *The Outlook* does, then you are stuck with the second. But the second choice makes true Preaching impossible -- as the tragic history of Liberalism so clearly demonstrates.

The Church, as we believe it, stands or falls with true Preaching. And true Preaching stands or falls with the belief that an inspired Bible lies open on the pulpit. How else shall the Word go forth: *Thus saith the Lord!*...

Meanwhile, Brethren, *The Outlook* is your magazine. Does it here speak for you?

Listen to it further, as you make up your mind: "For all practical purposes, we can take a modern translation in hand -- even the King James with all its errors -- and say, 'This is the Word of God.' It is not the Word of God, because it is not the original, which the Holy Spirit inspired ..." (a quote from Dr. Palmer's article in the January 1977 issue of *The Outlook*).

Look for a moment at the Bible, in your hand or on the pulpit, and see if your lips can frame your *Outlook's* words: "*It is not the Word of God...*" For then -- it is only the word of man!

Is that now *your* doctrine of Scripture?

Briefly, *The Outlook's* scenario runs like this: God once inspired the original writers of the bible. He preserved them from all error as they committed His inspired (God-breathed) Word to writing. But, alas, those original manuscripts (called the autographs, or autographa) were lost, or worn out, or destroyed in the course of time. But what happened, then, to that inspired Word? *The Outlook*

says that this Word went with the autographs; God's Word was lost -- as if God's intent to preserve His inspired Word for His Church in all ages was thus easily frustrated! The inspired Word of God, according to *The Outlook*, no longer exists. History has devoured it!. Obviously, on this view, the world has been without any inspired Word from the Lord ever since the first copies were made, and originals lost

But what good, then, for *The Outlook* to assure us that "we" (whoever that is) are now sure of the accuracy of "98 percent" of our copies? What good would it do if "we" were certain of 100 percent accuracy -- so long as the "God-breathed" Word upon which Preaching depends was lost in the first copy? 'We' might say that the Bible on our pulpits is as pure a copy as Ivory soap -- it remains, on *The Outlook's* grounds, still the uninspired, fallible, errant word of copyists and translators. No basis, Brethren, for: "Thus saith the Lord!"

Of course, it should be pointed out in the interests of objectivity that, in the midst of all the dust thrown into the air at Palmer and Lindsell's expense, De Koster never attempts an alternative explanation for his position that the Bible on the table and on the pulpit of his church "*is*, here and now, the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God." Instead he retreats into mysticism. He speaks of "God's mysterious ability to use a fallible, frail, erring human ministry to proclaim His infallible Word!" and then goes on to say:

No one, at least in the Reformed tradition, claims inerrancy, or infallibility, or inspiration for the pulpit ministry. Yet, genuine Preaching is possible, and can mark off the true Church, *only* because the Word of God is, in fact, here and now, conveyed to the faithful by the lips of sinful man! You know this well, Brethren. Many of you depend upon this inexplicable mystery every Lord's Day to dare to say: "Thus saith the Lord!"... No, this cannot be explained. Only believed -- or disbelieved. How can God convey His inspired Word across time and space by way of fallible human beings? This is, for us, an inexplicable mystery. But we are naive enough

to believe (except for *The Outlook*) that God in His overarching Providence does get His inspired, infallible, inerrant Scriptures from its writers to our pulpits, *and*, from our pulpits to the faithful in the pew. This is what Reformed believers gladly affirm, knowing full well, Brethren, that if you and I never believe more than we can explain, we will never believe unto salvation!

Aside from the rhetoric, let us analyze what Dr. De Koster is saying. First, he affirms that God uses sinful human ministers to proclaim the Word of God. With this affirmation we can humbly and joyfully acquiesce. Second, he affirms that God conveys His Word across time and space, from the writers of Scripture to present-day ministers and their people. To this affirmation practically all evangelicals can agree. Third, Dr. De Koster asserts that the way in which God gets His Word from the writers of Scripture to us today is "mysterious," an "inexplicable mystery," something which "we are naive enough to believe," and something which we "gladly affirm" but which "cannot be explained." To this assertion we are obliged to respond in a twofold manner. On the one hand, it is good and proper to acknowledge that sinful human beings cannot exhaustively understand the nature or the working of God. Truly, as the Lord says, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:9). On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of evangelical writers (including Lindsell and Palmer) have attempted to come to grips with the necessity of clearly distinguishing between the original manuscripts of Scripture, which were the products of the Holy Spirit's special and unique act of inspiration, were inerrant, and were infallible (in the dictionary sense of that term), and the present-day copies of Scripture, which were not copied by inspiration, and which are products of a long process of transmission which involved a number of copyist's errors; and have attempted responsibly to deal with the problems raised by this necessary distinction, especially by demonstrating how closely present-day copies of Scripture approximate the text of the original manuscripts. By so doing, these evangelicals have attempted to preserve the integrity of the assertion that we have the Word of God today, as well as the teaching of Scripture concerning its unique inspiration. Dr. De Koster sees no need for making such a distinction or of coming to grips with the problems raised by it. He chooses simply to believe that we have God's "inspired, infallible, inerrant Scriptures" on our pulpits today. Such fideism is fascinating; like a magic

wand it waves into nonexistence both the problem of errors in transmission and the need for textual criticism! Fourth, Dr. De Koster affirms that the Bibles which lie on our pulpits are inspired, infallible, and inerrant; then he denies inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy for the pulpit ministry; and then he affirms that God gets His inspired, infallible, inerrant Scriptures to the faithful in the pew. If this combination of statements seems mind-boggling, it should be remembered that to Dr. De Koster it is an "inexplicable mystery" which he is "naive enough to believe." Frankly, such a confession of belief seems more than faintly reminiscent of Tertullian's "I believe it because it is incredible," or Kierkegaard's "I believe it because it is absurd!"

Although this exchange between Dr. Lester De Koster and Dr. Edwin H. Palmer does not serve particularly to illuminate the discussion concerning the value of the doctrine of inerrancy (since we do not possess the originals) and concerning our ability to say that we are proclaiming the word, sound doctrine, and truth today (since we possess only errant copies), yet it serves to illustrate the kinds of tensions occasioned by the distinction between inerrant originals and errant copies. To these tensions we must now address ourselves.

The Concept of "Inspiredness"

In a paper first presented first presented at the 1977 Summer Theological Institute of Biblical Theological Seminary (Part One, above), I proposed a concept for which I coined the term "inspiredness." Under the general term "inspired," I included two terms which are more specific: "inspiration" and "inspiredness." "Inspiration" was defined as:

...that special act of the Holy Spirit by which He guided the writers of the books of sacred Scripture, so that their words should convey the thoughts He wished conveyed, should bear a proper relationship to the thoughts of the other books of Scripture, and should be kept free from error in thought, fact, doctrine, and judgment.

In brief, inspiration is the supernatural act of the Holy Spirit by which God's Word was inscripturated.

"Inspiredness" was defined as

...a unique quality, inherent in the autographs in a primary, immediate, absolute sense, but also retained in the apographs in a derived, secondary, mediate, and relative sense.

In brief, "inspiredness" is a quality resulting from the act of inspiration.

Inspiration refers only to the autographs of Scripture; "inspiredness" refers both to the autographs and to the apographs of Scripture. Thus under the general term "inspired" I included both the originals and the copies of Scripture. The originals are inspired in two senses: they were the product of an act of inspiration; and they were marked by the quality of "inspiredness." The copies were (and are) inspired in only one sense: they were (and are) marked by the quality of "inspiredness."

This theological proposal, if it could be supported, would provide us with a basis for the claim that the copies, versions and translations which we have in our possession are in truth the inspired and authoritative Word of God (inspired in the sense that they would be characterized by the quality of "inspiredness").

In Part One, I indicated scriptural grounding for my proposal in 2 Tim 3:15, John 10:35 and 2 Pet 1:19. I do not believe that it is exegetically defensible to interpret 2 Tim 3:16 as saying, "All Scripture was inspired, and is profitable ..." Because it is not exegetically defensible to interpret it in this fashion, I do not believe it is theologically sound to understand the first predicate adjective "inspired" to refer to the unique act of inspiration in the past, and the second predicate adjective "profitable" to refer to a constant quality characteristic of Scripture in the present. Rather, I believe that Paul is saying that all Scripture -- both originals and all copies -- is characterized by the constant qualities of "inspiredness" and "profitableness." And that includes the copies which the Jews of Christ's day had, the copies which Paul and Timothy had, and the copies which lie upon our pulpits today!

The Possibility of Error in the Steps of Transmission

However, at this point we must make an important qualification. "Inspiredness," though it is a product of inspiration, does not require the quality of inerrancy. Inerrancy is a quality which is a product of inspiration, *not*

of "inspiredness." This raises the question, "If inerrancy is a quality distinct from 'inspiredness,' and if the quality of 'inspiredness' (but not that of inerrancy) characterizes the apographs of Scripture, how much errancy can characterize the apographs before the quality of 'inspiredness' is lost?" How much error can be accommodated in the process of transmitting the Word of God from God's original revelatory words and events to the proclamation of God's Word today? Can we say that we *have* God's Word today, or that we are *proclaiming* it? We *know* what we mean when we speak of "God's Word" as He originally revealed it. But do we mean the same thing when we speak of "God's Word" as we proclaim it today? This is one of the problems posed in Part Two of this paper: How much error can the quality of "inspiredness" accommodate before we reach a point at which we are no longer able responsibly to continue calling the copies of Scripture which we possess "The Word of God"? Thus the title of this part: "Inspiration, 'Inspiredness,' and the Proclamation of God's Word Today," in which "inspiredness" is the connecting link which carries us safely from the inspiration of the originals to the proclamation of God's Word today.

The problem of how much error the quality of "inspiredness" can accommodate could be dealt with summarily, simply by negating the applicability of the term "Word of God" to the copies of Scripture in our possession. This would amount to a frank (if a bit precipitous) admission that one of two possibilities is true: either that *any* degree of error makes the term "Word of God" inapplicable to our copies, or that *so much* error has piled up over centuries of repetitious copying that the Word of God has become hopelessly irretrievable in the tangled mesh of truth and error. The first possibility (that *any* degree of error makes the term inapplicable) is plainly negated by the fact that Christ, Paul and Peter all speak of errant copies in terms of "Word of God." The second possibility (that so much accumulated error makes the term inapplicable to present-day copies) must be examined to see just how much error has entered the process of transmission of the Word of God from its original state as given by God to its present state as received by us. To that task we now turn our attention.

Step One: Revelation

The first step in the transmission of God's Word is that of revelation itself. Here we must ask the question, "Can God reveal Himself *truly*?" By revelation (here in the special sense, as distinguished from general revelation in nature) we mean "divine self-disclosure in immediate mode." But what do we mean by "truly"? A long time ago Aristotle said, "To say what is, is, and what is not, is not, is true. And to say what is, is not, and what is not, is, is false." More recently the semantic theory of truth proposed by the Polish logician Tarski has been widely adopted in linguistic and philosophical circles. Tarski said that the statement "Snow is white" is true if and only if snow is white. That is, the words in the sentence are a linguistic entity, and the analogous words refer to reality. The characteristics of Tarski's definition are (1) truth is defined in terms of *language*; (2) truth is defined in terms of *sentences* (that is, truth is a property of sentences, not individual words); and (3) truth is defined in terms of *correspondence*. In the light of these definitions we must ask, "Can God reveal truth concerning himself? Can He reveal to us something of what He actually is?" Can He bridge the great chasm between an infinite, holy God and finite, sinful men? Gordon Clark, writing an article in *Revelation and the Bible*, says:

...the evangelical Christian ... by reason of the doctrine of creation, must maintain that language is adequate for all religious and theological expression The possibility of rational communication between God and man is easily explained on theistic presuppositions. If God created man in his own rational image and endowed him with the power of speech, then a purpose of language, in fact, the chief purpose of language, would naturally be the revelation of truth to man ... ^6

Paul K. Jewett, in the same volume, speaks of the

...uniqueness of the Biblical idea of revelation, which is that history is the medium through which the eternal God has revealed himself once for all. The foundation is laid in the Old Testament concept of the history of Israel But the Old Testament idea of history, as the scene of God's acts as Redeemer of his people, is not an end in

itself. Its meaning is Jesus Christ, whose name is Emmanuel, God-with-us, who came to "fulfill the law and the prophets." The prophets had the Word of God, but Jesus is the Word. "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The incarnation is that event in history which gathers up all other revelation into itself.^7

To the question, "Can God reveal truth concerning himself?" we must answer: "Not only is there the possibility of such revelation, there is the actuality!" As the writer of Hebrews puts it, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers by the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us by His Son" (Heb 1:1-2).

However, there are those who would claim, "Yes, God can reveal truth concerning himself, but what He has revealed is not inerrant. but only generally trustworthy." In this manner we must understand the concept of "general trustworthiness" as implying that God's revelation includes *error*. This answer calls for analysis.

If God revealed error, then either He must have done so *deliberately* or He *could not help* doing so. If He deliberately revealed error, we must ask, "Why would, and how could, the God of truth reveal error to man?" Scripture itself tells us that "God is not a man, that He should lie" (Num 23:19), and that God "cannot lie" (Tit 1:2). There us no hint of such error in the teachings of the prophets, of Christ, or of the apostles. And there is no evidence that there were errors in revelation itself, either as originally communicated or as originally inscripturated. There is abundant evidence of errors of transcription; but what evidence is there of errors of revelation, especially since neither side of the question possesses the original manuscripts of Scripture! Thus we must reject the concept that God deliberately revealed error, on two counts: (1) it is antithetical to His nature; and (2) there is no evidence to substantiate it.

If, on the other hand, God could not help revealing error, then either He is *not omniscient* (i.e., He was ignorant of the fact that He was revealing error), or He is *not omnipotent* (i.e., He simply could not inerrantly communicate His thoughts and words to men). That God is omniscient is so clearly taught in Scripture that we must reject the first alternative. To

the alternative claim that God is not able inerrantly to communicate His thoughts to man, we must ask, "What man is that who dares to presume to say what God can and cannot do, apart from revelation?" It is clear in Scripture that there are some things which God cannot do, but His revelation of truth to man is never mentioned as one of them! In fact, one of the things which God is said not to be able to do is specifically related to this claim -- "God cannot lie" (Tit 1:2). Thus we must reject this alternative. If God, who created man's mind, can communicate one truth to man, then in principle there is no reason why He cannot communicate any finite number of truths to man.

And it will not do to ask, "But what does man really *need* for the knowledge of salvation?" and answer, Not an inerrant, but only an essentially trustworthy revelation." We do not decide the nature of *what God revealed* by the measure of what man needs; but rather by the measure of *what God purposed to do, and did* in His revelation to man. And there is no other source of knowledge as to what God purposed to do, than the statements of Scripture themselves! The norm of the content of revelation must be the content of the inscripturated revelation. There is no other objective norm!

Step Two: Inscripturation

The second step in the transmission of God's Word is that of the inscripturation of revelation. Here we must ask the question, "Has God caused His revelation to be *truly inscripturated*?" To this question we must reply that either revelation has been truly (i.e., inerrant, for truth by definition must exclude error) inscripturated, or human finiteness and fallibility have conditioned (at least to some degree) the inscripturation of revelation. If the latter is true, then either we need an absolute principle external to Scripture in order to distinguish divine truth from human error; or, lacking such a principle, we cannot know what is true and what is false, and thus cannot help being reduced to agnosticism or skepticism with regard to any absolute truth in Scripture.

If the *kerygma* (the message, or proclamation) of Christ be claimed as the absolute principle by which truth can be distinguished from error, then it should be pointed out that by definition the kerygma itself is conditioned as to its inscripturation by human finiteness and fallibility. Thus the kerygma cannot escape the possibility of error, and therefore cannot be the

norm of absolute truth.

If empirical verification be proposed as the absolute principle of distinguishing truth from error, then what of those statements in Scripture which have not as yet been empirically verified? Must each one await the judgment of philosophy, science or history before it can be affirmed as true? If so, what does this do to faith? You can only trust in that which you believe to be true. You can never trust that which you believe is in error or is a lie, no matter how hard you may try! (Thus faith and truth are bound up together, in the sense that faith is dependent on truth.) If one must await the conclusion of critical (and for the most part, unbelieving) scholarship before he can know whether or not a particular statement is true, then he cannot believe that statement until such conclusions are reached. But if and when these expert human conclusions are made, is one then sure that he has absolute truth? And what about those spiritual realities which are not able to be verified by sense experience, at least in this present existence? Can one believe in them? As the Lord Jesus put it, "If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" (John 3:12). Empirical verification as a method of testing and verifying truth-claims via sense experience is hopelessly inadequate as an absolute criterion of distinguishing truth from error in Scripture!

Thus consideration prompts a necessary review of the basic approach and method in discovering the true doctrine of inspiration. If we approach this question via the "critical data of Scripture" or via the phenomena of Scripture," it would appear unlikely that we could ever arrive at any confidence concerning the Bible as the Word of God. If on the other hand we approach this question via the witness of Scripture to itself, we discover that with one voice the prophets, Christ and the apostles proclaim that God's revelation of truth has been truly inscripturated! The teaching of Scripture concerning its own inspiration must be permitted to speak. What God has said concerning the nature and extent of the inscripturation of revelation must be taken as normative in defining the true doctrine of inspiration. Only when we are armed with this doctrine are we equipped to undertake the task of attempting to resolve the problems presented by the critical data of Scripture."

Step Three: Preservation

The third step in the transmission of God's Word is that of its preservation through the process of copying. Here we must ask the question, "Has God caused His inscripturated revelation to be purely preserved?" To this question we must give a mixed answer. If by "purely preserved" one means "inerrantly preserved," then the answer is no. But if by "purely preserved" one means "uncorruptedly preserved" in the sense that no teaching of Scripture (either in whole or in part) has been corrupted, then the answer is yes.

For example, in the more than 600 manuscripts of the Hebrew Old Testament there are about 284 million letters. Among these 600 plus manuscripts there are about 900 thousand variations in the text. At first blush 900 thousand variations certainly seem to indicate that the text has become hopelessly corrupt! However, of these 900 thousand variations, 750 thousand are the negligible variations between the similar-appearing Hebrew letters *waw* and *yodh*. The remaining 150 thousand do not affect any part of the system of doctrine discoverable in Scripture nor any individual teaching of the Bible as a whole. It should be pointed out that 900 thousand variations sounds like a great many, but 900 thousand variations distributed among 284 million letters amounts to one variation in 316 letters. And if the 750 thousand negligible variations between *waw* and *yodh* are discounted, the 150 thousand variations distributed among 284 million letters amounts to one variation in 1893 letters. Think of that level of accuracy for an ancient text, parts of which are anywhere from 2400 to almost 3400 years old! By way of comparison, this amounts to the misspelling of one letter in about a half-page of this paper!

John H. Skilton, in whose article some of these statistics are to be found, makes a statement which neatly summarizes this point. He writes:

We will grant that God's care and providence, singular though they have been, have not preserved for us any of the original manuscripts either of the Old Testament or of the New Testament. We will furthermore grant that God did not keep from error those who copied the Scripture during the long period in which the sacred text was transmitted in copies written by hand. But we must maintain that the God who gave the Scriptures, who works all

things after the counsel of his will, has exercised a remarkable care over his Word, has preserved it in all ages in a state of substantial purity, and has enabled it to accomplish the purpose for which he gave it. It is inconceivable that the sovereign God who was pleased to give His Word as a vital and necessary instrument in the salvation of his people would permit his Word to become completely marred in its transmission and unable to accomplish its ordained end. Rather, as surely as that he is God, we would expect to find him exercising a singular care in the preservation of his written revelation. That God has preserved the Scriptures in such a condition of essential purity as we would expect is manifestly the case.⁸

Step Four: Establishing the Best Text

The fourth step in the transmission of God's Word is that of the construction, via textual criticism, of an original-language text which most closely approximates that of the original manuscripts. Here we must ask the question, "Is it possible, via textual criticism, to arrive at a text about which, in a probability sense, we can be morally certain regarding its accurate representation of the autographs?" To this question we may confidently reply that we *have* such a text in our possession. Our confidence of this lies in the agreement of the many manuscripts of the New Testament, together with the connecting link of the early church fathers with the New Testament writers; and the agreement of various lines of witness to the Old Testament text, together with the connecting link of the Jews (to whom was entrusted the keeping and transmission of the Old Testament writings) with the Old Testament writers.

We have already noted some statistics concerning the Old Testament; now let us note some concerning the New. We have about five thousand manuscripts of the Greek New Testament (either the whole New Testament or portions of it). These include approximately: (1) 80 papyrus manuscripts, dating as far back as the second century; (2) 260 parchment manuscripts (uncials), dating as far back as the third century; (3) 2700 cursive manuscripts, dating from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries; (4) 2100 lectionaries, containing selections from the New Testament for use in church services; and (5) a number of ostraca and amulets. In addition

to these Greek manuscripts, we have many manuscripts of ancient versions; those of the Latin Vulgate alone exceed eight thousand. Besides manuscript evidence, we have the important connecting link of the early church fathers, a number of whom included citations of the New Testament in their writings. Let us note six of these writers, the first five of whom died before AD 255, and the sixth died in AD 340. The number of citations of the New Testament included in each of their writings is as follows: (1) Irenaeus, 1819; (2) Clement of Alexandria, 2406; (3) Origen, 17,922; (4) Tertullian. 7258; (5) Hippolytus, 1378; and (6) Eusebius. 5176.

In this great mass of evidence for the text of the New Testament there is also a large number of variations, as was the case for the Old Testament. In regard to these, Benjamin B. Warfield, in his *Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, calls attention to Ezra Abbott's view that 19/20ths of the variations in the New Testament text "have so little support that, although they are various readings, no one would think of them as rival readings; and 19/20ths of the remainder are of so little importance that their adoption or rejection would cause no appreciable difference in the sense of the passages where they occur."⁹ Warfield goes on to state that

the great mass of the New Testament ... has been transmitted to us with no, or next to no, variation; and even in the most corrupt form in which it has ever appeared, to use the oft-quoted words of Richard Bentley. "the real text of the sacred writers is competently exact; ... nor is one article of faith or moral precept either perverted or lost ... choose as awkwardly as you will, choose the worst by design, out of the whole lump of readings."¹⁰

It should be noted, in connection with the matter of textual criticism, that the great question which liberal scholars raise is not that of whether the text which we have accurately represents the autographs, but rather that of the value of the autographs themselves! For them the autographs are not the Word of God, but the word of man; and amazingly accurate copies of the word of man do not overly excite them! Their problem appears to lie in their doctrine of revelation itself, and behind that problem stands the even greater problem of their doctrine of the nature of God.

Step Five: Translation

The fifth step in the transmission of God's Word is that of the translation of the best attested texts of the Old and New Testaments into the native or common language of every nation to which the Scriptures come. Here we must ask the question, "Can the best attested text of Scripture be translated with such accuracy that we can confidently call the resultant version 'The Word of God'?" To this question we must respond by pointing out two facts. First, in a number of places the New Testament writers appear to quote from the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. They quote it as Scripture and as carrying with it all the authority of the Word of God. Second, we have a number of translations in our possession, some of which are more accurate and some less accurate, but all of which are the Word of God and all of which are characterized by the quality of "inspiredness." At the present time the three leading contenders for the title of the English "Textus Receptus" are the King James or Authorized Version, the New American Standard Bible, and the New International Version. Of course, I am speaking of favored versions among evangelicals, not among liberals, Roman Catholics, Jews or cultists; and I am speaking only of English-language versions. There are many other English versions, including the Revised Standard Version, the New English Bible, the Living Bible, Today's English Version (or the Good News Bible), J. B. Phillips' translation, the Jerusalem Bible, and a host of others, including Douay, Goodspeed, Moffatt, and the Confraternity Edition. To some degree, all of these versions retain the quality of "inspiredness." Nevertheless I believe that a distinction should be made between essentially trustworthy translations and those which are essentially untrustworthy; the difference being that an essentially trustworthy translation is one which, with confidence, one could commend almost indiscriminately, whereas an essentially untrustworthy translation is one which one could not commend with confidence, or about which one would have strong reservations. Of course, the saving feature about this step is that there are many Christians who have a working proficiency in the original languages of Scripture, who can check the accuracy of any or all of these translations, and can perhaps even more closely approximate the meaning of the best attested text of Scripture.

Step Six: Interpretation

The sixth step in the transmission of God's Word is that of the interpretation

of Scripture. Here we ask the question, "Can we approximate the God-intended meaning of Scripture sufficiently to be able to affirm that our understanding of the Word of God is correct?" If the answer to this question is no, then transmission has failed, and all the previous steps are futile. If we cannot have correct understanding of the Word of God, then salvation itself becomes impossible, because saving faith involves knowledge of, assent to, and trust in the redemptive truths of Christ's incarnation, atonement and resurrection. Because believers have been born again by the Spirit of God, they can understand the things of the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:14-15). Because believers have the anointing (the gift of spiritual enlightenment or understanding) of the indwelling Holy Spirit, they are able to perceive and discern truth (1 John 2:20-21,27). The Holy Spirit is both the infallible Author of Scripture and the infallible Interpreter of Scripture; and therefore believers can have a correct understanding of the Word of God.

Having said this, however, we recognize that among professing Christians there are presuppositionalists and evidentialists, young-earth creationists and old-earth creationists, dichotomists and trichotomists, Calvinists and Arminians. Baptists and paedobaptists, dispensationalists and covenant theology adherents, amillennialists, postmillennialists and premillennialists, pretribulationists and posttribulationists. In fact, there are even inerrantists and errantists! How can we reconcile these differences of interpretation with the claim that it is possible to have a correct understanding of the Word of God? Shall we say that all of these interpretations are correct, and that all of them are informed by the infallible Interpreter of Scripture, the Holy Spirit?

I believe that the disparity, can at least partly be explained by the recognition of four factors: (1) the continuing effects of sin upon even the regenerate human understanding; (2) the differences in the systems of hermeneutics devised by biblical scholars; (3) the frequent gaps between good theory and bad practice; and (4) the frequent failure to distinguish essentials from nonessentials, or verities from distinctives.

In the midst of all these differences of interpretation, three facts should give us hope. First, our understandings, our hermeneutics, our practice and our emphases are, by God's grace, always remediable, always open to correction and modification. Second, all born-again Christians have more in common than they have in difference; they have a greater unity than

they have diversity; there is more that should unite them than divide them. Third (quoting the words of the Westminster Confession, chap I, sect VII):

All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all, yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.

Step Seven: Proclamation

The seventh step in the transmission of God's Word is that of the proclamation of God's Word. Here we ask the question, "When, by means of exposition, illustration, application and persuasion, we attempt to preach upon or teach a portion of Scripture, can we properly say that we are preaching or teaching the Word of God?" In Acts 4:30 we find thousands of believers gathered together, and we are told that "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the Word of God with boldness." In Acts 8:4 we are told concerning the scattered disciples of the church in Jerusalem. "Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. And in 2 Tim 4:2 Paul exhorts his son in the faith to "preach the word!" On the basis of many such Scriptures I believe it is quite proper to speak of preaching and teaching the Word of God. Of course, this is only true as we approximate the content and intended meaning of Scripture, and if the Scripture which we have can properly be called the Word of God. This brings us back to the concept of "inspiredness."

Conclusions

Earlier in this paper we noted that Paul writes, "All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable." We pointed out that it is not exegetically defensible to translate this statement. "All Scripture was God-breathed." Still the objection may be made, "Even though we cannot put 'was' with the first predicate adjective and 'is' with the second, is there not inherent in the word 'God-breathed' the idea of origination? Is not Paul saying that Scripture has come from God's mouth, and therefore is the Word of

God? And does this not speak of the inspiration of the original writings of Scripture by the special act of the Holy Spirit?"

To this objection two things need to be said. First, it is true that the term "God-breathed" has primary reference to the original inspiration of Scripture. God breathed out His Word as holy men of God wrote; and the result was Scripture, the Word of God written. Second, it is also true that the term "God-breathed" has secondary reference to all copies, versions, and translations which may properly be called "Scripture." "All Scripture is God-breathed." This includes the copies of Scripture which Timothy had known from childhood and the copies which were available to Timothy at the time Paul wrote 2 Timothy. Paul did not say to Timothy. "Some Scripture is God-breathed (namely the original manuscripts which Timothy did not have); but rather he said, "All Scripture is God-breathed (including the copies which Timothy had). This "God-breathed" characteristic of Scripture was not lost with the loss or destruction of the original manuscripts, but was retained in the copies.

These considerations now permit us to attempt a fuller definition of the concept of "inspiredness." "Inspiredness" is that supernatural. Wordbearing, Word-expressing, Word-retaining quality which guarantees that Scripture, subsequent to its inspiration, is a revelation from and of God. Thus quality is a product of inspiration, and characterizes not only the text of the original manuscripts of Scripture, but also the texts of all copies of Scripture, to the extent and degree that the texts of those copies faithfully reproduce the text of the originals.

What is the implication of "inspiredness" for the proclamation of God's Word today? Simply to the extent and degree that the copies which we have can be called *Scripture*, to *that* extent and degree we have the quality of "*inspiredness*." "All Scripture is inspired by God ..." And to the extent and degree to which we have the quality of "*inspiredness*," to that extent and degree we have *the Word of God*.

Let us then take heart, realizing the remarkable providence which God has exercised in the preservation and care of His Word, and let us proclaim this living and abiding Word of God with all confidence, in the power of its divine Author, the Holy Spirit, and to the everlasting honor and glory of the incarnate Word, the Lord Jesus Christ!

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Part Two:
Theology Proper

Chapter Five

The Trinity: Fides Quarens Intellectum

Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, in their iconoclastic book, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, suggest that it would be a good thing if teachers looked in the mirror each morning and asked themselves three questions: (1) What am I going to teach today? (2) What's it good for? (3) How do I know? The authors feel that this approach to teaching, honestly applied, would revolutionize the educational enterprise.¹

My topic here is the Trinity. My subtitle is actually the title of a book written in the eleventh century by Anselm of Canterbury; it means "faith in search of understanding." The same three questions posed by Postman and Weingartner, in slightly different form, can be posed as we begin our study of this topic. That is, we can ask (1) what we are going to teach about the doctrine of the Trinity, (2) why the doctrine is important, and (3) what evidence can we claim as a basis for our answers? As we proceed we will first mention some brief responses that have been made to these questions, and then develop the topic more fully. And in our fuller development we will attempt to state clearly and accurately the doctrine of the Trinity, with a view toward gaining a better understanding of this foundational yet difficult truth.

Some Brief Responses to Our Three Initial Questions

1. *What are We Going to Teach About the Doctrine of the Trinity?*

John Calvin, in his *Institute of the Christian Religion*, asserts: "Say that in the one essence of God there is a trinity of persons; you will say in one word what Scriptures states, and cut short empty talkativeness."² It should of course be noted that the "empty talkativeness" Calvin wanted to cut short was that of the Arians and the Sabellians, and that Calvin himself went on to discuss at some length the distinctions between substance, essence, subsistence, and persons.

William G. T. Shedd, a nineteenth century theologian, stated that "Theology asserts that God is one in respect to essence, and is three in respect to personal distinctions."³

And the first of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England in the form of its American Revision of 1801, states:

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker, and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.^4

Of course these brief statements leave much unsaid and use some technical terms which need definition and expansion. For the moment, however, we will let these assertions stand as brief responses to our first question.

2. Why is this Doctrine Important?

Although it is not apparent upon initial reflection, the doctrine of the Trinity is important in its implications for the nature and meaning of biblical revelation, particularly that body of revelation concerning the true deity and mediatorial work of Christ. If God is one in the sense of one individual Person, then when we read in Scripture of the Father saying at Jesus' baptism, "Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well-pleased" (Mark 1:11), or the Father saying at Jesus' transfiguration, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" (Matthew 17:5), or Jesus in His high priestly prayer saying, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee." (John 17:1), we must understand these statements to mean either that Jesus was only a man who experienced very special personal interrelationships with God, or that God accommodated Himself to our limited understanding by employing the *appearance* of interaction and interrelationship, although the *reality* of such was simply nonexistent.

But if Jesus was only a man and not the God-man, he could not be the "one Mediator between God and man" spoken of by the apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 2:5, and could not accomplish redemption for sinners. And if God created the mere appearance of interaction, so that the one Person God both spoke from heaven and appeared in human form at the same time, then perhaps the other things recorded in Scripture about the nature and word of God are mere appearances, and should not be understood as representations of reality! Such an interpretation raises severe questions

about the nature and meaning of biblical revelation, and is not in one sense very far from Rudolf Bultmann's contention that all of Scripture is in the language of *myth* (which he defines as otherworldly realities expressed in this-worldly terms), and that the teachings of Scripture must therefore be *demythologized*! Unfortunately, for Bultmann this means that no genuine "revelation" from God to man is possible, and we are left with a this-worldly Bible filled with language that tells man nothing about the nature of God or of the Trinity, but only of man and of the possibilities of authentic human existence! Thus the doctrine of the Trinity is vitally important in its implications.

3. What Evidence Can We Claim as a Basis for Our Answers?

Of the four basic sources from which theological beliefs have been constructed -- reason, religious experience, ecclesiastical authority, and revelation -- various biblical commentators and theologians have employed primarily the first and fourth (reason and revelation) as sources for their constructions of the doctrine of the Trinity. There is no problem with this configuration, so long as biblical revelation is regarded as ultimate and controlling, and reason is not regarded as a *source* of truth, but as an *instrument* for understanding, analysis, synthesis, and explanation of the truth. All too often in the history of doctrine, human reason has *imposed* some sort of pattern on scriptural teaching, and in doing so has gently (or sometimes violently) bent the scriptural data into shapes hardly recognizable! Whenever human reason has become the ultimate, controlling source of truth about the Trinity, inevitably the result has been an aberration from the truth and a plunge into heresy. Although this paper is subject to the same dangers, hopefully it will avoid them and make a modest contribution to our understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity, as our faith seeks understanding.

This brings us to our second major emphasis.

A Fuller Development of our Topic

In this section we will attempt to say something about each of the following subtopics:

1. The biblical doctrine of the Trinity
2. Some historic orthodox formulations of the doctrine
3. Some historic aberrant views of the doctrine

4. The meaning of the unity of God
5. The meaning of the plurality of God
6. The essential equality of the three Persons
7. The economic subordination of the three Persons
8. Mystery versus complete rational penetrability in the formulation of the doctrine
9. Summary of the doctrine

Most of what I am going to say will not *be new* to most of the members of this audience; some of what I am going to say may *sound new* to some of you. I ask only that you keep an open mind until the completion of this paper. Then close your mind around that which the Spirit of God through the Word of God witnesses to as truth, and throw all the rest away!

1. The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity

The Bible does not use the word "Trinity," but it does teach each of the distinct truths out of which the theological doctrine of the Trinity has been constructed. The Bible simply tells us that God is one (Deuteronomy 6:4), and that there are three distinct Persons who are God. The Father is God (Jude 1); the Son is God (Titus 2:13); and the Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4). Whatever it is to be God, the Father is that, and the Son is that, and the Spirit is that. And these three divine Persons are not three Gods, but one God. This is what Scripture teaches.

Edward Bickersteth, in his classic work. *The Trinity*, states the teaching simply and succinctly. He writes:

To one who receives with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save our souls, the Scriptures ... prove beyond contradiction that as the Father is God, so is Jesus Christ God, and so the Holy Spirit is God. This truth, however, must be combined with another, which is revealed with equal clearness and enforced with equal solemnity -- "I am Jehovah, and there is none else, there is no God beside me." The combination of these truths establishes the doctrine of the Holy Trinity...^5

2. Sonic Historic Orthodox Formulations of the Doctrine

The earliest creeds are Trinitarian in form. Incidentally, a creed is a formal statement of belief -- the word "creed" comes from the Latin *credo*, which means "I believe." The earliest form of the Apostles' Creed, and every form thereafter, has three articles: one for each of the Persons of the Godhead. The Nicene Creed of AD 325 has a Trinitarian form, and asserts that the Lord Jesus Christ is "true God of true God," "of one substance with the Father," and that by Him "all things were made."⁶ The Constantinopolitan Creed of AD 381 also has a Trinitarian form, and asserts that the Holy Spirit "with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified."⁷ The Chalcedonian Creed of AD 451 asserts that the Son of God is perfect in Godhead," "very God," and "consubstantial with the Father as touching His Godhead."⁸ But the classic creedal statement on the Trinity is that found in the Athanasian Creed of the fifth or sixth century, which statement I simply, quote:

The universal faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the substance. For there is one Person of the Father; another of the Son; and another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is all one; the glory equal, the majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is, such is the son, and such is the Holy Spirit. The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated. and the Holy Spirit uncreated. The Father unlimited, the Son unlimited, and the Holy Spirit unlimited. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal. And yet they are not three eternals, but one eternal. As also there are not three uncreated, nor three unlimiteds, but one uncreated and one unlimited. So likewise the Father is omnipotent, the Son omnipotent. and the Holy Spirit omnipotent. And yet they are not three omnipotents, but one omnipotent. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord. And yet not three Lords, but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord; so we are forbidden by the universal religion to say, There are three Gods, or three Lords. The Father is made of none; neither

created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Spirit is of the Father and the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits. And in this Trinity there is nothing before or after; nothing greater or lesser. But the whole three Persons are coeternal and coequal. So that in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshiped.^9

3. Some Historic Aberrant Views of the Doctrine

By aberrant views I mean those views that stray or deviate from Scripture or from historic orthodox formulations of the doctrine, or views that are heretical. It is not my intention to survey these views, but only to sample a few of them.

Dynamic Monarchianism arose in the second century. It attempted to safeguard the unity of the Monarch of the universe -- God -- by denying that the Logos (the Word of John 1:1) was a divine Person, and by asserting that Jesus was a mere man.

Modalistic Monarchianism or *Sabellianism* also arose in the second century. It tried to safeguard the unity of God by affirming that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are simply one divine Person who manifests himself in different modes according to circumstances.

Arianism attempted to preserve the unity of God by holding that the Son of God was not divine, but was the highest of all created beings; and that he took the place of the human spirit in the body of Christ. This fourth century heresy influenced many professing Christians for a long period of time.

Socinianism arose in the sixteenth century. It held that Christ was a man who was baptized with the Holy Spirit (which was not a person, but the influence of God), lived an exemplary life, and was rewarded with a resurrection and an ascension to a kind of divinity, so that he is to be called God, prayed to, and worshiped. The view of Socinianism has come down to the present day, in a modified form, as Unitarianism.

4. The Meaning of the Unity of God

There are many Scriptures that stress the unity and uniqueness of God. Perhaps the one quoted most frequently is Deuteronomy 6:4 -- "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!" But there are other Scriptures that deserve mention, even in a brief treatment. I will simply quote them:

Isaiah 37:16 -- O Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, Thou art the God, Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. Thou has made heaven and earth.

Isaiah 44:6 -- Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me."

John 17:3 -- And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God...

1 Corinthians 8:4-6 -- ... we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him...

Ephesians 4:6 -- one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

James 2:19 -- You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

Both the Scriptures that speak of God's unity and those that speak of His uniqueness send the same message: God is one, and there is only one true and living God. There are not two or three Gods or many Gods; there is one God. God is one!

But how are we to understand the oneness of God? Does it mean that God is one in the sense of a numerical oneness -- one individual, or one Person?

Or is the oneness of God a dynamic unity, which allows for a godhead of Persons?

In Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin's book, *To Be a Jew*, a handbook of contemporary Jewish belief and observances, the author states:

"Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One" (Deut 6:4). These words express the underlying faith of Israel that there exists a one, indivisible God by whose will the universe and all that is in it was created. In what was a radical departure from polytheism and idolatry, Abraham the Hebrew was the first to give effective expression to this monotheistic faith ...¹⁰

But how are we to understand his words, "a one, indivisible God," and his meaning of "monotheistic faith"? It is interesting to note that a few lines later Rabbi Donin mentions Maimonides, one of the greatest rabbis of Judaism. In AD 1168 Maimonides (Moses ben Maimon) completed his Commentary on the Mishnah; and in his introduction to the tenth chapter of Tractate Sanhedrin he enumerates thirteen Basic Principles as constituting the very foundation of the Faith of Israel. The second principle concerns God's unity. Maimonides says:

PRINCIPLE 2 is that we are to believe in the unity of the Lord, blessed be He, that is, we are to believe that He who is the Cause of all things is One: not that He is One in a numerical sense, or one in the sense of a species, or one in the sense of being an individual person who is divisible into many parts, or one in the sense of constituting some one simple substance capable of infinite division -- but the Lord, blessed be He, is One by virtue of a Unity which is unlike any other unity. It is this, the SECOND PRINCIPLE, that is referred to in his words, *Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One.*¹¹

Does Maimonides, by his denial that God is one in a numerical sense, leave open the possibility that God is a dynamic unity?

It is fascinating to note that the word translated "one" in Deuteronomy 6:4 (*echad*) is also used in Genesis 2:24, where we read: "For this cause a

man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one (*echad*) flesh." Here is an instance of a dynamic unity, in which two become one in one sense while remaining two in another sense.

In the Trinity, the unity of God is located in the dynamic unity of three divine Persons who share one divine essence and life. God's essence or substance simply means God's ultimate nature (and the nature of anything is what it is). God's essence is what He is! God's nature has many aspects, some of which He has been pleased to reveal. We call these aspects perfections, qualities, characteristics, or attributes. We attribute or ascribe them to God because He attributes them to Himself. God's essence or nature, although characterized by various attributes, is simple and indivisible. There is only one essence that is fully God; there are three Persons who share fully in that essence.

5. The Meaning of the Plurality of God

Scripture teaches that as the Father is God, so Jesus Christ is God, and so the Holy Spirit is God. In 1 Peter 1:2 we read of "the foreknowledge of God the Father." In John 1:1 we read that the Word that became flesh "was God." And in Acts 5:3-4 Peter tells Ananias that in lying to the Holy Spirit he has "not lied to men, but to God."

In addition, we have already referred to instances of interaction between the Father and the Son in Jesus' public baptism, His transfiguration, and His high priestly prayer. To these we may add Galatians 4:4, where Paul says, "But when the fulness of time came, God sent forth His Son," and John 14:26, where Christ says, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."

Because of the history of the doctrine we have become accustomed to calling the Father, the Son, and the Spirit *Persons*. This term has been widely accepted from the time of the church fathers to the present. The Greek fathers used the words *prosopon* and *hypostasis*, both of which they understood (in this context) to mean "person." The Latin fathers used the words *persona* and *subsistentia*. Augustine, Boethius, Aquinas, and Calvin all employ this language. In fact Calvin, in book 1, chapter 13, sections 2-6 of his Institutes, presents a strong case for the propriety

of the use of this and other terms. Some theologians have opted for the term "three personal subsistences," but this reduces to the same thing -- three personalities. However, this raises the question, What are "persons"?

Permit me to suggest a definition. Persons are beings characterized by conceptual thought, the use of some form of language, emotions, deliberate choice and purposive action toward pre-selected goals, self-consciousness, and moral and religious attitudes and actions. Put another way, persons are moral and spiritual beings who have a distinct existence and the faculties of intellect, emotion, will and self-consciousness.

When we look into Scripture, we discover that persons are *spirits*. Human beings are spirits in union with bodies; and when they become disembodied spirits in the experience of physical death they are still persons (although they are not complete persons until physical resurrection). Satan is a person. The demons are persons. Angels are persons. And God is essentially personal. God is spirit.

A person is a being with a personal nature, personal faculties and powers, and distinct individual existence, or personality. The members of the godhead are Persons. They think, they feel, they will, they are conscious of themselves as distinct selves, and they interact with each other on a personal level.

But now we must safeguard the doctrine by putting fences around it. On the one hand, the plurality must not be understood in a modalistic sense, by viewing the three Persons as merely revelations of the one God in different characters, as that when God is creating He is the Father, and when He is redeeming He is the Son, and when He is communicating life and gifts He is the Spirit. On the other hand the plurality of God must not be understood in a tri-theistic sense, by viewing the Persons as three separate individuals, each of whom is a perfect mirror image of the other two, so that we come out with three Gods having precisely the same nature, essence, and attributes.

When we speak of finite persons, we mean distinct and separate individuals who have no essential connection with other individuals. When we speak of the Persons of the Trinity, we do not mean distinct and separate individuals who are exactly alike but are only externally related as three

divine beings. Rather we mean distinct individuals who are united in the single being and life of God. Although with Calvin¹² we can posit a "special quality" that distinguishes each divine Person from the others, this quality does not deny the unity of the three Persons in one essence and being. Thus the three Persons are not three Beings in their own ontological right, but rather one Being, as the Athanasian Creed so aptly asserts.

6. The Essential Equality of the Three Persons

By "essential equality" is simply meant that in the one indivisible essence, the three Persons share fully and completely. And by this is meant that the three Persons are fully God, have all of the attributes of God, have all the rights and prerogatives of deity, and are eternally equal in glory. As the Second Helvetic Confession puts it:

So that there are not three Gods, but three persons, consubstantial, coeternal, and coequal; distinct, as touching their persons; and, in order, one going before another, yet without any inequality. For, as touching their nature or essence, they are so joined together that they are but one God; and the divine essence is common to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.¹³

Equality of essence means that no Person of the Trinity is a lesser god than the other Persons, or lacks some divine attributes or rights, or has lesser essential glory than the others. There is no subordination of one Person to the others in essence or rights or glory. Whatever it means to be God, all of the Persons of the Trinity are that.

However, when we come to consider the inner relationships of the Persons of the godhead, we discover that there is in some sense an order within the essential equality, which is represented to us in the names and expressions of relationship of the Persons, and which is reflected in the order of the outworking of God's purpose. The Father is always the Father; the Son is always the Son; and the Spirit is always the Spirit. The Father is always represented as first in order; the Son is always represented as second in order; and the Spirit is always represented as third in order. This does not mean that the *essence* of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit has in it levels of subordination; the essence of all three Persons is one and the same. But within the unparticularized essence of God, the particularized personal

subsistences are characterized by an order and by specific personal interrelationships.

What, then, shall we say about the many creedal references to the eternal generation of the Son and the eternal procession of the Spirit. J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., in his *Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, has an excellent treatment of the scriptural passages from which these concepts were derived. In treating Psalm 2:7, where we find the words, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee," Buswell says:

We are thus justified in saying that the "begetting" of the Son referred to in Psalm 2:7, as interpreted in the New Testament, is not a literal generation of His being in any sense of the word, but is a reference to God's declaratory revelation of the eternal divine Sonship, particularly in Christ's resurrection from the dead.^14

Buswell examines the word "firstborn" (*prototokos*) and concludes that it means "virgin birth" (Luke 2:7), the "firstborn from the dead" (Colossians 1:18 and Revelation 1:5), "the one who has pre-eminence" (Romans 8:29 and Hebrews 1:6), "the one who originally brought forth" (Colossians 1:15). Then Buswell turns to the word "only begotten" (*monogenes*), and discovers that it has nothing to do with "begetting," but rather means "in a class by himself," "the only one of his kind," "unique." Buswell summarizes this study by saying:

We have above examined all the instances in which "begotten" or "born" or related words are applied to Christ, and we can say with confidence that the Bible has nothing whatsoever to say about "begetting" as an eternal relationship between the Father and the Son.^15

From this Buswell concludes "I ... believe that the 'eternal generation' doctrine should be dropped." However, he goes on to say something further:

If we drop eternal generation, what then shall we say of eternal Sonship? That is an entirely different matter. There can be no doubt ... that "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" are words intended by the writers of the Scriptures

to indicate eternal relationships within the Triune Godhead
.... It should not be difficult to understand the words
"Father and Son" as conveying a personal relationship in
the eternal Trinity, without in any sense involving the
thought of generation, or of any essential
subordination."¹⁶

7. The Economic Subordination of the Three Persons

By "economic" is simply meant the arrangement that God has been pleased to make, in which the various Persons of the Trinity do different things in the carrying out of God's great Purpose as respects creation, providence, redemption, and judgment. The three Persons of the godhead are equal in their essence, but unequal in their working.

To employ a very imperfect analogy, in moving the great ocean liner of the Purpose of the Triune God toward its goal, the Father functions as the captain, the Son functions as the chief executive officer, and the Spirit functions as the crew. The captain gives orders; the chief executive officer goes to carry out the orders and see that they are completed; and the crew does the work and fulfills the tasks assigned to them. Although all three Persons of the Trinity are active in the divine works of creation, providence, redemption, and judgment, nevertheless they do different things in the carrying out of these works. In the work of redemption, for example, the Father *initiates* redemption by sending His beloved Son into the world, the Son *accomplishes* redemption by becoming incarnate and by making an atonement for our sins, and the Spirit *applies* redemption by uniting us with Christ and to the benefits of His atoning work. Of course, my analogy fails because the officers and crew of the ship are separate and different beings, whereas the Persons of the Trinity are united and identical in their characteristics. But perhaps this imperfect analogy can serve to aid our understanding of the distinction between essential equality and subordination of office and working. Subordination refers to *function*, not to *essence*.

8. Mystery versus Complete Rational Penetrability in the Formulation of the Doctrine

Through the centuries Christian thinkers have attempted to state what the Scriptures teach about the triunity of God, and to prevent their formulations of the doctrine from error. Some have held that the Bible teaches

that God is both one and three, and that any further statement intrudes into the realm of mystery which is forbidden to us. Any attempt to make this teaching more intelligible is labeled "rationalistic," and is condemned. Others have stated that the Bible teaches that God is both one in essence and three in Persons. This introduces terms which attempt to explain the different senses in which "one" and "three" are used, but also creates the problem of defining "essence" and "Person." Still others have pressed on to a rationally more penetrable statement of the doctrine, such as the view that the Father is the deity in its original, direct, unoriginated existence; the Son is the deity generated by the Father's exact idea or understanding of Himself; and the Spirit is the deity flowing out and proceeding in love from the Father and the Son; and thus there are three distinct subsistences in the divine essence: *God*, the *idea* or *Logos* of God, and the *love* or *Agape* of God; and thus there are three Persons. This view introduces the concepts of generation and procession into the discussion, but does so in a manner that seems to border on the heretical view that the Son and the Spirit are simply *projections* of God's thought and love, and not Persons in any meaningful sense.

It is true that along the continuum of formulations of the doctrine from the one end of complete mystery to the other end of complete rational understanding there have been some who have cried "It's a mystery!" before the Scriptures require us to do so, and others who have pressed on toward rational understanding until they have stumbled into the morass of speculation or the abyss of heresy. But surely somewhere between Charybdis' whirlpool of mystery and Scylla's rock of heresy there must be a course that the vessel of doctrinal construction can safely steer toward its desired haven -- truth concerning the nature of God. Our problem is to find that course, safely navigate it, and clearly chart it, so that others coming after us may also reach that destination, perhaps by an even straighter and smoother passage than ours.

On the role of reason in doctrinal formulation in general, I would like to propose seven principles for your consideration.

(1) Revelation is, first of all, addressed to the human mind, to the rational faculty. Unless the content of revelation can be rationally known (at least partially), it is of no value as far as communication of truth is concerned.

(2) Faith, as response to revelation, involves knowledge, conviction, and

trust. Faith always has a rational object, which is truth about some person, thing, or event. Without at least partial knowledge of truth, faith cannot be exercised.

(3) Faith in a complete "mystery" is a contradiction in terms. To be believed, truth must be known, at least partially.

(4) The rational faculty of the regenerate person is able to receive the truths communicated by the Spirit of God in Scripture and to know them.

(5) Some of the truths of Scripture are clear and easy to understand; some others are difficult for our sin-darkened minds to clearly grasp, and need study and sound thinking before they can become intelligible. Some teachings lie along the surface and can be read and grasped as one runs; others lie deeply embedded in the rock and need to be dug out painstakingly with great care and skill and patience by one who will sit down and work at the task. In the midst of this laborious process sometimes even doctrines thought to be great mysteries will open to the understanding and yield to a better formulation, and will then be seen as having required only some key idea or insight to unlock their beauty and utility.

(6) Safeguards against prying into what appear to be impenetrable mysteries include fervent prayer, careful study, fruitful contact with previous work in the relevant area(s), submission of ideas and proposals to the judgment of godly and competent persons, reflection over a period of time, and smooth integration of new concepts with knowledge previously acquired. When internal resolution of logical difficulties and/or external "fit" with all known data cannot be achieved, a proposal for penetrability of mysteries should not be abandoned, but temporarily laid on the shelf, to be worked on at some future time.

(7) Whenever a doctrine continues to resist further rational penetration, it should be remembered that mystery is an appropriate category in doctrinal formulation, and that the incomprehensibility of God applies in every area of revealed truth. However, I would urge that the category of mystery be invoked, not at the *beginning* of an investigation, but as near the end as possible!

Incidentally, this is not intended to be a complete set of guiding principles for the rule of reason in doctrinal formulation; it contains only a few

relevant concepts. And I do not expect that every believer will be involved in the process of development of difficult doctrines -- that is the burden of only some -- but I do expect that every believer will wish to understand the teachings of Scripture as fully and as deeply as possible, especially in the case of doctrines that are fraught with intellectual difficulties that cry out for resolution.

Edward Bickersteth, toward the end of his treatise on the Trinity, expresses this balanced emphasis nicely. He writes:

But, do you ask, is it needful for every believer to pass through such a long process of proof as even this little treatise sets forth? Assuredly not. The Bible is eminently the poor man's book. These things are hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes. And to such a childlike mind a very few simple truths generally carry conviction, and with conviction life and peace. "I am God, and beside me there is no Saviour." "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." "I will send the Comforter to you." His Father, his Redeemer, his Sanctifier, are equally indispensable to him; and he knows that he was baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. He needs no more. Without any laboured syllogisms, he believes these Three are One. The truths find him. He does not expect to fathom the mystery; but his whole heart embraces that which satisfied his whole necessity.

If, however, doubts and suspicions assail these first principles when implanted, or keep back an inquirer from believing them, then the word of God, reverently consulted, affords a complete answer to every, what I may call, rational objection. The armoury supplies a weapon for every encounter. We are ready to give every man a reason of the hope that is in us. Therefore, if held back by these doubts from faith in Christ, you must give yourself, heart and soul, to the momentous inquiry...¹⁷

9. Summary of the Doctrine

When we began the fuller development of our topic (which, incidentally, is entitled "The Trinity: Fides Quarens Intellectum" -- faith seeking understanding), we noted that the Trinity is a biblical doctrine, and that all of the elements of the doctrine are clearly found in Scripture. We looked at some creedal statements, particularly the Athanasian Creed, and identified this as the classic creedal formulation of the Trinity. We then sampled some heretical views, including those of Dynamic Monarchianism, Modalistic Monarchianism or Sabellianism, Arianism, and Socinianism, with its contemporary counterpart, Unitarianism.

In examining the meaning of the unity of God, we discovered that the one in Deuteronomy 6:4 ("the Lord is one") can be understood as a dynamic unity, thus permitting three Persons to be viewed as sharing one divine essence and life. And in examining the meaning of the plurality of God, we discovered that scriptural events clearly reveal interaction and personal interrelationships between the three Persons of the godhead, and that the term "person" is a good word with a long pedigree. We suggested a safeguard, however, in stressing that the three Persons are not separate individual Gods, but distinct subsistences united in the single being and life of God.

In attempting to distinguish between the "essential equality" and "economic subordination" of the three Persons, we discovered that the Scriptures teach that whatever it is to be God, all of the Persons are that. We also discovered that there is an order among the Persons, but that it is not grounded in the "eternal generation of the Son" or the "eternal procession of the Spirit," but rather in the eternal relationships within the godhead. We also discovered that the Persons of the Trinity perform various functions in the implementation of the Plan and Purpose of God.

In relation to the need of striking a balance between mystery and complete rational understanding, we suggested that we allow Scripture to set the limits of our understanding, but that we not foreclose our investigations prematurely.

I would like to close this study by quoting a portion of the second chapter of the *Philadelphia Confession of Faith* of 1689. This excellent formulation of doctrine states:

The Lord our God is but one only living and true God;

whose subsistence is in and of himself, infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but himself In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word (or Son), and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided: ... all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar, relative properties, and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him.^18

May God grant that our faith in the Triune God will continue to seek understanding, especially in this important and difficult doctrine!

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Chapter Six

A Proposed Creationist Alternative to Evolutionism

Originally Delivered as the Fall Lecture Series at Philadelphia College of the Bible, November 1-4, 1971. A series of four lectures which suggest a way in which both Biblical and scientific data concerning the nature of God's creative activity can be synthesized in a unified creationist view as an alternative to evolutionism. In Lecture One a case is made for the need for such an alternative and a survey/appraisal of various creationist views is made. In Lecture Two an outline-summary of the creative events of Genesis 1-2 is proposed, incorporating both Biblical and scientific data. In Lecture Three the problem of the proper relationship of Biblical and scientific chronologies is analyzed and a time-frame for the structuring of God's creative activity is proposed. In Lecture Four the question of the meaning of "kinds" is explored; the paleontological record is reviewed, and a proposal for the synthesis of the Biblical and paleontological data is offered in which these two records of God's creative activity provide mutual intelligibility.

Lecture One:

A Proposed Creationist Alternative to Evolutionism

Evolutionism is that view of reality which holds that natural processes, operating exclusively by means of natural forces, are responsible for the whole range of physical, chemical, biological, psychological, and sociological phenomena which make up the history of the universe.

Ordinarily, when we think of evolution we think of only one phase -- the biological phase. Yet, as Sir Julian Huxley points out in his book *Evolution in Action*, the overall process in the comprehensive sense is understood to comprise three main phases: the inorganic (or cosmological), the organic (or biological), and the human (or psychosocial).¹ Evolutionism is thus the view that the process of evolution is comprehensive, all-encompassing, universal.

Upon analysis, this view can be seen to contain several constituent propositions:

- (1) Either matter is eternal or it has simply, of itself, come into being.
- (2) The complex structure of the physical universe has evolved from the simple unorganized condition of primeval matter.
- (3) Living material has evolved from non-living matter.
- (4) All living things -- whether monerans, protistans, plants or animals -- have evolved from the simplest living things.
- (5) Man has evolved from animals.
- (6) Each of the above processes took place by means of the random operation of previously-existing natural forces.

In connection with our topic, I should like to point out the fact that there are good reasons why an alternative to Evolutionism is needed. One such reason is that Evolutionism makes a claim that it is the only reasonable and credible explanation of the origin and development of the universe, of life, and of man, and that any other explanation is unworthy of consideration. To substantiate this charge, it is necessary only to quote from one of a number of writers who express themselves on this point. Horatio Hackett Newman, when he was Professor Emeritus of Zoology at the University of Chicago, wrote:

The nature of the proof of organic evolution, then, is this: that, using the concept of organic evolution as a working hypothesis it has been possible to rationalize and render intelligible a vast array of observed phenomena, the real facts upon which evolution rests There is no other generalization known to man which is of the least value in giving these bodies of fact any sort of scientific coherence and unity. In other words, the working hypothesis works and is therefore acceptable as truth until overthrown by a more workable hypothesis. Not only does the hypothesis work, but, with the steady accumulation of further facts, the weight of evidence is now so great that it overcomes all intelligent opposition by its sheer mass. There are no rival hypotheses except the outworn and completely refuted idea of special creation, now retained only by the ignorant, the dogmatic, and the prejudiced.^2

Another reason why an alternative to Evolutionism is needed is that

Evolutionism is presently confronted with virtually insuperable problems in connection with the question of a causal explanation of the origin of matter and of life, the question of adequate evidences for its claims, and the question of a mechanism which is sufficient to produce new families, orders, classes and phyla of living things. Unless it can give reasonable answers and solutions to these questions and problems, it hardly seems scientifically accurate, logically sound, or ethically responsible for Evolutionism to make such extravagant and immodest claims for itself, and to vehemently denounce all opposition as being ignorant, dogmatic and prejudiced!

However, the question may now be raised as to why a *Creationist* alternative to Evolutionism is need. One reason that immediately occurs to us is that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to permanently compartmentalize in one's mind conflicting religious beliefs and scientific beliefs. Unless reconciled, one set of beliefs tends ultimately to destroy the other. Unfortunately, it is usually one's religious beliefs that are sacrificed upon the altar of scientific belief. In this day of increasing tensions between religion and science, an alternative that synthesizes one's religious beliefs with one's scientific beliefs is desperately needed. There are many students and teachers, laymen and pastors, seminarians and professors, scientists and theologians, who are seeking for a competent, responsible, coherent synthesis which will include both religious beliefs and scientific beliefs in their integrity.

A second reason why I believe a Creationist alternative to Evolutionism is needed is that, as a Christian, I believe that the Scriptures are the only inerrant and unfailing rule for faith and life, and that they do teach a number of truths concerning God's creative activity. In those places where the Scriptures speak on matters which have a bearing upon scientific questions, Christians should be ready to listen. I realize, of course, that this view has not always been held by all believers, as is evident by a quotation from Augustine's defense against the Manicheans. He declared:

We do not read in the Gospel that the Lord said, "I sent to you the Paraclete who will teach you about the course of the sun and moon," for he wanted to make Christians, not mathematicians.^3

Herman Bavinck, commenting upon Augustine's statement, pointed out

that when the Scripture, as a book of religion, comes into contact with other sciences and sheds its light upon them, it does not suddenly cease to be God's Word but continues to be such. He then added:

When it speaks about the origin of the heaven and earth, it presents no saga or myth or poetical fantasy but even then, according to its clear intention, presents history, which deserves faith and trust. And for that reason, Christian Theology, with but few exceptions, has held fast to the literal, historical view of the account of creation.⁴

But there is yet a third reason why a Creationist alternative to Evolutionism is needed. I firmly believe that the only self-consistent, coherent alternative to Evolutionism is Creationism. Creationism alone answers the question of the ultimate origin of matter and of life; Creationism alone explains the similarities which form the basis of the alleged evidences for evolution from comparative anatomy, comparative physiology or biochemistry, embryology, vestigial organs, taxonomy, geographic distribution, genetics, paleontology, and physical and cultural anthropology, and Creationism alone provides an adequate mechanism for the appearance of new kinds of living things. May I say that I do not believe that any Christian need ever be ashamed to be, or to be called, a Creationist. Of course, I say this because I believe that Creationism is not only the best view theologically, but also the best view scientifically! On the other hand, I believe that a Christian who chooses to remain in wanton ignorance of either the relevant Biblical facts or the accessible scientific facts should feel ashamed, and not proud! For how can such a Christian obey the scriptural injunction in 1 Peter 3:15 -- "But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord, being prepared on every occasion for a defense to every man who asks of you a reason for the hope that is in you"?

Having come thus far, it is needful to pause and to reflect upon the way in which we have come. We began with a definition of Evolutionism, and took note of its several constituent elements. We then suggested reasons why an alternative to Evolutionism is needed, and especially a Creationist alternative. But what is Creationism? We must now propose a definition.

Creationism is that view of reality which holds that the triune God, employing supernatural and natural forces as well as second causes, has,

for the purpose of glorifying Himself, created or brought into objective being the universe and all things in it, whether material or non-material, and sustains, or holds in being, all things according to His good pleasure.

Unfortunately, having said this much, we discover that we have not yet said enough. For there are several views of God's creative activity, and each of them claim to be the Christian view! Now whenever there is a multiplicity of views differing from one another, the applicable logical axiom is that, although one of them may be correct, yet all of them cannot be correct. It is even possible that all of them are incorrect, or that some of them contain elements which are correct. Although the limited scope of these lectures prevents extensive discussion of those views of God's creative activity which Christians have from time to time espoused, perhaps a brief mention of these views is in order.

Upon examination, those views which have claimed to be Creationist appear to fall into one of four basic types, as follows:

(1) Non-Scientific Creationist View -- This category includes those views which regard the Creation account in Genesis as mythical or symbolic, those which regard the Genesis account as a pictorial-revelatory account of Moses' visions during six consecutive days, and those which understand the events of the six days to have been arranged by means of some non-chronological framework, whether topical, logical or literary. Although these views differ from each other at many points, yet they are agreed upon two crucial emphases. The first emphasis of each form of the Non-Scientific Creationist View is that science and theology occupy two distinct spheres, and any conflict between these spheres is settled the moment both are content to remain within their proper boundaries. The second emphasis of each form of this view is that in Genesis 1 the author offers us a story of creation. It was not his intent to present an exact report of what happened, but to impress the reader with the fact that all that exists has been created by God.

(2) Theistic Evolutionist View -- This category includes those views which hold that God, having brought into existence the primal matter of the universe, and having created living material, proceeded to create all forms of life mediately, that is, by employing the process of evolution as His mode of operation. Some who espouse the Theistic Evolutionist View hold that the creation of man was part of this process, whereas other

advocates of this view hold that, because of his spiritual nature, man must be viewed as a special creation. Most proponents of this latter view hold that, at the least, man's soul must have been a special creation of God.

(3) *Scientific Creationist View* -- All varieties of this view, whether they are named "Progressive Creationism," "Threshold Evolution," or simply "Scientific Creationism," hold that God created primal matter, living material, all of the basic "kinds" of living things, and man, as special creations. The many points at which they differ arise out of differing approaches to and methods in the interpretation and correlation of the relevant scriptural data or scientific data or both.

(4) *Anti-Scientific Creationist View* -- This last category includes all of those views which reject the conclusions, the methodology, or the data of science as capable of making a significant contribution to the interpretation of those scriptural data which are relevant to the doctrine of Creation. Thus those views which advocate a recent date for the age of the universe, or earth, of life, and of man; which affirm the doctrine of the "fixity of species," i.e., the dogma of the inherent impossibility of one species giving rise to the development of another; or which assert the Noachian Flood as a proper and adequate explanation for both the existence and the sequence of the sedimentary strata of rocks in the geologic column, fall within this category. However, as we have already mentioned, its most prominent characteristic is its rejection of the data and observations of science as an aid to the better understanding of the relevant scriptural data.

By way of a critical analysis of one aspect of these four basic types of views of God's creative activity, it is instructive and interesting to note the attitudes taken by each of these views toward the scriptural data on the one hand, and the scientific data on the other. The *Non-Scientific Creationist View* does not take into consideration the scientific data, while according them independent authority within their own realm, and does not do justice to the biblical data, abstracting from them their scientific aspects. Small wonder that we are left with myths, pictures, or empty frameworks, in which Revelation is divorced from history!

The *Theistic Evolutionist View* takes the scientific data seriously, but does so in such an uncritical fashion that it does violence to the exegesis of Scripture. It thus commits the error of inverted priorities, in that it allows its imperfect understanding of the scientific data to exercise a controlling

influence over its Biblical exegesis.

The *Scientific Creationist View* takes both the Biblical and the scientific data in their integrity, and then attempts a synthesis of them. Its chief problems lie in at least four directions: (1) the problem of maintaining the proper order of priorities; (2) the problem of the amount of weight to be accorded to the scientific data wherever those data bear upon theological understanding; (3) the problem of the relative certainty of our understanding of the Biblical facts on the one hand, and our understanding of the scientific facts on the other; and (4) the problem of the achievement of a fine balance between the interpretation of both sets of data. However, the problems are not insuperable obstacles; they are simply methodological safeguards, which proponents of the Scientific Creationist View must be careful to observe.

The *Anti-Scientific Creationist View*, although it attempts to do justice to the Biblical data, does not do justice to the scientific data, but actively rejects or speculatively reinterprets them. As a consequence, it does justice to neither set of data. Having rejected God's General Revelation of his creative activity as a possible source of truth, in favor of a supposed ideal of objective, certain, clear understanding of God's Special Revelation in Scripture, this view must of necessity be characterized by a distortion and emasculation of the truth of the doctrine of Creation. Having begun by denying the theological value of God's Revelation in nature, the Anti-Scientific Creationist View ends by misinterpreting both God's Revelation in Scripture and His Revelation in nature.

We are thus brought face to face with the question of which of these Creationist views to adopt. At this point I must confess that the Non-Scientific Creationist View, the Theistic Evolutionist View, and the Anti-Scientific Creationist View, because of their failure to do justice to both the Biblical and the scientific data in their integrity, are unacceptable views of God's creative activity, at least to me personally and professionally. As to the Scientific Creationist View, a variety of this view has thus far appeared to synthesize, to my satisfaction, both the theological and the scientific elements in the doctrine of Creation.

At long last, therefore, I come to the "proposal" part of my topic, "A Proposed Creationist Alternative to Evolutionism." This proposal has two parts, the first rather brief, and the second somewhat more extensive. In

this lecture I shall present only the first part of the proposal, that part which deals with the definition of the term "Creation."

In order to set forth the scriptural understanding of this word, and in order to avoid the semantic ambiguity which so often accompanies its use in discussions of this nature, I should like to suggest three meanings for the term.

First of all, "Creation" means the bringing into being of that which did not (either in its *substance* or its *form*) previously exist. An example of this meaning would be the creation of the original matter-energy complex of the physical universe. This usage we shall call *Ex Nihilo Creation* (i.e., "creation from nothing").

Secondly, "Creation" means the bringing into being of that which did not (in its *form*) previously exist, employing previously-existing substance. An example of this meaning would be the creation of Adam's body from the dust of the ground. This usage we shall call Immediate Creation (i.e., creation by direct action of God, using previously existing substance).

Thirdly, "Creation" means the bringing into being of that which did not (in its *form*) previously exist, employing both previously-existing *substance* and *secondary causes*. An example of this meaning is the creation by God, through human parents, of each child born into the world. This usage we shall call *Mediate Creation*.

In each of these three usages -- in *Ex Nihilo Creation*, Immediate Creation, and Mediate Creation -- it is important to remember and to recognize that in the context of this discussion it is God who is the Creator. But it is also important to remember that when we speak of God's activity in Creation, we must from time to time clarify the statement "God created such-and-such" by specifying whether God created *ex nihilo*, or *immediately*, or *mediately*. This also means that when we read a statement in Scripture concerning God's creative activity, we must occasionally ask ourselves the question, "Which meaning of 'creation' is intended in this usage?"

At this point someone may be wondering, "Of what value are these distinctions, and how do they contribute to the subject at hand?" This is a perfectly proper question. However, instead of attempting to justify the making of these distinctions by giving *reasons*, I shall attempt to *illustrate*

their value in a series of concrete instances.

To implement this purpose, I propose to examine these three meanings of the term "Creation" as those meanings are conjoined with various aspects of God's creative activity. By doing so, we may be able to determine whether these distinctions are artificial trivialities, interesting oddities, or fruitful tools of systematic understanding.

In keeping, therefore, with this intention, I should like to present another Creationist View of the creative events of Genesis chapters one and two. In thus doing, I shall include in the body of facts to be structured both the Biblical facts and the scientific facts, or to put it in theological terms, both the data of Special Revelation and the data of General Revelation. Lest there be some objection to the inclusion in this synthesis of both sets of facts, we must hasten to point out that the assertion in Psalm 19:1 that "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork" is not only a *truth* of Special Revelation; it also affirms the *reality* of General Revelation. This means that if we ever hope to read God's account of His creative activity properly, we must learn to read it from both books of Revelation -- the Book of Scripture and the book of nature. Or, to express it more precisely, we must learn to read the book of nature through the spectacles of the Book of Scripture.

In the second lecture, then, I shall propose an outline/survey of the creative events of the first two chapters of Genesis, attempting to synthesize both the scriptural and the scientific data, and to unify all of the relevant data in one self-consistent and coherent system of truth concerning Creation. This conception of God's creative activity, which we shall refer to as *The Unified Creationist View*, shall then form the structure of my "Proposed Creationist Alternative to Evolutionism."

Let us now, by God's grace, set out to regain a deeper and fuller recognition of the great truth that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, the world, and they who dwell therein," and let us strive to reclaim all of nature as God's creation, and as the sphere in which God's glory, God's eternal power, God's divinity, and God's Creatorship are wonderfully manifested.

Lecture Two: The Unified Creationist View

In this second lecture on the subject, "A Proposed Creationist Alternative to Evolutionism," we have set for ourselves the task of presenting the second part of our proposal, namely the structuring of the scriptural and the scientific data, and the unification of these data in one self-consistent and coherent system of truth concerning the doctrine of Creation.

However, before proceeding to this task via a summary-outline of the creative events of the first two chapters of Genesis, let us briefly review two basic definitions and the first part of our proposal.

Evolutionism, we have stated, is that view of reality which holds that natural processes, operating exclusively by means of natural forces, are responsible for the whole range of physical, chemical, biological, psychological, and sociological phenomena which make up the history of the universe. We have also noted that this view implies several constituent propositions:

- (1) Either matter is eternal or it has simply, of itself, come into being.
- (2) The complex structure of the physical universe has evolved from the simple unorganized condition of primeval matter.
- (3) Living material has evolved from non-living matter.
- (4) All living things have evolved from the simplest living things.
- (5) Man has evolved from animals.
- (6) Each of the above processes took place by means of the random operation of previously-existing natural forces.

Creationism, on the other hand, is that view of reality which holds that the triune God, employing supernatural and natural forces as well as second causes, has, for the purpose of glorifying Himself, created, or brought into objective being, the universe and all things in it, whether material or nonmaterial, and sustains, or holds in being, all things, according to His good pleasure.

However, as we noted, there are four basic types of Creationism. We have called these four types the Non-Scientific Creationist View, the

Theistic Evolutionist View, the Scientific Creationist View, and the Anti-Scientific Creationist View; and we have stated that, of these four basic types of Creationism, the first, second and fourth are unacceptable to us personally and professionally, and that no variety of the third (i.e., the Scientific Creationist View) has thus far seemed to be adequate or entirely satisfactory. We are therefore proposing yet another alternative.

The first part of our proposal concerned the definition of the term "Creation." We have suggested three meanings or usages of the term, and we have called these three usages by the names Ex Nihilo Creation, Immediate Creation, and Mediate Creation. By Ex Nihilo Creation is meant Creation out of nothing in an instantaneous event. By Immediate Creation is meant Creation using pre-existing material but not secondary causes, in either an instantaneous event or a gradual process. By Mediate Creation is meant Creation employing both pre-existing material and secondary causes in either an instantaneous event or a gradual process.

In my first lecture I mentioned that the second part of our proposal would be set forth in this present lecture, by means of an examination of these three meanings of the term "Creation" as those meanings are conjoined with the various aspects of God's creative activity. At that time I also proposed doing this by drawing an outline-survey of the first two chapters of Genesis, attempting to synthesize both scriptural and scientific data in one unified, coherent account. Let us now attempt this ambitious project.

This second part of my "Proposed Creationist Alternative to Evolutionism" is structured by a series of fourteen events, all of which concern God's creative activity as recorded in Genesis 1 and 2. Let us now consider these events in numerical order, noting one or two interesting aspects of each.

Event #1 (included in Genesis 1:1) -- God's Ex Nihilo Creation of all the matter-energy and the space of the universe, together with their properties, several billion years ago.

Although Genesis 1:1 does not specifically mention the creation of primal matter, yet it includes that creation. Since matter is not eternal, it must be created; and it is here that we learn of this creative event. In point of fact, this creation refers to God's bringing into being, from nothing, all of the basic units of matter and energy found in the physical universe -- neutrons,

protons, electrons, and various other atomic and sub-atomic particles.

It has been estimated that the entire observed universe contains 10^{80} particles (i.e., 10 followed by 79 zeros). For most of us, this is an inconceivable number! And yet God has created them from nothing, by the Word of His power. Incidentally, by way of comparison, the entire earth contains 10^{50} atoms (10 followed by 49 zeros), and a single cup of water contains 10^{25} atoms (10 followed by 24 zeros, or 10 trillion trillion atoms).

With respect to the age of the universe (and thus the age of primal matter), a number of astrophysicists, computing back from the present rate of expansion of the universe to the beginning of the expansion, have arrived at a figure of 10-13 billion years. In addition, astronomical evidence indicates that the energy emitted by certain galaxies (whether in the form of light waves or radio waves) left those galaxies several billion years ago.

Event #2 (included in Genesis 1:1) -- God's Mediate Creation of the basic structure of the universe, a process which began after the creation of primal matter-energy, and continued for a vast period of time of indefinite duration.

This process, which proceeded during the long phase of the universal expansion of the universe, refers to the formation, out of the original gaseous agglomerate of energy and matter, of the various elements; and to the condensation of enormous amounts of galactic gas into the large groupings of galaxies and stars which form the essential structure of the physical universe.

Event #3 (included in Genesis 1:1) -- God's Mediate Creation of our own galaxy (the Milky Way Galaxy), a process which occupied a long period of indefinite duration.

The Milky Way Galaxy, as it presently appears to us, is a vast aggregate of star clusters, stars, interstellar gas, and interstellar dust, arranged in the shape of an enormous disk somewhat bulged in the middle (viewing it edge-on) or in the shape of a pinwheel, containing spiral arms winding outward from a central nucleus (viewing it from the top). The size of our galaxy is almost beyond comprehension. The distance from one edge to the opposite edge is roughly 100,000 light years, i.e., the distance light

travels in 100,000 years. Since light travels at 186,000 miles per second, the distance covered by a star's light traveling from one edge of our galaxy to the opposite edge would be 587 quadrillion miles (587 followed by 15 zeros), and it would take that light 100,000 years just to cross our galaxy! When we stop to consider the fact that there are at least 100 billion galaxies in the observed universe, our minds reel and stagger at the very thought of such vastness, and we cannot help recalling the Psalmist's words: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him? ... O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!"

Event #4 (recorded in Genesis 1:2-5) -- God's Mediate Creation of our solar system, comprising a system of planets orbiting the sun and rotating about their own axes, a configuration which not only produced light to shine upon the planet Earth, but also provided for a division between day and night upon the earth.

Here I should like to mention a particular scientific theory of the origin of the solar system: the Fowler-Greenstein-Hoyle theory. Now in order for any scientific theory of the origin of the solar system to be called a good theory, it should be able to explain at least five sets of facts:

- (1) The fact that the sun has most of the mass of the solar system (750:1), whereas the planets have most of the angular momentum (200:1).
- (2) The fact that the orbital planes of the planets are mostly within five degrees of the mean plane of the system.
- (3) The fact that the planets and their satellites (with only a few exceptions) both orbit and rotate in the same direction as the sun rotates.
- (4) The fact that the planetary orbits are nearly circular.
- (5) The fact that the inner planets are made of less volatile material (i.e., which does not vaporize as easily) and are more dense than are the outer planets.

The Fowler-Greenstein-Hoyle theory of the origin of the solar system proposes that the whole solar system was at first a dark, tenuous nebula which, as it revolved, contracted into a slowly spinning disk. When contraction was well advanced, this disk began to glow. The center of the

disk, contracting still further, became the hot sun. The gaseous outer portion of the disk, magnetically connected to the spinning sun, moved outward and cooled, condensing to form the orbiting planets.

There are three reasons why I mention this particular scientific theory:

- (1) Most of the contemporary theories of the origin of the solar system are similar to the Fowler-Greenstein-Hoyle theory.
- (2) This theory is not in conflict with the Biblical facts, but fits them rather well. The dark, tenuous, disk-shaped-nebula concept fits rather well with the Biblical statement, "And the earth was without form (or unformed), and empty; and darkness was upon the face of the deep."
- (3) This theory fits the scientific data quite well.

This fourth event, the creation of our solar system, provided for both light and for day and night, since it is the earth's rotating motion in relation to the sun that gives us the alternating periods of daylight and darkness which we know as day and night. This is in perfect accord with the scriptural account in which we read, "And God said, Let there be light; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night." (Genesis 1:3-5)

Event #5 (recorded in Genesis 1:6-8) -- God's Mediate Creation of the earth's atmosphere, and the subsequent separation of water above the surface of the earth from water covering the surface of the earth.

The word translated "firmament" in Genesis 1:6, 7, 8 -- רָקִיעַ (raqiya) means "that which is stretched out, an expanse." Our proposal is that this expanse was the atmosphere, or what we call the sky (in the near sense of that word). In verse 8 of Genesis 1, God calls this expanse "heaven."

Our present atmosphere is a rather thin blanket covering the surface of the earth to a height of about 100 miles. It is comprised of nitrogen (78%), oxygen (20.9%), water vapor, and small amounts of argon, carbon dioxide, neon, helium, methane, and other gases. It should be noted that nitrogen and oxygen comprise 98.9% of the total volume of atmospheric gases.

Professor Russell W. Maatman, a member of the department of chemistry at Dordt College, asserts in his book *The Bible, Natural Science and Evolution*, that there is considerable mineralogical evidence that the early atmosphere was largely carbon dioxide, and that it was almost totally devoid of oxygen (in contrast to our present atmosphere which, as we have mentioned, contains 20.9% oxygen). Such an atmosphere would have been capable of holding a great deal of water, in the form of thick clouds. Thus the initial atmosphere or "firmament" would have provided a means of dividing between water above the surface of the earth, and water covering the surface of the earth.

Event #6 (recorded in Genesis 1:9-10) -- God's Mediate Creation of dry land, by the structuring of earth's surface into land and seas.

At the present time, of the total surface area of the earth (197,000,000 square miles), 29% (or 57,000,000 square miles) is dry land, and 71% (or 140,000,000 square miles) is covered with water. In primeval times, as we learn from these verses, the entire surface area of the earth was covered with water.

The separation of dry land from water would of necessity involve the uplifting of enormous land masses, with the concomitant creation of deep ocean basins. It is instructive to note that, at present, the average depth of the oceans is much greater than the average elevation of the land. The average depth of the oceans is about 2 1/2 miles, while the average elevation of the land is about 1/2 mile. Thus if the continents were entirely eroded away, and the material composing them placed in the ocean, the earth would be covered by a universal sea approximately 1.8 miles deep.

Whether one holds the theory that the continents are presently where they always have been, or the theory that whole land masses have drifted to form our present continents, is not crucial to the essential interpretation of the Genesis account. However, it is interesting to note that twice in these verses (verses 9 and 10) we read of the gathering together of the waters into one place. Is this significant?

This form of expression *could* be thought to suggest the idea that only one land mass existed in the distant past; and that later the single land mass broke up to form our present continents. This is called the Theory of Continental Drift, a theory which has practically swept the field of geology

in the last few years. This *is* a possible interpretation of verses 9 and 10. Of course, these statements could also mean simply that God gathered the waters into their own places ("place" taken collectively), so that dry land could appear in its own place.

Event #7 (recorded in Genesis 1:11-13) -- The beginning of God's Immediate Creation of various "kinds" of land plants.

Here in these verses we have the first mention of the creation of living things. It is instructive to note that Moses makes no mention of Monerans and Protists, -- two whole kingdoms of very simple microscopic living plants. He speaks only of plants which grew on the land. Of course, it should be pointed out that if Moses, by means of a Special Revelation, had spoken in the inspired Scriptures of these microscopic creatures, no one reading his words at any time during the next three thousands years would have had the slightest notion of what he meant!

In verse 11-12 three general categories of plants are mentioned: "vegetation," "herbs which produce seeds," and "fruit trees which produce seed-containing fruit." The word "vegetation" and the word "herb" are quite general terms, and would appear to have a very wide range of applicability.

It is fascinating to note the fact that the creation of plants is mentioned before the creation of animals. Is this a mistake on Moses' part? Or is it merely a coincidence?

In reply to these questions, we must point out that plants are capable of manufacturing their own food, by means of photosynthesis. Green plants, which contain chlorophyll, take carbon dioxide and water, and using the energy from sunlight, break down these substances and synthesize their constituent elements into energy-rich sugar plus oxygen and water. Some animals eat these energy-rich plants, and thus obtain the energy needed to carry on life functions. Other animals eat these animals, which in turn have eaten energy-rich plants. And man eats both energy-rich plants and animals which (directly or indirectly) have eaten energy-rich plants. Thus we discover that, as far as utilizable energy for the carrying on of life functions is concerned, animals and men are dependent upon plants. It is therefore no mistake nor coincidence that Moses mentions plants as having been created before animals and man.

One further word about the fact that only three general categories of plants are mentioned is in order. Botanical taxonomists classify all known plants into more than 350 thousand species. One may with propriety ask whether 350 thousand species of plants were intended to be included within this simple three-point classification. I should like to suggest that the list in Genesis was not intended to be exhaustive, but only representative of all plants. Yet, as a representative list, in which part is given for the whole (as in the figure of speech called synecdoche), its implications are clear: God is the Creator of all plant-life.

Event #8 (recorded in Genesis 1:14-19) -- God's Mediate Creation of the appearance of the sun, the moon, and the stars (as viewed from earth's surface).

We have already spoke of God's creation of the firmament or expanse; and have proposed the idea that the expanse is earth's atmosphere. We have also mentioned the mineralogical evidence that the atmosphere during earth's early history was largely composed of carbon dioxide. And we have suggested that, with a carbon dioxide blanket (which would cause a slight increase in atmospheric temperature), much of the water on the earth's surface would be in the form of water vapor, and the weather would be continually cloudy.

As soon as the created plants began to grow, they commenced, by means of the process of photosynthesis, to consume the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and to produce free oxygen. Of course, through the process of cellular respiration, they also took in oxygen and released carbon dioxide. However, since the rate of photosynthesis slightly exceeded the rate of respiration, the atmosphere, over a long period of time, was gradually converted from one containing a very large percentage of carbon dioxide and almost no oxygen, to one containing very little carbon dioxide (33 thousands of one percent, on average), and a sizable amount of oxygen (almost 21 percent).

As the carbon dioxide percentage decreased, the temperature decreased also. Gradually the water vapor condensed, and the thick clouds began to dissipate. Then at some point in the process, the cloud cover broke up, and the sun, moon, and stars became visible from the surface of the earth. And thus the now-visible sun, moon, and stars became light-bearers, to clearly distinguish day from night, to give light upon the earth, to signify

God's Creatorship and Providential Rulership, and to mark off periods of time, including days, seasons and years.

Event #9 (recorded in Genesis 1:20-23) -- The beginning of God's Immediate Creation of various "kinds" of aquatic animals and various "kinds" of birds.

The animals mentioned in these verses are classified according to the environment in which they move. The environment of the various "kinds" of "living creature that moves" is in this case the water. This category also includes the "great sea monsters," and probably the amphibians, as well as all fish and marine invertebrates. The environment of the various "kinds" of birds and other flying creatures is twofold: the firmament of heaven (i.e., the air above the ground), and the ground.

In addition, we are told that God blessed the aquatic animals and the celestial animals with the blessing of fruitfulness, that they might multiply and fill their ecological niches throughout the earth, both in the seas and on the land.

Event #10 (recorded in Genesis 1:24-25) -- The beginning of God's Immediate Creation of various "kinds" of terrestrial animals.

Three basic categories of land animals are mentioned here: "cattle," "creeping animals," and "living animals of the earth." The principle of division upon which this classification is based could very well be the method of locomotion. Thus these three categories could be viewed as including animals that move by walking upon the ground, animals that move by creeping on the ground, and animals that move in the ground itself (presumably by digging or burrowing).

In any case, it would appear necessary to break down these three categories into various "kinds" of each category, and we are told that God called these "kinds" of terrestrial animals into existence.

Event #11 (recorded in Genesis 2:8) -- God's Immediate Creation of the Garden of Eden.

There may be a question as to whether this creative event should be placed before the creation of Adam, or between Adam's creation and Eve's

creation. There can, of course, be no question that it must be placed before Eve's creation, since God placed Adam in the garden (2:15) and put him to sleep there (2:2 1) in order to create Eve.

Since both male and female are spoken of in the general creation account of Genesis 1:27, it would appear to make very little difference whether one places the creation of the garden before Adam's creation or after it. However, I prefer to view the creation of the garden as coming before Adam's creation, so that the newly-created man would be located in the Garden of Eden from the very beginning of his existence. Thus I prefer the pluperfect translation of Genesis 2:8 -- "And the Lord had planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed."

Where was this beautiful paradise located? Well, beyond the fact that it was somewhere in the Middle East, we know next to nothing about its precise location. Perhaps like the mythical lost continent of Atlantis, that beautiful garden was destroyed, wiped out, and completely obliterated from the face of the earth. Perhaps when we are in glory we shall learn of its location and its end. In the meanwhile, we are urged, not to fix mournful and longing eyes upon paradise lost, but rather to look forward to a better Paradise, one regained for us by Christ and prepared for those who love Him.

Event #12 (recorded in Genesis 1:26-31 and 2:7) -- God's Ex Nihilo Creation of man's soul, and His Immediate Creation of man's body.

The Scriptures tell us that God created man in His own image and likeness. This likeness is stamped upon man's soul. As God is a Spirit (i.e., Person), so man is a spirit (a person). As God's nature has the attributes of wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, so man's nature, as created in God's image, had the attributes of wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. However, whereas God possesses these attributes in an infinite, eternal, and unchangeable way, unfallen man possessed in a finite, temporal, and changeable way. Thus there is both likeness and unlikeness in God's creation of man in His own image: likeness, because God created man in His *image*; unlikeness, because God *created* man in His image.

The creation of man's body, as recorded in Genesis 2:7, is an *immediate* creation by God, using pre-existing substance (in this instance, "dust from

the ground"), but *not* secondary causality. The substance from which Adam was formed was not living substance before God communicated life to it at this point.

In connection with this assertion, the translation in the Authorized (King James) Version is unfortunate, since it obscures a very important truth, and also makes the verse teach something that simply is not there. Genesis 2:7 should be translated, "And the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils breath of life, and man became a *living being*" (or "living creature"). The Hebrew simply says that man became *נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה* (nephesh hayyah).

Looking back to Genesis 1:20-21, we notice that God created aquatic life. This life is called *נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה*. In Genesis 1:24-25, God created terrestrial life. This life is also called *נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה*. And then in Genesis 2:7, as a result of divine inbreathing of life into the body which God had created for him, Adam became a *נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה*. The facts are clear: Adam was *not* a living creature before Genesis 2:7; the animals *were* living creatures before the time of Genesis 2:7; therefore Adam could not have been descended from the animals, since in that case Adam would have *been* a living creature *before* he *became* a living creature, which is plainly absurd. And further, since Genesis 2:7 is speaking of the creation of Adam's *body*, and of the bringing of that body to *life*, neither Adam as a whole nor Adam's body descended from animals.

Event #13 (recorded in Genesis 1:27 and 2:19-23) -- God's Ex Nihilo Creation of woman's soul, and His Immediate Creation of woman's body.

It should be emphasized that God also created woman in His own image and likeness. Again, this likeness, as in man, refers to woman's soul. As to her body, however, she was created from Adam's flesh and bone, not from dust from the ground. Nevertheless, since Adam's flesh and bones were formed from the dust, Eve also (indirectly) was from the dust; and, as a result of the Fall, was destined, by the sentence of death, to return with Adam to the dust. Thus the curse in Genesis 3:19 falls upon both Adam and Even, and upon all of their posterity.

Event #14 (recorded in Genesis 2:1-3) -- The Cessation of God's Immediate Creation; the continuation of God's Mediate Creation.

By "cessation of Clod's Immediate Creation" is meant the completion of God's purposed activity of bringing the universe and its constituent elements into being. This expression is not intended to deny the reality of miracle, or to deny the immediate character of God's redemptive acts.

I do not believe the words, "He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made," mean that God was tired out from all that creating, and therefore needed to rest up for a day before He took up the job of keeping everything running. Rather, I believe that this "resting from work" is better understood as a cessation, a stopping of God's creative activity in the Ex Nihilo and Immediate senses. Of course, His Mediate creative activity continued, continues, and shall continue until the end of time.

This then is an outline-survey of the structure of what I have called the Unified Creationist View. This is my proposed Creationist alternative to Evolutionism, the value of which I must discover through further study and thought, as well as through the evaluation of your judgment.

I pray that the Spirit of Truth will open our eyes to two things: to the glory of God that is being revealed day unto day and night unto night throughout the entire vastness and beauty of His created universe, and to the need of relating the truth of that revelation to the truth which He has been pleased to give us in the Scriptures. May God grant still better, less imperfect, more competent syntheses than this!

Lecture Three:

The Unified Creationist View and the "Days" of Creation

In the first two lectures of this series, we attempted to sketch out, in broad outline, a "Proposed Creationist Alternative to Evolutionism." At the outset, having defined the terms "Evolutionism" and "Creationism," we attempted to demonstrate the need for such an alternative. We then proceeded to present our proposed view, the first part of which was a careful consideration of the three basic meanings of the term "Creation." In the second lecture we presented the second part of our proposal, which took the form of an outline-summary of the creative events of Genesis 1-2. The resulting synthesis we called the Unified Creationist View.

We now come to the question of the chronology of the first two chapters

of Genesis. Actually, there are two important questions that relate to the chronology of the events of these chapters. The first question concerns the chronological meaning of the term "day." The second question concerns the relationships of the events of the seven "days" and of the seven "days" themselves to the geologic and paleontologic records. Let us now address ourselves to these two questions.

What is the chronological meaning of the term "day" in the Genesis record of the seven creation "days"? This question places before us the task of determining the Scriptural meaning, according to usage, of the Hebrew word *yom* (יוֹם).

The Authorized of King James Version translates the Hebrew word *yom* in the following ways: 1167 times *yom* is translated "day," 63 times it is translated "time," 30 times it is translated "today," (in these cases the Hebrew has the definite article); 29 times it is translated "daily" (in these cases *yom* is associated with various prepositions and adjectives); and 18 times it is translated "forever"!

Quite apparently the King James translators viewed *yom* as comprising a fairly broad range of meaning!

Upon examination of a large number of usages in context, the possibilities of meaning of the Hebrew word *yom* appear to contract to essentially four:

- (1) A period during which there is light upon a part of the earth's surface, relative to a particular location on earth; or simply a period of light.

Thus in Genesis 1:5 we read, "And God called the light *yom*"; and in Genesis 1:16 we read that God made "the greater light to rule the *yom*."

- (2) A period during which the earth makes one full rotation upon its axis; or a 24-hour day.

In Exodus 20:8-10 we have an instance of this usage. There we read: "Remember the *yom* of rest, to keep it holy. Six *yamim* (יָמִים-- plural of *yom*) shall you labor and do all your work. But the seventh *yom* is the rest of the Lord your God."

- (3) A relatively determinate period (i.e., a period with fairly well-determined boundaries) during which some event or series of events takes place. Thus period could be short or long.

In Genesis 41:1 we read: "And it came to pass at the end of two full *yamim* (plural of *yom*), that Pharaoh dreamed." This is translated "years" in the Authorized Version, and I believe that the translation is correct. If so, then we take note of the fact that this Scripture is speaking of two full years during which Joseph was in prison, and yet it uses the plural of the word *yom*.

In Exodus 13:10 Moses commanded the children of Israel, "Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in its seasons from *yamim* to *yamim*."

And in Proverbs 25:13 we read the words, "As the cold of snow in the *yom* of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him." Here *yom* means the time of harvest, the season of harvest.

- (4) A fourth possibility of meaning is that of a relatively indeterminate period (i.e., a period without well-defined boundaries) during which some event or series of events takes place. This could be a brief indeterminate period or a lengthy indeterminate period.

In Genesis 35:3 Jacob said to his household, "Let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the *yom* of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went." In this usage *yom* simply means time.

In Genesis 40:3 we read of what Pharaoh did to his chief butler and his chief baker: "And he put them in prison." In verse 4 we are told, "and they continued *yom* in prison." Here *yom* simply means a period of time, a season of time of indefinite length.

In Proverbs 31:25 we read of the virtuous woman that "Strength and honor are her clothing, and she shall rejoice in the *yom* to come." Here all is indefinite, without boundaries in time. *Yom* simply means time.

But we are now faced with the question: Which of these four possibilities of meaning was intended in Genesis 1-2? In which sense shall we

understand the seven Creation *yom*'s? Are they periods of light, 24-hour periods, relatively determinate periods, or relatively indeterminate periods of time?

There are at least five important considerations which bear upon the question of how we are to understand the time value of the seven Creation *yom*'s:

- (1) The light-darkness separation, and the calling of light "Day" and of darkness "Night";
- (2) The evening-morning pattern ("and it was evening, and it was morning") which is associated with *yom*'s 1-6;
- (3) The appointment of the sun to rule over the "Day" and of the moon and stars to rule over the "Night";
- (4) The time-period occupied by each *yom*. This could be:
 - (a) the period during which God spoke His creative command
 - (b) the period during which God's creative activity was exercised
 - (c) the period during which God's creative command began to achieve fulfillment
 - (d) the period when a particular aspect of God's creation was completed
 - (e) the period during which God spoke His creative command, and saw it completely fulfilled.
- (5) The question of the time consumed in the fulfillment of God's creative commands. How shall we interpret the Biblical record? Were the creative commands of God fulfilled in a moment, or in a twelve-hour period, or in a twenty-four hour period, or in a relatively short period of time, or during a moderately long period of time, or throughout a vast period of time? Could some of these commands have been fulfilled in an instantaneous event, and others by a long process? Notice: there is no question here of whether God could have created all things instantaneously, if He had so chosen. The question here is simply, How did He create all things?

With these five considerations in mind, and attempting to keep the Biblical data in view, I should like to propose a chronological-aspect meaning of

the seven *yom*'s of Genesis 1-2. This proposal has two parts:

First, as to the time-period indicated by each *yom*, I propose the meaning, "the period during which God's creative command began to achieve fulfillment." Thus the seven *yom* s would fall into seven periods of time, the first six of which would be creative periods (i.e., periods during which some aspect of God's creative activity would be accomplished). Further, these creative-aspect periods would be marked by three distinct stages: the beginning stage, the stage of essential fulfillment, and the completion stage. The beginning stage of each creative-aspect period would be marked by God's creative command, "Let there be!" These commands are recorded in Genesis 1:3, 1:6, 1:9, 1:11, 1:14-15, 1:20, 1:24, and 1:26. The stage of essential fulfillment, in which God's creative command began to achieve fulfillment, would be marked by the recognition, by God, that His handiwork was good. These appraisals of the value of God's handiwork toward the accomplishment of His eternal Plan and Purpose are recorded in Genesis 1:4, 1:10, 1:12, 1:18, 1:21, 1:25 and 1:31. I propose that the first six *yom* 's coincide with six stages of essential fulfillment in six distinct creative-aspect periods. The completion stages of the creative-aspect periods are not generally marked, in Scripture, by a special notation. The reason for this may become apparent in facts which we have yet to consider.

To summarize my proposal, then, I propose that the first six *yom* 's fall within six creative-aspect periods of indefinite length, and that they coincide, not with the beginning stage or the completion stage, but with the stage of essential fulfillment in each creative-aspect period.

Second, as to the duration of each *yom*, I propose that the light-darkness separation factor, the day-night oscillation factor, and the evening-morning pattern factor all combine to point to a literal day, i.e., a period during which the earth makes one full rotation upon its axis.

Combining the two parts of this proposal concerning the *yom* 's of Genesis 1-2, we thus far define a *yom* as a literal day which marks the stage of essential fulfillment in each of six creative-aspect periods of indefinite length. In this scheme, these Creation *yom*'s are separated from one another by indefinite, sometimes vast, periods of time.

We have thus far considered the first question related to the chronology of

the events of these chapters: namely, the question of the chronological meaning of the term "day." We must now consider the second question, which concerns the chronological relationships of the events associated with the seven days to the geologic and paleontologic records.

The Standard Geologic Relative Time Scale divides all geologic time into five eras. They are called the Archeozoic Era (meaning "beginning life"), the Proterozoic Era (meaning "former life"), the Paleozoic Era (meaning "ancient life"), the Mesozoic Era (meaning "middle life"), and the Cenozoic Era (meaning "recent life"). These five eras are divided into periods, and some of the periods are further divided into epochs and ages. The Archeozoic Era and the Proterozoic Era are frequently lumped together under the name "Pre-Cambrian" (the Cambrian Period being the first period of the Paleozoic Era).

Geologists, using radioactive techniques, have computed the age of the earth to be 4.55 billion years. Precambrian time represents almost 87% of this figure, or 3.95 billion years. Thus the beginning of the Paleozoic Era (which is the same as the beginning of the Cambrian Period) is dated 600 million years ago. The beginning of the Mesozoic Era is dated at 225 million years ago. And the beginning of the Cenozoic Era is dated at 70 million years ago.

The word "paleontology" means the study of ancient being. The paleontological record is both fascinating and illuminating. It is made up of literally billions and billions of fossils, which have been found in practically every corner of the earth. These evidences of former living things are found in the various strata of the geologic column, and they tell a very important story which is directly relevant to our understanding of God's creative activity.

In the pre-Cambrian eras of the geologic column, there are very few fossils, and these are of relatively simple living forms. Some algae, some bacteria, a few worm tracks -- these are the only evidences of living things before the Cambrian. However, in the Cambrian Period of the Paleozoic Era, a veritable population explosion unfolds before the eyes of the paleontologist! Almost every major phylum appears in the Cambrian! Algae, Arthropods, Brachiopods, Chordates, Peripheral, Coelenterates, Annelida, Mollusks, Echinoderms, and Protozoans -- all appear in the fossil record quite suddenly!

In the Ordovician Period of the Paleozoic Era, the Bryozoans and the first Vertebrates appear, the latter in the form of jawless fishes.

In the Silurian Period of the Paleozoic, the simplest vascular plants, the oldest known land plants, and the first land animals (scorpions) appear.

In the Devonian Period, Fungi, the first known seed-bearing plants (seed ferns), the first bony fishes, and the Amphibians appear.

In the Mississippian Period, the first Bryophytes appear.

In the Pennsylvanian Period, the first Conifers, primitive insects, and primitive reptiles appear.

In the Permian Period of the Paleozoic Era, modern insects appear.

In the Triassic Period of the Mesozoic Era, the first dinosaurs appear.

In the Jurassic Period of the Mesozoic Era, the first flowering plants, the giant dinosaurs, the first birds, and the first mammals appear.

In the Cretaceous Period of the Mesozoic Era, the last dinosaurs and the first modern birds appear.

In the Tertiary Period of the Cenozoic Era, a large number of new mammals appear, together with the Primates, which include lemurs, tarsiers, monkeys, and apes.

In the Quaternary Period of the Cenozoic Era, most of the modern families, genera, and species of plants and animals appeared, together with humans.

This, then, in very brief outline, is what we are told by the record of the rocks.

Now we come to the crucial question. Can the scriptural record and the record of the rocks be synthesized and correlated? A number of men, including theologians and scientists, have made the attempt but have been unsuccessful. Perhaps they have not been willing or competent or patient enough to carefully examine the data in each other's field, or perhaps they

have not taken each other's data in their integrity. But if we believe that truth is a unity, and that God's revelation in nature and His revelation in Scripture are true, then we must conclude that such a synthesis can be made and ought to be made!

Toward this end, therefore, I should like to present a proposed synthesis of the Creation Days and the creative events of Genesis 1-2, and the records of geology and paleontology. The conceptual structure which I propose is that of a series of creative-aspect periods, some of which partially overlap in time, and all of which are marked by a beginning stage, a stage of essential fulfillment, and a completion stage. In all of these creative-aspect periods (except the first), the stage of essential fulfillment falls upon a particular literal day, which is numbered. In the total configuration, the seven Days of Genesis 1-2 are arranged in numerical order 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 (See diagram of One Possible Structuring of the Creation Days and the Creative Events of Genesis 1-2.)

The arrangement of the fourteen creative events which we enumerated in our second lecture is thus as follows. The Ex Nihilo Creation of primal matter (1), the Mediate Creation of the structured universe (2), and the Mediate Creation of our Milky Way Galaxy (3), all fall into a Pre-Day 1 creative-aspect period. The Mediate Creation of our solar system (4) falls into a second creative-aspect period, which culminates in Day 1. The Mediate Creation of our atmosphere (5) falls within a third creative-aspect period, which culminates in Day 2. The Mediate Creation of day land (6) and the Immediate Creation of land plants (7) fall into a fourth creative-aspect period, which reaches its stage of essential fulfillment in Day 3, but continues through Day 6. The Mediate Creation of the appearance, from the earth, of sun, moon and stars (8) falls into the fifth creative-aspect period, which culminates in Day 4. The Immediate Creation of aquatic animals and of birds (9) falls into the sixth creative-aspect period, which attains its stage of essential fulfillment in Day 5, but continues through Day 6. The Immediate Creation of terrestrial animals (10), the Immediate Creation of the Garden of Eden (11), and the Ex Nihilo Creations of Adam's and Eve's souls, together with the Immediate Creations of their bodies (12 and 13) all fall within the seventh creative-aspect period, which culminates in Day 6. Day 7 then initiates the period of the cessation of Ex Nihilo and Immediate Creation (14).

But how does this conceptual structure correlate with the combined

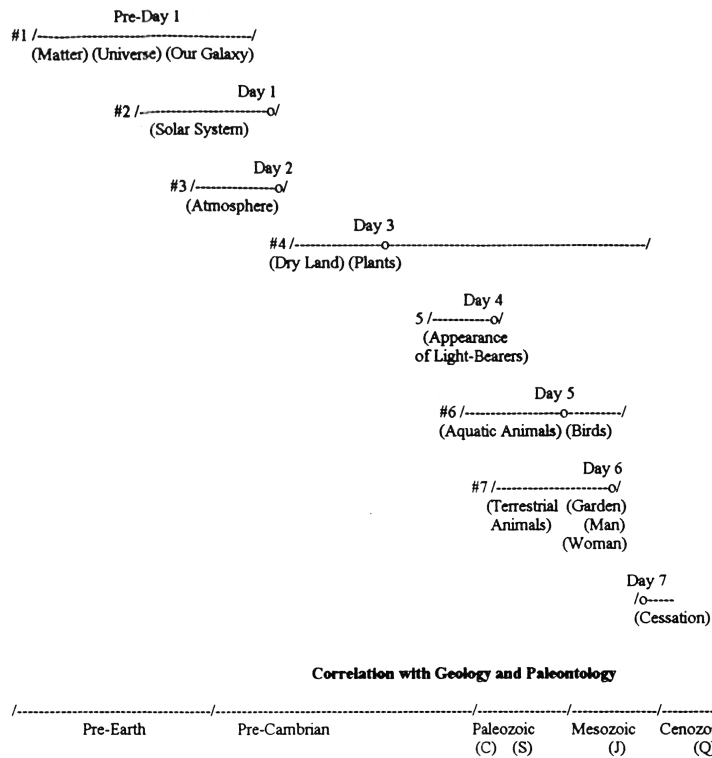
records of astrophysics, geology, and paleontology? First of all, on the basis of astrophysics, we postulate a pre-earth period of time which stretches back to the Ex Nihilo Creation of primal matter. This pre-earth period would correspond with our Pre-Day 1 creative-aspect period. Day 1 would then fall near the beginning of the Precambrian, and Day 2 farther on in the early Precambrian. Day 3 would fall in the later Precambrian, and Day 4 near the close of the Precambrian. The sixth creative-aspect period would then begin with the paleontologic record in the Cambrian, and Day 5 would correlate with the Jurassic Period of the Mesozoic Era. The seventh creative-aspect period would begin in Silurian Period of the Paleozoic, and Day 6 would fall in the Quaternary Period of the Cenozoic Era. Day 7 would then begin after the appearance of humans upon the earth, during the Pleistocene Epoch of the Quaternary Period. This conceptual structure can no doubt be grasped with greater ease if seen in the Diagram of One Possible Structuring of the Creation Days and the Creative Events of Genesis 1 & 2, noting especially the correlation with geology and paleontology.

In this third lecture, then, we have attempted to raise and to answer two important questions. The first question had to do with the chronological meaning of the term *yom*, with particular reference to the Creation Days of Genesis. We have proposed literal, 24-hour Creation Days, separated by intervals of varying length, and marking the stage of essential fulfillment in overlapping creative-aspect periods (i.e., periods of time during which God accomplished some aspect of His creative activity).

The second question which we raised had to do with the correlation of the Creation Days and the creative events of Genesis 1-2 with the combined records of astrophysics, geology, and paleontology. We have proposed a correlation which, although it does not answer all questions which might be raised, yet does attempt to show that the scriptural record and the record of the rocks are not, at any essential point, in conflict, but rather are beautifully in agreement with one another.

Of course, we must confess that this is exactly what we expected, not only because we have constructed this synthesis, but primarily because we are convinced that God's inspired revelation of Himself in Scripture is true, and that this revelation in Scripture cannot conflict with God's revelation of Himself as Creator in nature! It is one and the same God who has revealed Himself as Creator in Scripture and in His creation!

Diagram of One Possible Structuring of the Creation Days and the Creative Events of Genesis 1 & 2



But now a problem arises. Does this discussion imply that the interpretation by most paleontologists of the record of the rocks as proving evolution from non-living to living material, and from living material to all the forms of living things on earth today, is a correct interpretation? Here it is important to distinguish between a Creationist interpretation of the record, and an Evolutionist interpretation of the same record. This distinction raises the question of exactly what God created, and this in turn points our attention to the need for discovering the meaning of the Biblical "kinds" which Genesis tells us God brought into being. However, this subject must be reserved for our next lecture.

THE UNIFIED CREATIONIST VIEW

Part One: Three Meanings of the Term "Creation"

Ex Nihilo Creation -- The bringing into being of that which did not (either in its substance or its form) previously exist.

Immediate Creation -- The bringing into being of that which did not (in its form) previously exist, employing previously-existing substance but not secondary causes.

Mediate Creation -- The bringing into being of that which did not (in its form) previously exist, employing both previously-existing substance and secondary causes.

Part Two: A Proposed Structuring of the Creative Events of Genesis 1-2

Creative Period	Creation Day	Creative Event	Reference
1st	Pre-1	(1) Ex Nihilo Creation of primal matter-energy	1:1
		(2) Mediate Creation of the structured universe	1:1
		(3) Mediate Creation of the Milky Way Galaxy	1:1
2nd	Day 1	(4) Mediate Creation of our solar system (thus light, and thus day and night)	1:2-5
3rd	Day 2	(5) Mediate Creation of earth's atmosphere, and the subsequent separation of water above the surface of earth from water covering earth's surface	1:6-8
4th	Day 3	(6) Mediate Creation of dry land, by the structuring of earth's surface into lands and seas	1:9-10
	Day 3	(7) Immediate Creation of land plants begins	1:11-13

5th	Day 4	(8) Mediate Creation of the appearance of sun, moon and stars in the sky (as viewed from earth)	1:14-19
6th	Day 5	(9) Immediate Creation of aquatic animals and birds begins	1:20-23
7th	Day 6	(10) Immediate Creation of terrestrial animals begins	1:24-25
		(11) Immediate Creation of the Garden of Eden	2:8
		(12) Ex Nihilo Creation of man's soul Immediate Creation of man's body	1:26-27 2:7
		(13) Ex Nihilo Creation of woman's soul; Immediate Creation of woman's body	1:27 2:19-23
	Day 7	(14) Cessation of Immediate Creation; Mediate Creation continues to present	2:1-3

Standard Geologic Relative Time Scale

Time Scale (begins yrs BP)	Eras	Periods	Epochs	Fossil Record - Appearance of New Life Forms
10 thousand	Cenozoic	Quater- nary	Recent	No new basic forms
2 million			Pleisto- cene	Most modern fami- lies, genera, species present, first humans
12 million		Tertiary	Pliocene	All carnivores, many types of horses and browsing animals
26 million			Mio- cene	First mastodons, giant ground sloths, primitive dogs, horses, antelopes
36 million			Oligo- cene	First true carnivores, first cats (saber- toothed), first apes
54 million			Eocene	First rodents, first rhinoceroses, first monkeys
65 million			Paleo- cene	First hoofed mam- mals, first flesh-eat- ing mammals, first lemuroids
135 million	Mesozoic	Creta- ceous		Last dinosaurs, last toothed birds, first modern birds
180 million		Jurassic		First flowering plants, giant dinosaurs, first birds, first mammals
225 million		Triassic		Last seed ferns, first dinosaurs

280 million	Paleozoic	Permian		Last trilobites, last eurypterids, first modern insects
310 million		Pennsylvanian		First conifers, first primitive (wingless) insects, first reptiles
355 million		Mississippian		First bryophytes (mosses and liverworts)
405 million		Devonian		First fungi, first seed-bearing plants, first amphibians
440 million		Silurian		First land plants, first land animals
500 million		Ordovician		First bryozoans, first vertebrates (jawless fishes)
600 million		Cambrian		Almost every major phylum of living things
	Proterozoic			Marine worms (trails, burrows)
(3.4 billion) [4.55 billion]	Archeozoic			Marine bacteria, Marine algae (oldest surface rocks) [age of earth]

Lecture Four:

The Unified Creationist View and the "Kinds" of Creation

In the first two lectures of this series, we attempted to establish the need for a self-consistent, coherent, responsible Creationist alternative to Evolutionism, and we proposed the Unified Creationist View as that alternative. In the third lecture we dealt with the chronology of the Creation Days and the creative events of Genesis 1-2. We proposed the

conceptual structure of several overlapping creative-aspect periods (i.e., periods of time during which God accomplished some aspect of His creative activity), each of which was marked by a beginning stage, a stage of essential fulfillment, and a completion stage. Within these creative-aspect periods we arranged the creative events of Genesis 1-2. We defined the Creation Days as literal 24-hour days and proposed that these days marked the stage of essential fulfillment in each of these creative-aspect periods (with the exception of the first creative-aspect period, which we placed prior to the creative-aspect period marked by the creative command, "Let there be light," which command culminated in Day 1).

Having proposed this conceptual structure of the creative events and the Creation Days, we attempted to correlate this structure with the records of astrophysics, geology, and paleontology. We found that they harmonized rather well. This, in turn, suggested the question, "If we correlate the scriptural record with the scientific record, do we not thereby place our stamp of approval upon the essential arrangement of the geologic and paleontologic data as given by men of science in these fields? And, since this arrangement is used by paleontologists as a very important evidence for the theory of evolution, do we not thereby give up the entire Creationist case in favor of Evolutionism?" To this question we suggested that a distinction must be made between a Creationist interpretation of the fossil record and an Evolutionist interpretation of the same record. For a Creationist standpoint, this raised the question of the meaning of the Biblical "kinds" which God created. And it is to this question that we now turn.

The Hebrew word translated "kind" is used ten times in the first chapter of Genesis. It is used a total of 31 times in the Hebrew Old Testament. This Hebrew word (מין) is transliterated *min*. But now we must ask the question: What does *min* mean?

One of the first principles of lexicography is that the meaning of a word is discovered by an examination of its *usage in context*. In this connection we are fortunate to have as many instances of *min* in Scripture as we do have, and we are doubly fortunate in the fact that 30 of its 31 occurrences are found in the writings of one author, namely Moses. We thus have a fairly solid base upon which to build our understanding of the meaning of this Hebrew word.

As we approach the question of the usage of the word *min*, something that could affect its meaning strikes us almost immediately. In every one of its 31 uses, *min* is preceded by a preposition, and it is the same proposition in every case. This preposition (?) has the meanings "to, according to, for." It would appear that the meaning "according to" best fits its usage in these cases.

Unfortunately, this preposition has sometimes been translated by the English preposition "after," and this has caused readers to think that there is some temporal idea, some time component in the Scriptural phrase. There is no idea in the Hebrew preposition ? of something "coming after" something else, or of one thing "following" another. This time idea must be expunged from our understanding, if we wish to correctly interpret these usages. The meaning of this preposition, in all of its usages with *min*, is simply "according to."

Let us proceed, then, to an examination of those scriptural passages in which *min* is used. However, lest we enter upon this examination of a portion of the Word of God in a careless manner, let us pause and ask ourselves, What method of examination will best facilitate our study?"

In inductive studies in which a considerable number of items are involved, it is sometimes quite sufficient to study them in simple enumerative order. At other times, especially when the items to be studied differ in degree of difficulty, it is often more efficient to begin with the less difficult problems and proceed to the more difficult ones. In this study, we shall adopt the latter approach.

Let us begin at Genesis 6:19-20. Here we read God's words to Noah

And from every living thing, from all flesh, two of each shall you cause to come into the ark, to preserve alive with you; they shall be male and female. From the bird, *according to its kinds*, and from the cattle, *according to its kind*, and from every creeping animal of the ground *according to its kinds*; two of each shall enter unto you to preserve alive.

It is important to note that there is no time element, no before-and-after sequence in this passage. Verse 20 says nothing about birds, cattle, and

creeping things which *come after* other birds, cattle and creeping things. Verse 20 also says nothing about animals *being similar* to their parents. I mention these things at this point because these two ideas of coming after and being similar to are the ideas most frequently associated with the translation "after its kind."

In this connection, I believe that the King James Version's translation of *min* with the preposition is misleading to English-speaking people today. What can the phrase "after its kind" as it is ordinarily understood mean in this context? What can it mean for Noah to take "fowls after their kind" into the ark with him? What can it mean for Noah to take "cattle after their kind" into the ark? What was Noah to understand by such a command? Did God wish Noah to make certain that he took into the ark only those birds and those cattle which had been begotten in their parents' likeness? Such an interpretation reduces a simple command to meaninglessness!

At this point I must speak frankly. There are many exegetes and theologians who appear to firmly believe that, unless *min* with its preposition is translated in every case by the phrase "after its kind," a potential loophole is opened which could be interpreted as providing aid or support to evolutionists. And such a loophole must not be opened, even at the expense of interpreting Scripture in a faulty, incorrect or meaningless way!

This allegation receives support from the fact that, by translating *min* with its preposition exclusively (with one exception) by the phrase "after its kind," twenty out of thirty uses become meaningless for present-day English, and the remaining ten uses are all in Genesis 1, where we are dealing with Creation! But what does it matter that twenty uses become meaningless; Creationism has been preserved, and Evolutionism has been deprived of a potential weapon! Is not the good accomplished thereby greater than the evil?

To this we must answer with all the earnestness and vigor at our command: Christianity does not need the well-intentioned but exegetically questionable, hermeneutically unsound, theologically indefensible, and ethically reprehensible attempts on the part of some Christians to save other Christians (especially Christian young people) from the faith-destroying theory of Evolutionism. What Christianity needs in this desperate

hour is a straightforward translation of the Word of God in its integrity!
Let those who wholeheartedly believe in the truthfulness of the
Scriptures set them forth truthfully!

But how, then, shall we translate this passage in Genesis 6 in a
meaningful way, while simultaneously preserving its integrity? Actually,
in the proper understanding of the inspired Word of God, these two
purposes never conflict. Scripture can only be meaningful if its integrity
is preserved; and if its integrity is preserved, it will be meaningful.

In this passage God told Noah that "from the bird, *according to its kinds*,
he was to take two of each into the ark. "The bird according to its kinds"
simply means "*various kinds of birds*" which Noah was to take into the
ark. The correctness of this translation is reinforced by the clause, "two
of each shall enter unto you." The phrase "two of each" certainly does
not mean that only two birds, two cattle, and two creeping animals of the
ground were to enter the ark with Noah, but rather that two of each kind
of bird, two of each kind of cattle, and two of each kind of creeping
animal of the ground were to be brought into the ark.

This translation receives further support from the record of fulfillment of
God's command, as found in Genesis 7:13-14. This passage states:

In the very same day Noah and Shem and Ham and
Japheth the sons of Noah entered, and the wife of Noah
and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark.
They, and every living animal, *according to its kind*, and
every cattle, *according to its kind*, and every creeping
animals which creeps upon the earth, *according to its
kinds*, and every bird, *according to its kinds*, every winged
bird.

Here we do not read that Noah brought into the ark those animals which
came after and *were similar* to their parents (the idea associated with the
expression "after its kind"). We read simply that Noah brought into the
ark two specimens of each kind of living animal, each kind of cattle,
each kind of creeping animal, and each kind of bird. Thus the phrase
"according to its kind" as the translation of *min* with the preposition *ʾ* is
not only the proper translation, it also makes good sense!

Proceeding now to Leviticus 11. we discover that *min* is used five times
in

connection with animals that are not to be eaten. Verse 14 that the kite, according to its kind, is not to be eaten. (Incidentally, this is not addressed to that famous species of kite-eating tree which plagues Charlie Brown; it is a prohibition to the children of Israel against the eating of the various kinds of long-tailed, long pointed-winged birds called kites!) Notice what this verse does *not* say. It does not say that the kite which has *come after* and is *similar to* its parents is not to be eaten. It simply says that the various kinds of birds known as kites are not to be eaten!

The same is true in Leviticus 11:15, 16, 19 and 29. The children of Israel are forbidden to eat various kinds of raven, various kinds of hawk, various kinds of heron, and various kinds of tortoise.

In Leviticus 11:22 we find that *min* is used four times in connection with animals which may be eaten. The children of Israel are permitted to eat various kinds of locust, various kinds of bald locust, various kinds of beetle and various kinds of grasshopper. In all of these cases, instead of translating *min* with its preposition by the phrase "after its kind," we should translate it by the phrase "according to its kind."

In the second giving of the Law, as recorded in Deuteronomy 14, there are four instances of *min*. They are found in verses 13, 14, 15 and 18, and they all concern animals which are not to be eaten by the children of Israel. In verse 13 they are forbidden to eat the vulture according to its kind. In verse 14 they are prohibited from eating the raven according to its kind. In verse 15 they are commanded not to eat the hawk according to its kinds. And in verse 18 they are told not to eat the heron according to its kind. All of these uses are quite transparent. They are simply not to eat any kind of vulture, raven, hawk, or heron. There is not the *slightest hint*, in the expression of *min* preceded by ׀ of the idea of animals being "after their kind," i.e., of animals which have come after and are similar to their parents. The entire thrust of the expression is the inclusion, within a given category of animals not to be eaten, of all the various kinds of that category. Thus we translate the expression in the Hebrew, "according to its kind," or "according to its kinds."

Ezekiel 47:10 provides the only usage of *min* outside the Pentateuch. It is also the only instance out of 31 uses in which the proposition is translated "according to" in the Authorized Version. The passage, speaking of the great river which flows from beneath the Millennial Temple, states:

And it shall come to pass, that fishermen shall stand upon it, from Engedi even to Eneglaim; they shall be a place to spread out nets; their fish shall be *according to its kind*, as the fish of the great sea, exceedingly many.

This passage would appear to be speaking of the many varied kinds of fish which shall inhabit the great river of the Millennial Temple, and the Authorized Version translates it in exactly this fashion.

This brings us to the disputed uses in Genesis 1. The word *min* with the preposition *ʾ* occurs ten times in the first chapter of Genesis. Three of these instances are associated with the Immediate Creation of plants, one instance is connected with the Immediate Creation of aquatic animals, one instance is concerned with the Immediate Creation of birds, and the remaining five instances relate to the Immediate Creation of terrestrial animals.

One point, which may at first appear to be a truism but must nevertheless be made, is that these plants and animals which God created did not exist before God created them. There are many who are quick to give assent to this proposition, but who reject its clear implication. The clear implication of this proposition is that, in the Genesis account of Creation, we are not dealing with *reproduction*, but with the *original creation* of all living things. Genesis 1 is not speaking of plants *reproducing* other plants; it is speaking of God *creating* plants. Again, Genesis 1 is not speaking of animals reproducing animals; it is speaking of God *creating* animals. With this clarification firmly in mind, let us proceed to an examination of *min* in the first chapter of Genesis.

In the following translations I have translated *min* with the preposition in the same fashion as in all the instances already noted. I have done this for at least three reasons:

- (1) An examination of the 21 instances of *min* outside of Genesis I has revealed the fact that *min* with the preposition *ʾ* uniformly means "according to its kind(s)."
- (2) Twenty of those 21 instances fall within the writings of Moses (7 in Genesis, 9 in Leviticus, and 4 in Deuteronomy); Moses also wrote Genesis 1.
- (3) In Genesis 1 we are dealing with the Immediate Creation of all living

things; i.e., their initial coming into existence by God's creative commands. In Genesis 1:11-12 we read:

And God said, Let the earth cause vegetation to sprout forth; the herb yielding seed, the fruit tree producing fruit whose seed is in it, *according to its kind*, upon the earth. And it was so. And the earth produced vegetation, the herb yielding seed *according to its kinds*, and the tree producing fruit whose seed is in it, *according to its kinds*, and God saw that it was good.

In the English it is difficult to phrase the words of these verses in such a way as to show the connection of *min* with its antecedent. Verse 11 connects *min* with "fruit tree." This may be expressed by reading, "Let the earth cause to sprout forth various kinds of fruit tree which produce fruit whose seed is in it." Likewise verse 12 connects *min* with "herb" and with "tree." This may be expressed by reading, "And the earth produced various kinds of herbs yielding seed, and various kinds of trees producing fruit whose seed is in it." Although this mode of reading may seem a bit awkward, it is the only way in which to show the proper relationship of the words concerned.

In Genesis 1:21 we read:

And God created great aquatic animals, and every living being that moves, which the waters multiplied *according to their kinds*, and every winged bird, *according to its kinds*; and God saw that it was good.

Here we understand the statements of fact to mean simply that God created various kinds of aquatic animals and various kinds of birds. There is no thought of reproduction here, since aquatic animals and birds did not exist before this creation; this passage speaks only of their original creation in various kinds.

In Genesis 1:24 we read:

And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living being *according to its kind*, cattle and creeping animal and living animal of the earth, *according to its kind*. And it

was so. And God created the living animal of the earth, *according to its kind*, and the cattle, *according to its kind*, and every creeping animal of the ground *according to its kind*; and God saw that it was good.

Here there is absolutely no thought whatever of terrestrial animals "reproducing after their kind"; the thought is simply that of God's calling forth from the earth all the varied kinds of living being: cattle, creeping animal, and living animal of the earth. Verse 25 should be understood to mean that God immediately created different kinds of the specified categories of land animals. And there is nothing more in the combination of *min* with the preposition *ʔ* than this!

But now, having ascertained the Biblical usage of *min*, we must ask the question: "To what level in the scientific classification of plants and animals does *min* correspond? Is it the equivalent to a biological *species*? Can it sometimes refer to a genus, or a family, or an order, or a class, or a phylum?"

An analysis of the level of the classification of the Biblical "kinds" uncovers a rather remarkable fact. The word *min* is associated with categories of plants and animals which range from the level of sub-species to the level of phylum, and which include all levels between! From this information we may learn a very important truth: the word *min* does not denote one specific level in scientific classification (such as species, for example). Another truth which we may learn from this study is that, in Genesis 1, where we read of God's original Creation, the categories of plants and animals range from family up to phylum, and therefore we may not say that the Bible says that God created all plants and animals on the level of our present species. In the case of some living things, God may have created on the level of our present orders, in some cases on the level of our present families, in some case on the level of our present genera, and in some cases on the level of our present species. Perhaps the paleontologic record could be of help in learning on what present classification level or levels God created the various "kinds" of plants and animals.

Analysis of the Technical Taxonomic Level of the Biblical "Kinds"			
Scripture	Nature of Kind	Taxonomic Level	Scientific Group Name
Gen 1:11	Fruit trees	Some orders of a subclass	Dicotyledonae
Gen 1:12	Herbs	Some orders of 2 subclasses	Mono- and dicotyledonae
Gen 1:21	Aquatic animals	Several phyla	
Gen 1:21	Birds	Class	Aves
Gen 1:24	Terrestrial animals	Several phyla	
Gen 1:24	Cattle	Family	Bovidae
Gen 1:24	Creeping animals	Several phyla	
Lev 11:14	Kite	Family	Elaninae
Lev 11:15	Raven	Genus	Corvus
Lev 11:16	Hawk	Family	Accipitrinae
Lev 11:19	Heron	Family	Ardeidae
Lev 11:22	Locust	Family	Locustidae
Lev 11:22	Bald Locust	Species (?)	

Lev 11:22	Beetle	Order	Coleoptera
Lev 11:22	Grasshopper	Suborder or Superfamily	Acridiidae & Locustidae
Deut 14:13	Vulture	Family	Cathartidae
Ezk 47:10	Fish	Superclass	Pisces

Another truth which we learn from this study is that the Bible does *not* say that the development of new species is an impossibility. As a matter of fact, if God originally created some living things on the present level of family (for example), then all of the members of the family have since developed, which means that new genera as well as new species have developed. The Bible simply does not teach the dogma of "the fixity of species." As a matter of fact, this dogma grew out of a mistranslation of *min* with the preposition ? coupled with a mistaken identification of the Biblical word *min* with the scientific concept "species."

But further, the Bible does not even say that God created all of the original "kinds" of plants and animals in such a way that no new "kinds" could develop from the original "kinds." I realize that in saying this I am desecrating the "sacred cow" of many who believe that the limits of variability established by the phrase "after their kind" is the last bulwark of Creationism against the flood-tides of Evolutionism. However, not finding this translation "after their kind" is Biblically correct, I do not find it theologically correct! And therefore I do not find it a crucial support for Creationism, nor a great bulwark against Evolutionism.

But let us pause for a moment and reflect. Does this mean that the door is now wide open for a thorough-going Evolutionistic interpretation of the record of the rocks? Is the way now cleared for the Evolutionist's assertion of amoeba-to-man development? Having given up the phrase "after its kind," which was the one remaining defense against Evolutionism, must we now become Evolutionists?

Before we answer too hurriedly (thereby running the risk of making fools

of ourselves), let us consider what the record of the rocks tells us. And, for a competent and unbiased (i.e., unbiased in favor of Creationism) summary of that record, let us note the words of the "Dean of American Paleontologists," George Gaylord Simpson, in his book *The Major Features of Evolution*. Simpson writes:

The record already acquired is amazingly good. It provides us with many detailed examples of a great variety of evolutionary phenomena on lower and intermediate levels and rather abundant data that can be used either by controlled extrapolation or on a statistical sampling basis for inferences as to phenomena on all levels up to the highest. Among the examples are many in which, beyond the slightest doubt, a species or a genus has been gradually transformed into another. Such gradual transformation is also fairly well exemplified for subfamilies and occasionally for families, as the groups are commonly ranked In spite of these examples, it remains true, as every paleontologist knows, that most new species, genera, and families appear in the record suddenly and are not led up to by known, gradual, completely continuous transitional sequences.⁵

It is most important to realize what Simpson is saying. Gradual transformations leading to new species, new genera, some new subfamilies, and occasionally new families are witnessed to by the record of the rocks. However, *most* new species, genera, and families appear quite suddenly; i.e., the record of the rocks is absent of ancestors from whom they could have descended. Moreover, *practically all* new orders, classes, and phyla appear quite suddenly; i.e., without ancestors. How are these systematic deficiencies, these discontinuities, these gaps in the fossil record to be overcome? Simpson says that this can be done by extrapolation and inference from what we are able to see on lower levels to what we are not able to find on higher levels. To say that such an explanation of the systematic gaps in the record of the rocks, especially on the higher levels, is quite unsatisfactory, is to utter a gross understatement! But how then can these gaps be explained?

I would propose that the record of the rocks is a natural record of God's creative activity. I would further propose that the reason that most new

species, genera, and families, and practically all new orders, classes and phyla appear quite suddenly in the fossil record is that these appearances represent separate creative acts of God in the bringing into existence of new "kinds" of plants and animals. I would still further propose that these distinct creations of new "kinds" of plants and animals be synthesized with the chronological framework which was presented in the third lecture of this series.

In that lecture, we proposed a chronological framework for the correlation of the creative events and the Creation Days of Genesis 1-2. This framework consisted of seven creative-aspect periods, some of which overlapped in time, and all of which were marked by a beginning stage, a stage of essential fulfillment, and a completion stage. In each of the creative-aspect periods from the second to the seventh, the stage of essential fulfillment coincided with a specific literal day. These were the six Creation Days of Genesis 1.

In synthesizing the concept of distinct creations of new "kinds" of plants and animals with this chronological framework, as well as with geologic and paleontologic history, I would propose the following:

- (1) That the Immediate Creation of various "kinds" of plants be placed at various intervals in the fourth creative-aspect period, beginning in the later Precambrian and continuing through the Tertiary Period of the Cenozoic Era.
- (2) That the Immediate Creation of the various "kinds" of aquatic animals be placed at intervals in the sixth creative-aspect period, beginning near or at the inception of the Cambrian Period of the Paleozoic Era and continuing through the Tertiary Period of the Cenozoic Era.
- (3) That the Immediate Creation of the various "kinds" of birds be placed at intervals in the sixth creative-aspect period, beginning in the Jurassic Period of the Mesozoic Era and continuing through the Tertiary Period of the Cenozoic Era.
- (4) That the Immediate Creation of the various "kinds" of terrestrial animals be placed at varying intervals during the seventh creative-aspect period, beginning in the Silurian Period of the Paleozoic Era and continuing through the Tertiary Period of the Cenozoic Era.
- 5) That the Ex Nihilo Creation of man's soul and the Immediate Creation

of man's body be placed at the close of the seventh creative-aspect period, somewhere in the Quaternary Period of the Cenozoic Era.

Thus, by combining the conceptual structure of our proposed chronological framework for the events of Genesis 1-2 with the conception of creation at varying intervals of all the various "kinds" of plants, animals, and man in the world, we arrive at a synthesis of the relevant Biblical and scientific data, which we have called the Unified Creationist View. However, this is not the completion of our task; it is only the beginning. Yet, as a beginning, it is our "Proposed Creationist Alternative to Evolutionism." May God grant that this work shall be carried forward, by His grace and for His glory!

Reference Notes:

1. Julian S. Huxley, *Evolution in Action* (New York: The New American Library, 1953), p 10.
2. Horatio Hackett Newman, *Evolution, Genetics, and Eugenics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956), p 51.
3. Augustine, "De Actis cum Felice Manichaeo," in *Patrologia Latina* 42.525, caputX.
4. Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (Kampen: 1928), 2:458.
5. George Gaylord Simpson, *The Major Features of Evolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), pp 359-60.

Part Three

Redemption

Chapter Seven

Some Implications of the Meaning of the Incarnation

Benjamin B. Warfield, writing in *The Westminster Teacher* of January, 1908, in a brief article entitled "John's First Word," states:

The fundamental purpose of the preface which John has prefixed to his Gospel is ... to account for Jesus Christ... Precisely what John ... represents Jesus as really being is God manifested in the flesh. Not God merely; though he does represent him as God, and that is the fundamental thing. Least of all, as one who was once God, but ceased to be God on becoming flesh -- even for a time only, or for some aspects only. But specifically as God manifested, fully manifested, in the flesh His purpose is to prepare his readers for the manifestations of deity which they will meet in the story of Jesus' life and teaching, to make these seem to them natural in this man, and thus to enable them to read them simply and without shock or surprise. He therefore wishes to tell them plainly at the outset that this Being of whose life on earth they are to read is no mere man, but just God manifested in the flesh He is declared plainly to be God. He is asserted to have subsisted from eternity, in some high sense identical with God, while yet in some equally true sense distinct from God. He is announced as the actual creator of all that, in distinction from him, the eternally self-existent One, has come into being. He is represented as the source of all the light and life that is in the world; and of all the restorative influences which play upon this sinful world. He is proclaimed finally as God only-begotten, who abides in the bosom of the Father, while manifesting his glory on earth. Such is the Being whom, John tells us, we must recognize that Jesus Christ to be, whose life and work on earth he is essaying to describe to us. Only by so recognizing him as God in the flesh, he tells us, can we understand the life he lived and the work he did; or can we hope to know him.^1

In the first chapter of John's Gospel, verse 14, we come upon the very center, the heart of the doctrine of the Incarnation. In one clause of five words, John proclaims the most marvelous and profound truth when he says:

Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο
and the Word became flesh.

What does this brief statement mean? And what are the *implications* of that statement's meaning?

The Meaning of the Incarnation

This clause, "And the Word became flesh," contains three key words, *logos*, *sarx*, and *ginomai*. Let us briefly consider the meanings of these words.

The first of these three words, *logos* (λόγος) is used 322 times in the Greek New Testament. Arndt and Gingrich's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* proposes three basic categories of meaning. The first is that of speaking -- either speaking in general or revelation from God in particular. The second category of meaning is that of computation or reckoning. And the third is a special theological usage, such as is found in this section, referring to the preexistent, incarnate Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the speaking, the word, the expression of God. The speaker of this Word, this *Logos*, is none other than God Himself. Jesus Christ is the supreme mode of Revelation from and of God. He is the truth about God, the personal Word of God to us. The God whom no one has seen at any time, who cannot be known by unaided reason, has revealed Himself to us preeminently in the *Logos*.

In John 1:1 we read, "in the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was with God, and the *Logos* was God." Note that it does not say "and the *Logos* was a god," but simply "and the *Logos* was God." If someone insists that the second time the Greek word for God (*Theos*) is used in verse 1 it does not have the article and therefore should be translated "a god," then we must insist that we together look at some other verses in the immediate context where *Theos* occurs without the article, and see what

happens if these uses are translated as "a god."

Verse 6, for example, then reads, "There was a man sent from *a god*, whose name was John." Verse 12 reads, "But whoever received Him, He gave them power to become children of *a god*." Verse 13 then reads speaking of those who believe on and receive Jesus Christ as Savior "Which were begotten, not of bloods nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of *a god*." Verse 18 then reads, "No one has seen *a god* at any time, an only-begotten god, the one who is in the bosom of the Father, that one has revealed Him." Here the concept that the use of *Theos* without the article means "a god" reduces verse 18 to absurdity. It makes this verse say, "an only-begotten god has revealed an unseen god"; or to put it more simply, *a god* has revealed *a god*! Of course, the person who insists that *Theos* without the article be translated "*a god*" does not really want to translate it that way in verses 6, 12, 13 and 18, but only in verse 1. One cannot know, but one may justifiably suspect that such a translation has some kind of ulterior motive behind it, arising out of some theological bias or aberration! Verse 1 should simply be translated "In the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was with God, and the *Logos* was God."

The second of these three key words, *sarx* (σὰρξ) is used 151 times in the Greek New Testament. In these uses, at least eight categories of meaning can be discerned. The word *sarx* means "flesh" in English. But having said that, we hurry on to ask, "But what does 'flesh' mean in English?" Permit me to mention these categories of meaning and to quote a Scripture or two for each.

1. "*Flesh*" means the physical body.

Acts 2:26-27, 31 -- Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; Moreover my *flesh* also will abide in hope; Because Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades, Nor allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay He [David] looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did his *flesh* suffer decay."

Ephesians 5:28-29 -- "So husbands ought also to love their on wives as their own *bodies*. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own *flesh*, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church."

2. *"Flesh" means the soft parts of the body, especially the muscle tissue, which cover the skeleton.*

Luke 24:39 -- [The risen Christ is speaking] "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself, touch me and see, for a spirit does not have *flesh* and bones as you see that I have."

3. *"Flesh" means physical or natural descent from one's ancestors.*

Romans 1:3 -- [speaking of the Gospel which God promised in Scripture] "concerning His Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the *flesh*."

Romans 9:3 -- [Paul is speaking] "For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the *flesh*."

4. *"Flesh" means humanity, or to be a human being.*

Acts 2:7 -- "And it shall be in the last days, God says, That I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all *mankind*; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."

Galatians 2:16 -- "Nevertheless, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no *flesh* be justified."

5. *"Flesh" means earthly existence, the present life.*

Hebrews 5:7 -- "In the days of his *flesh* [speaking of Christ] when He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and who was heard because of His piety."

I Peter 4:1-2 -- "Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the *flesh* [see 3:18, where Christ was "put to death in the *flesh*"; thus this is meaning #1, the physical body], arm yourselves also with the same purpose,

because he who has suffered in the *flesh* [same meaning, #1] has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the *flesh* [meaning #5] no longer for the lust of men, but for the will of God."

6. *"Flesh" means the natural, unregenerate state of human beings.*

Romans 7:5 -- "For while we were in the *flesh*, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death."

Romans 8:8-9 -- "And those who are in the *flesh* cannot please God. However, you are not in the *flesh* but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But in anyone does not have the Spirit of God, he does not belong to Him."

7. *"Flesh" means naturally, as distinguished from spiritually.*

2 Corinthians 5:16 -- "Therefore from now on we recognize no man according to the *flesh*; even though we have known Christ according to the *flesh*, yet now we know Him thus no longer."

8. *"Flesh" means the mass of sinful attributes in a human being, the depravity or corruption remaining even in the regenerate person.*

Romans 13:14 -- "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the *flesh* in regard to its lusts."

Galatians 5:19-21 -- "Now the deeds of the *flesh* are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envyings, drunkenness, carousings, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Now, having briefly noted these eight categories of meaning for the word *sarx*, we must ask, which one fits John 1:14? Although it is difficult to capture the precise idea of *sarx* in this usage, perhaps meaning #4 comes closest to it. In meaning #4, "flesh" means to be a human being. The *Logos* became *sarx*, that is, a human being.

The third of these three key words in John 1:14 (and the one which is perhaps the most critical), *ginomai*, is used 648 times in the Greek New Testament. This verb has a number of meanings, but chiefly two major categories. *Ginomai* means "to be" and "to become." Usage in context usually enables us to decide which of these meanings is intended. Given that the form of the verb indicates punctiliar action and past time (a 2nd aorist indicative), *ginomai* in this context means "became" rather than "was." The Logos was not always a human being; rather, at some point in the past, the *Logos became* a human being!

This point may be supported by reference to other Scriptures. For example, Hebrews 2:14 states, "Since the children [the sons of God] share in flesh and blood, He Himself [Jesus] also likewise *partook* of the same." Philippians 2:7c speaks of Christ Jesus "being *made* in the likeness of men." John 17:18 quotes our Lord as saying, "As Thou didst *send me into the world*, I also have sent them into the world." And 1 Timothy 1:15 asserts, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus *came into the world* to save sinners, among who I am foremost of all."

Putting all this together, we arrive at the doctrine: the God whom no human being has seen at any time manifested Himself in the world by becoming a human being. The *Logos* became *sarx*! However, since this leaves much to be desired and said, we must hasten on to our second major consideration.

The Implications of the Doctrine of the Incarnation

For some centuries conservative theology -- that theology which adheres heartily to the full and sole authority of Scripture as an infallible guide in all that it affirms -- has held tenaciously to two concepts which have sweeping implications for the doctrine of the Incarnation (as well as for other doctrines). Both concepts are denials of certain categories to God.

The first concept is a denial of the category of *becoming* to God. The category of *being* alone is applicable to God; the category of *becoming* is not. In this concept, God's nature is viewed as being completely actualized, with nothing of potentiality in Him. Since He already *is* everything He can be, He cannot *become* anything.

Thomas Aquinas, following the lead of Aristotle, proclaimed in his great work of systematic theology, *Summa Theologiae* (1265-1273) the doctrine that God has no potentiality, but is fully actualized. In Part One, Question 3, Article 2, he states that "God is pure act without any potentiality (*Deus est purus actus*). And in Article 4, he states "... since in God there is no potentiality ... it follows that in Him essence does not differ from being. Therefore His essence is His being." (*Essentia est suum esse*).

Aquinas' conception of God as completely actualized, with no possibility of becoming, has heavily influenced many Protestant thinkers. Fortunately, most conservative theologians have stressed *both* the unchangeability of God's nature, decrees, and Word, while at the same time resisting the seductive temptation to view God as immovable, static, and inactive on the other hand, or as doing everything that He does in the form of eternal acts on the other. To cite one example of a theologian who attempts to keep away from both extremes, Augustus Hopkins Strong, the Baptist theologian, in discussing the immutability of God, writes:

By this [immutability] we mean that the nature, attributes, and will of God are exempt from all change. Reason teaches us that no change is possible in God, whether of increase or decrease, progress or deterioration, contraction or development. All change must be to better or to worse. But God is absolute perfection, and no change to better is possible. Change to worse would be equally inconsistent with perfection. No cause for such change exists, either outside of God, or in God himself.^2

In order to balance the account, Strong adds an important corrective:

Immutability must not be confounded with immobility. This would deny all those imperative volitions of God by which he enters into history. The Scriptures assure us that creation, miracles, incarnation, regeneration, are immediate acts of God. Immutability is consistent with constant activity and perfect freedom.^3

Now, however, we come to the problem. Affirming on the one hand the unchangeability of God's nature, attributes, will, and Word (along with

Calvin, Charles Hodge, A. H. Strong, Lewis Sperry Chafer, and Henry C. Thiessen), we must on the other hand attempt to relate this concept of the denial of the category of becoming to the doctrine of the Incarnation. For the doctrine of the Incarnation teaches nothing less than that the *Logos became* a human being! If the category of *becoming* is denied to God, then how can the Second Person of the Trinity *become* anything? I will come back to this problem later.

The second concept which has sweeping implications for the doctrine of the Incarnation is a denial of the category of *time* to God. God is alleged to be timeless. God is said to be above time, outside of time, without conception of time. Time has no meaning for Him. Everything is an eternal *now* for God -- there is no past, present, or future for God everything is present.

Once again, Thomas Aquinas, following both Aristotle and Augustine, asserted that God is timeless. In his work *De Veritate*, Question 2, Article 12c, he states:

... since the vision of the divine knowledge is measured by eternity, which is simultaneously total, and yet includes the whole of time, nor is absent from any part of time, it follows that it sees whatever happens in any part of time, not as future, but as present. For that which is seen by God is future with respect to some other thing which it follows in time, but, to the divine vision itself, which is not in time, but is above time, it is not future but present. We, therefore, see the future, as future, because to our vision, which is measured by time, it is future; but to the divine vision, which is above time, it is not future.^4

To show how widely and deeply this concept of God's alleged timelessness has permeated conservative theology, one need only refer to Herman Bavinck's discussion of eternity as one of God's attributes. He writes:

... the essence of time is not that it is without beginning or end, but that it contains a succession of moments; that it is past, present, or future. From this it follows that time -- intrinsic time -- is a mode of existence of all created and finite beings. He who says "time" says motion, change,

measurableness, finiteness, limitedness, that which can be numbered, created being. Time is the measure of creaturely existence. "Time is the measure of motion in the movable object." Hence in God there is no time. He is what he is from eternity to eternity. There is in him "no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning." God is not an "eternally-becoming" being, but he is eternal essence. He is without beginning and end, and also without succession of moments: he cannot be measured or counted in his duration. A thousand years are with the Lord as one day. He is the eternal "I Am," John 8:58. Hence, God's eternity should rather be conceived as an eternal present, without past or future. "With God all is present. Thy today is eternity. Eternity itself is the substance of God, to which pertains nothing that is mutable." Boethius said concerning God's eternity that "God comprehends and at the same time possesses a complete fulness of interminable life," while Thomas Aquinas described this eternity as "a complete and at the same time a full possession of interminable life." With this agree all the theologians, not only the R. C. but the Lutheran and Reformed as well.^5

Well, there you have it! It would appear that the entire conservative theological world is agreed on God's timelessness! Shall we throw in the towel? Or shall we, like Athanasius, stand against the world? Let me report a personal conviction. After 26 years of graduate-level teaching, I have become more suspicious than ever of theological concepts that have germinated and grown up out of the arid soil of Greek philosophy rather than out of the good rich soil of Scripture! And these two concepts -- the denial of becoming and the denial of time to God -- seem to be more and more like cactus plants with sharp needles all over them and less and less like large leafy trees which provide nesting places for birds and cool shade for weary travelers.

But now we must become less botanical and more theological, as we examine these concepts critically. But before we do this, we must relate this concept of the denial of the category of time to the doctrine of the Incarnation. What is the problem specifically? Briefly stated, it is this: If there is no time with God, not even in the sense of succession of moments,

then how can a true doctrine of the Incarnation, involving a genuine union of divine and human natures in one Person, be preserved, in terms of the necessary before-and-after sequence in the Incarnation event? If the Son of God was not always Incarnate, but *became* Incarnate, then do we not have a pre-Incarnate state and then an Incarnate state? And how can this sequence in the personal experience of the Son of God be reconciled with God's alleged timelessness?

At this point, as you are beginning to realize the implications of these two somewhat interrelated concepts of the denial of becoming and the denial of time to God for the doctrine of the Incarnation, you may be tempted to do what I have found so many Christians willing to do -- simply put the entire doctrine of the Incarnation over in the realm of mystery, and to say, "The Incarnation is a *mystery* -- we cannot understand it -- we must simply believe it." Pious-sounding words! Somehow they sound vaguely similar to "Ignorance is bliss." But although pious-sounding, they may be bad words, since they seem too ready to affirm the meaninglessness of the scriptural truth, "The *Logos* became a human being."

Let us pause a moment and consider the idea of mystery. *Mystery* is a good scriptural concept! However, one should use it scripturally. "Mystery" in the Bible means either (1) something veiled, hidden, not revealed (either partially or fully); or (2) something revealed, but not fully understood. "Mystery" in Scripture never means total meaninglessness! By "mystery" Scripture means either that something has *not yet* been *revealed*, and therefore we can't know it: or that something *has* been *revealed*, and we don't *fully understand* it.

Many Christians, when they strike something that is the slightest bit difficult to understand, take immediate refuge in the category of "mystery." If anything in Scripture or Christian truth is not clear, simple, immediately apparent, they throw up their hands and say, "It's a mystery!" What I believe they are really saying is either that God did not intend us to understand the difficult things in Scripture until we reach heaven (when God will make it all clear to us), or that they do not feel like investing time and effort in prayerful study and reflection in attempts to understand those truths whose meanings are not immediately apparent.

In speaking with people in various churches who have run up against difficult truths in Scripture -- truths difficult to understand -- I have found

that they generally fail into one of two classes: either they react to difficulties by saying "It's a mystery! I don't understand it, but I believe it!" or they react by saying, "Hmm This needs prayerful study, careful thought, and perhaps time for reflection. I believe God wants me to understand as much of His Word as I can." Sorry to say, I meet more who fall into the former class than the latter! And still it is true: God does not put a premium upon so-called sanctified ignorance! The person who says, "I don't need to know about all that other stuff -- that history, that doctrine, that poetry and prophecy -- all I want to know about is *Jesus*!" either doesn't know or has forgotten that the Bible is a Special Revelation given by God to fallen man for his redemption, and that the entire Bible is centered in Jesus Christ and His redemptive work. If one wishes to know Jesus, let him or her look into God's Revelation of His redemptive plan and learn to find Jesus there. Since the written Word witnesses throughout to the Incarnate Word, a person who really loves and wants to know Jesus will love and want to know Scripture!

I believe that there is a proper place for the category of mystery in theology. But I do not believe that place is as a limiting concept at the very beginning of our study of Scripture, but as a recognition, when we have reached the temporary limits of our studies, that God's infinite greatness and our finiteness and sinfulness must necessarily prevent us from understanding any truth exhaustively. Thus I believe that mystery reminds us of the incomprehensibility of God! But this does not mean that we may not temporarily put the problem on the shelf, with the expectation of coming back to work on it further at some future time. And we should not be discouraged if we cannot understand things immediately. Some Christians have studied certain problems for years before these problems have yielded to understanding. And each time the Spirit of God opens a portion of His Word to our understanding, He gives us not only intellectual light but spiritual refreshing and assisting grace to put that particular truth to use for His glory and our good and the good of others.

Now, what about the implications of denial of the category of becoming for the doctrine of the Incarnation? How shall we understand the concept of becoming as related to the Second Person of the Trinity? Well, let us get clear on what happened at the moment of Incarnation.

The Scriptures represent the event in such a manner as to enable us to reconstruct the doctrine as follows: The Son of God, a divine Person from

eternity, took into personal union with Himself a human nature, consisting of a human body and a human soul/spirit, and thus became the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ. This personal union is not to be understood as a mere indwelling of the Word in flesh, in the manner in which the Holy Spirit indwells believers. Nor is it to be understood as a mere moral or sympathetic union of the Son of God with a human being, in the sense that they both thought alike, felt alike, and willed to do the will of God in like content and manner. The personality of this union resided in the divine nature before the Incarnation, but resided in both natures following the incarnation. The Son of God did not take into union with Himself a human *person*, but a human *nature*. By this act, He became a divine-human person.

This "becoming human" in the incarnation sense is not like putting on new clothing, or like taking on a new behavioral role; it is an actual becoming. The Son of God actually *became what He had not been* before the Incarnation! It is not that He "put on" certain human characteristics so as to appear like us in certain respects; He actually *became human* without ceasing to be divine. The Son of God became the God-man! The Word became flesh!

This brings us to the threshold of the problem in the "becoming" aspect of the Incarnation. On the one hand we must affirm that the Son of God, as God, has always been what He is and ever will be. *As God* there is no becoming in His essence or nature or attributes; there is only *being*. There is no potential in God's nature that is not fully actualized. There are no attributes that are not fully developed. God's attributes are perfect and complete. He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in all of His perfections. As such, God's being is not in process of becoming (contrary to the doctrine of Process Theology). This is not to deny that God is living, dynamic, active; or to deny that God thinks thoughts, feels emotions, and purposes to do certain things, and puts forth efficiency to produce effects.

On the other hand we must affirm that the Son of God at the Incarnation became what He had never been before -- a real man. Although the change from His preincarnate state of glory to His incarnate state of humiliation may be spoken of as a "mere change in outward circumstances," this change of becoming a human being involves the very Person of the Son of God. *He* (the Person) *became* (i.e., began to be what He

was not before) a *human being*!

But what does this do to the Son of God's attribute of immutability? The answer is that the Son of God changed and yet did not change. By becoming a man He changed; by remaining God He did not change. That is, this is a change not by *subtraction* of His divine attributes, but by *addition* of human attributes. Thus in one sense the Son of God was unchangeable in His Incarnation in that He was fully God; in another sense the Son of God changed in His Incarnation by taking into union with His Person a true human nature. Although this human nature was not a person in its own right, yet the Son of God took it into personal union with Himself from the first moment of conception, thereby making it personal. And from that moment on, it was *His* human nature. From that moment on, He was no longer God alone, with a divine nature; He was the God-man, with both a divine nature and a human nature. He was what it was to be divine, and He was what it was to be human.

Someone may say, "Yes, that is all very fine, but what do you do with Hebrews 13:8 -- 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, yes and forever.'?" Well, one thing is clear; we cannot make this verse deny the clear scriptural teaching that the Lord Jesus Christ, though He was rich in His preincarnate state of glory, yet for our sake He became poor by entering His incarnate state of humiliation; or that whereas He was God before the Incarnation, He was the God-man following it. What then does this denial of change mean?

Two fairly straightforward interpretations suggest themselves. The first takes the "yesterday" part of Hebrews 13:8 to refer to the recent historical past, beginning with the Incarnation itself; it would thus understand the verse to mean that from the Incarnation on, Jesus Christ has remained and will remain just as He is, without change. The second interpretation takes the "yesterday" part to refer to eternity past, and would thus understand the verse to mean that Jesus Christ, with respect to His divine nature, has always been and will always be what He is, without change. Either of these interpretations has merit.

In regard to this first concept -- the denial to God of the category of becoming-- I believe that we can conclude that we have established the category of becoming, while leaving the category of being intact. The Incarnation does not affect the attribute of unchangeability, since the Son

of God did not change by altering His divine nature, but by taking into union with Himself a human nature. Yet it was a genuine change in His Person, for although He had had one nature before the Incarnation, He had two natures following the event.

But now, what about the implications of denial of the category of time for the doctrine of the Incarnation? How shall we understand the before-after sequence in the event of the Incarnation as related to the alleged timelessness of the Second Person of the Trinity? Well, let us get clear on the concepts of time and eternity.

To begin with, "time" is a very elusive concept. It has various meanings. However, when we ask concerning the relationship of time to God, we must rule out certain meanings as inapplicable. When we ask, "Is there time with God?" we are not asking about calendar time, solar earth time, physics time, or even a nonphysical development-decomposition concept. We are asking about time in the sense of "a unidirectional continuum of experience including before and after relationships in sequential order." Is there time in this sense with God? Does God experience before and after relationships, not simply outside of Himself in the created universe, but in His self-experience?

The Incarnation helps us to decide the question of whether or not there is time in this sense with God. Before the Incarnation the Lord Jesus Christ was God and had only a divine nature. After the Incarnation the Lord Jesus Christ was the God-man, and had both a divine nature and a human nature. This event took place not only in the space-time history of the created universe; this was also an event in God's self-experience! The Son of God experienced in Himself the change which took place at the Incarnation. Here were before and after relationships in the continuum of the Son of God's self-experience; and this is time as we have defined it.

There is time with God. And yet God is eternal. Technically, I would define eternity as "an infinite, unbounded, unidirectional continuum of experience, including before and after relationships in sequential order." And I would propose that God alone is eternal. The physical universe, angels, Satan, demons, and humans are not eternal. God's existence and experience are eternal (i.e., unbounded by beginning or ending time); man's existence and experience are temporal and unending (i.e., bounded by a beginning time, but not bounded by an ending time).

Perhaps a few Scriptures should be mentioned. Psalm 90:1-2 says,

Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.
Before the mountains were born, Or Thou didst give birth
to the earth and the world, Even *from everlasting to*
everlasting, Thou art God.

In Psalm 102:24-27, we read:

I say, "O my God, do not take me away in the midst of my
days, *Thy years* are throughout all generations. *Of old*
Thou didst found the earth; And the heavens are the work
of Thy hands. Even they will perish, but Thou dost endure;
And all of them will wear out like a garment; Like clothing
Thou wilt change them, and they will be changed. But
Thou art the same, And *Thy years* will not come to an end.

In John 17:5, our Lord prays:

And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father,
with the glory which I ever had with Thee *before the world*
was.

And Ephesians 1:3-4 reads:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the
heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him
before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy
and blameless before Him.

These Scriptures and many others employ chronological language to describe God's activity. In fact, there are really only two Scriptures which appear to offer some support for the concept of God's alleged timelessness. But this concept was not originally derived from the Scriptures in any case; it was proposed by Aristotle, and found its way though Augustine and Aquinas into the various theology books of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Almost the only theologian of standing to challenge the concept was J. Oliver Buswell, Jr. In his monograph *Thomas*

and the Bible, Buswell writes:

The implications of the doctrine ... are devastating Creation with a before and after, predictive prophecy of future acts of God, incarnation in time (*chronos* and *kairos*), the atoning act once for all; the interval in the grave, the resurrection, the future resurrection of the dead, future judgment, all these chronological acts of God are reduced to illusions or paradoxes.^6

Although the Bible uses so many chronologically conditioned statements about God's activity, nevertheless the philosophical idea of God's timelessness does not die easily. After one has heard an idea over a period of years, it becomes difficult to disabuse oneself of it. And since there are two Scriptures which seem to hold out hope for the idea, the concept persists in spite of all the scriptural data to the contrary. These two references are 2 Peter 3:8 and Revelation 10:6.

2 Peter 3:8 says, "But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Although this is the main proof text in support of God's alleged timelessness, it should be noticed that the context does not suggest support for such an interpretation. Among various possibilities, two seem to hold promise, and both arise out of the context. The first holds that God's long-suffering and patience toward sinful men are so great that, whether he waits one day or a thousand years, His patience will endure, at least during the present day of grace (though it will not last forever, since the Day of the Lord will come as does a thief). The second interpretation holds that this verse has reference to the outworking of God's purposes in the created universe. God, by supernatural power, can accomplish in one earth day what would, by natural process, take one thousand years to accomplish. As far as His supernatural power is concerned, a thousand years of natural process can be accomplished in one day. This interpretation would emphasize the truth that God can, by supernatural power, bring human history to its completion in a very short time, and thus bring all of His promises to fulfilment in the very face of mockers and scoffers. Either one of these interpretations would appear to explain 2 Peter 3:8 without having to bring in the philosophical dogma of God's timelessness.

Revelation 10:6 is less difficult to explain. Actually the problem comes

with the Authorized Version, which translates the last part of the verse "that there should be *time* no longer." Of course, the fact the book of Revelation goes on to mention a number of chronologically designated events which come after the event spoken of in this verse, including the thousand-year period of the Millennium, should have alerted Bible students to the problem of absolutizing this statement in 10:6. In any case, the recent versions rather uniformly translate the statement "that there should be *delay* no longer."

Thus the case for timelessness collapses, as far as scriptural support is concerned. No doubt many will still cling to the concept, not realizing that it has not been built on Scripture, but on pagan Greek philosophy.

The doctrine of the Incarnation is a priceless truth. The statement, "And the *Logos* became flesh" is filled with profound meaning. The idea that Jesus Christ *became* a human being, and continues as the God-man forever, is a truth I can hardly take in. Here is the place for mystery! Here is the mystery of godliness! Here is the point at which we must step back in awe and reverence, realizing that we are standing on holy ground!

Reference Notes

1. Benjamin B. Warfield, "John's First Word," reprinted in *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield* -- I, ed. John E. Meeter (Nutley NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co, 1970), pp 148-150.
2. Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1907), 1:257.
3. Ibid., p 258.
4. Quoted from J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., *Thomas and the Bible*, unpublished monograph, p 51.
5. Herman Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God*. Trans. and ed. William Hendriksen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), p 156.
6. Buswell, *Thomas and the Bible*, p 71.

Chapter Eight

Regeneration and Indwelling in the Old Testament Period

Thirty seven years ago Lewis Sperry Chafer, discussing the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, wrote the following words:

Of the present ministries of the Holy Spirit in relation to the believer -- regeneration, indwelling or anointing, baptizing, sealing, and filling -- nothing indeed is said with respect to these having been experienced by the Old Testament saints, excepting a few well-defined instances where individuals were said to be filled with the Spirit. Old Testament saints were invested with these blessings only theoretically, and without support of the Bible, by those who read New Testament blessings back into the Old Testament.^1

Nine years ago Leon Wood, in the Preface to his landmark work, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament*, stated:

Some have doubted that true spiritual renewal existed prior to the founding of the church at Pentecost, and few have believed that the Old Testament could have included such New Testament truths as the "indwelling," "sealing," or "filling" of the Holy Spirit. The question is considered in the following pages, where it is maintained that all these truths were experienced by Old Testament saints. They did not call their experiences by these names, nor could they have defined them, but their existence is witnessed in the lives of true believers.^2

These quotations fairly delineate the issue between two strongly differing points of view concerning the work of the Holy Spirit during the Old Testament period. It should be noted that the differences between these positions go far deeper than the question of the number and kinds of ministries the Holy Spirit carried on during the older dispensation; they concern the very nature of Old Testament salvation itself, with regard both to the accomplishment and the application of salvation during that

dispensation.

Which of these views is correct? The former? The latter? Neither? In the words of the Westminster Confession of Faith, which of these views "is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture"?³

This paper addresses the question, Were all Old Testament believers regenerated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit? As projected, this study will examine recent opinion on these issues, propose tighter definitions of these ministries, and attempt to establish the claim that all Old Testament believers experienced these ministries, at least in some sense. As to the plan of the study, we will take up regeneration first, and then proceed to indwelling.

However, before we examine the question of these ministries as they relate to Old Testament saints, there are certain truths that must be set forth as preliminary principles essential to the study as a whole.

Preliminary Principles

The first of these principles may be stated in the following manner: since the Fall of mankind, human beings have been saved by grace through faith, upon the basis of the shed blood of Christ. Among evangelical Christians, dispensationalists have sometimes been accused of advocating more than one way of salvation, especially in regard to Old Testament saints. Roy L. Aldrich, Visiting Bible Lecturer at Dallas Theological Seminary for a number of years, stated that this is an "ultradispensational" teaching, and not characteristic of dispensationalism. In an article entitled "An Outline Study on Dispensationalism," in *Bibliotheca Sacra* of April 1961, he also states that "Orthodox Christian theology is in general agreement that there is only one plan of salvation for all dispensations."⁴ In the Doctrinal Statement of Dallas Theological Seminary the following assertion appears: "We believe that according to the 'eternal purpose' of God (Eph 3:11) salvation in the divine reckoning is always 'by grace, through faith,' and rests upon the basis of the shed blood of Christ."⁵

The second principle may be stated in the following words: the benefits of Christ's redemption can be applied before that redemption is accomplished

This principle addresses the problem of the time element in salvation, which is basically this: how can spiritual blessings which are based upon the time-space facticity of Christ's death and resurrection be applied before these events occur? In connection with our topic it can be framed in this fashion: how could Old Testament believers be regenerated or indwelt by the Holy Spirit until Christ died, rose, ascended and sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost? One answer is that none of these blessings could come to any Old Testament believer until Christ actually accomplished redemption in time. The problem with this answer is that it would exclude Old Testament believers from some of the benefits of Christ's atonement, but include them in others, even though the time problem is the same for both kinds of benefits (unless one posits another basis of salvation than that of Christ's shed blood). A second answer to this problem is that Christ's redemptive work was certain in God's eternal purpose, and thus atonement benefits could be applied before the atonement was actually accomplished in time, and especially to Old Testament saints. If the time problem is resolved in this second way, then the door is opened to the potential application of all of the benefits of Christ's redemption to the believer under the older dispensation, the only qualification pertaining to those benefits which are inherently impossible to apply or those which are specifically denied to the Old Testament believer by scriptural statement.

The third principle may be stated as follows: an epistemological mystery is not necessarily an ontological mystery. This principle addresses the problem of the concept of "mystery" in the New Testament, which is really twofold: (1) Is a mystery something totally unknown in past ages or only dimly and partially known? (2) If a spiritual reality was not revealed at all in the Old Testament, or not revealed as clearly in the Old Testament as in the New, does it follow that the spiritual reality did not exist in the Old Testament period? If we adopt the hermeneutical principle that non-revelation of a truth equals non-existence of the corresponding reality, what does this do to the concept of the progress (or unfolding) of revelation in Scripture? What does this principle do to such timeless truths as that of the Trinity, for as Warfield points out, "Whether there really exist traces of the idea of the Trinity in the Old Testament ... is a nice question."⁶ If we reject the principle -- "not revealed, therefore nonexistent then the possibility is opened that Old Testament believers experienced a number of blessings which were not explicitly revealed in the Old Testament.

The fourth principle is simply this: the Holy Spirit is that Person of the Trinity who implements the purposes of God in every age. In the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity we stress both oneness of essence and plurality of Persons; and we also distinguish essential equality and economic subordination. Although Father, Son, and Spirit are equally God, yet they do different things in the outworking of the Plan and Purpose of God. To employ a very imperfect analogy, in moving the great ocean liner of the Purpose of the triune God toward its goal, the Father functions as captain, the Son functions as chief executive officer, and the Spirit functions as the crew. The captain gives orders; the chief executive officer goes to carry out the orders and to see that they are completed; and the crew does the work and fulfills the tasks assigned to them.

Although all three Persons of the Trinity are active in the divine works of creation, providence, redemption, and judgment, nevertheless they do different things in the carrying out of these works. In the work of redemption, for example, the Father initiates redemption by sending His beloved Son into the world, the Son accomplishes redemption by becoming incarnate and by making an atonement for our sins, and the Spirit applies redemption by uniting us to Christ and to the benefits of His atoning work. Throughout the Bible it is the Holy Spirit who implements the plans of the Trinity. He is the one who does the work, as far as carrying the purposes of God into effect. He is the one who gets the job done, in the sense of bringing it into actuality. Although He is not merely a power or an influence but a real, living Person, nevertheless He is the power of God, the one who exerts energy and exercises efficiency to move the purposes of the godhead toward fulfillment in every age.

Now, having enunciated these principles as preliminary to our study, let us proceed to the ministries of regeneration and indwelling, particularly as these relate to Old Testament saints.

The Holy Spirit's Ministry of Regeneration During the Old Testament Period

Recent Opinion on the Question

Since the term "recent" is somewhat relative, I will arbitrarily define the recent period as beginning with the publication in 1948 of Lewis Sperry Chafer's *Systematic Theology* and continuing until the present. Since I

began this paper with a quotation from Chafer, and since when I finish this paper it will be the present moment, this definition of recent does not seem unreasonable. In any case, let us briefly survey some recent writers on the subject.

Rene Pache in his book, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*, states:

Before Jesus was glorified and before Pentecost, the Spirit was not poured out on all flesh ... In the Old Covenant, His work in the heart of men was therefore altogether different from what it is now ... Christ having not yet died and been raised for sinners, the Spirit could not raise them up with Him. He could not make them members of the Body of Christ, which did not then exist; consequently, He could neither baptize them into one Body (1 Cor 12:13), nor live eternally within them. The Spirit had to find hearts purified from sin before making them His temple. Christ, being without sin, was the first in whom the Spirit made His abode, and if He now lives within us, it is because of the blood of the Lamb which cleanses us from all our sins. But the atonement was not yet accomplished for believers under the Old Covenant.⁷

William Barclay, in his work, *The Promise of the Spirit*, states:

The Old Testament ... tells us that the Spirit is not only God's agent in creation; the Spirit is also God's agent in re-creation The Spirit is God's creating and God's re-creating power both in the world and in the individual life Every man needs to be made new; and he can be made new if he opens himself to the re-creating power of the Spirit of God.⁸

Leon Morris, in his book, *Spirit of the Living God*, holds that the Old Testament looks forward to a renewal of the inner life of men by the Spirit.⁹ In relation to the Holy Spirit's work in the life of the New Testament believer, he claims:

But the Spirit does not simply convict men and leave it at

that. He brings life; He can be called "the Spirit of life" He "quickens "men ... H. J. Wotherspoon trenchantly says, "Nothing was added to the Church by Pentecost no new truth, no new institution, nothing of apparatus; but only life itself."¹⁰

J. Dwight Pentecost, in an article on "The Godly Remnant of the Tribulation Period," published in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, states:

While we agree that the restrainer is the Holy Spirit, and that He will be taken away, yet we must recognize that the Spirit is omnipresent. He will cease His particular ministry of indwelling the body of Christ, but that does not mean He will be inoperative. Before Pentecost the Lord told Nicodemus that a man must be born again by the Spirit (John 3:5-6). If a person could experience a new birth before the Holy Spirit began to indwell the body, certainly one could after He ceases that particular ministry.¹¹

Roy L. Aldrich, in an article entitled "An Outline Study on Dispensationalism," in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, tells us that:

Critics of dispensationalism usually fail to recognize that most dispensationalists would approve of the following:
(1) That there is only one plan of salvation for all dispensations. (2) That the new birth is characteristic of all dispensations.¹²

J. Barton Payne. in his *Theology of the Older Testament*, asserts:

This definition of regeneration as being "in Christ" by no means, however, eliminates the doctrine of the new birth from the Old Testament. There is but one, unified testament of God's sole plan of salvation, through which Christ offers a redemption that is equally effective for the saints of both dispensations ... our Lord Himself bore witness to the reality of the doctrine of regeneration within the older revelation; for He countered the perplexity over the new birth that characterized the well-intentioned

but still Pharisaically blinded Nicodemus with the question, "Art thou the teacher of Israel and understandest not these things?"¹³

Roy L. Aldrich, in another article in *Bibliotheca Sacra* entitled "A New Look at Dispensationalism," affirms that:

Perhaps both sides of the dispensational debate could also agree that the new birth is characteristic of every period since the fall, even though this doctrine is not as clearly revealed in the Old Testament as in the New. It was before the inauguration of the church age that the Lord said to Nicodemus: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:15). Old Testament saints are clearly declared to be in the kingdom of God (Luke 13:28-29) and therefore they must have experienced the new birth. The Scriptural truth of man's sinful nature would make the new birth a necessity before there could be entrance into the kingdom of God."¹⁴

John J. Davis, in a thesis presented to the faculty of the graduate school of Grace Theological Seminary, stated:

Not all soteriological discussions by dispensationalists are devoid of an explanation of the essential elements of salvation as they relate to both the New and Old Testaments; but the greater majority of expositors that have written on this subject reject the idea that the essential elements of salvation were part of the believer's experience in all ages. This is especially true in regard to regeneration It will be shown later that regeneration in the Old Testament not only can be held by a dispensationalist but is more and more being defended as the proper approach to Old Testament soteriology.¹⁵

Incidentally, John J. Davis went on to become vice president of Grace Seminary.

Charles C. Ryrie, in his book entitled *The Holy Spirit*, does not mention

regeneration in relation to Old Testament believers, either pro or con. Since Chapter 2 deals with regeneration and Chapter 6 deals with "The Holy Spirit in Relation to Man in the Old Testament," this omission would appear to be significant!¹⁶

Charles W. Carter, in his work, *The Person and Ministry of the Holy Spirit: A Wesleyan Perspective*, states:

Important as was the function of the Spirit in the original creation of the natural world ... there remained for Him an even more important work. That was to be the re-creation and restoration of man from the wreckage sustained in the Fall. This re-creative work of the Spirit in man's salvation was to be realized through His conviction of man, His wooing him back to God from sin, and His regeneration of the repentant, believing sinner, plus his sanctification and ultimate glorification The work of the Spirit is both physical and spiritual, both creative and re-creative in the Old Testament, as well as the New, in nature as well as in man."¹⁷

Edwin H. Palmer, in his book, *The Person and Ministry of the Holy Spirit: The Traditional Calvinistic Perspective*, writes:

We find that in order to become a part of the church, one must be born again by the Holy Spirit ... it is the Holy Spirit who unites us to the church He establishes the church of Christ by regeneration It should not be thought, as some contend, that the Spirit founded the church at Pentecost and was not active in the church in the Old Testament period The church is one in both the Old and New Testaments, and it has always been the Holy Spirit who has introduced new members to the church, whether in the Old or New Testament dispensations.¹⁸

Leon Wood, in his work, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament*, asserts:

It is not difficult to show that Old Testament people did experience spiritual renewal The evidence that spiritual

renewal, or regeneration, was true of such Old Testament people lies mainly in two directions. One is that these people lived in a way possible only for those who had experienced regeneration, and the other is the avenue of logical deduction that argues back from New Testament truth The first line alone seems sufficient, for what more telling evidence of regeneration could there be than the lives of these great Old Testament saints? How could such lives be accounted for otherwise? These people were born sinners, as any of New Testament time (Rom 3:23). Yet they came to display the very highest in faith and obedience to God Their lives were outstanding in faithfulness and dedication, and they are set forth in the Old Testament as examples to follow. Did they achieve such commendable lives by their own efforts? Did they have some resource in their own nature on which they could draw that people of New Testament time do not have? The answer, of course, is that they did not. But, if not, they must have experienced an impartation of new life, just as saints of the New Testament, and this means regeneration.

The other area of evidence is that of logical deduction on the basis of New Testament truth. This deduction runs as follows: The New Testament declares that all men are born lost sinners ... and that this has been true since Adam in the Garden of Eden ... It states that Christ is the only way of salvation from such a state of sin ... and that the benefit He provided in His work of atonement is solely through trust in Him It indicates that when one does this he experiences regeneration... Since this is the only way of salvation possible for man, and since man has been in need of this salvation since the time of Adam, it must be that Old Testament people had to be, and were, saved, or regenerated, in the same way as New Testament people.^19

Now having scouted opinion on the question of regeneration during the Old Testament period, let us proceed to the matter of definition.

A Proposed Definition of Regeneration

Although various terms and concepts have been used by the writers whom we have quoted, I would propose the following as a brief working definition: *Regeneration is that ministry of the Holy Spirit by which He imparts spiritual life to one who is spiritually dead.*

Why is regeneration necessary? Because the Scriptures teach that all natural descendants of Adam in the natural state are spiritually dead, dead in trespasses and sins, sinners, bondslaves to sin, at enmity with God, rebels against the Law of God, suppressers of the truth of God, unable to understand the things of God, unable to please God, and those who continually stand under the wrath and condemnation of God. The Bible uniformly portrays fallen man in all dispensations and ages as spiritually dead and morally depraved; and these two aspects of man's spiritual condition establish the necessity of regeneration.

The Bible presents the doctrine of regeneration under several aspects, but mainly four: a new birth, a new life, a new creation, and a new nature. Regeneration is a new birth, a spiritual rebirth, a being born into God's spiritual family, a becoming a child of God, a being begotten anew by the Holy Spirit. Regeneration results in a new life, a resurrection from the dead, a spiritual coming to life. The presence of spiritual life is detected by the presence of life functions, by awareness of spiritual activity and movement and spiritual appetites and drives, and by the experience within oneself of spiritual thoughts, emotions, desires, intentions, and decisions. Regeneration is also a new creation. It is a restoration, initially and progressively, of God's image and likeness in me. It means being restored to God-likeness, becoming more and more conformed to the perfect image of God in Christ. It means knowing God personally, and becoming a holy person, as He is holy. It means becoming a new person, and having a new outlook on creation and life. And regeneration also results in a new nature. In regeneration my nature -- what I am -- is renewed and renovated. The Spirit of God enables me to begin to put to death the expressions of godlessness and unrighteousness in me, and to begin to produce expressions of godliness and holiness in my life, with the result that the prevailing disposition of my character and conduct is that of righteousness.

Now armed with these definitions of regeneration and the various aspects

under which it is presented, let us proceed to the question at issue.

Old Testament Experience of Regeneration

If it be admitted that all men born of ordinary generation in the Old Testament period were unregenerate in their natural state; if in the same breath asserted either that Old Testament believers were not regenerated by the Holy Spirit, or that no positive assertion can be made concerning Old Testament regeneration; then certain problems arise in regard to New Testament statements about the unregenerate state when compared to Old Testament characterizations of the state of the Old Testament believer.

For example, the New Testament states that the unregenerate man perceives the things of God as foolishness and does not receive them (1 Cor 2:14a); whereas the Old Testament believer is said to delight in the Law of the Lord (Ps 1:2), to meditate in it day and night, to hide God's Word in his heart (Ps 119:11), to love God's Law (Ps 119:97), to take God's testimonies as an heritage forever (Ps 119:111), to rejoice in God's Word (Ps 119:162), and to eat God's words (Jer 15:16). The New Testament states that the unregenerate man's understanding is darkened and characterized by ignorance, and that he cannot know the things of the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:14b), whereas the Old Testament believer is said to have light and understanding through the entrance of God's words (Ps 119:130), to be enlightened and made wise by the testimony of the Lord (Ps 19:7-8), and to understand all things (Prov 28:5). The New Testament states that the unregenerate man is an enemy of God (Rom 5:10) and at enmity with God (Rom 8:7a); whereas the Old Testament believer is spoken of as loving the Lord (Ps 116:1), blessing the Lord and praising Him (Ps 34:1), magnifying and exalting the Lord (Ps 34:3). And Abraham is called the friend of God (Isa 41:8; Jas 2:23). Again, the New Testament states that the unregenerate man is not subject to the Law of God, and is not able to be (Rom 8:7); whereas the Old Testament believer is spoken of as keeping God's Law, seeking His precepts, inclining his heart to perform God's statutes (Ps 119:44-45), loving God's commandments above gold, and esteeming His precepts to be right (Ps 119:112-113). Furthermore, the New Testament states that the unregenerate man cannot please God (Rom 8:8); whereas the Old Testament believer is spoken of as pleasing the Lord (Prov 16:7) and through faith pleasing God (Heb 11:5-8, 20-23, 31-33).

Now frankly, I find these contrasts between New Testament statements about the unregenerate state and Old Testament statements about the state of the Old Testament believer to be irreconcilable. There is abundant evidence that Old Testament believers manifested great faith, exemplified sincere repentance, pleased God, and brought forth the fruit of the Spirit in their lives (imperfectly, of course, as we do today). If all natural descendants of Adam are spiritually dead, and if the only way they can become spiritually alive is through regeneration, the Old Testament saints had to be regenerated in order to become spiritually alive. If only those who are spiritually alive can manifest spiritual life, and if the Old Testament believers manifested spiritual life, then Old Testament believers must have been spiritually alive. When John J. Davis concludes that "It would seem ... that there is no real ground for denying regeneration to a saved individual in any age,"²⁰ his conclusion would appear to be entirely warranted.

Now having considered the Holy Spirit's ministry of regeneration during the Old Testament period, let us move on to our second area of concern.

The Holy Spirit's Ministry of Indwelling During the Old Testament Period

Recent Opinion on the Question

In this brief survey of recent writers on the subject we will begin with Lewis Sperry Chafer. In his *Systematic Theology* he claims:

The fact that the Spirit indwells every believer is peculiar to the age of grace under the law, there was no abiding character to the relationship between the Spirit and individuals upon whom He came (Ps 51:11). The Spirit came upon them, or departed, according to the sovereign purpose of God. Under grace, the Spirit is not only given to every believer, but he never withdraws.²¹

Rene Pache, in his book, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*, states:

Before the cross and Pentecost the Spirit could not do in men what He is doing now He could neither baptize them into one Body ... nor live eternally within them. The

Spirit had to find hearts purified from sin before making them His temple In discussing later regeneration, baptism, indwelling, and sanctification, we shall have further evidences of the totally new work done by the Spirit since Pentecost.^22

John F. Walvoord, in his work, *The Holy Spirit*, writes:

In the dispensation of grace the Holy Spirit undertakes to indwell every Christian from the moment of regeneration Throughout the entire Old Testament period up to the Day of Pentecost no such universal indwelling of the Holy Spirit is observed ... nevertheless God in His sovereign will and according to His own purposes selected individuals in the Old Testament to whom were given the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit.^23

Walvoord goes on to say:

The fact that the Holy Spirit indwelt some saints in the Old Testament can be conclusively established Several features of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament are quite distinctive from the same ministry in the age of grace. It will be noted, first, that the coming of the Spirit to indwell individuals has no apparent relation to spiritual qualities. No record is found of regeneration in these cases as necessarily antecedent to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit A second important factor quite distinct from indwelling as known in the New Testament Church is that indwelling was a sovereign gift usually associated with a special call to service, and it had in view enablement for a specific task. Indwelling was not a universal privilege. Only a few were indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and these were known for their distinctive gift, and sought out as leaders and prophets, and were usually marked men. A third important distinction found in the Old Testament doctrine of indwelling was that it was in many cases temporary. While the New Testament saint need never fear loss of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, however He may be hindered

in His ministry by sin, the Old Testament saint knew the presence of the Spirit was a special privilege which could be withdrawn at will even as it was given.^24

Charles C. Ryrie, in his book, *The Holy Spirit*, says:

Although the Spirit did indwell men in Old Testament times, it was a selective ministry, both in regard to whom He indwelt and for how long. Can this relationship be summarized in any simple way? Yes, for the Lord summarized it by telling His disciples that up to that time the Spirit had been abiding with them, though on and after the day of Pentecost He would be in them (John 14:7) Although in the Old Testament there were clear instances when the Spirit indwelt men, His ministry could not be described generally as a ministry of being in men but only with them. Many things may not be clear in this contrast between "with" and "in," but a contrast is clear.^25

Arthur W. Pink, in his work, *The Holy Spirit*, asserts:

It is a great mistake to say, as many have done, that the Holy Spirit was never in any believer before Pentecost That the Holy Spirit indwelt saints under the Legal economy is clear from many considerations; how otherwise could they have been regenerated, had faith, been enabled to perform works acceptable to God? The Spirit prompted true prayer, inspired spiritual worship, produced His fruit in the lives of believers then ... as much as He does now All the spiritual good which has ever been wrought in and through men must be ascribed unto the Holy Spirit.^26

Charles W. Carter, in his book. *The Person and Ministry of the Holy Spirit: A Wesleyan Perspective*, states:

Though there were certain individuals in the Old Testament who experienced the Spirit's indwelling presence in their lives, this experience was the rare exception ... a few special individuals in the Old Testament experienced it as

a pledge of what was to come, but all the believers on the Day of Pentecost and until the end of the age became the heirs of this great divine provision.^27

Leon Wood, in his work, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament*, states:

Evidence that this spiritual renewal included regeneration, indwelling, sealing and filling exists ... in the lives of the Old Testament saints They must have been indwelt by the Spirit, because they remained children of God all their life (Noah, Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, and the rest), and the New Testament is clear that this is made possible only by the continued indwelling of the Gods Holy Spirit.^28

Having briefly reviewed recent opinion on the subject, let us move on to definition.

A Proposed Definition of Indwelling

As background to such a definition, I believe it is necessary to review the scriptural teaching concerning the omnipresence of the Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is present everywhere in all of His perfections. He fills space and transcends it. He occupies the same space that the matter and energy of the universe occupies. He is not excluded from any bit of space by any physical object or by any finite person. He is present in every mountain, tree, flower, and human being in this world. That this is not Pantheism but Christian Theism may be shown by a quotation from Charles Hodge. He writes:

Everywhere in the Old and New Testament, God is represented as a spiritual Being ... as everywhere present, and everywhere imparting life, and securing order; present in every blade of grass, yet guiding Arcturus in his course, marshalling the stars as a host, calling them by their names; present also in every human soul, giving it understanding, endowing it with gifts, working in it both to will and to do.^29

The implications of the Spirit's omnipresence for the concept of indwelling

are tremendous. In the sense of space, the Holy Spirit is always present in every human being's body. In the sense of space, the Holy Spirit is just as present in the unregenerate person's body as in the regenerate person's body! And this has always been true, from the moment of mankind's creation until the present moment!

For the Holy Spirit to *indwell* a human being, then, cannot mean simply to be present in the space a believer's body occupies, since the Holy Spirit occupies all of space. So if "indwelling" is taken to mean that when a person is an unbeliever, the Holy Spirit is "outside" his or her body, but when a person becomes a believer, the Holy Spirit comes "inside" his or her body, that concept of indwelling is erroneous.

What, then, can "indwelling" possibly mean? I would propose that the difference between the way the Holy Spirit is present in the unbeliever and the way He is present in the believer is one of personal relationship. The relationship the Holy Spirit sustains to the regenerate person is radically different from the relationship He sustains to the unregenerate person. And the most basic difference in these relationships is that the Holy Spirit is *savingly* related to the believer, but is not savingly related to the non-believer.

If the Holy Spirit is *present* in both the believer and non-believer, but does not indwell the unbeliever, then "indwelling" takes on a technical meaning. But let us extenuate this meaning further. The Holy Spirit is not welcome in the unbeliever's "house," but is an intruder, an undesirable alien, a squatter. The Holy Spirit is welcome in the believer's "house," and is a beloved friend, an honored guest, a resident. The Holy Spirit is present in the unbeliever, but is not "at home" in him, as He is in the believer. To the unbeliever the Holy Spirit is a stranger and an enemy; to the believer He is a trusted Helper and a Friend. To the unbeliever the Holy Spirit is a restrainer and convincer of sin, a disturber of the peace; to the believer He is a Sanctifier, an Assurer of salvation, a Consecrator, and a Comforter.

I would further propose the concept that indwelling involves the sustaining of the spiritual life imparted at regeneration. Thus I would define indwelling as that relationship which the Holy Spirit sustains to the believer subsequent to regeneration, in which He helps, rules, consecrates, assures, comforts, sanctifies, empowers, and sustains the life imparted at regeneration

Indwelling is thus the Holy Spirit's continuance of that new relationship and ministry begun in regeneration.

With this definition in hand, let us look at the controversial question.

Old Testament Experience of Indwelling

Although there are some seven Old Testament references which could be cited as support for Old Testament indwelling, they are not conclusive. For the sake of the record I will mention them: Gen 41:38, Num 27:18, Isa 63:11, Ezek 11:19, 36:26,27, and Hag 2:5. However, I believe a stronger approach to the question can be made in two directions: first, by connecting our proposed definition of indwelling with the Old Testament experience of regeneration; and second, by carefully examining John 14:16-17.

If indwelling is not a movement of the Holy Spirit in space from the outside to the inside of the believer's body, but is rather a change of relationship which is begun in regeneration, involving the sustaining of the spiritual life imparted in regeneration, then two questions must be asked: (1) Were Old Testament believers regenerated? (2) Could Old Testament believers, by their own abilities and powers, sustain spiritual life in themselves? If they were regenerated, and if they could not sustain spiritual life in themselves, then they must have been indwelt by the Spirit of God. For just as human beings cannot sustain their own physical life, but are totally dependent upon God for every heartbeat and every breath, so those who have been made spiritually alive cannot sustain their own spiritual life, but are totally dependent upon God for every spiritual heartbeat and breath. But this is nothing else than the Holy Spirit's ministry of indwelling, in which He enters into saving relationship with the believer and sustains the life imparted in regeneration.

John 14:16-17 is usually adduced as strong support for the position that denies indwelling to Old Testament believers. A curious thing happens, however, upon closer examination of this passage and its teaching. In fact it is possible to read this passage in the same version in two entirely different ways, simply by emphasizing different words, and to come out with two quite different interpretations.

One way to read John 14:16-17 is as follows

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth *with* you, and shall be *in* you.

But notice what happens when I take the same passage in the same version, and simply emphasize different words:

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he *dwelleth* with you, and *shall be* in you.

Notice how the first way of reading this Scripture emphasizes a change of location from the outside of Christ's disciples to the inside of them (which, if this is understood as movement in space, cannot be true, since the Holy Spirit has always been omnipresent); whereas the second way of reading this passage emphasizes the assurance that the Holy Spirit who is already dwelling with Christ's disciples will continue to dwell with them even after Christ ascends to heaven.

But how then shall we understand the language employed in John 14 and 15 and 16, where we read of the giving of the Spirit, and the sending of the Spirit, and the coming of the Spirit? We should not understand these expressions in terms of a new location in space to which the Holy Spirit is coming, but in terms of a new relationship into which the Holy Spirit will enter with Christ's disciples.

Let us attempt to put ourselves into the historical situation. In John 16:6-7 the Lord Jesus said:

But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I do away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

Christ is about to depart from His disciples. They were filled with sorrow

at the thought of losing their Master, of no longer having Him there with them. And they were filled with apprehension and fear; and felt almost lost at the prospect of being without their Leader. How could they carry on without His presence, without His direction and truth and example? And so Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit to them as a Comforter, both to comfort them in their loss of His physical presence, and to help them in their need after His departure.

Now let us read John 14:16-17 once more, in the light of these considerations, and in an overly literal translation:

And I will ask the Father and He will give you another Comforter [or, Helper], in order that He may be with you always -- the Spirit of truth, whom the world is not able to receive because it is neither beholding Him or knowing Him. You are knowing Him, because He is remaining with you, and shall be in [or, among] you.

Now we are able to see truths in this passage which we perhaps have not been able to see before. Christ says that unbelievers have no experiential knowledge of the Holy Spirit, but that His disciples have an experiential knowledge of the Holy Spirit. Christ says that unbelievers are not able to receive the Holy Spirit, but that His disciples are able to receive the Holy Spirit; in fact, they have already received the Holy Spirit, and He is already remaining with them. Christ says that after His departure from them into heaven, His disciples will receive the Holy Spirit in the capacity of comforter and Helper, and that He (the Comforter and Helper) will remain with them and in (or among) them always. Thus our Lord was telling His disciples that the Holy Spirit, whom they already knew, whom they had already received, who was already remaining with them, would be remaining with them forever; and that since our Lord would soon be leaving them, He was sending the Holy Spirit to them in a new relationship; namely, that of a Comforter and Helper after Christ's departure. To put it another way, the Holy Spirit, who was already related to them in various ways, who was already indwelling them and sustaining spiritual life in them, would come to them in a new relationship, to comfort them and help them after Christ's departure.

I would thus propose that Old Testament believers were both regenerated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Old Testament saints, before they became

saints, were spiritually dead and needed the Holy Spirit's impartation of spiritual life in order to become spiritually alive. And I would propose that the new life that was created in them by the Holy Spirit was also sustained in them by the Holy Spirit, and that He was personally and savingly related to them in various ways. And I would urge that this is nothing else than indwelling! There may have been differences in degree in Old and New Testament indwelling, but the essential reality is one that is common to believers under all dispensations and ages.

In this paper we have examined two ministries of the Holy Spirit -- regeneration and indwelling. We have surveyed recent opinion on the question of the presence of these ministries during the Old Testament period, have proposed definitions that attempt to express the precise nature of these ministries, and have tried to establish the claim that the Old Testament believers experienced these ministries. In a succeeding paper, the Lord willing, we will extend our study to include the question whether the Old Testament saints also experienced the Holy Spirit's ministries of filling and union with Christ. [Ed. Note: This succeeding paper never appears to have been written.]

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Chapter Nine

Saul and the "Witch" of Endor: A Classic Study in Spirit Mediumship

Although spirit mediums have been around for a long time, in recent years there has been a tremendous revival of interest and participation in such occult activity. Are the phenomena allegedly produced by mediums all a product of fraud, or auto-hypnosis, or extra-sensory perception, or dissociation of personality, or Satanic forces? Or are they produced by disembodied spirits, employing mediums as channels? An analysis of King Saul's consultation with a spirit medium sheds considerable light on this question.

In Bible times those who attempted to know secret, hidden things unknowable by ordinary means, and things not revealed by God, sometimes consulted with those who claimed to be able to communicate with the spirits of the dead. People who made such claims were known variously as mediums, spiritists, wizards, necromancers, or those who had a familiar spirit. The references to these persons and their activities all come from the Old Testament, with one possible exception, as noted later. There are twelve such references in the Old Testament, as follows:

Leviticus 19:31 -- "Do not turn to *mediums* or *spiritists*; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God."

Leviticus 20:6 -- "As for the person who turns to *mediums* and to *spiritists*, to play the harlot after them, I will also set My face against that person and will cut him off from among his people."

Leviticus 20:27 -- "Now a man or a woman who is a *medium* or a *spiritist* shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones, their bloodguiltiness is upon them."

Deuteronomy 18:9-12 -- "When you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one

who casts a spell, or a *medium*, or a *spiritist*, or one who calls up the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the Lord; and because of these detestable things the Lord your God will drive them out before you."

2 Kings 21:6 -- "And he [Manasseh] made his son to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and used divination, and dealt with *mediums* and *spiritists*. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him to anger."

2 Kings 23:24 -- "Moreover, Josiah removed the *mediums* and the *spiritists* and the teraphim and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might confirm the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the Lord."

1 Chronicles 10:13 -- "So Saul died for his trespass which he committed against the Lord, because of the word of the Lord which he did not keep; and also because he asked counsel of a *medium*, making inquiry of it."

2 Chronicles 33:6 -- "And he [Manasseh] made his sons pass through the fire in the valley of Ben-hinnom; and he practiced witchcraft, used divination, practiced sorcery, and dealt with *mediums* and *spiritists*. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him to anger."

Isaiah 8:19-20 -- "And when they say to you, 'Consult the *mediums* and the *spiritists* who whisper and mutter,' should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn."

Isaiah 19:13 -- "Then the spirit of the Egyptians will be demoralized within them; and I will confound their strategy, so that they will resort to idols and ghosts of the dead, and to *mediums* and *spiritists*."

Isaiah 29:4 -- "Then you [Jerusalem] will be brought low; from the earth you shall speak, and from the dust where you are prostrate, your words shall come. Your voice shall also be like that of a *spirit from the ground*, and your speech shall whisper from the dust."

And finally, our focus passage will be 1 Samuel 28:3-25.

The one possible exception to the assertion that all of the references to spirit mediumship in Scripture are found in the Old Testament is Acts 16:16-19. Paul and Silas were in Philippi.

Acts 16:16-19 -- "And it happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a certain slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune telling. Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation." And she continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment. But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities.

This spirit of divination was a demon, whom Paul cast out of the slave girl. Literally, verse 16 calls it a "spirit of *Python*." It is interesting to note that the oracle at Delphi, Greece, was guarded by a python, and the priestess was called "pythia." She also was supposed to have the power of divination, and many came to consult her concerning the future. It would appear that this slave girl in Philippi was possessed by a demon who divined, or told fortunes, to those who came to consult her. However, there is nothing here about consulting the dead, or attempting to communicate with the spirits of deceased persons. There is only a fortune teller who was demon-possessed and brought her owners much profit by fortune telling.

Did this slave girl hold seances? Did she go into trances? Did she tell persons who came to consult her that spirits of the dead were sending these messages? Did her demon pretend to be the spirit of some dead person, and tell her things she could never have known by natural means? To all of these questions we much plead ignorance or begin to speculate. In view of the absence of further scriptural evidence concerning this case, it would appear both proper and wise to say that we do not know.

Before proceeding to our focus passage, we should take note of some of the terms pertinent to spirit mediumship, some of which will be employed in this paper. The following definitions are quoted from the glossary of terms in Edgar B. Mitchell's book *Psychic Exploration* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1974):

Spiritualism -- A religious movement with doctrines and practices based on the belief that survival of death is a reality and that communication between the living and the deceased occurs, usually via mediumship.

Medium -- A sensitive who apparently perceives and communicates with discarnates, or who acts as a channel for discarnates to communicate through direct voice. A *mental* medium receives messages from the deceased and transmits them to the living. A *physical* medium can, in addition, produce physical effects such as levitation and materialization.

Sensitive -- A person who is psychic -- that is, is often able to induce psychic experiences at will.

Psychic -- (1) A synonym for sensitive. (2) Describing paranormal events and abilities that cannot be explained in terms of established physical principles.

Discarnate -- Disembodied. Used in mediumistic communications to refer to a soul, intelligence, or personality of a deceased person.

In 1 Samuel 28:3-25 we find an actual instance of a person consulting a spirit medium, and an insight into what actually transpires during such consultation. Our intention in this paper is to carefully and patiently work our way through the passage, seeking to understand its meaning and to draw pertinent implications for the practice of spirit mediumship today.

**A Detailed Analysis of I Samuel 28:3-25,
with Particular Reference to the
Modus Operandi of Spirit Mediumship**

Verse 3 -- "Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him and buried him in Ramah his own city. And Saul had removed from the land those who were mediums and spiritists."

Samuel was dead! It is important to establish this fact at the outset, and to point up its implications. Just as Charles Dickens in his short story *A Christmas Carol* takes pains to establish the death of Jacob Marley, so we must be clear about Samuel's death. Dickens writes, "There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate."

Samuel was dead. His body was buried in Ramah; his disembodied self was in the presence of the Lord in the third heaven. This fact must be seen against the background of the biblical teaching concerning the intermediate state. The intermediate state is that state or condition of persons following physical death until their resurrection and judgment. Persons in the intermediate state are either in the place or realm to which disembodied unrighteous persons go or in that one to which disembodied righteous persons go. Samuel, then, was in the place or realm to which the disembodied righteous go, which is called by various names in Scripture, including heaven, paradise (a Persian loan-word meaning a park or garden, reminiscent of the beautiful, unspoiled Garden of Eden), the Father's house, Abraham's bosom, and the highest heaven.

We also learn from this verse that Saul had removed all mediums and spiritists from the land of Israel. This must mean that he had outlawed them, or chased them out, or had killed them.

Verses 4-5 -- "So the Philistines gathered together and came and camped in Shunem; and Saul gathered all Israel together and they camped at Gilboa. When Saul saw the camp of the Philistines, he was afraid and his heart trembled greatly."

Back in verse 1 we learn that the Philistines had gathered their forces to fight against Israel. Saul then gathered the army of Israel to defend against the Philistines, and had camped by Mount Gilboa, a hill some

1700 feet above sea level, southwest of the Sea of Galilee and east of the Carmel range in north-central Palestine. Saul was very fearful of defeat at the hands of the Philistine army.

Verse 6 -- "When Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets."

Saul inquired of the Lord, probably for guidance and concerning the outcome of the battle, but the Lord did not answer him by any of the usual modes of special revelation that were familiar to Saul.

Verse 7 -- "Then Saul said to his servants, 'Seek for me a woman who is medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her.' And his servants said to him, 'Behold, there is a woman who is a medium at En-dor.'"

Saul decided that he *had to know* how the battle would go. And if the *Lord* would not tell him, he would find out by some other means, whether lawful or not! He asked his servants to locate a medium for him, and they found one in the village of En-dor, a few miles north of Mount Gilboa, on the north side of the Hill of Moreh.

Verse 8 -- "The Saul disguised himself by putting on other clothes, and went, he and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night; and he said, 'Conjure up for me, please, and bring up for me whom I shall name to you.'"

Saul disguised himself, took only two servants, and went by night to consult the medium and to ask for a message from the dead. Since the Philistines were camped at the southwestern foot of the Hill of Moreh, Saul doubtless went around the east end of the Hill of Moreh, disguised and at night. By going to consult the medium, Saul showed that he believed that spirit mediums can contact, ask questions of, and receive messages from, the dead. This suggests that Saul knew something about spirit mediums: something about the way they worked, and something about the kinds of information they claimed to receive from their spirit "familiaris." Saul probably knew that some of the information they gave their clients was derived from careful observations of the clients' behavior and responses, some unobtrusive probing, and some clever leading questions coupled with some educated guesswork. Yet he must also have believed that at least some of the mediums were able to know things that

no one else seemed to know, and to be able to see into the future. Saul did not know what to do in the face of the great Philistine army; and in his desperation he tried the only possibility he believed was open to him -- he consulted a medium.

It is interesting to speculate on the question why Saul had spared this particular medium when he had previously outlawed or driven out or killed all of the other mediums in the land. Had he used her services before? Had he simply missed this one in his great roundup of mediums and spiritists? Or had he reserved this one medium "just in case" he needed her services? Saul's instructions to his servants to "seek a woman who is a medium" does not answer this question for us. For if Saul had used her services before, he would not have been likely to admit it. If he had simply missed this one in his great roundup, he would not have been likely to go out of his way to call attention to the fact that his big push to rid the land of mediums have not been entirely successful! And if he had given secret instructions to spare one top-quality medium 'just in case,' he probably would not have admitted it. Saul was not widely known for his willingness to admit mistakes or failures, and had probably become secretive in view of real or imagined plots to remove him from the throne in favor of his chosen successor, David.

Verses 9-10 -- "But the woman said to him, 'Behold, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off those who are mediums and spiritists from the land. Why are you then laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?' And Saul vowed to her by the Lord, saying, 'As the Lord lives, there shall no punishment come upon you for this thing.'"

The medium was very suspicious, and very reluctant to reveal herself as a medium and use her alleged powers, knowing that King Saul (who was in disguise) had outlawed or killed all the mediums and spiritists he knew about in Israel. But Saul assured her with a vow that no harm would come to her.

Here we must pause and ask, What would make the medium willing to risk her life by doing what the stranger asked?

(1) This stranger could be trying to trap her into an admission that she as a practicing medium.

(2) If the stranger did entrap her, it could mean death to her.

(3) Did the stranger offer her such a large fee that she was willing to risk her life for it? And how large would such a fee need to be? (Incidentally, if he did offer her a large fee, there is no indication of it in the passage.)

(4) When the stranger assured her that no harm would come to her, and did so with a vow, how could he back up this assurance? Even with a vow, how could he protect her against the wrath of King Saul? The only way this stranger could back up such an assurance was if he was as powerful as Saul! And the only man in the kingdom at this time who was as powerful as Saul was Saul himself! *He alone* could make her willing to take her life into her hands and attempt to consult the dead!

What would make the medium willing to risk her life by doing what this stranger asked? The only answer that fits the situation is that the medium must have known that it was Saul who had come to consult her. When she looked at him and saw that he was head and shoulders taller than his companions (recall in 1 Samuel 9:2 that Saul, "from his shoulders and up was taller than any of the people"), and that he carried himself and spoke like a king, she probably saw right through his disguise, and was sure that it was none other than Saul himself. Then she took heart, trusted his vow, and agreed to do a consultation for him.

Verse 11 -- "Then the woman said, 'Whom shall I bring up for you?' And he said, 'Bring up Samuel for me.'"

The medium asked Saul whom he wished her to contact, and Saul said, "Samuel." The woman then went into some altered state of consciousness -- probably a trance -- and probably called for the spirit of Samuel to contact her.

Verse 12 -- "When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice; and the woman spoke to Saul, saying, 'Why have you deceived me For you are Saul.'"

The medium, in her trance state, saw a spirit apparition and cried out with a loud voice. Why did she cry out with a loud voice?

(1) Did she cry out with a loud voice of *surprise*? Surprise at what?

Surprise that the spirit apparition looked like *Samuel*? But Saul had specifically asked to contact Samuel.

(2) If she cried out with a loud voice of surprise, did she do so because this time an apparition had appeared, when usually nothing happened? Perhaps, although the rest of the passage does not support this.

(3) Did she cry out with a loud voice of *terror* at the sight of the apparition? Perhaps, although the rest of the account does not appear to show her as terrified, but rather shows *Saul* terrified (verse 21).

(4) Did she cry out with a loud voice every time she went into a trance and made contact with a spirit entity? Was this a part of her regular routine? The text does not tell us.

In any case, coming (momentarily) out of her trance state, the medium asked Saul why he came to her disguised. Had he come to get a spirit message from her and *then* kill her?

Verse 13 -- "And the king said to her, 'Do not be afraid; but what do you see?' And the woman said to Saul, 'I see a divine being coming up out of the earth.'"

Saul assured her that he would not harm her, and asked her to go back into the trance and tell him what she saw. Here is a clear indication of one important aspect of mediumship, at least of the mental variety. This medium did not produce *physical* manifestations which Saul could see. Rather, he was totally dependent on the medium for what she claimed to be able to see while in the trance state, and totally dependent on her for what she told him she was seeing.

The medium told Saul that she saw a "divine being" or a "god" coming up out of the earth. Two questions immediately arise: (1) Why did she use the word "god" or "divine being" to describe the spirit apparition? (2) Why did she describe the apparition as coming up out of the earth?

The answer to the first question is rather simple. Saul had asked the medium to contact Samuel, who had been the last Judge of Israel before the kinship had been established. The Judges of Israel stood in the place of God, judged for God, and held the divine power of life and death over

the people they judged. Because of these great powers and their lofty position and responsibilities, God Himself in Psalm 82 called these human judges "gods." The medium called the spirit apparition of Samuel a "god" and did so quite appropriately.

The answer to the second question is simpler still. The medium envisioned the spirit apparition as coming *up* out of the earth because the common folk belief was doubtless that when persons' bodies were buried in the ground, their spirits also went down into the ground with them. (Think of the present-day folk belief in spirits arising out of cemetery graves partly shrouded in mist on dark nights!) Therefore, when called on by a medium, these spirits came *up*, out of the ground.

Verse 14 -- "And he said to her, 'What is his form?' And she said, 'An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped with a robe.' And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and did homage."

Notice, Saul saw *nothing*. He asked the medium, "What is his form"? "What does he look like?" Whatever information he hoped to get through the medium, he was totally dependent on her for it.

Notice her answer, and what there is in it that is definite and concrete and unambiguous, as far as the identification of her spirit guide. She mentioned three identifying marks: (1) the spirit is a man; (2) the spirit is old; and (3) the spirit is wrapped in a robe. And notice that Saul's response to the mention of these identifying marks was definite and unambiguous: "And Saul knew it was Samuel."

Here we must ask a very forthright, point-blank question: *How* did Saul *know* that the spirit apparition whom the medium said she was seeing was the spirit of *Samuel*? After all, Saul could see nothing; he could "see" only what the medium told him she saw. As we analyze this situation, we should note two features which characterize all consultations of spirit mediums, including those of the present day:

(1) The person who comes to consult the medium believes, at least to some extent, in mediumship itself; i.e., that the medium can, at least sometimes, contact the spirits of persons who have died, and can receive

messages from them -- messages that reveal something unknown or something future. By coming to the medium, Saul showed that, at least to some extent, he believed in spirit mediumship. He knew that consultation of mediums was forbidden by God (and he had recently shown that he knew this, by outlawing or putting to death most of the mediums and spiritists in the land); yet Saul was desperate for guidance and knowledge of the outcome, and God had refused to answer him!

(2) The person who believes what the medium consulted says invests a degree of trust in that medium as one who really has mediumistic powers. This usually reveals a *great desire to believe* what the medium tells him or her, upon very little evidence of the truth of what the medium says.

In the present case the kinds of information the medium provided Saul as identifying marks, on the basis of which Saul "knew" that it was Samuel, consisted of facts that any child in Israel could have supplied! Think of the three "marks" of identification the medium supplied: (1) the spirit was a man (Samuel was certainly that); (2) the spirit was an *old* man (Samuel was old when he died; and (3) the spirit was wrapped in a *robe* (Samuel usually wore a robe, as did most men of his day, especially old men, who felt the cold more keenly). There you have the definite, unambiguous marks of identification! It could only be Samuel and no one else! Actually, this tells us more about Saul's tremendous desire to believe than it does about the identification of the spirit apparition! Notice that the *medium* did not identify the spirit apparition as Samuel; *Saul* did. Saul asked for Samuel, and Saul identified the spirit as Samuel. Of course, from then on the medium doubtless acquiesced to Saul's identification.

Verse 15 -- "Then Samuel said to Saul, 'Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?' And Saul answered, 'I am greatly distressed; for the Philistines are waging war against me, and God has departed from me and answers me no more, either through prophets or by dreams; therefore I have called you, that you may make known to me what I should do.'"

Note also that here, as in verse 16, we read, "And *Samuel* said..." And in verse 20 we read, "Then Saul ... was very afraid because of the words of *Samuel*." If we take these phrases out of the context of this incident, out of the context of spirit mediumship, and out of the context of the teaching of Scripture concerning the nature of the intermediate state of the righteous, it is possible to understand these uses of the name Samuel as

indicating that the person Samuel himself was speaking here. But we definitely know that this was not the case, for at least three important reasons:

(1) Samuel was with the Lord in the third heaven. Although he was in the disembodied, intermediate state, he was not available to be "brought up" by a spirit medium to give messages to people who came to consult her.

(2) Consultation of spirit mediums was expressly forbidden by the Lord upon pain of death. The Lord would never have sent or permitted Samuel to come to earth to be involved in that which He expressly condemned (especially since God Himself had refused to answer Saul in any of the ways by which He revealed His will to human beings, and Saul was attempting to obtain knowledge of the future by a forbidden means). And Samuel, a righteous man, would never have participated in that which God had forbidden.

(3) It is important to remember that it was not Samuel who was giving the message to Saul, but the medium. Just as Saul saw nothing but that which the medium described, so he heard nothing but that which the medium told him. And in view of the first two reasons above, we can affirm that whatever and whoever the spirit medium saw and heard, it was not Samuel, the last great Judge of Israel, the earliest of the great prophets of Israel, the anointer of King Saul and King David, the hero of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11.

But now we must ask, if it was not Saul speaking through the medium's vocal chords, who was it? It seems that there are only two possibilities:

(1) the medium was speaking for herself, perhaps changing her voice to sound like a man; or (2) a demonic spirit was speaking through her, controlling her and using her voice like an instrument.

Notice also the spirit's first words: "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" The spirit came "up"; the medium had power to "disturb" and "bring up" this spirit. Once again this shows that it was not Samuel, even though Saul believed that it was Samuel. The medium certainly had no power over Samuel to bring him from heaven. And again note that the medium never called the spirit apparition "Samuel."

No doubt someone will object: "That may all be true, but in verse 12 it

actually *says* 'When the woman saw Samuel.' Doesn't that *prove* it was Samuel's spirit who appears to her?"

Again the answer is no. We must remember that the medium was asked to "bring up Samuel." She went into an altered state of consciousness, in which she was able to see things which Saul was unable to see; and in that altered state she "saw" Samuel. This must mean that she saw Samuel in her imagination, or in a vision, or in her memory, or in her "mind's eye," or in some other way that mediums "see" spirits. If a spirit was locally present and was enabling her to see it, that spirit was definitely *not* the spirit of Samuel, although it could have been a demonic spirit impersonating Samuel and taking the name Samuel. In fact, this is what happened, since the spirit apparition is called Samuel.

Saul tells the spirit allegedly speaking through the medium why he has come to consult it. He wishes to know what to do in his distress!

Verses 16-18 -- "And Samuel [not Samuel the prophet, but Samuel the spirit apparition] said, 'Why then do you ask me, since the Lord has departed from you and has become your adversary? And the Lord has done accordingly as He spoke through me; for the Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, to David. As you did not obey the Lord and did not execute His fierce wrath on Amalek, so the Lord has done this thing to you this day.'"

Notice the first part of the spirit's message: it is all history, and is all well known to any Israelite. There is nothing here that the medium herself did not know.

Verse 19 -- "Moreover the Lord will also give over Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines, therefore tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. Indeed the Lord will give over the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines!"

Here in the second part of the spirit's message we are no longer speaking of the past but of the future. The spirit makes a prediction containing four items, each of which is capable of being checked as to its fulfillment. These four items are:

(1) Israel's arms' will be defeated by the Philistine army.

- (2) Israel will again become subject to Philistia.
- (3) Saul will fall into the hands of the Philistines.
- (4) Saul and his sons will be dead the next day.

Now we must ask a pointed question: Are these four items of prediction of such a nature that they could be known only by supernatural means, or could they be known or guessed at by natural means?

What about the *first item*: that the army of Israel will be defeated by the Philistine army? Could the medium have predicted this by normal means? Two comments may be made:

(1) in verse 5 Saul's heart trembled greatly when he saw the camp of the Philistines. If the Philistine army was much larger and better equipped and had higher morale than the army of Israel, then we can appreciate Saul's fear. The medium probably knew of the strength of the Philistine army also (especially since they were encamped only a few miles away, at the southwestern foot of the Hill of Moreh).

(2) In verse 15 Saul admitted that God had departed from him and would not answer him when he inquired of Him. Thus the medium knew that God was Saul's adversary and would not help him in the difficult battle ahead.

From these two items the medium could have predicted (though not with certainty) the defeat of the Israeli army, using only normal, natural reasoning.

What about the *second item*: that Israel will again become subject to Philistia? Could the medium have predicted this by natural means? To this we must reply that if Israel's army was defeated, then it would follow as a certainty that Israel would become subject to Philistia, just as it had a number of times before. Thus, given the fulfillment of the first prediction, this second one was fairly easy to make by natural means.

What about the *third item*: that Saul will fall into the hands of the Philistines? Could the medium have predicted this by natural means?

An important point to consider in this connection is that Saul, with rare exception, always led his army into battle, and frequently planned and

directed the course of the battle personally (instances in which this occurred may be found in 1 Samuel 12:11; 14:17; 14:46-47; 15:5; 17:13; 18:6 and 24:1; 1 Samuel 19:8 may be an exception). If the army of Israel was defeated, all of them (except for those who deserted or fled) would either be killed or taken captive. Thus, unless Saul deserted as commander in chief or fled, it was certain that he would fall into the hands of the Philistines if the army of Israel was defeated in battle. Thus this item could have been predicted by natural means.

But what about the *fourth item*: that Saul and his sons will be dead the next day? Could the medium have predicted this by normal, natural means?

It would of course not have been difficult for the medium to predict that Saul and his sons would *die*. Eventually that would happen to all human beings in the Old Testament period (unless they were translated like Enoch and Elijah)! But to predict that Saul and his sons would all die on the same day, and that day would be the *next day* -- could the medium have done that by natural means? Or is a supernatural explanation necessary?

If the medium knew from Saul or his servants that the battle was (at least to all appearances) going to be *the next day*, then this part of the prediction was not too difficult to make. Of course, if the battle was not lost on the *first* day, but continued with a series of attacks, retreats, regroupings, etc., then this part of the prediction would not have been confirmed. Or if only *Saul* and not his son was killed, this part of the prediction would not have been fulfilled. Or if Saul and only *some* of his sons were killed, this part would not have been verified. Since the prediction appears to imply that Saul and all of his sons would be dead the next day (even though verse 19 does not specifically say "all").

At this juncture an observation would seem to be called for. Even if the prediction was off by a day or two, or by a son or two, the medium could still have claimed a high degree of accuracy, which is all that spiritists have ever claimed. When spirit mediums have at times attained a 50 or 60% degree of accuracy, this has been considered high. On the other hand, the prophets who spoke for God have been scrutinized by critics of the Bible for centuries to see if they were 100% accurate; and whenever these critics have claimed that their predictions have seemed to fall short of this high standard, skeptics, atheists and agnostics have pounced on

such alleged failures and have held them up as evidence of the falsity of the entire Bible!

Perhaps this is because of the differing claims of levels of accuracy made by spirit mediums and the writers of Scripture. Spirit mediums have allowed for large degrees of error in the messages they have allegedly transmitted. The writers of Scripture claim that they are transmitting God's truth with no mixture of error. Spirit mediums have often been proved wrong. No one has ever proved an error in the teaching of Scripture! However, these more modest claims of accuracy by spirit mediums still allow them to claim that at least some of their messages are true, or substantially accurate.

Returning to the fourth item of the prediction in terms of what actually happened, we learn from 1 Samuel 31 and 1 Chronicles 10 that the battle between the army of the Philistines and the army of Israel was probably lost on the *first day*, that not only *Saul* but his *sons* as well were killed, and that *all* of Saul's sons who went out with him to the battle died with him, including Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua. In 2 Samuel 2:8-11 we find mention of a fourth son, Ish-bosheth, who did not die then, but ruled over much of Israel for two years after Saul's death. Why he did not go out with his father and brothers to the battle is not clear. His name – Ish-bosheth (man of shame) is strange, but we can only speculate on the change from his former name, Esh-baal (man of Baal) to this name. Thus the fourth item in the medium's prediction came to pass essentially as she had spoken it! Could the medium have done this by natural means? Or must we bring in a supernatural fact to explain the fulfillment?

In favor of the natural-means explanation, we may say the following: If the medium could, by natural means, predict that the Israeli army would be defeated, that Israel would become subject to Philistia, that Saul would fall into the hands of the Philistines, and that the battle would be joined the next day, it would not have been such a great step to the prediction that Saul and his sons would die the next day. After all, Saul would rather die than fall into the hands of the Philistines (he proved this the very next day by killing himself by falling on his sword, as recorded in 1 Samuel 31:4); and if the army were defeated, he and his sons, as the army's leaders, would probably die fighting anyway.

In favor of the supernatural explanation, we may say that the accuracy

level of this prediction was much higher than even very highly-rated spirit mediums usually achieve; and that the message the medium gave Saul was not one which would endear her to Saul or to his servants, or earn her a high fee! She told Saul what he had no doubt hoped he would not hear. In fact, if her purpose was to tell him what he wanted to hear, or to deceive him with a fraudulent message, she certainly did not do this. Instead, she told him what actually came to pass. This is quite inconsistent with what we know of practically all spirit mediums during the past 130 years, and argues for a supernatural factor which tended to operate against her natural character, her usual procedure, her pocketbook, and her well-being.

Deuteronomy 13:1-3 tells us that it is possible for someone to predict the future and to have the prediction come to pass, and yet to do so, not by God's Spirit, but by means of other powers and forces which tend to lead the people away from the true God to follow after and serve other gods. The only other supernatural powers that can do such things are Satanic and demonic.

Therefore we must conclude that unless this medium made a very accurate prediction by guesswork and chance, she must have opened or yielded herself to supernatural Satanic or demonic powers in order to obtain the information she channeled to Saul.

In the aftermath of the consultation, we find Saul terrified and faint with fear and hunger. The medium encourages him to strengthen himself with food before he returns to his camp in Gilboa.

Verses 20-25 -- "Then Saul immediately fell full length upon the ground and was very afraid because of the words of Samuel [i.e., the words of Samuel, the spirit apparition]; also there was no strength in him, for he had eaten no food all day and all night. And the woman came to Saul and saw that he was terrified, and said to him, 'Behold, your maidservant has obeyed you, and I have taken my life in my hand, and have listened to your words which you spoke to me. So now also, please listen to the voice of your maidservant, and let me set a piece of bread before you, that you may eat and have strength when you go on your way.' But he refused and said, 'I will not eat.' However, his servants together with the woman urged him, and he listened to them. So he arose from the ground and sat on the bed. And the woman had a fattened calf in the house, and she

quickly slaughtered it; and she took flour, kneaded it, and baked unleavened bread from it. And she brought it before Saul and his servants, and they ate. Then they arose, and went away that night."

Some Observations Concerning Spirit Mediumship and the Source of Its Phenomena

Spiritualism and spirit mediumship have been in existence for a very long time. It goes back to very early Bible times. During the past 130 years it has experienced a great revival of interest and participation. Currently there are Spiritualist associations in many countries of the world. One of the largest is the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain (SAGB), with headquarters in London. There are more than 500 Spiritualist churches in the United Kingdom. In the United States there are more than 400 Spiritualist churches, including the National Spiritualist Association of Churches (200 churches), the Universal Church of the Master (125 churches), and the International Assembly of Spiritualists (80 churches). The only other country with a sizable number of spiritualists is Brazil, which is said to have a large number, but little is available in the way of statistics regarding the number of churches.

In the history of Spiritualism the one feature that characterizes alleged spiritualistic phenomena is that of *fraud*. After intentional deception and outright fraud are sifted out of the reports of spiritualistic phenomena, there appears to be very little of a substantive nature. Fraud is the *rule*, not the exception!

However, after all of the deductions for fraud, the question must still be asked: Are there some spiritualistic phenomena that look genuine, that stand in need of further explanation? If there are such phenomena, we must ask whether they are explainable on a natural basis, or whether some supernatural explanation must be sought. If there are some genuine phenomena, we must be aware of various possibilities of explanation, including the following:

(1) Could these phenomena be produced by disembodied (discarnate) spirits of deceased human beings? The answer that Scripture gives is that the disembodied selves of the unrighteous are in Hades, whereas the disembodied selves of the righteous are in heaven with the Lord. Since there are only two classes of human beings (the righteous and the

unrighteous), there can be no disembodied spirits of deceased human beings whom spirit mediums can contact or act as channels for. All discarnate human spirits are either in Hades or in heaven!

(2) Could these phenomena be produced by autohypnosis by the medium, resulting in a trance state in which his or her memory banks are opened, thereby making available enormous quantities of previously stored information? If the human brain never really forgets anything, so that very old people can sometimes remember minute details of their childhood seemingly forgotten for many years, perhaps under hypnosis such data can be tapped and used as though they were originating from a disembodied spirit.

(3) Could these phenomena be produced by means of supernormal powers within the medium -- powers that go under the name of extra-sensory perception, including telepathy, clairvoyance, and clairsaudience? Although at the present time there is very little solid evidence in support of the reality of such powers, perhaps such evidence will be forthcoming in the future. The mind may have powers as yet untapped. In this explanation, these powers -- not disembodied spirits -- would be the source of that small residue of spiritualistic phenomena that are considered as possibly genuine.

(4) Could these phenomena be produced by a dissociation of personality in the medium, with one part of the medium's mind communicating (without conscious awareness) with another part? Again, the evidence for such dissociation appears to be rather slender and fragmentary, and quite insufficient as a base on which to build spiritualistic phenomena, however small in genuine number.

(5) Could these phenomena be produced by Satan and demonic spirits to whom the medium, through trance, yields control of his or her faculties -- spirits who use the medium's faculties and powers to impersonate discarnate spirits or deceased persons in order to communicate to the person consulting the medium anti-scriptural ideas, concepts, and attitudes toward God, Christ, the Bible, life and death, judgment and hell? In the light of the Bible's teaching concerning Satan's plan and purpose in the world, and concerning demonic spirits and their activities in possessing and controlling and influencing human beings to accomplish Satan's purposes, this possibility of explanation may be an important factor in

evaluating spiritualistic phenomena that appear to be genuine.

Finally, Spiritualism and spirit mediumship is strongly condemned in the Bible. Those who in Israel were themselves mediums were to be put to death; those who consulted mediums in Israel were warned that God would cut them off from their people. In 1 Chronicles 10:13 the writer says, "So Saul died for his trespass which he committed against the Lord, because the word of the Lord which he did not keep; and also because he asked counsel of a medium, making inquiry of it."

Why is Spiritualism so strongly condemned and harshly punished? Because it refuses to be satisfied with God and His revelation, and deliberately seeks secret knowledge from other forbidden sources -- sources that are anti-God and that turn people away from the one true and living God, in whom alone there is truth and salvation, and who alone can give that knowledge which is necessary for life and godliness.

Spiritualism and spirit mediumship turn people from the true God to worship and serve finite, created, and evil beings and powers. Christians are called on to worship the one true God through Jesus Christ, to trust in and be satisfied with His revelation of truth, and to do His will.

Part Four:
Eschatology

Chapter Ten

The Intermediate State

The Intermediate State is concerned with the state of persons between their death and their resurrection.

Some years ago a church sexton was feeling quite poorly and thought maybe he ought to go home. But it was midwinter, it was Saturday, and he was a conscientious fellow.

"No, you go home," the pastor said. "Maybe you'll feel better in the morning and can come over early to fire up the furnace."

The sexton went home to bed, was up early the next morning, and was quickly scanning the newspaper before hurrying over to the church. Suddenly his eyes stopped at a story that announced that he had died.

He rushed to the telephone and called the pastor. "Hey, did you see that announcement about my death in the paper?" he asked.

"Yesss, I did," replied the pastor hesitantly. "Ehhh ... where are you calling from?"

In recent years there has been a resurgence of interest in mysticism. Books on eastern thought are selling in huge numbers. Schools of meditation are springing up everywhere. Gurus abound. Yoga is everywhere. Extrasensory perception is being studied in scientific laboratories; and department stores are selling the concept in ESP games and Ouija boards. Along with all this has come a renewal of interest and belief in life after death, disembodied existence, immortality, and the idea of another world.

There are at least four questions which may be asked concerning the Intermediate State:

(1) Is there such a thing, or is death a cessation of existence, an eternal sleep, a total absorption into a larger or more ultimate reality, or a simple dissolution into our constituent physical elements?

(2) If there is such a thing as an Intermediate State, does it consist in a cessation of existence until a person is re-created at the resurrection; or in a state of absolute unconsciousness until the last trumpet; or in a slumber of the soul until the Day of Judgment; or in the post-mortem continuance, in a conscious disembodied state, of the numerically same person who lived in an ante-mortem state?

(3) If we assert a conscious disembodied state of persons between death and the resurrection, does this concept make logical sense, is it epistemologically verifiable (both in principle and in fact), and can it be given ontological status?

(4) Do the Scriptures say anything about such an Intermediate State, and if so, what?

Let us divide our treatment of this subject into two unequal headings: A Consideration of the Scriptural Data, and Some Intriguing Questions about the Intermediate State, questions concerning which Scripture gives us little or no information.

A Consideration of the Scriptural Data

Let us treat this concern under two sub-heads: Scriptural data regarding the Intermediate State in general, and Scriptural data regarding the possibility of a dispensationally-related change in the Intermediate State.

The Intermediate State in General

There are five words in the original languages of Scripture which would appear to have the most direct bearing on the Intermediate State. Let us consider the usage of each of these words.

Sheol. The first of these words is the Hebrew word *Sheol* (שְׁאוֹל). It is used 65 times in the Old Testament. The Authorized or King James Version translates it as follows: 31 times as "grave," 31 times as "hell," and 3 times as "pit." *Sheol* appears to have three areas of meaning, when

examined according to its usage. First of all, it means the grave, the state of death, which includes the ideas of physical dissolution and destruction. Secondly, it means the place or state to which persons, without regard to their moral character, pass at death. And thirdly, it means the place or state to which wicked persons pass at death. Most of the usages appear to refer to death or the grave. Three representatives of this usage are Genesis 42:38, Psalm 49:14, and Hosea 13:14.

Genesis 42:38 tells us of Jacob's concern for his son Benjamin:

He said, "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone. If mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to *Sheol*."

Psalm 49:14 speaks of that event which comes to the wise and foolish alike:

Like sheep they are laid in *Sheol*; death shall feed on them, and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in *Sheol* from their dwelling.

Hosea 13:14 predicts the ultimate restoration of Israel:

I will ransom them from the power of *Sheol*; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O *Sheol*, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hidden from mine eyes.

Examples of the third usage, the place or state to which wicked persons pass at death, are more difficult to find. Perhaps the following would fit this meaning:

Psalm 9:17 -- "The wicked shall be turned into *Sheol*, and all the nations that forget God."

Proverbs 15:24 -- "The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from *Sheol* beneath."

Proverbs 23:13-14 -- "Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from *Sheol*."

There are three usages of *Sheol* which have at times been suggested as problematic. They are Psalm 6:5, Isaiah 38:18, and Ecclesiastes 9:10.

Psalm 6:5 -- "For in death there is no remembrance of thee; in *Sheol* who shall give them thanks?"

Isaiah 38:18 -- "For *Sheol* cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth." (Verse 19 should be added) -- "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known thy truth."

Ecclesiastes 9:10 -- "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in *Sheol*, whither thou goest."

Of course, if *Sheol* is being used in the first sense in these three references, that is, referring to the grave, the state of death in which physical dissolution and destruction take place, then there is no problem. And I would propose that this is the meaning of *Sheol* in these cases.

Hades. The second word which would appear to have some bearing on the question of the Intermediate State is the Greek word *Hades* (ᾍδης). It is used 11 times in the New Testament, and is employed rather uniformly to translate *Sheol* in the Septuagint (LXX) translation of the Old Testament into Greek. The Authorized Version translates it ten times as "hell" and once as "grave." Let us examine all of its usages in context.

Matthew 11:23-24 -- "And thou, Capernaum, which are exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to *Hades*; for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."

In this usage we discover two ideas: Capernaum is to be humiliated, to be brought down to destruction; and its inhabitants are to be left in a miserable state of anticipation of coming judgment for their continuance in sin and unbelief in the face of Christ's teachings and sign-miracles.

Matthew 16:18 -- "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of *Hades* shall not prevail against it."

Here Christ assures His disciples (and us) that the gates of *Hades* shall not prevail against, shall not overpower the Church! But how could the gates of *Hades* overpower the Church?

There are three ways of viewing this assertion:

(1) The gates of *Hades* cannot overpower the Church by keeping the Church out of *Hades*. In this view the Church breaks into *Hades* and frees its prisoners.

(2) The gates of *Hades* cannot overpower the Church by keeping the Church in *Hades*. In this view the gates of *Hades* cannot keep the Church from bursting the bonds of *Hades* and breaking out through its gates.

(3) The gates of *Hades* cannot overpower the Church by swallowing up the Church. In this view the gates of *Hades* are looked upon as gaping jaws, threatening to swallow the Church. But the gates of *Hades* are unsuccessful, and the Church escapes *Hades* by the redemption wrought by Christ.

I would propose the third interpretation.

Luke 10: 15 -- "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to *Hades*."

This is a parallel passage to Matthew 11:23.

Luke 16:22-23 -- "And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom; the rich man also died, and was buried. And in *Hades* he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom."

I would like to stress the fact that Lazarus is not said to have passed into *Hades*, but into *Abraham's bosom*. Only the rich man is said to be in *Hades*.

Acts 2:26-32 -- "Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also shall rest in hope, because thou wilt not leave my soul in *Hades*, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch, David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He, seeing this before, spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul is not left in *Hades*, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses."

I would like to propose a different rendering of verses 27 and 31.

Verse 27 -- "Because you will not abandon my soul to *Hades*, nor will you give your holy one to see corruption."

Verse 31 -- "Seeing this before, he spoke concerning the resurrection of Christ, that 'Neither was he abandoned to *Hades*, nor did his flesh see corruption.'"

Since these are references to Psalm 16:10, it is interesting to note how that verse reads in the Hebrew. Psalm 16:10 says: "Because you will not abandon (עָזַב) my soul to (5) *Sheol*; you will not give your holy one to see corruption."

This rendering (both in the Hebrew original and in the Greek quotation) makes the two clauses parallel: Christ's person is not permitted to experience *Sheol* (in the third sense) or *Hades*; Christ's body is not permitted to experience corruption.

1 Corinthians 15:55 -- "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

The English word "grave" is used here to translate *Hades*, but the best

textual reading is not *Hades*, but *Thanatos* (Θάνατος). Thus the better reading would translate "Where, O death, is your victory; where, O death, is your sting?" Thus this reference does not provide us with information on *Hades*.

Revelation 1:18 -- "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of *Hades* and death."

This could be a reference to the idea expressed in Rev. 3:7, that it is Christ "who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens." Or it could imply that Christ locks the wicked into *Hades* and opens the gates of death at the resurrection; or it could simply refer to the keys as a symbol of Christ's authority over *Hades* and death. The last of the three would seem to pose the fewest problems.

Revelation 6:8 -- "And I looked, and behold, a pale horse, and his name that sat on him was Death, and *Hades* followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth."

Death is personified here, and *Hades* seems also to be personified. Death and *Hades* are able to overpower one-fourth of the inhabitants of the earth during this period when a temporal expression of the wrath of God is poured out upon mankind.

However, since Death and *Hades* are personified here, this usage would not seem to tell us much about the Intermediate State, unless one takes this in connection with Matthew 16:18, in which case one could say that those who are overpowered by the gates of *Hades* in this instance are wicked persons, since those gates cannot prevail over the members of Christ's Church.

Revelation 20:13-14 -- "And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and *Hades* delivered up the dead that were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and *Hades* were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire."

This passage, together with its context, gives us some useful information. Those who are judged at this "great white throne" judgment are the wicked dead, and their names are not found written in the book of life.

We are told that "death and *Hades* delivered up the death that were in them." These are the wicked dead who are judged.

Perhaps the combination "death and *Hades* " is a reference to the reuniting of the body and the personality, "death" referring to the state of dissolution and destruction out of which the body is raised, and " *Hades* " referring to the Intermediate State into which wicked persons had passed at their death. Thus this "delivering up" would refer to the reunion of the body and of the disembodied personality of the wicked dead, in order to receive final judgment at the hand of God. And thus the wicked, having been thus reconstituted, will be cast (verse 14 -- "death and *Hades* ") into the lake of fire.

Having briefly surveyed all the uses of *Hades* in the New Testament, it is instructive to note what some of the encyclopedists and lexicographers have said concerning the meaning of *Hades*.

In the article on *Hades* in M'Clintock and Strong's *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical History*, we read the following:

The Greeks, however, in process of time abandoned this use of Hades [as the personal designation of Pluto, the invisible-making deity], and when the Greek Scriptures were written the word was scarcely ever applied except to the place of the departed. In the classical writers, therefore, it is used to denote Orcus, or the infernal regions...

Two or three points stand out prominently in the views entertained by the ancients respecting *hades*: first, that it was the common receptacle of departed spirits, of good as well as bad; second, that it was divided into two compartments, the one containing an Elysium of bliss for the good, the other a Tartarus of sorrow and punishment for the wicked; and thirdly, that in respect to its locality, it lay under ground, in the mid-regions of the earth.

Following this piece of intelligence from M'Clintock and Strong, perhaps I should have been prepared for the entry under *Hades* in Grimm's (better known as Thayer's) *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Nevertheless I am just as astounded today as I was the first time I came

across it. It reads as follows:

1. a prop. name, *Hades*, *Pluto*, the god of the lower regions; so in Hom. always. 2. an appellative, *Orcus*, *the nether world*, *the realm of the dead*. In the Sept., the Hebr. הַאֵדֶם is almost always rendered by this word (once by Θάνατος , 2 5. xxii.6); it denotes, therefore, in bibl. Grk. *Orcus*, *the infernal regions*, a dark ... and dismal place ... in the very depths of the earth ... the common receptacle of disembodied spirits ... Metaph. ... to go or be thrust down into the depth of misery and disgrace.

I am still astounded at the reasoning which apparently was employed in this entry: Because *Hades* was used to mean such and such a thing in the pagan Greek writers; and because *Hades* is employed in the Greek New Testament; therefore *Hades* has the same meaning in the New Testament writings as it had in the pagan Greek writings! Once again, permit me to enunciate one of the most basic principles of hermeneutics: The meaning of a word is not determined by its etymology, but by its usage in context!

Well, then, employing this principle, and having surveyed all of the uses of *Hades* in the New Testament, what can we say about its meaning?

I think we can say this much: that *Hades* is a place or dimension or state in which the wicked dead remain in a disembodied state in misery and torment until the resurrection and final judgment, and from which the wicked dead shall come to be cast into the lake of fire.

Geenna. The third word which has sometimes been associated with the Intermediate State is the Greek word *Geenna* ($\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\epsilon\nu\nu\alpha$). It is used 12 times in the New Testament. The Authorized Version translates it 9 times as "hell," and 3 times as "hell fire."

The word *Geenna* is really a transliteration of the Aramaic גִּי אֶהֱנִי which is derived from the Hebrew גִּי אֶהֱנִי . It is a locality word used by the Jews, meaning "Valley of Hinnom," and was given to the Wadi er-rababi in South Jerusalem. Threats of divine punishment had been uttered over this valley by Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 7:32 and 19:6, we read:

Jer. 7:32 -- "Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the

Lord, that it shall no more be called Topheth, nor the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter; for they shall bury in Topheth, till there be no place."

Jer. 19:6 -- "Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that this place shall no more be called Topheth, nor the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter."

Because of the judgment pronounced over the valley of Hinnom, the place came to be associated in apocryphal literature with the fire of the last judgment; and thus *gehinnom* came to be used for the eschatological fire of hell.

Since *Geenna* was a localized word used by the Jews, it should not surprise us to learn that this word is not found in classical Greek, nor in the LXX, although its absence from Josephus and Philo does surprise us a little.

However, *Geenna* is used 12 times in the New Testament. Let us examine its uses.

Matthew 5:21-22 -- "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old, 'Thou shall not kill and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of judgment.' But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of judgment. And 'Whosoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be in danger of the council.' But whosoever shall say, 'Thou fool,' shall be in danger of *Geenna*."

The emphasis here appears to be upon the punishment consequent upon God's judgment of wickedness.

Matthew 5:29-30 -- "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into *Geenna*. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should

perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into *Geenna*."

Geenna is here portrayed as a place for offenders against God. And it receives the whole person, including his physical body.

Matthew 10:28 -- "And fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in *Geenna*."

Here again *Geenna* is a place in which both soul and body are devoted to destruction, a place more to be avoided than physical death itself!

Matthew 18:9 -- "And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than, having two eyes, to be cast into *Geenna*."

This reference is quite similar to Matthew 5:29.

Matthew 23:15, 33 -- "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of *Geenna* than yourselves Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of *Geenna*?"

Geenna in these uses appears to have two related meanings. On the one hand, *Geenna* is associated with wickedness, with hypocrisy, insincerity, moral perversity, and self-righteousness. On the other hand, *Geenna* is associated with condemnatory judgment. Connecting the two ideas, *Geenna* means condemnatory judgment upon the wicked.

Mark 9:43, 45, 47 -- "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed than, having two hands, to go into *Geenna*, into the fire that never shall be quenched And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter lame into life than, having two feet, to be cast into *Geenna*, into the fire that never shall be quenched And if thine eye offend thee,

pluck it out; it is better to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than, having two eyes, to be cast into *Geenna*."

These references are quite similar to Matthew 5:29-30 and Matthew 18:9. However, they do add an idea: that of the fire which never shall be quenched. In view of the fact that both soul and body are involved, this addition introduces a genuine element of terror into the meaning of *Geenna*!

Luke 12:4-5 -- "And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into *Geenna*; yea, I say unto you, Fear him."

This appears to be a parallel to Matthew 10:28.

James 3:6 -- "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of *Geenna*."

Here the moral wickedness and perversity associated with *Geenna* appear to be in view, with Satan as the agent who with that perversity sets the tongue on fire. Of course, fire has already been associated with *Geenna*.

Having now glanced at all the uses of *Geenna* in the New Testament, what are we able to say from a study of its usage in context?

I think we are able to say this much: that *Geenna* is a place of condemnation and terrible punishment into which the wicked, following the reunion of their physical bodies and disembodied personalities, shall be cast, there to remain forever. It would appear difficult not to connect this concept with that expressed in Revelation 20:13-14, wherein the wicked are reconstituted and re-embodied, are judged, and are cast into the lake of fire. In fact, I would propose that *Geenna* and the lake of fire refer to the same place, that the wicked are cast into it *after* the resurrection and final judgment, and that therefore *Geenna* has no bearing on the nature of the Intermediate State.

Paradeisos. The fourth word which has some bearing on the Intermediate State is the Greek word *Paradeisos* (παράδεισος). It is used 3 times in the New Testament. The Authorized Version transliterates it all three times as "Paradise." Let us examine the three instances of its occurrence.

Luke 23:42-43 -- "And he said unto Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.' And Jesus said unto him, 'Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in *Paradeisos*.'"

Since this reference looms large in all discussions of the possibility of a dispensationally-related change in the Intermediate State, we shall defer discussion of it.

2 Corinthians 12:2-4 -- "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth) -- such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth) -- How he was caught up into *Paradeisos*, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

It would appear that *Paradeisos* is equated with the "third heaven" -- the abode of God -- in this reference. Other than this, we are given no further information.

Revelation 2:7 -- "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the *Paradeisos* of God."

This tree of life, which appeared in the Garden of Eden, appears again in Revelation 22:2, 19, in the holy city, the New Jerusalem, in which also the throne of God and of the Lamb is set. It would appear difficult to distinguish *Paradeisos* from heaven in this instance. However, since it occurs after Christ's Second Coming, it would not appear to have a direct bearing on the question of a present Intermediate State.

Ouranos. The fifth and last word which we shall treat as having some bearing on the Intermediate State is the Greek word *Ouranos* (οὐρανός).

It is used 284 times in the New Testament. The Authorized Versions translates *Ouranos* 268 times as "heaven," 10 times as "air," 5 times as "sky," and once as "heavenly." We shall not examine all these 284 cases! However, perhaps the examination of two of these cases would be helpful.

Philippians 1:21-24 -- "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor, yet what I shall choose I know not. For I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."

Now someone may have noticed that the word *Ouranos* is not used in this passage. I hasten to point out, however, that chapter 3, verse 20, states: "For our citizenship is in *Ouranos*, from where also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Paul desires to depart from the flesh and to be with Christ, who is presently in *Ouranos*.

2 Corinthians 5:1-9 -- "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the *Ouranos*. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from *Ouranos*. If so be that, being clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the very same thing is God, who hath also given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore, we are always confident, knowing that, while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. (For we walk by faith, not by sight). We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore, we labor that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him."

In these passages, we learn that disembodied existence for the believer means an existence in the very presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, an existence in *Ouranos*.

In the passage in John 14 in which our Lord attempted to comfort his disciples and to answer some of their questions, we discover some answers to some questions of our own. What is the way to *Ouranos*? Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Lord and Savior. Where is *Ouranos*? Where Jesus is! What is *Ouranos* like? It is like Jesus! He is the life and light of *Ouranos*! *Ouranos* is filled with His truth, His goodness, His beauty! Let us contemplate Jesus, when we wish to think of *Ouranos*. There will be no lie there. There will be no wickedness or uncleanness there. There will be no ugliness there. Truth and goodness and beauty will fill and permeate every dwelling-place and every dweller in *Ouranos*!

Now having considered the Intermediate State in general, let us look at the second sub-head which we shall subsume under the main heading "A Consideration of the Scriptural Data." Let us briefly examine:

Scriptural Data Regarding the Possibility of a Dispensationally-Related Change in the Intermediate State

Some years ago I ran across a fascinating quotation in a book entitled *The Second Coming of Christ*, by Clarence Larkin. I should like to quote this material as a useful entree into the present question. Larkin wrote:

"The Underworld" (Hades) in Christ's day was made up of two compartments, "Paradise" and "Hell," separated by an "impassable gulf." "Hell" is the abode of the *souls* of the Wicked between the death and resurrection of their bodies.

When Jesus died on the Cross His *body* was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea ... and His *soul* went to Paradise, where He had an engagement that day to meet the *soul* of the "Penitent Thief"... whose *body* was buried in the "Potter's Field." It was in their "*soulish bodies*" then that they met in Paradise. When Jesus "*soul*" returned from "Paradise" on the third day to reoccupy His body in Joseph's tomb, He did not return alone. He led "captivity captive" ... and brought out with Him all the souls of the "Righteous Dead" imprisoned in the Paradise section of the "Underworld." and placed them in the "Paradise" of the "Third Heaven," to which Paul was caught

up. This is clear from other Scriptures. Matt. 16:18 -- Jesus said that the "Gates of Hell" (Hades, the Underworld) should not prevail against the Church. Then "Hell" (Hades) has *gates* to prevent the escape of its inmates. What Jesus did before He came back from the "Underworld" was to seize the "Keys of Hades," unlock the "Gates" of the "Paradise Section," and empty it of its inmates, and then lock it up that it might remain empty

From what has been said we see that the *souls* of the "Righteous Dead," since the resurrection of Jesus, go to the "Paradise" of the "Third Heaven," that they may be "with the Lord."

While "Paradise," as a suburb of Heaven, is a glorious place, it does not follow that the state of the Righteous there is more blissful than it was in the "Paradise Section" of the Underworld.

This idea of Christ descending into Hades appears in the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea, one of a number of Church Fathers who espoused the view. Clement of Alexandria extended the purpose of the descent to include not only the saints, martyrs and prophets of the Old Testament, but all of the heathen as well, to whom the gospel was preached. Origen, in his work *Against Celsus*, quotes Celsus as saying, "You will not surely say that Christ when He failed to persuade the living went down to Hades to persuade those who dwell there?" and Origen answers, "We say ... that [Christ's] soul, stripped of the body, did there hold converse with other souls that were in like manner stripped, that He might there convert those who were capable of instruction, or were otherwise in ways known to Him fit for it." The descent into Hades view also appears in the writings of Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius, Ambrose, and Jerome. Augustine, however, rejected the view. In chapter 79 of his work on heresies, Augustine lists the view as a heresy.

This view dominated the great scholastic writers of the middle ages, and was frequently used to support the dogma of purgatory. The leaders of the Reformation, however, rejected the descent into Hades view. They did so for three reasons: (1) It was looked upon as a traditional, not a scriptural, belief; (2) It appeared to give some support for the Romish dogma

of purgatory; and (3) It appeared late in the creeds of the Church. (In fact, the phrase, "He descended into hell" did not appear in the accepted version of the Apostles' Creed until AD 700. It does not appear in the versions of AD 150 or 350.) As a result, most of the Catechisms or Confessions of the Reformed Churches simply ignored the descent into Hades view. The Roman Catholic Church maintained the article, and gradually a minority of Anglicans and Lutherans came to accept it. In the twentieth century among evangelical churches the view has again become widespread, largely through its espousal by dispensational writers and teachers.

But what Scriptures are employed to support this view? There are several, and we should briefly glance at them.

Matthew 27:52-53 -- "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints that slept were raised, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

There is no indication in this reference that this was anything more than a local phenomenon -- in the vicinity of Jerusalem. In addition, it does not say that *all* of the Old Testament saints in the vicinity of Jerusalem were raised, but *many* of them. Further, there is no hint here that these saints were raised because of any descent into Hades, or of any preaching on the part of Christ to those who were purportedly there. And finally, this passage proves too much, since in the descent into Hades, it is the *souls* of the pious Old Testament dead that are freed and taken by Christ with Him to heaven; there is no *resurrection of bodies*. The resurrection of Old Testament saints comes much later, at Christ's return.

Ephesians 4:8-10 -- "Wherefore, he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)"

Two clauses are especially stressed: "He led captivity captive," and "he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth." The first clause, "he led captivity captive," is a quotation from Psalm 68:18. This is

connected with Colossians 2:15 -- "And, having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." The second clause, "he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth," is linked to Isaiah 61:1 -- "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me ... he hath sent me ... to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound." This is quoted by Christ in Luke 4:18. Both of these clauses, and the related Scriptures, are quoted in favor of the descent into Hades view.

However, the first clause may be understood as teaching that Christ broke the slave-hold of sin over all His people and bound them as captives to Himself, or that Christ broke the bondage of death and made death His own captive. And the second clause really turns on the word "lower." ("he descended first into the *lower* parts of the earth"). However, if the contrast is not between His descending to hades and then ascending to heaven, but between His descending to earth (which is certainly "lower" relative to His pre-incarnate state!) And His subsequent ascending to heaven, then the whole theory collapses. And once again, if the proponents of this view want to press the "lower parts of the earth" idea, then do they want to locate the "Paradise Section" of hades in the interior of the earth?! Once again, this proves too much.

The proclamation of "liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who were bound" could certainly apply to the marvelous deliverance from the guilt, penalty, and bondage of sin which every child of God experiences.

Finally we come to the *locus classicus* of the descent into Hades view, 1 Peter 3:18-20:

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, who at one time were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, in which few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water.

This passage is usually coupled with I Peter 4:6 -- "For, for this cause

was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

There are at least five interpretations of these passages. Let me list them for you.

- (1) Christ went to Hades to preach the gospel to the pious dead of the Old Testament.
- (2) Christ went to Hades to preach the gospel to those who perished in the Flood, who had had little or no opportunity to hear or believe it.
- (3) Christ went to Hades to declare the just condemnation of those who were disobedient to the external call of the gospel, not only in the period immediately preceding the Flood, but during the ages from Adam to Christ.
- (4) Christ went to Hades to preach the gospel to all men who had previously died, having only the revelation of Nature, as well as those who through ignorance or stubborn prejudice had refused the revelation of Grace.
- (5) Christ did not preach in Hades, but rather preached by the Holy Spirit through Noah to the unsaved people who were disobedient to the gospel in the time immediately preceding the Flood, and who are now in prison.

I would highly recommend the fifth interpretation. It has the fewest problems, both exegetically and theologically, does not keep the Old Testament saints waiting for salvation for an interminable period, proposes no wholesale or retail condemnations, and affords no "second chances" to those who didn't accept the gospel the first time around.

Now with an alternate explanation of these Scriptures which are used to support the view, there is no further need to feel that we must hold it as an article of faith. But we must say more.

This view of the descent into Hades arises out of two movements of thought. First, the idea that during the Old Testament period Sheol or Hades consisted of two compartments, one of them a Paradise of bliss and

the other a Hell of misery, and that it was a dark and dismal place in the depths of the earth in which disembodied spirits were imprisoned, is nothing less than a wholesale acceptance of pagan Greek mythology, and nothing more than a semantic variation on the Elysium of bliss and the Tartarus of misery where comprised the Hades of Greek speculative thought.

Second, the idea that Christ went to Hades to preach the gospel arose originally out of a tendency, especially on the part of Clement of Alexandria and Origen, toward universalism. Clement held that all men would have opportunity to repent right up to the Day of Judgment; Origen held that there would be a complete restitution of all things, and that even Satan would eventually be saved!

Because of these two basic tendencies I would propose that the theory of Christ's descent into Hades be abandoned. Incidentally, in connection with this proposal, I take note that the New Scofield Reference Bible, in a footnote on 1 Peter 3:19, makes the following statement: "The theory that the Lord Jesus, after His crucifixion, preached to the unsaved dead in hades and gave them a second chance is not found in Scripture." May we all heed the implied admonition!

At the outset of this study I mentioned a second division of our subject. I propose that we now consider:

Some Intriguing Questions about the Intermediate State

I also stated that these were questions concerning which Scripture gives us little or no information. And thus we stand in great jeopardy of moving over into the area of unfounded speculation. However, I would propose these merely as questions for contemplation and reflection.

What is it like to be a disembodied person in a post-mortem state? This question contains and implies many sub-questions. Does a disembodied person have some sort of form? Does a disembodied person retain the same level of intellectual and emotional maturity attained in the ante-mortem state? Does a disembodied baby or child continue to grow psychologically? Does a disembodied person who had passed into senility in the ante-mortem state regain clarity of thought?

Does the memory of one 's life in the ante-mortem state persist in the post-mortem state? If we never really forget anything, so that under hypnosis we are able to reach back and remember the most minute details of our childhood, or so that a person facing imminent peril of death may, in a few moments, relive an entire lifetime, or so that elderly people begin forgetting the recent past but begin remembering with great vividness the distant past, then will the memory of our life in the ante-mortem state become immediate, clear, vivid in the disembodied state? Will the criminal or vicious acts, the bitter words that can never be recalled, the impurity which tainted the life of another as well as our own, the greed of gain, the life that fared sumptuously every day, the dishonesty and the fraud which passed for wisdom, the zeal for God that was not according to knowledge, the hollow formalism, the life self-centered in its love of praise or power -- will the memory of all these things come back to exercise a terrible retribution?

Will it be possible in the Intermediate State to experience a godly repentance deeper and more agonizing than any that had been possible in this life? If, with a clearer conception of the truth of God than had been possible in this life, and a more complete understanding of the relations between the holiness of God, the will of God, the true nature of sin, the righteousness of Christ, and the beauty of personal holiness, a deeper, more thorough repentance is possible, will there be provision for such growth? If such deep, thorough repentance for sin is an indispensable condition for growth in holiness, will there be room for such advancement?

Will there be opportunity in the Intermediate State to grow in the knowledge of divine truth? Will the transition from our present partial knowledge to that state of full knowledge be instantaneous, or may it be thought of as gradual? Will one who dies in infancy, or idiocy, suddenly gain full knowledge? Will there be a development of capacities that are now latent, as well as an extension of the range of action of capacities that are now vigorous and strong?

Will there be, in the Intermediate State, a mutual recognition among those who are partakers of the inheritance of the Kingdom? Must all personal affections, all loves, all friendships be cast aside in that state?

It is easy to ask hard questions, after the fashion of the medieval

theologians. It is harder to wrestle with these questions, to draw solid, Scripturally based inferences.

Of some things, however, we may be certain. We know that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him even as He is, when He shall be revealed at His Coming. We know that, in the New Jerusalem, there shall be no more tears, or crying, for the former things will have passed away. We know that, although now we see through a glass, darkly, then we shall know, even as we are known. And we know that the One who does all things for His glory and our good, will do all things well. And so we may approach the Intermediate State with hope, trust, and firm confidence, knowing that Christ has removed the sting of death, and that to depart from this life and to be with Christ is far better. And we may know that, if we are savingly united to Christ, the life beyond this life is richer, fuller, happier, and infinitely more satisfying than anything which we have known!

Chapter Eleven

Some Observations Pertaining to Eschatology

1. Among evangelical, orthodox Christians, there is no such thing as a universal eschatology--a single view or system of the events of the last days. Christ's Second Coming, the Resurrection, the Judgment, the New Heavens and New Earth, and Heaven and Hell are revealed truths. But with regard to the precise nature of each of these events or states, and a scheme of the relationships between them, there is no universal agreement among Christians.

2. Therefore we need to recognize that all of our eschatological views and systems are theological constructs. As such, they are capable of misconstruction, either through poor exegesis, alien hermeneutics, unsound reasoning, theological preconception, or psychological bias. This is true whether we are speaking of Millennial views or of Tribulational views.

3. The Central revealed truth of eschatology is the Second Coming of Christ. Although Scripture is quite clear on the *certainty* of Christ's return, it is not at all clear on the *time* of His return.

4. Scripture speaks of Christ's return as both *imminent* and *delayed*. Consequently there is the tension between the "perhaps very soon" and the "perhaps not for a long time."

5. We need somehow to retain both concepts, the concept of *imminency* and the concept of *delay*, in our theological constructs.

Of course, *death* is always imminent for every human being. But we are not speaking of an *individual* departure from this present life to remain with the Lord for a time in a *disembodied* state; rather we are speaking of a *collective* departure from this present life to be with the Lord forever in new, *transformed bodies*.

If we lose imminency altogether, we not only fail to do justice to the Scriptures that emphasize readiness in view of the uncertainty and incalculability of the time of Christ's return; we also undermine our motivation to be ready for a final accounting of the things that we have done in this life. That is, although imminency is not necessary to motivate

us to want to live our entire lives to the glory of God (our love for Christ is sufficient motivation for that), yet imminency adds the motivational factor of *urgency*, to do what we ought to do *today*, instead of putting it off until some future time. Imminency suggests the possible shortness of time for the fulfillment of obligations to God, and thus combats apathy, laxness, and the tendency to procrastinate.

Both imminency of death and imminency of our Lord's return combat apathy and satisfactions with the humdrum, and introduce alertness and urgency into our living of the Christian life. Our Lord teaches us to *number our days* (since they are brief and fleeting), so that we may apply our hearts to wisdom. He also teaches us to remain ever *alert* and *watchful*, not because every day of a Christian's life is to be lived to the glory of God (although that is true), but because *we do not know the time of the Lord's return*, and because when He returns we will have to give an account of how we have lived and what we have accomplished during His absence. We must maintain the concept of *imminency*!

But we must also retain the concept of *delay*. Now it is true that our Lord's return is called "the blessed hope" (Titus 2:13), and that we are to be looking for the appearing of our Lord. We also recognize that "hope deferred makes the heart sick" (Proverbs 13:12). And yet we are to hope for and confidently expect our Lord's return, even if it is delayed. In Romans 8:23 Paul says that we groan, waiting eagerly for our new transformed bodies, which we will receive at our Lord's return. And in verse 25 he says that if we hope for this transformation, which we have not yet experienced, then "with perseverance we wait eagerly for it."

Peter mentions the concept of delay in 2 Peter 3, and asserts that the Lord is not *slow* about fulfilling the promise of His coming, but is rather *patient*, not desirous that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Yet even during this delay, Peter finds a basis and motivation for holiness and godly conduct in the impending destruction of the present skies and earth -- which are to take place following our Lord's return -- and the establishment of new skies and a new earth, in which righteousness will dwell.

6. It is possible so to emphasize imminency as to neglect the delay factor, or to emphasize the delay factor and neglect imminency. It is possible to do this in preaching and teaching. It is possible to do this in formulating

strategies for missions, evangelism, Christian education, etc. It is possible to do this in our mode of living, our personal and family lifestyles. It is possible to overemphasize either imminency or delay!

7. We need to preach, carry on the Lord's work, and live as if the Lord were returning *today*, and we need to preach, carry on the Lord's work, and live as if the Lord were returning hundreds of years from today! We are to *live* as if the Lord were coming today; we are to plan for the future of God's work as if the Lord were not coming for a long time!

This means we need both short-term strategies, goals, objectives, and plans, and long-term strategies, goals, objectives, and plans. The concept of imminency must affect the formulation of short-term plans and strategies; the concept of delay will affect the formulation of long-term plans and strategies.

May the Lord help us to preserve this fine balance!

Chapter Twelve

Hell: Some Observations on the Views of John Stott, Clark Pinnock, and Edward Fudge

There appear to be four basic positions on the destiny of those who die without repenting:

- (1) They will finally be saved -- universalism.
- (2) They will not survive physical death, but cease to exist -- conditional immortality.
- (3) They will survive physical death, be resurrected and judged, suffer in hell for a limited period of time, and then cease to exist -- annihilationism.
- (4) They will survive physical death, be resurrected and judged, and suffer in hell unendingly -- the traditional orthodox view.

Three Proponents of Conditional Immortality or Annihilationism

In the last few years some highly visible evangelicals have stepped forward and announced that they now hold or are seriously leaning toward either the second or third position above -- conditional immortality or annihilationism.

1. John Stott, in an article that appeared in *World Christian* magazine in May 1989, makes the following (excerpted) statements:

What is hell? We surely have to say that this banishment from God will be real, terrible, so that "it would have been better from him if he had not been born" (Mark 14:21), and eternal. The New Testament contains no hint of the possibility of a later reprieve or amnesty I have never declared publicly whether I think hell, in addition to being real, terrible, and eternal, will involve the experience of everlasting suffering Will the final destiny of

the impenitent be eternal conscious torment, "for ever and ever," or will it be a total annihilation of their being? The former has to be described as traditional orthodoxy Do I hold it, however? Well, emotionally, I find the concept intolerable and do not understand how people can live with it without either cauterizing their feelings or cracking under the strain My question must be -- and is -- not what does my heart tell me, but what does God's word say? ... We need to survey the biblical material afresh and to open our minds, not just our hearts, to the possibility that Scripture points in the direction of annihilation, and that the doctrine of eternal conscious torture has to yield to the supreme authority of Scripture. There are four arguments; they relate to language, imagery, justice and universalism.

First, language. Jesus himself told us not to be afraid of those who kill the body and cannot kill the soul. "Rather," he continued, "be afraid of the One [God] who can destroy both soul and body in hell." ... If to kill is to deprive the body of life, hell would seem to be the deprivation of both physical and spiritual life, that is, the extinction of being It would seem strange ... if people who are said to suffer destruction are in fact not destroyed; and it is difficult to imagine a perpetually inconclusive process of perishing The immortality -- and therefore indestructibility -- of the soul is a Greek not a biblical concept Only God possesses immortality in himself ... "annihilation" is not quite the same as "conditional immortality." According to the latter, nobody survives death except those to whom God gives life (they are therefore immortal by grace, not by nature), whereas according to the former, everybody survives death and will even be resurrected, but the impenitent will finally be destroyed.

Second, imagery. The main function of fire is not to cause pain, but to secure destruction The fire itself is termed "eternal" and "unquenchable," but it would be very odd if what is thrown into it proves indestructible.

Our expectation would be the opposite: it would be consumed forever, not tormented forever. Hence it is the smoke (evidence that fire has done its work) which "rises forever and ever" Rev 14:11; cf. 19:3).

Four objections are raised to this understanding of the "lake of fire."

1. There is the vivid picture of hell as the place where "their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:48) Jesus' use of Isaiah 66:24 does not mention everlasting pain. What he says is the worm will not die and the fire will not be quenched. Nor will they until presumably their work of destruction is done.

2. At the end of the so-called parable of the sheep and goats, Jesus contrasted "eternal life" with "eternal punishment" (Matt 25:46). Does that not indicate that in hell people endure conscious punishment?... Jesus said that both the life and the punishment would be eternal, but he did not define in that passage the nature of either.

3. But did not Dives cry out because he was "in agony in this fire" (Luke 16:23-24, 28)? Yes, he did. But we must be cautious in interpreting a parable (if it was that) which speaks of "Abraham's bosom" as well as hell fire The natural interpretation would be that Jesus was referring to the so-called "intermediate (or intern) state" between death and resurrection. I myself believe that this will be the time ... when the lost will come to the unimaginably painful realization of their fate. This is not incompatible, however, with their final annihilation.

4. But does the Book of Revelation not say that in the lake of fire "they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever"? Yes, that sentence occurs, but only once The beast, the false prophet and the harlot, however, are not individual people but symbols of the world in its varied hostility to God They cannot experience pain. Nor can "Death and Hades" which follow them into the

lake of fire The most natural way to understand the reality behind the imagery is that ultimately all enmity and resistance to God will be destroyed. So both the language of destruction and the imagery of fire seem to point to annihilation.

The third argument in favor of the concept of annihilation is the biblical concept of *justice* Would there not be a serious disproportion between sins consciously experienced throughout eternity?... I question whether eternal conscious torment is compatible with the biblical revelation of divine justice, unless perhaps (as has been argued) the impenitence of the lost also continues, throughout eternity.

The fourth and last argument relates to those texts which have been used for the basis for universalism. I am not a universalist. The hope of final salvation for everybody is a false hope, since it contradicts the recorded warnings of Jesus that the judgment will involve a separation into two opposite but equally eternal destinies The eternal existence of the impenitent in hell would be hard to reconcile with the promises of God's final victory over evil It would be easier to hold together the awful reality and the universal reign of God if hell means destruction and the impenitent are no more I do not dogmatize about the position to which I have come. I hold it tentatively. But I do plead for frank dialogue among evangelicals on the basis of Scripture. I also believe that the ultimate annihilation of the wicked should at least be accepted as a legitimate, biblically founded alternative to their eternal conscious torment.

Who will go to hell? Do evangelicals believe that hell will be the fate of the bulk of humanity, in which case the gospel does not appear to be good news for the mass of humanity?... What about the final destiny of those who have never heard of Christ, never received a worthy presentation of him and so never had a reasonable opportunity to respond to him? What will be their fate...
My

answer includes four parts, of which the first three are (for evangelicals at least) non-controversial, while the fourth area leads us to the precarious area of speculation.

First, all *human beings*, apart from the intervention and mercy of God, are *perishing* "Hell-deserving sinner" sounds an absurdly antiquated phrase, but I believe it is the sober truth. Without Christ I am "perishing" and deserve to perish.

Secondly, *human beings cannot save themselves* by any religious or righteous acts Self-salvation is out. In this connection we need to think about Cornelius, because he is the person often chosen to exemplify the upright seeker whom God "accepts" on account of his sincerity and decency God honored his reverent spirit, his prayers and his uprightness, and led a messenger of the gospel to him. But his salvation came through his penitent, believing response to the gospel, not through his previous religion and righteousness. I don't think this conclusion can be avoided. Principled exegesis requires it.

Thirdly, *Jesus Christ is the only Savior*

That brings me to my fourth point. Here we need to ask questions rather than make statements. If we grant that human beings left to themselves are perishing, and that they cannot save themselves, and that Jesus is the only qualified Savior -- which are three truths which evangelicals are at all costs determined to safeguard -- what condition has to be fulfilled in order that they may be saved? How much knowledge of Jesus do people have to have before they can believe in him? And how much faith do they have to exercise? Those who genuinely hear the gospel must repent and believe, of course. But what about those who have not heard it? They cannot save themselves, as we have seen, and Christ is the only Savior. Is there then any way in which God will have mercy on them, through Christ alone, and not through their own merit? A variety of answers have been given to these

questions.

1. Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* seems to promise salvation to those who "seek God" and who give evidence of the sincerity of their search by "striving" to do his will and live a good life The statement has many ambiguities. A statement by John Paul II at the beginning of his papal ministry is quite unambiguous, however. In his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* (1979) he wrote: "man every man without exception -- has been redeemed by Christ, and ... with man -- with each man without any exception whatever -- Christ is in a way united, even when man is unaware of it" (para. 14). This kind of universalism must, however, be firmly rejected by those who look to Scripture for authoritative guidance.

2. Others turn to the sheep and goats passage in Matthew 25

3. A third approach is to say that God knows how people would have responded if they had heard the gospel, and will save or judge them accordingly

4. Others have speculated that God gives everybody a vision of Jesus, and therefore an opportunity to repent and believe, at the moment of their dying. But no evidence is available to support this, either from Scripture or from deathbed experiences.

5. A more common suggestion is that God will give everybody an opportunity in the next life to respond to Jesus Although the guess that people will be given in the next world the opportunity to believe is an attractive one, it remains a guess and lacks biblical warrant.

6. Sir Norman Anderson, in speech and writing, has often suggested that some people who have never heard of Christ may be brought, by a sense of their sin, guilt and inability to save themselves, to cry for mercy to the God they but dimly perceive; that God does have mercy on

them; and that he saves them on the basis of Christ's atoning work, through faith, even though they have not heard of him. This proposal has two particular merits. First, it preserves the three safeguards outlined above, especially that we cannot save ourselves and that Christ is the only Savior. Second, it can claim some biblical warrant, since Old Testament believers were saved by God's grace through faith, even though they knew little if anything about the coming Christ

Speaking now for myself, I believe the most Christian stance is to remain agnostic on this question The fact is that God, alongside the most solemn of warnings about our responsibility to respond to the gospel, has not revealed how he will deal with those who have never heard it. We have to leave them in the hands of the God of infinite mercy and justice, who manifested these qualities most fully in the cross. Abraham's question, "Will not the judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen 18:25) is our confidence too.

However, I am imbued with hope. I have never been able to conjure up (as some great evangelical missionaries have) the appalling vision of the millions who are not only perishing but who will inevitably perish. On the other hand, as I have said, I am not and cannot be a universalist. Between these extremes I cherish the hope that the majority of the human race will be saved. And I have a solid biblical basis for this belief. True, Jesus said that those who find the narrow road that leads to life were "few" (was he referring to the little remnant of his own day within the nation of Israel?). But we need to remember that God is the Creator of all humankind, and remains infinitely loving, patient and compassionate toward all whom he has made The final vision of the redeemed in the Book of Revelation is of a "great multitude that no one could count" (7:9), a huge international throng, in whom God's promise to Abraham will at last be fulfilled -- that his seed (his spiritual posterity) would be as innumerable as stars in the sky, the dust of the earth and the

grains of sand on all the seashores of the world.

2. Clark H. Pinnock, in his article entitled "The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent," published in the *Criswell Theological Review* (4.2 [1990]: 243-259), makes the following (excerpted) statements:

Let me say at the outset that I consider the concept of hell as endless torment in body and mind an outrageous doctrine, a theological and moral enormity, a bad doctrine of the tradition which needs to be changed. How can Christians possibly project a deity of such cruelty and vindictiveness whose ways include inflicting everlasting torture upon his creatures, however sinful they may have been? Surely a God who would do such a thing is more nearly like Satan than like God, at least by any ordinary morals standards, and by the gospel itself Surely the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is no fiend; torturing people without end is not what our God does. Does the one who told us to love our enemies intend to wreak vengeance on his own enemies for all eternity?... Is it a surprise, given the cruelty which the doctrine attributes to God's action, the Christians would repeatedly wonder if it were true? It is no wonder to me why they would gravitate to the kind of view I am defending, that the finally impenitent wicked, rather than suffering torture forever, pass out of existence. Their moral sensibilities demand it of them...

The view I am advancing does seem to be gaining ground among evangelicals. The fact that no less a person than J. R. W. Stott has endorsed it now will certainly encourage this trend to continue. [Pinnock also mentions J. W. Wenham, E. Fudge, P. E. Hughes, and S. Travis as supporting this view.]

Let us ask then whether the traditional doctrine of hell is biblically and theologically sound. In my view it is not.

1. The strong impression the Bible creates in this reader with regard to the fate of the finally impenitent wicked is

a vivid sense of their final and irreversible destruction The Bible repeatedly uses the language of death, destruction, ruin, and perishing when speaking of the fate of the wicked. It uses the imagery of fire consuming (not torturing) what is thrown into it. The images of fire and destruction together strongly suggest annihilation rather than unending torture. It creates the impression that eternal punishment refers to a divine judgment whose results cannot be reversed rather than to the experience of being tormented forever

2. Some advocates prefer to call their position conditional immortality rather than annihilationism because it sounds more positive to the ear. Underlying the doctrine of annihilation, after all, is a belief in conditional immortality, the understanding that our immortality is not a natural attribute of humankind but God's gift Belief in the natural immortality of the soul, which is so widely held by Christians, although stemming more from Plato than the Bible, really drives the traditional doctrine of hell more than exegesis does. Consider the logic: if souls must live forever because they are naturally immortal, the lake of fire must be their home forever and cannot be their destruction. In the same way, the second death would have to be a process of everlasting dying and not a termination of existence which is impossible. I am convinced that the hellenistic belief in the immortality of the soul has done more than anything else ... to give credibility to the doctrine of the everlasting conscious punishment of the wicked

Belief in the immortality of the soul has long attached itself to Christian theology The Bible teaches no such thing. The soul is not an immortal substance that has to be placed somewhere if it rejects God. The Bible states that God alone has immortality (1 Tim 6:16) and that everlasting life is something God gives to humanity by grace (1 Cor 15:51-55). Eternal life is not something we possess by any natural right according to Scripture. Immortality is not inherent in human beings Rather

than speaking of immortal souls, the Bible refers to resurrected bodies, to persons being reconstituted through the power of God (Phil 3:20). In a word, Jesus Christ "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim 1:10).

The idea of souls being naturally immortal is not a biblical one, and the effect of believing it stretches the experience of death and destruction in Gehenna into endless torment. If souls are immortal, then either all souls will be saved (which is unscriptural universalism) or else hell must be everlasting torment. There is no other possibility since annihilation is ruled out from the start. This is how the traditional view of hell got constructed: add a belief in divine judgment after death (scriptural) to belief in the immortality of the soul (unscriptural), and you have Augustine's terrible doctrine.

Nevertheless, I do not call my position conditional immortality. It is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition of my view Conditional immortality then, while necessary to belief in annihilation, does not prove that annihilation is true. The key issue remains my first argument: the Scriptures suggest the destruction of the wicked.

3. As I intimated earlier, everlasting torment is intolerable from a moral point of view because it makes God into a bloodthirsty monster who maintains an everlasting Auschwitz for victims whom he does not ever allow to die. How is one to worship or imitate such a cruel and merciless God? The idea of everlasting torment ... raises the problem of evil to impossible dimensions.

4. The need to correct the traditional doctrine of hell also rests upon considerations of the divine justice Unending torment would be the kind of utterly pointless and wasted suffering which could never lead to anything good beyond it Furthermore, it would amount to inflicting infinite suffering upon those who have committed finite sins There would be a serious disproportion between

sins committed in time and suffering experienced forever. The fact that sin has been committed against an infinite God does not make the sin infinite. The chief point is that eternal torment serves no purpose and exhibits a vindictiveness out of keeping with the love of God revealed in the gospel.

5. Finally, from a metaphysical point of view, everlasting torment gives the clear picture of an unending cosmological dualism. Heaven and hell just go on existing alongside of each other forever. But how can this be if God is to be "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28) and if God is making "all things new" (Rev 21:5)? It just does not add up right

6. Nevertheless, the reader may be asking, have I not forgotten something important? What about the texts which have always been taken to support the doctrine of everlasting conscious torment? In regard to them I would say that their number is very small. The texts which can be taken to teach this doctrine are few in number and capable of being fairly interpreted in harmony with the majority of verses which teach the destruction of the wicked.

Concluding Remarks. First, I hope we remember that eschatology is an area in which what we know by way of specific knowledge is quite limited. The Bible is reserved about giving us detailed information about heaven or hell, so we should try not to be too dogmatic or harsh with one another.

Second, I hope that traditionalists will not make this issue into one which will divide evangelicals from one another as seems quite possible. Whether the wicked perish or suffer endlessly, hell is a very grim prospect, and I and the others are not trying to lessen it.

3. Edward Fudge, in "The Final End of the Wicked," published in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* in the September, 1984 issue (27.3, pp 325-334) looks at the New Testament language on the

subject.

1. On "unquenchable fire" (Mark 9:43, 48) Fudge says that fire, if it is not extinguished, burns up its victims, totally destroying them.
2. On "undying worms" (Mark 9:48) Fudge says this represents total destruction, total extinction.
3. On "gnashing of teeth" (Psalm 112:10) Fudge says this represents *rage*, not pain, and that this rage precedes the wicked person's own destruction.
4. On "smoke that ascends for ever and ever" (Revelation 14:11) Fudge says that this tells us that the extinction of the wicked is perpetual, that it will never be reversed or undone.
5. On "no rest day or night" (Revelation 14:9-11) Fudge says this means that the suffering of the wicked will occur without relief until it is finished and over.
6. On "the cup of God's wrath" (Revelation 14:9-11) Fudge says this is a symbol for God's punishment, which is a complete, irreversible destruction and extinction forever accomplished.
7. On "the lake of fire" (Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 15; 21:8) Fudge says this means the annihilation of Death and Hades, and the annihilation of sinners who are cast into it.
8. On Paul's warnings that the wicked will *die* (Romans 6:21, 23), will *perish* (Romans 2:12), and will be *destroyed* (Galatians 6:8; 1 Cor 3:17,2 Thess 1:9; Php 1:28, 3:19), Fudge says that these all picture the total extinction of sinners at the end.

Fudge concludes that the wicked will finally perish completely and forever in hell, and that this means there will be "a resurrection of the wicked for divine judgment, the fearful anticipation of a consuming fire, irrevocable expulsion from God's presence into a place where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth, such conscious suffering as the divine justice individually requires --- and finally, the total, everlasting extinction of the wicked with no hope of resurrection, restoration, or recovery" (p 334).

Some Problems with Conditional Immortality and Annihilationism

1. "They have no rest day and night" (Revelation 14:11)

If "the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever" (Revelation 14:11) means that, although unbelievers are annihilated, the evidence of their annihilation (the smoke) continues forever, then what does the next clause, "and they shall have no rest day and night" mean? The "day and night" appears to be correlated with the "forever and ever," i.e., "they have no rest day and night forever and ever"! How can these statements be squared with the assertion of the *annihilation* of these unbelievers?

2. The same terminology is used to describe the *endless* misery of hell and the *endless* happiness of heaven.

If the endless misery of hell is denied, then must the endless happiness of heaven also be denied, since the same terminology is employed to describe the *endlessness* of both states? For example, in Matthew 25:46-- "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

3. Spiritual death is not equivalent to annihilation of the soul/spirit; why should eternal death be equivalent to annihilation?

If spiritual death does not mean that the soul/spirit of an unregenerate human being is extinct or nonexistent, how does it follow that eternal spiritual death means that the soul/spirit of an unrepentant sinner in hell is extinct or annihilated? If a person can be spiritually dead while physically alive, why can't he or she continue to be spiritually dead following physical death and resurrection? Spiritual death does not equal extinction in this life; why should it in the eternal state?

4. How can such language as *eternal* fire, punishment, and destruction refer to momentary annihilation?

What can it mean for the New Testament to speak of *eternal* (αἰώνιος) fire, punishment and destruction if they really refer to *momentary* annihilation? J. I. Packer says that if all that is envisaged is momentary extinction, such language would be as pointless and inappropriate as it would be to dwell on unending pain resulting from an immediately fatal bullet wound!

5. Satan, the beast, and the false prophet are tormented for ever and ever in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 19:20; 20:10); how can the Lake of Fire represent extinction?

Revelation 20:7-10 pictures Satan, the beast and the false prophet cast into the Lake of Fire and describes them as "being tormented day and night for ever and ever." In 20:15 those not listed in the Lamb's book of life are cast into the same Lake of Fire. If Satan, the beast, and the false prophet can be *tormented for ever and ever*, there is no basis for stating that the Lake of Fire means *extinction* for sinners cast into it, or *destruction* in the sense of annihilation! This is a *formidable* objection to annihilation.

6. Unbelievers should not be told about annihilation, lest they adopt hedonism as their way of life.

If unbelievers are to be resurrected, judged, and then annihilated, *they should not be told about this*, lest they begin to weigh alternatives and decide that it is preferable to adopt a hedonistic lifestyle of "eat, drink, and be merry" in this life and then face annihilation, rather than to adopt the Christian lifestyle of repentance, faith, radical discipleship and holiness, and then look forward to an endless life in the presence of God.

In fact, if they *are* told about annihilation, they may decide to throw themselves fully into the spirit of "let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die," realizing that there is no negative payoff in terms of endless punishment, but at most a brief period of suffering.

Part Five:
Ecclesiology

Chapter Thirteen

Baptism: A Consideration of the Scriptural Mode

Introduction

The subject of Baptism has been a fruitful source of controversy as well as a powerful occasion for division among believers. This statement of historical fact, however, in no sense impugns the doctrine; for the problem lies, not with the pure, perfect Law of God, but rather with the sin-clouded understanding of those who would interpret it. Whereas it is affirmed that the true and full sense of any Scripture is not manifold but one, it is also a patent fact of experience that good people have apprehended (and continue to apprehend) that one sense from differing points of view. And, since men have differed widely in their preconceptions, their approach, their emphases, and their method, so their interpretations of Scripture have been manifold.

To say that the question of the Mode of Baptism has by no means escaped this problem is to utter a gross understatement. In the history of Christian doctrine, there have been those who have believed that the Mode is of the substance of the sacrament, and is therefore of vital interest and importance. Unless the proper Mode of administering the ordinance has been observed, the ceremony has been considered invalid. A second class, going to the other extreme, have held that the question of Mode is so inscrutable or so divisive, that they have either dispensed with the ceremony in any form or have minimized its proper place in the body of doctrine. A third class, believing that Mode is a matter of indifference, and that the vital thing to be stressed is the underlying significance of the sacrament, have practiced various modes and have considered them all proper and valid.

Historically, three modes of administration of the sacrament have emerged: Immersion (from the Latin *in* + *mergo* = "to dip"), *Affusion* (from the Latin *ad* + *fundo* = "to pour"), and *Aspersion* (from the Latin *ad* + *spargo* = "to sprinkle"). Those who have found themselves in the Anabaptist tradition have as a rule practiced Immersion to the exclusion of other modes. Those who have followed the Reformed or the Lutheran tradition have practiced either Affusion or Aspersion, but as a rule have

not rejected Immersion as a proper mode.

The Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., since its founding in 1706, has consistently practiced Aspersions, but has not held that this Mode or any one Mode is essential to the proper administering of the sacrament. The Mode of Immersion has been held to be perfectly valid, and any minister who has found it in any place or at any time desirable to administer Baptism in this way has been viewed as entirely within the bounds of propriety. In this matter, the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. has followed the classic Reformed tradition as witnessed to by John Calvin, who wrote:

Whether the person who is baptized be wholly immersed,
or whether water be only poured or sprinkled upon him, is
of no importance: churches ought to be left at liberty in
this respect to act according to the differences of countries.

Institutes 4.15

From time to time, however, questions have been raised as to the Mode of Immersion being proper or expedient; and the General Assembly has consistently answered these questions with the Deliverance of General Assembly of 1834:

Question: Is it expedient in the present state of the Church,
for a Presbyterian minister to baptize by immersion in any
case?

Answer: The Confession of Faith, Chap. XXVIII, Sec. iii,
teaches as follows, viz.: Dipping of the person into the
water is not necessary; but baptism is rightly administered
by pouring or sprinkling of water upon the person. Your
committee see no cause for adding anything to the doctrine
of the Confession of this subject.

*Minutes of General Assembly of the
Presbyterian Church in the U S. A., 1834, p 433*

When the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. met in Philadelphia in 1861, it adopted a Deliverance requiring ministers

or candidates for ordination to pledge loyalty to the Union between the States. In strong reaction to this extra-Biblical and extra-Constitutional requirement, the southern portion of the Church seceded to form the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. (Southern Presbyterian). After some years, the question of Mode was brought to the floor of their General Assembly in 1894:

Question: An overture from a number of individuals, asking whether, "in the discretion granted to sessions to receive members from evangelical immersion churches, it is intended to admit immersion to be the scriptural mode of baptism?"

Answer: Baptism by immersion is not scriptural as to its mode, but the irregularity of this unscriptural mode does not invalidate the sacred ordinance, and persons who have been baptized by immersion, by the authority of an evangelical church, are not required to be rebaptized by the scriptural mode of sprinkling or pouring when received into the communion of our church.

*Minutes of the General Assembly of the
Presbyterian church in the U S., 1894, p 197*

It is with little difficulty that we discern a difference of viewpoint between the Northern and the Southern Church on the question of Mode. And yet there is a unity amidst the diversity, for although they have differed on the question of whether Immersion is Scriptural, these two great Churches have been one in their insistence that Mode is not essential to the validity of the sacrament. One this point they have remained truly Presbyterian and truly Reformed.

It is with some difficulty that we attempt to understand the reasons for the differences between the views of the Northern and those of the Southern Church, especially as we recall the fact that both Churches claim the Westminster Standards as their creedal confession. Is there in those Standards such ambiguity as to warrant this diversity of interpretation?

The Westminster Standards

The Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter XXVIII, section iii, states:

Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but
Baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling
water upon the person.

James Benjamin Green, Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology and
Homiletics in Columbia Theological Seminary at Decatur, Georgia
(Southern Presbyterian), in his *Harmony of the Westminster Presbyterian
Standards* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1951), states:

The third section relates to the mode of baptism. It says
that dipping of the person into the water is not necessary.
Not necessary for what? For real and valid baptism. It
further says that baptism is rightly administered by pouring
or sprinkling water upon the person. If it is rightly
administered by this mode, then is it wrongly administered
by any other mode?

It is sometimes said that the Westminster Assembly came
within one vote of affirming that immersion is the
Scriptural way of baptizing. The truth is that the
Westminster Assembly refused by one vote to approve
immersion as a Scriptural mode.

In order to assess the importance of this statement, it is necessary to
review the historical situation which actually obtained at the Westminster
Assembly. Edward D. Morris, Emeritus Professor of Systematic
Theology, at Lane Theological Seminary, in his large work, *Theology of
the Westminster Symbols* (Columbus, OH: 1900) gives us an insight into
this knotty problem:

Respecting the use of water as an element, it is a striking
illustration of the state of the question of mode at the time,
and perhaps also of the liberality of the Assembly on
matters regarded as comparatively indifferent, that all three
modes of applying water to the person, known in the early
Church, sprinkling and pouring and dipping or

immersing, were alike recognized by that body as valid. In the third section it is stated that baptism is *rightly administered either by pouring or by sprinkling* water upon the person, and that *the dipping of the person into the water is not necessary*. In the original Directory (Chap. VIII) it is said that infants may be baptized by pouring or by sprinkling water on their faces: which for the manner of doing it, is *not only lawful but sufficient and most expedient to be*. An interesting illustration of the disposition of the Assembly appears in the *Life of Lightfoot* [John Lightfoot, a member of the Westminster Assembly] (Preface to his *Works*), in the following record: When they came to the vote whether the Directory should run thus, The minister shall take water and *sprinkle or pour* it with his hand upon the face or forehead of the child, some were unwilling to have *dipping* excluded; so that the vote came to an equality within one, for the one side their being twenty-four and for the other twenty-five. The business was therefore recommitted and resumed the day following, when Lightfoot demanded of them who insisted upon the recognition of *dipping*, that they would state the reason for their opinion, and would give in their proofs. Hereupon it was thus worded, That pouring on of water or sprinkling in the administration of baptism is lawful and sufficient. Whereupon Lightfoot excepted against the word *lawful*, it being unfit to vote that as lawful which everyone grants it to be, and moved that it might be expressed thus, *It is not only lawful, but also sufficient*: and it was so done accordingly. To this settlement of the question of mode in the case of adults as well as infants, the Presbyterian churches have adhered almost without exception, and still adhere. The preference for pouring or sprinkling, the two terms being apparently very nearly synonymous, as being sufficient and *most expedient to be*, does not exclude dipping or immersion if Christian experience should so suggest; and this latter mode is regarded by all Presbyterians as entirely valid.

It is manifestly apparent that, even in the Westminster Assembly, there

was a division of opinion as to whether dipping should be recognized as a proper mode. But it is also apparent from the previous quotation that it was not the will of the Assembly to exclude Immersion as a proper mode.

Recalling Dr. Green's statement: "It is sometimes said that the Westminster Assembly came within one vote of affirming that immersion is the Scriptural way of baptizing. The truth is that the Westminster Assembly refused by one vote to approve immersion as a Scriptural mode." We hasten to reply: the difference at the Assembly was between those who wished to *exclude* immersion and those who wished to retain it. By one vote the Assembly *refused to exclude it!* By one vote the Assembly *retained* immersion as a proper mode of baptizing!

The simple facts are these: (1) There were those who wished to exclude Immersion. (2) There were those who wished to retain Immersion. (3) Those who wished to retain Immersion objected to the statement. "The minister shall take water and sprinkle or pour it with his hand upon the face or forehead of the child." (4) Those who wished to retain Immersion did not object to the statement, "Infants may be baptized by pouring or sprinkling water on their faces: for which the manner of doing it, is not only lawful but sufficient and most expedient to be." (5) Those who wished to retain Immersion outnumbered by one those who wished to exclude it. (6) Those who wished to retain Immersion got their statement adopted. And (7) the statement which was adopted was not interpreted as excluding Immersion.

Referring back, then, to the statement of the Confession -- "Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but Baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person" -- we conclude that this statement is not to be interpreted as excluding Immersion while affirming Affusion and Aspersion, but rather as including Immersion while expressing a preference for Affusion and Aspersion.

However, in pointing to the Westminster Standards as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures, we are pointed by these Standards to Scripture as the ultimate authority:

The Supreme Judge, by whom all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private

spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other than the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.

Confession, Chap. I: X.

And thus we turn to a consideration of the Mode of Baptism as taught in the Scriptures.

Evidence Relevant to the Scriptural Mode of Baptism

We shall examine four lines of evidence relevant to this question: (1) Grammatical Considerations; (2) Historical Considerations; (3) Practical Considerations; and (4) Theological Considerations.

Grammatical Considerations

Usage of relevant words in the classical Greek of 450 BC. Edmund B. Fairfield in his work *Letters on Baptism* (p 22) notes the general usage of the word *baptizo* in the classical Greek literature which has survived. In one hundred and fifty-nine passages he discovers the following:

... twenty times it was used of a ship that was going to the bottom of the sea; eighteen times of one sinking or drowned as a result of his immersion; nineteen times of dipping into oil; six times of plunging something, as a sword, into the human body; of land overflowed by water twice; of the difficulty of sinking things into very salt[y] water, four times; of dipping into milk, vinegar, wine, honey, wax, fire, ointment, etc., twenty times ...

Besides these, about seventy examples are given of its figurative use of being sunken or overwhelmed in cares, debts, ignorance, sleep, passion, drunkenness, taxes, crimes, vices, sorrows, afflictions, calamities, punishments, difficulties, etc.; *every time in a bad sense*.

This testimony to the usage of *baptizo* in the classical Greek is confirmed by all major lexicons, including Thayer's and Arndt and Gingrich, which respectively define *baptizo* as "to dip repeatedly, to immerge, submerge" and to "dip, immerse."

Usage of relevant words in the koine Greek of 200 BC. The Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament made by Alexandrian Jews about 200 BC, uses the word *baptizo* four times. Two of the instances occur in Apocryphal books, which were included with the Old Testament books in the Septuagint, but not regarded as Scripture. Although the Septuagint translation was not inspired, it gives us an important witness to Greek word usage at that time.

In 2 Kings 5:14, Elisha tells Naaman to go and *wash* in the Jordan River seven times, and Naaman baptizes himself (*baptizo*) seven times *according to the saying of the man of God*. The Old Testament Hebrew word which *baptizo* here translates means "to dip." Therefore, *baptizo*, even if it includes the additional idea of a symbolic washing away of the uncleanness of leprosy, retains the idea of dipping in this instance.

In Judith 12:7b, we read that Judith "baptized herself at the fountain of water in the camp." Since the fountain was in a camp containing 182,000 soldiers, and was the army's water supply, it would seem likely that this "baptism" was a ritual purification by pouring or sprinkling which Judith, a very scrupulous Jewess, performed every night, rather than an immersion.

In Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 34:25, we are told that "He that baptizeth himself because of a dead body, if he touch it again, what availeth his washing?" This "baptism" according to Numbers 19 is a ceremonial and hygienic washing from uncleanness, accomplished by sprinkling upon the unclean one of ashes mixed with water on the third and the seventh day, and by the unclean one's washing of his body and his clothes on the seventh day. No mode is prescribed for the latter hygienic washing.

The Isaiah 21:4 usage is admittedly figurative: "transgression baptizes me" simply means "transgression overwhelms me."

Usage of relevant words in the koine Greek of the New Testament. Although *baptizo* is used 70 times in the New Testament, there is not one instance in which, from its usage in context, it can be demonstrated to *mean* or even strongly *imply* Immersion. The same statement may, however, also be made concerning Affusion and Aspersion, with the probable exception of Mark 7:3, 4 and Luke 11:38 (taken together). Here the word does not *mean* Affusion or Aspersion, but rather "to wash in a

ritual or ceremonial sense," probably employing the mode of pouring or sprinkling.

The word *bapto*, which is used in the classical Greek and in the Septuagint to mean "to dip," is used twice to mean "to dip," and once to mean "to dye." It is never used of Christian Baptism.

The word *baptisma*, found only in Christian writers, adds no information to our quest for the Biblical Mode. The same statement can be made concerning the word *baptistes* (baptizer) applied to John.

The word *baptismos*, which occurs four times in the New Testament, is used of the ritual washing of cups and pots (Mark 7:4, 8), of Christian Baptism (Heb 6:2), and of the various ceremonial cleansings of the Old Testament (Heb 9:10). In regard to this last usage, it is important to note that (1) No ceremonial cleansings by immersion are prescribed in the Old Testament; (2) The immediate context of Heb 9:10 (specifically verses 11-23) describes some of these cleansings -- of the book, of the people, of the tabernacle, and of the vessels of the tabernacle which were accomplished by *sprinkling*. This, however, does not mean that the "divers washings" of Heb 9:10 *means* "divers *sprinklings*." It means various cleansings, the greater majority of which in the Old Testament were accomplished by sprinkling, though some of them were not. Coupling this usage of *baptismos* with that of Heb 6:2, in which Christian Baptism is spoken of, we note that *baptismos* is a ceremonial washing or cleansing, which may be accomplished in various ways. Thus Christian Baptism is a washing, a ceremonial cleansing, and not a particular way of doing it. *Baptismos* is not an Immersion; it is not an Affusion; it is not an Aspersion -- it is a ceremonial washing with water.

To this construction agree the words of one of the most famous of all Reformed theologians, Charles Hodge:

... baptism is a washing with water. By washing is meant any such application of water to the body as effects its purification. This may be done by immersion, affusion, or sprinkling. The command, therefore, to baptize is simply a command to wash with water. It is not specifically a command to immerse, to affuse, or to sprinkle. The mode of applying water as the purifying medium is

unessential. The only necessary thing is to make such an application of water to the person, as shall render the act significant of the purification of the soul.

Systematic Theology, Part III, Chap. XX, p 526

Usage of relevant words in the writings of Josephus. Josephus, a Jewish historian writing late in the first century AD, uses *baptizo* in the classical sense, i.e., "to dip, immerse, submerge, plunge," and in a figurative sense, "to overwhelm."

Usage of relevant words in the Greek Papyri. Moulton and Milligan, in their massive work, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources*, note that *baptizo* is used in the classical sense, such as in the sinking of a boat, as late as the fourth century AD, in the London Papyrus 46⁶⁹; in the sense of ceremonial cleansing in the Papyri Oxyrhinchus V. 840¹⁵ and London 121⁴⁴¹, and in the figurative sense of "overwhelm" in the Paris Papyrus 47¹³.

The possibility of a shift in the meaning of the relevant words. Words *do* change their meanings. A number of significant changes in meaning have occurred in English words in the 350 years since the King James Version was made. It is our contention that such a shift of meaning has occurred in the history of *baptizo*.

Alexander Carson, one of the best-known Baptist writers on the subject, objects to this thesis. He writes:

Bapto has two meanings; *baptizo* in the whole history of the Greek language has but one. It not only signifies to dip or immerse, but it never has any other meaning.

Baptism: Its Mode and Its Subjects, p 19

In Volume VII of his *Systematic Theology*, Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer states:

... it is of interest to note that, while in every generation of recent history there have been scholarly men who believed in and practiced immersion, there have been, as pointed out by Dr. A. T. Robertson, the Greek scholar of the Southern Baptist Church, but eighteen worthy New Testament lexicographers and every one of these, being

clergymen, practiced affusion in their ministry. Dr. Robertson also declares that no immersionist has ever written a New Testament lexicon; but he fails to give a reason why these eighteen men, though in their lexicons they give *immersion* as the primary meaning of *baptizo*, practiced affusion as he asserts they did. In seeking the answer, rather than to assume that these good men were untrue to their convictions, it would be well to look more carefully at the Greek text which they interpret and to give scope, as these men evidently did, to the more vital, secondary meaning of the word *baptizo*.

Article "Ritual Baptism," pp 37-38

Joseph Henry Thayer, in his *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, gives as the meanings of *baptizo*:

1. prop. to dip repeatedly, to immerge, submerge.
2. to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water ... to bathe.
3. metaph. overwhelm, ... to be overwhelmed with calamities.

And William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich in their *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, define *baptizo* to mean to "dip, immerse, wash."

Now the question comes to our minds, how can Thayer give the meanings, "to wash, to make clean with water, to bathe," and how can Arndt and Gingrich give the meaning "to wash" for *baptizo*, if the word *always* and only meant to "dip, immerse, submerge"? It is to be noticed that the first meaning given by Thayer (where there is a notable usage in the classical Greek) is usually the meaning of that word in the classical Greek; then follow its meanings in the Septuagint (if any) and the New Testament. In his Preface (page vii) Thayer explains that "... the exposition of classical usage is often intended merely to serve as a standard of comparison by which the direction and degree of a word's change in meaning can be measured." So that to select Thayer's *first* meaning and apply it to New Testament usage may be to ignore the change which has taken place in the history of the word.

Alexander Carson, while rejecting the suggestion of change in *baptizo*, admits a development of meaning in *bapto*: "*Bapto, to dip*, comes naturally to signify *to dye*, from the frequency of *dyeing* by dipping." (p 92).

But whereas he admits to a development and expansion of meaning in the case of *bapto*, he refuses to admit any such possibility in the case of *baptizo*! If *bapto* first meant "to dip," then becomes "to dip in order to dye," then "to dye by dipping," and finally "to dye" regardless of how the dyeing was accomplished, could not *baptizo* first have meant "to immerse," then "to immerse in order to wash," then "to wash by immersion," and finally "to wash" regardless of how the washing was accomplished? And when we trace the word from the classical Greek through the Septuagint to the New Testament and discover from its usage in context that the word at first means "to immerse," then "to physically or ceremonially wash by immersion," then "to physically or ceremonially wash by some mode other than immersion," and then "to administer the ceremony of Christian Baptism," are we not led (not to say pressed) to the conviction that *baptizo* has undergone a development in meaning?

Historical Considerations

Mode of Old Testament ceremonial cleansings. As has been previously mentioned, no ceremonial cleansings by immersion are prescribed in the Old Testament. Most of the Old Testament ceremonies of purification were accomplished by some form of applying the purifying element to the object to be purified, with sprinkling as the prevailing mode. There are some cases in which clothes were to be washed as part of a ceremony. In such instances, the mode may indeed have been immersion. There are some cases in which the entire body was to be washed as part of a ceremony. This washing was accomplished by immersion in one instance (2 Kings 5:14) and could have been so in other instances. It was not accomplished by immersion in one instance (Lev 16:23-24) and was probably not so in many similar instances. This symbolism forms the background of the New Testament ceremony of cleansing.

Mode of Jewish proselyte baptisms. Baptism as a ceremony of cleansing was not new to John the Baptizer. Gentiles who desired to become Jews were called Proselytes, and were required to be circumcised, to be baptized, and to offer a sacrifice. This practice of "proselytizing" on the part of the Jews was witnessed to by our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 23:15:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

Alfred Edersheim, a noted authority on Jewish life and customs, provides the following information regarding mode of proselyte baptism:

The baptism was to be performed in the presence of three witnesses, ordinarily Sanhedrists, but in case of necessity others might act. The person to be baptized, having cut his hair and nails, undressed completely, made fresh profession of his faith before what were designated "the fathers of the baptism," and then immersed completely, so that every part of the body was touched by the water.

Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 2:746

Mode of ritual baths of Jewish sects, particularly that at Qumran. From 100 BC to about 67 AD a small group of Essene monks lived in a monastery in the Judean wilderness at Khirbet Qumran. They wrote, studied, sang hymns, prayed and copied the Scriptures. At the time of the great Jewish War, they dispersed, after hiding their precious scrolls in caves nearby. Recently their scrolls and their monastery have been uncovered. They have become known as the Dead Sea Community, or the Sect of Qumran.

The monks who were full members of this order were required to take ceremonial baths. At the northwest corner of the ruins of the monastery is an open baptistery, with steps leading down into it, quite large enough for immersion.

In the *Zadokite Work* (also called the *Damascus Document*), the following rule is recorded:

On cleansing in water. No man shall wash in dirty water or [water] not sufficient for immersion of a man. None shall cleanse himself in water from a vessel. And every pool in a rock in which there is not sufficient water for immersion, or which has touched some unclean thing, its waters shall be contaminated like the water from a vessel.

A. Dupont-Sommer,
The Jewish Sect of Qumran and the Essenes, p 98

However, the *Manual of Discipline* of the Dead Sea Community complicates the matter somewhat by its statement:

And it is by the Holy Spirit of the Community, in His truth, That he shall be cleansed of all his iniquities. And by the spirit of uprightness and humility His sins shall be atoned. And by the submission of his soul toward all God's ordinances When he sprinkles himself with lustral water, And he shall sanctify himself with running water.

Ibid., p 99

Thus it would seem difficult to know whether the monks entered the waters of the baptistery merely to sprinkle themselves, or to sprinkle *and* immerse themselves.

Mode in the writings of the Church Fathers. It has been frequently pointed out that almost anything can be and is proved by reference to the Church Fathers! This statement is largely true. In the matter of the mode of baptism, it is eminently true!

In the writings of Clement of Rome. Ignatius, and Polycarp, no mention of water baptism is found. The *Shepherd of Hermas* speaks of going down into the water and coming up out of the water. Justin Martyr speaks of those to be baptized as being led to a place where there is water, and receiving the water-bath. The Letter of Barnabas speaks of going down into the water, and coming up out of the water. In chapter 7 of the *Didache*, we read:

About baptism, baptize in this way: After first repeating all these things [exhortation about right living], baptize in living [running] water, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. If you have no running water, baptize in other water, and if you cannot use cold water, use warm. If you have neither, pour water on the head three times in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit.

Tertullian and Cyprian do not give statements relative to mode. Augustine wrote (Homily IV), "After you professed your belief, three times did we submerge (*demersemus*) your heads in the sacred fountain." Ambrose wrote (*De Sacramenti*), "You were asked, Dost thou believe in God Almighty? Thou saidst, I believe; and thus thou was immersed (*mersist*), that is, thou was buried."

From this evidence we would seem to draw a rather mixed conclusion, although we are aware that the usual (and it would seem, the most natural) conclusion is that during the first few centuries, Immersion was the almost universal form of administering the rite. At this point, the statement that the early Church Fathers, being closest in point of time to the New Testament writings, would be most likely to interpret them accurately, might well give us pause.

Mode as illustrated in frescoes and drawings. In his revealing work, *Baptism and Christian Archaeology* (Oxford, 1903), Clement F. Rogers presents sixty examples of Christian art, dating from the first to the tenth century, and coming from Rome, Gaul, Spain, Milan, Ravenna, Armenia, Syria, Egypt, Byzantium, Sicily, Ireland, Lombardy, and Germany. In all of these cases, the person being baptized is standing in the water, usually naked, and water is pouring or being poured over his head. Frequently a dove is found in the pictures, representative of the Holy Spirit. In the earliest representations, the water is only ankle deep; but as the centuries pass, the water reaches the knees, the thighs, the waist, and finally the neck. There is usually another person in the representation (frequently John the Baptizer) who stands on a higher level, is clothed, and either guides the head of the candidate under the descending stream of water or places his hand upon him. There are no representations of Immersion until the ninth century, at which time three pictures of infants being immersed appear.

Mode as related to the physical characteristics of ancient baptisteries. In addition to providing us with pictorial evidence as to mode, Rogers delves into the question of whether or not such pictorial representations tell only part of the story. The question must yet be asked, Were these candidates also immersed as well as poured upon?

Rogers answers this query by providing us with data as to the size and shape of 38 baptisteries and baptismal fonts, dating from the second to the

tenth century, and located in Rome, Alexandria, Palestine, Tyre, Egypt, Asia Minor, Persia, Byzantium, Dalmatia, Naples, Africa, the Lombard and Merovingian kingdoms, and the Frankish empire.

As to shape, these fonts may be divided into two types: the Eastern, which was square, circular or the shape of a Greek [equal arm] Cross; and the Western, which was octagonal or circular. There are usually two steps leading down into the font, and a drain hole at the bottom; this has enabled excavators to ascertain with certainty the depth of the font.

As to size, the fonts range in depth from 8.27 inches (at Poitiers) to 4 feet 6 inches (at St. Sophia); and in dimension from 24 inches (at Abu Sargah, Egypt) to 62 feet diameter (the Lateran Font at Rome) for circular fonts, and from 3 feet 3 inches by 6 feet 7 inches (in the Cemetery of Pontianus) to 11 feet 6 inches by 29 feet 7 inches (in the Cemetery of Priscilla) for oblong fonts.

In a number of these fonts immersion would not only have been difficult, but it would have been impossible. Twenty inches of water would certainly be sufficient to cover the whole body, but not in a font twenty-seven inches square! If it be pointed out that the Lateran Font, three feet deep and sixty-two feet in diameter, could hardly have been used for the purpose of sprinkling, it should quickly be noted that there are at this font two sarcophagi containing representations of baptism in which Christ is depicted standing in water with a stream of water descending upon his head.

Thus from the physical characteristics of ancient baptisteries as compared with the pictorial representations of baptism, we get the strong impression that baptism in the early centuries of the Christian Church was performed by the mode of Affusion.

Practical Considerations

Mode and availability of water supplies. It is recognized that in some areas of the world (including the Near East) water is a very scarce and very precious commodity. It is, however, quite possible that there were a good number of natural and artificial supplies of water available to dwellers in Jerusalem, Damascus, and Asia Minor; and that there was sufficient water in the desert to immerse the Ethiopian Eunuch! This

question does not of itself prove or disprove that Immersion was practiced.

Mode and climate. In the frozen regions of the world the question of Mode becomes very insistent. In most cases, it would not only be impracticable, but dangerous, to practice Immersion. However, it is admitted that this objection is not insuperable.

Mode and convenience of facilities. This consideration may best be illustrated by a brief quotation from a dear Baptist brother working in Japan. He writes:

On March 8th, some of these people who have turned to Christ from idols to serve the Living and True God, brought their idols and burned them publicly, despite a drenching downpour. Godsheives, idols, incense coffers, and incense -- versus tons of water from the sky. One of the new babes in Christ struck a match, and victory was declared on the side of the fire!

Then eight of the new believers went a step further to declare themselves *Christian*. These eight (4 men, 4 women) followed the Lord in baptism in the afternoon. (The indoor Japanese bath used for this purpose was so small that it was impossible to submerge each candidate completely, necessitating a novel manipulation: One poor lad was made to double up as a ball, fall into the tub face downward, and still half of his torso was protruding above water. Pressure had to be applied in order to try and flatten him out, but this still didn't get him all under. And for lack of time -- he was extremely patient, holding his breath down there -- the method resorted to was affusion!)

Mode and clinical baptism. In the early centuries, Aspersion seems to have been reserved for those sick and infirm persons too weak to be subjected to the normal mode of baptism. At times those who were thus baptized were looked down upon. In the middle of the third century, the question was raised whether Aspersion was a valid baptism, and Cyprian was asked concerning his opinion. In his 75th epistle he contended that the

ordinance administered in this way is perfectly valid: "Whence it appears that the sprinkling also of water prevails equally with the washing of salvation..."

In cases where the person to be baptized is an invalid or very ill, Immersion would appear to be almost completely ruled out as an expedient mode.

Theological Considerations

Ritual Baptism and Spirit Baptism. It would appear that there is a vital relationship between the external rite of baptism and Holy Spirit baptism. The same term (*baptizo*) is used to express both ideas. Sometimes the external rite is spoken of as if it actually accomplished the effects of the inner baptism. A good example of this may be found in Acts 22:16, where Ananias says:

And now, why are you lingering? Stand up and receive baptism for yourself, and cleanse away your sins, calling upon His name.

The significance of Ritual Baptism. Ritual Baptism can be viewed as a sign and a seal, i.e., as signifying and certifying a relationship. That relationship is not merely an identification; it is a union with Christ. It is a *union* into which we are baptized by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the basic and central import of Ritual Baptism is Union with Christ.

This Union into which we have been brought by the Holy Spirit results in certain benefits. Union with Christ means union in His death and resurrection; thus regeneration. Union with Christ means the application of His blood to our sins; thus cleansing from sin. And Union with Christ means a being brought into vital relationship with His Body; thus initiation into the Church. All of these significances are witnessed to by the Scriptures.

Significance as related to Mode. The questions which must be asked are, "What are we attempting to portray in Ritual Baptism? Which significance are we endeavoring to picture? And which Mode best pictures that significance?"

It would seem that regeneration could be pictured by Immersion, as

picturing death and resurrection. It could also be portrayed by Affusion, as picturing the Holy Spirit, the Agent of regeneration.

It would seem that cleansing from guilt could be portrayed by any mode, but that Aspersions would portray the symbolism of the sprinkling of the blood of Christ most graphically, whereas Immersion would portray a complete washing.

It would seem that initiation into the Church could be portrayed by any mode, but that Affusion would best portray the symbolism of the Holy Spirit, who baptizes into the body of Christ.

But as to the basic and central import of Ritual Baptism, that of Union with Christ, it would seem that the symbolism of the Holy Spirit, who is spoken of as "coming upon," "falling upon," "being given," and "being poured out upon," would be best portrayed by the mode of Affusion.

Conclusion

Baptism is a Sacrament, wherein the washing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our engrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's.

The Shorter Catechism, Q. 94

This is part of the Constitution of the Bible Presbyterian Church. It has been consistently interpreted in the same manner in which the Westminster Divines interpreted their Standards; i.e., as including Immersion as a proper Mode while expressing a preference for Affusion and Aspersions.

In examining the evidence relevant to an understanding of the Scriptural Mode of Ritual Baptism, we have noted that the relevant words have undergone a development from denoting a mode of action to denoting the administration of a sacramental ceremony, with no Mode involved or implied. We have noted that ceremonial cleansings have employed various modes of application of the purifying element, but that in the early Church pouring seems to have been predominant, sprinkling was used under certain conditions, and immersion came into usage much later than is ordinarily supposed. We have noted that the central import of Ritual

Baptism, Union with Christ, can perhaps best be portrayed by the Mode of Affusion. And we have noted the various practical considerations which must be taken into account.

Our conclusion, then, according with the statement of the Westminster Confession:

Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but Baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person.

Chapter Fourteen

Tongues: Glossolalia and Its Relevance Today

1. The phenomenon of speaking in tongues recorded in Acts 2, 10 and 19 represents the act of speaking in languages that are foreign to the speaker. In the nature of the case, this is not simply a spiritual gift but a supernatural gift -- beyond the natural or spiritual abilities of the speaker -- and it is imparted by the Holy Spirit.

2. In two of the three instances of foreign-language speaking in Acts, the speaking is closely connected with prophesying. In Acts 2:16-18 Peter says that this speaking is the effect of the predicted outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and that this outpouring results in all classes of human beings, regardless of age or gender -- sons and daughters, young men and old, menservants and maidservants -- prophesying, seeing visions, and dreaming dreams (all of which are modes of special revelation directly related to prediction of future events). And in Acts 19:6 Paul laid his hands on some disciples of John who had newly accepted Jesus as the Messiah who had accomplished redemption; and they spoke in foreign languages and prophesied. Both of these instances appear to say that the speakers prophesied in the foreign languages that they were speaking.

3. The specific content of the act of speaking in foreign languages, as recorded in Acts 2:11, was "the mighty works of God"; and as recorded in Acts 10:46, "praise to God for His great mercy." No specific content is reported in Acts 19. We are not told which of the mighty acts of God were being extolled, or for what particular mercy they were praising God, but it is highly likely that the great work of God's gracious and merciful redemption through Christ was included. Perhaps some aspects of the spread of the gospel were predicted, or perhaps some features of the endtime related to Christ's Second Coming.

4. The purpose of the act of speaking in foreign languages in Acts was twofold: apologetic and evangelistic. The Holy Spirit imparted this gift in order to provide supernatural evidence of the truth-claims made by the disciples of Christ, so that nonbelievers would receive and trust in Christ and His redemptive work, and believers would be convinced that God had extended His saving grace from Israel to all mankind, whether Jew,

Samaritan, or Gentile.

5. The phenomenon of speaking in tongues recorded in 1 Corinthians 12-14, considered in itself without regard to its antecedent in Acts, *could* represent either the act of speaking in rational, meaningful languages that were foreign to the speaker but not foreign to all hearers, or the act of producing irrational, meaningless ecstatic utterances that were foreign to speakers and hearers alike. However, since the only antecedent we have for the Corinthian phenomenon is the Acts phenomenon, it is highly probably that the Corinthian phenomenon represents the same act of speaking in foreign languages as is found in the book of Acts.

6. In 1 Corinthians 12-14 there appear to be two senses of prophesying. (a) The first of these is prophecy in the sense of revelatory prediction of future events by means of the supernatural gift of enablement to speak in foreign languages, for the purpose of providing supernatural evidence of the truth-claims made by the disciples of Christ, so that nonbelievers would receive and trust in Christ and His redemptive work, and believers would be convinced that God had extended His saving grace to all mankind (12:10, 28, 30; 13:1, 8; 14:2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 14, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26, 27, 39). (b) The second is prophecy in the sense of non-revelatory setting forth of various aspects of Christian doctrine or practice by means of the spiritual gift of enablement to understand and explain previously-revealed truth in an edifying manner, for the purpose of building up, encouraging, and comforting believers in their faith and life (12:10; 13:2,8,9; 14:1,3, 4, 5, 6,22,24, 31, 39).

7. What happened to this supernatural gift following the time of the apostles? It would appear that its apologetic and evangelistic purposes were fulfilled in the early church, when the message of Christ's coming and atonement had reached all parts of the inhabited world (Colossians 1:5-6, 23). The act had served its purpose by providing supernatural evidence of the truth-claims of the disciples of Christ, with the result that many nonbelievers had received and trusted in Christ and His redemptive work, and believers had been convinced that God had extended His saving grace to all mankind. Since its purpose had been fulfilled, the gift appears to have ceased.

8. What about the phenomenon of supernatural speaking in foreign languages today? The phenomenon appears to have disappeared very

early in the history of the church; and no sizable group in the church today makes a claim to the possession or exercise of this gift. A number make the claim that, although glossolalic utterances are not *given* in any known foreign language, nevertheless they are *heard* as a known foreign language by those who have the supernatural gift of interpreting tongues. Since Acts 2:4 clearly states that the disciples *spoke* in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance, this claim is not only unverifiable, but also contrary to scriptural evidence!

9. The conception of "tongues-speaking" in currency today is that of producing irrational (i.e., without the use of the mind), meaningless ecstatic utterances that are foreign to speakers and hearers alike. It is now clear that these utterances do not constitute "language" in any meaningful sense of that term. Descriptive linguists during the past twenty years have been comparing recordings of alleged glossolalia with known human languages. Although these linguists have not compared recordings of glossolalia with *each* of the three thousand or more languages in use in the world today, nevertheless those linguists know enough about representative languages of every known language family in the world to recognize whether or not tongues-speaking is similar to any of these languages. It is not. Not only are these ecstatic utterances devoid of any language structure, they are characterized by an excessive frequency of repetition, especially of one or two vowels; and when they are interpreted, the same phrases or clauses are translated to mean entirely different things! In addition, it has been noted that tongues-speaking, although not a language, is usually similar to the speaker's own language background; and that interpretations of tongues-speaking are frequently rendered in King James style, including King James vocabulary and thought-forms!

10. If modern glossolalia cannot be identified with the Holy Spirit's gift of foreign languages spoken in Acts and 1 Corinthians, then what is the source of this phenomenon? Any attempted explanation of its source must take into account the fact that tongues-speaking is not unique to Christianity, but is a universal phenomenon occurring in many religions as well as in the world of the occult; and it is quite clear that in such cases the phenomenon is *not* the expression of a gift of the Holy Spirit! In addition, any attempted explanation of the source of modern glossolalia must recognize the fact that, in a number of Christian groups, tongues-speaking is both *taught* and *caught*. Persons are encouraged to *learn* how to do it by practicing the repetition of certain sounds, by going with the flow of

their feelings, and by letting the pure experience carry them along. And persons are stimulated to speak in tongues by the *example* of those around them that are producing ecstatic utterances.

What explanation of the source of this phenomenon can be given? Three major answers to this question have been suggested:

(a) It is a gift of God not directly related to the biblical phenomenon of speaking in a foreign language. It is a separate gift of the Holy Spirit given as an assurance of salvation, or as a means of power and resiliency to meet the problems of life, or as an evidence of spiritual maturity (as a second distinct work of grace). It is claimed that it is *this* gift to which 1 Corinthians 12-14 refers.

(b) Or that the phenomenon arises from hidden, dark forces, i.e., from evil spirits, who are always ready to influence those who unwittingly open themselves to unknown forces they think are good but which are really evil or Satan-inspired.

(c) Or that it arises out of the human psyche, and is triggered by some mechanism in the autonomic nervous system that is common to all human beings. It provides an emotional release from tension, frustrations, and fears, and results in feelings of relaxation, peace, joy, and elation.

Conclusions

1. In Scripture the phenomenon of supernatural speaking in a foreign language is not regarded as evidence of regeneration, or of indwelling, or of spiritual maturity, but as an evidence of the *filling* of the Holy Spirit.

2. The modern phenomenon of tongues-speaking, defined as non-linguistic ecstatic utterance, has no warrant in Scripture, either exegetically or theologically. Therefore modern tongues-speaking should not be regarded as a supernatural or a spiritual gift of the Holy Spirit.

3. Tongues-speaking, defined as non-linguistic ecstatic utterance, should not be regarded as a Satanically-inspired counterfeit to the work of God, unless it clearly turns people's attention away from Christ and the gospel and toward the seeking of an experience of escape from reality and self-gratification.

4. Given the lack of scriptural warrant for modern tongues-speaking, and the universality of glossolalia in various religions, modern tongues-speaking should probably be regarded as an expression of the human psyche -- one that provides a temporary release from emotional tension and a temporary emotional "high." As such, it may have some value for psychology and psychosomatic medicine, but even here its side effects must be considered, including psychological dependency and escape from the need to come to grips with real problems in order to seek lasting solutions.

5. If evangelical Christians are drawn away from evangelizing the lost with the gospel, and drawn toward evangelizing other Christians with the baptism of the Holy Spirit and tongues-speaking, then the phenomenon has a net negative value, and holds promise of creating great harm and damage to the church of Jesus Christ.

Part Six

Apologetics

Chapter Fifteen

Steps Toward a Personal Christian Apologetic

Step 1: I exist.

How do I know this?

(1) I know it by *intuition* (direct knowledge) as a primary datum of consciousness.

(2) I know it by *reasoning*, via some form of Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*. Whether I reason "I think, therefore I am," or "I question, therefore I am," or "I doubt...," or "I wonder...," or "I don't know...," or "I deny...," or "I despair...," the conclusion is the same: "therefore I am." In all of these reasonings, there is an awareness, a consciousness of a being that is doing the thinking, questioning, etc. And this awareness is reflexive, i.e., it is a self-awareness. The being doing the thinking is aware that it *itself* is doing the thinking, doubting, or denying.

(3) I know it *empirically*, via sensory experience of myself and of my ability to experience the physical world around me.

(4) I know it by *authority*, on the basis of the affirmations of my parents, other persons, and official records (birth, medical, school, employment, military, voting, financial, church, government). These affirmations and official records assure me that I exist!

Step 2: How do I know that I am not merely dreaming or imagining that I exist?

(1) I know it by *reasoning*, via the dictum *I dream, therefore I am*. If I dream or hallucinate, then I must exist to do the dreaming or hallucinating.

(2) I know it *empirically*, via sensory experience of the *contrast* between waking and dream states, and of the contrast between the real world and the world of fantasy.

Step 3: But how do I know that the whole of my existence is not merely a dream or a fantasy?

I know it by *reasoning*. If all that I experienced was a dream world, then *that* world would be my real world; in fact, the only real world I would know. That is, since dreaming is an altered state of consciousness (by definition); and if an altered state of consciousness is altered from the normal state of consciousness; then if the whole of my existence was a dream, then dreaming would be my normal state of consciousness. And in that state (which would then be defined as my normal waking state) I would exist, and I would know that I must exist for the same reasons as those given in step 1, above.

But suppose in my dream world I only *dreamed* that I existed. But that would be the same as saying that in that world I only *thought* that I existed. But once again this would demonstrate that I exist!

Underlying all of this reasoning, of course, is the postulate: *Of that which does not exist* (in some realm) *nothing can be predicated*. That is, you cannot meaningfully say something about that which does not exist (in some realm). To put it another way, without a subject, there can be no meaningful predicate. Of a non-entity, nothing can be said!

Step 4: Other human beings exist.

How do I know this?

(1) I know it *empirically*, via sensory experience of other persons. I know it by means of my ability to interact with them -- to be able to communicate with them, to reason with them, to exchange ideas with them, to be affected by their ideas and emotions and to affect them by my ideas and emotions.

(2) I know it by reasoning, via the dictum, *Interaction with other beings like myself is possible, therefore other human beings exist*.

Step 5: The physical world around me exists.

How do I know this?

(1) I know it *empirically*, via sensory experience. I cannot exist without seeing or hearing or touching or smelling or tasting physical things. I cannot live without manipulating physical objects such as food and clothing. In short, interaction with the physical is a given, a fact of daily experience.

(2) I know it by *reasoning*, via the dictum, *Interaction with physical objects is possible, therefore the physical world around me exists*.

But how do I know that the physical world is not merely a *mirage*, an *illusion*, or a *projection* of my fevered brain?

I can perform specific tests by which mirages and illusions are distinguished from real and substantial things. I can check my temperature (for fever). I can perform standard scientific cause-and-effect experiments, and I can compare my observations with those of other human beings (whose brains are not fevered).

I can emulate Samuel Johnson. In Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, Boswell comments that he was satisfied that Bishop Berkeley's theory (that matter did not exist) was not true, but he didn't know how to refute it. Johnson struck his foot against a large stone till it rebounded, saying "I refute it *thus*."

Step 6: I and other human beings and the physical world around me did not always exist as we do now. What is the explanation of our coming into existence?

There are really only two current explanations. (The view which says that nobody knows is not an explanation, but an assertion that rejects all attempts at explanation.) There is the supernatural creationistic explanation, and there is the natural evolutionistic explanation.

The supernatural creationistic view provides answers to the crucial questions of origins: the origin of the matter-energy complex, the origin of the structured universe, the origin of life, and the origin of human beings. It provides an answer to the source of the enormous input of energy needed at the creation of the stuff of the physical universe at the first moment of its existence. It provides an answer to the unique arrangement and ordering of forces needed to develop the present structuring of the

galaxies, stars, planets, and other components of the physical universe. It provides an answer to the rise of the various kinds of living things on the earth, in an interdependent (symbiotic) chain of relationships among its flora and fauna. And it provides an answer to the rise of humans, with their tool-manufacturing ability, their intelligence, their development of culture, their building of structures, their development and use of language, and their morality and religion.

The natural evolutionistic view has no answer to the question of the origin of the matter-energy complex. It either says that no answer is possible, or asserts (with no evidence) that matter-energy existed forever, or reluctantly yields the floor to metaphysics! To the question of the origin of the structured universe, it asserts that the forces which have brought about the present ordered configuration of the universe have arisen randomly, have operated randomly, and have produced, not disorganization and chaos, but organization and order! To the question of the origin of life, it asserts that an extraordinarily complex sequence of contingently-related physical and chemical events, arising randomly and operating randomly, produced a few very simple forms of biological organization which, by randomly operating events and processes, have developed into all the biological organisms living today. And to the question of the origin of humans, it asserts that a gradual sequence of random biological events and processes led to the development of mammals, then primates, then apes, then near-apes, then ape-men, and then humans; and that man's intelligence, languaging ability, culture, morality, and religion are also products of a random development of biological events and processes.

As a hypothesis, the natural evolutionist view has some things to be said in its favor, and some things to be said in its disfavor. In its favor, it is able to rationalize large bodies of scientific data, to provide a unifying principle among the various scientific disciplines, and to demonstrate its explanatory power and "fit" on lower levels of the classification of living things (a few families, some genera, some species, most sub-species, varieties, races, and breeds or strains). In its disfavor, it is unable to provide answers to the crucial questions of ultimate origins; to provide a mechanism by which biological evolution operates (the most recent explanation, "punctuated equilibrium," is not really an explanation, but a *description* of what the fossil record reveals, *given* the evolutionary hypothesis); it is unable to explain how evolution occurred at higher levels of classification (most species, genera, and families; all orders, classes,

phyla and kingdoms).

As a hypothesis, the supernatural creationist view has much to be said in its favor, and some things to be said in its disfavor. In its favor, it is able to provide answers to the questions of ultimate origins, to rationalize large bodies of scientific data, to provide a unifying principle among the various scientific disciplines, and to demonstrate its explanatory power and "fit" on all levels of the classification of living things. In its disfavor, some of its adherents persist in doing or maintaining bad scriptural exegesis and bad science, thereby bringing the creationist view, the Bible, and Christianity into unnecessary disrepute.

Of course, it should be pointed out that the natural evolutionist view has some things to be said in its favor only *if God does not exist*; whereas the supernatural creationist view has much to be said in its favor only *if God exists*!

Step 7: God exists.

How do I know this?

I know it because God has revealed Himself in space-time history. The God who cannot be "seen" directly, has "spoken" many times and in many ways; and He has thus made Himself known. He has spoken in His general and special works, in His written Word, and in His incarnate Son. His written Word confirms and states His general works in creation; His written Word confirms and records His special acts in providence and redemption; His written Word reveals His incarnate Word; and His incarnate Word confirms the authority of His written Word.

These last two propositions may seem to be a case of circular reasoning, but this is only so if each functions in the same way. They do not, as may be seen in J. Warwick Montgomery's "crux validation" of Scripture, as outlined in Gordon R. Lewis in *Testing Christianity's Truth Claims*, p 307). Lewis says:

Six steps are involved: (1) The gospels are tested critically and found historically trustworthy. (2) From these sources Jesus is known to have historically exercised divine prerogatives and made divine claims resting them

on his forthcoming resurrection. (3) All four gospels attest His resurrection which evidences His deity. (4) The resurrection fact cannot be discounted by *a priori* definitions. (5) If Christ is God, He speaks the truth concerning the Old Testament, the New Testament, His death, and the nature of man and history. (6) So all biblical assertions bearing on philosophy of history are to be regarded as revealed truth and all human interpretation must harmonize with them.

Thus the existence of the God of the Bible and the truthfulness of Scripture stand or fall together.

Step 8: The Bible is a trustworthy record of God's self-revelations.

How do I know this?

I know it because it *claims* to be such a record, and because it *evidences* itself to be such a record.

Simon Greenleaf, in his *Testimony of the Evangelists*, states:

In trials of fact, by oral testimony, the proper inquiry is not whether it is possible that the testimony may be false, but whether there is sufficient probability that it is true It should be observed that the subject of inquiry is a matter of fact, and not of abstract mathematical truth In the ordinary affairs of life we do not require or expect demonstrative evidence, because it is inconsistent with the nature of matters of fact In all human transactions, the highest degree of assurance to which we can arrive, short of the evidence of our own senses, is that of probability It is all which the greatest sceptic has a right to require; for it is by such evidence alone that our rights are determined, in the civil tribunals; and on no other evidence do they proceed, even in capital cases The evidence which we have of the great facts of the Bible history belongs to this class; that is, it is moral evidence, sufficient to satisfy any rational mind, by carrying it to the highest degree of moral certainty. If such evidence will

justify the taking away of human life or liberty, in the one case, surely it ought to be deemed sufficient to determine our faith in the other.

Chapter Sixteen

Man and Man Alone: Secular Humanism

In 1980 a group of 58 prominent persons in the United States, Great Britain, and six other countries signed "A Secular Humanist Declaration," a document that expresses the principles and goals of a growing movement and a pervasive attitude that threatens to erode and destroy the biblical principles that have formed the core of the Judaeo-Christian heritage of western culture and society. Previous to 1980, two other documents of a similar nature had appeared -- Humanist Manifesto I (in 1933) and Humanist Manifesto II (in 1973). Prometheus Press, founded in 1970 in Buffalo, NY as the publishing arm of the secular humanist movement, lists 175 books and booklets in its current trade catalog on various aspects of Humanist thought, including such titles as *Atheism. The Case Against God*, *The Encyclopedia of Unbelief* (2 vols.), *Ethics Without God*, *Jesus in History and Myth*, *Some Mistakes of Moses*, *Religion Without God*, and *A New Bill of Sexual Rights and Responsibilities*. And recently Humanists have launched a magazine to spread their views -- Free Inquiry -- edited by Paul Kurtz, drafter of "A Secular Humanist Declaration."

But why should Christians be interested in or concerned about the growth of Secular Humanism? At least three good reasons could be mentioned. First, Secular Humanism has quietly permeated almost every educational institution (at every level) and almost every discipline of knowledge in our culture and society. Second, Secular Humanism is actively seeking to eliminate all absolutes from our culture, thereby opening the way for the acceptance of a materialistic, agnostic, and hedonistic world-view. And third, Secular Humanism is diametrically opposed to all types of formal religion in general, and to Christianity in particular!

What is Secular Humanism?

What is Secular Humanism? The term should not be confused with humanness, humaneness, humanitarianism, cultural humanism, or the humanities. Paul Kurtz, professor of philosophy at the State University of New York at Buffalo, enunciates four basic principles of the view: (1) Contemporary Humanism is anti-supernaturalistic. God does not exist.

There is no soul or mind separate from the brain, and man has no immortal destiny beyond the grave. (2) Human values are relative; that is, they have their source in man alone and cannot be grounded in an outside absolute source, such as God. (3) Human reason is the sole source and guide of human action; thus divine revelation as an informational source for human conduct is rejected. (4) The Humanist is committed to seek the greatest happiness for the greatest number and to further the welfare of mankind, particularly by working toward solutions to the problems of social injustice, poverty, war, overpopulation, and ecology.

Secular Humanism is not a formal philosophy or philosophical worldview. Rather, it is an informal outlook on and attitude toward the most basic issues of existence. It is the view of life that rejects any conception of God or revealed truth, and asserts that man and man alone can and must provide his own final responses to the basic issues of life. It is secular in that, in response to the foundational questions of life, it neither allows for nor accepts definitive answers that claim to be authoritatively revealed by God. It is humanistic in that it believes that man is the only one who can provide his own definitive responses to life's most basic problems.

This generalized outlook and attitude has roots in both the modern and the ancient worlds. In the history of modern thought Secular Humanism arose out of a background of two important developments, modern philosophy and Darwinian evolutionary science.

In the ancient world, this outlook of life originated very early in the history of mankind -- in the Garden of Eden! When Satan enticed Adam and Eve to eat of the forbidden tree (as recorded in Genesis 3:1-7), they had to choose one of two ways: the way of obedience and trust, or the way of sinful distrust and rebellion. This is seen in their attempts to be their own gods, and to know and determine on their own what was ultimately good or evil. The first way was the way of godly humility and dependence; the second way was the way of seeking to be self-sufficient or autonomous. Adam and Eve chose the second way, and thus plunged the whole human race into the grievous state of sin and death. The underlying principle of this "original sin" is the desire of man to be his own god, to overthrow the word and law of God, and to substitute his own reason and standards.

At the time of Noah almost the entire human race rejected God and God's standards of reality, truth, and value. They lived by their own self-made standards and did as they pleased, filling the earth with corruption and violence as recorded in Genesis 5:5-13. The Lord found it necessary to destroy all but a handful of people.

After the Flood, many of Noah's descendants returned to the ways of pre-Flood mankind. They desired to establish some sort of firm memorial to their efforts that could not be destroyed or wiped from the earth, whether by a flood or some other natural calamity. They built a city and a great tower, which was to be a center of worship -- worship not of God but of *man* -- man's abilities, man's power, man's glory! But God scattered these proud men over the entire earth, as recorded in Genesis 11.

In Genesis 19 we find that the men of Sodom rejected the law of God written into their nature, and claimed the right to determine on their own what was moral and what was immoral. They decided to exercise their sexual preference, which was homosexuality. God destroyed them all with a rain of fire and brimstone!

This attitude of rejection of God and revelation, and espousal of man-centered affirmation and value judgment is illustrated very clearly in Romans 1:18-32. There we are told that although unrighteous human beings are aware of God's existence and something of His nature, although they know that those who practice such evil things deserve God's wrath, nevertheless they suppress these truths and worship what they want to, and do what they wish, preferring to fulfill *their* desires and gratify *their* lusts. This is the very *spirit* of Secular Humanism, the attempt to dethrone the one true and living God, and to enthrone sinful, finite man!

What Can Christians Do About Secular Humanism?

What can Christians do about Secular Humanism? Do they have a responsibility to attempt to halt or at least slow down the erosion of moral values and standards in a pluralistic and highly secularized society?

First, the Bible clearly teaches that Christians have a responsibility to attempt to change the moral and spiritual character and conduct of the non-Christian members of their society. They can do this by witnessing to the *gospel* of Christ's salvation as the means that the Holy Spirit uses to

transform human nature; and by sharing the unchanging principles of the *law of God* as the means God uses to show human beings their sin, restrain them from fuller expressions of depravity, and teach them how He wants them to live. Our obligation to do this rests on our Lord's command to love our neighbor as ourselves. Christians are bound by their love to Christ to love their neighbors, by helping them obey God's law and by sharing with them the good news of the Christ's deliverance from sin and its effects.

Second, Christians have a responsibility to try to stop or at least slow down the secularization of their culture and society. They can do this by attempting to prevent the continuing erosion of those biblical principles that have shaped western culture. Why should they do this? It becomes especially important when Christians think of their children and, if the Lord tarries, of future generations of believers who must live in the world and be affected by its culture, particularly the mass media. One does not need to be overly observant to notice that the content of more and more television programming is becoming more immoral, or that some radio programming is communicating immoral values by the lyrics of its music. And many newspapers, magazines, and books are becoming more and more blatant in their portrayal of immorality, especially in the tacit or open approval of casual sex, promiscuity, living together without marriage, divorce, abortion, homosexuality (and other "alternate sexual preferences"), and enticing modes of dress and behavior.

Christians can and should attempt to screen out these harmful influences, but they cannot screen out all of them. In fact, as our culture becomes more and more saturated with sex, corruption, dishonesty, injustice, lawlessness, hedonism, and materialism, it becomes increasingly difficult to find television and radio programming, periodicals, and books that are decent, wholesome, and relatively free from destructive influences.

What, then, should Christians do? Should they simply stand by and allow their culture to slide toward greater corruption and immorality? Is it our Father's will that we turn over His world to Satan, to do with it as he pleases? Shall believers stand back and say, "These are simply signs of the world's growing immorality, signs of the nearing of the Lord's Return. I have nothing to do with them, nor they with me!"? Or shall they step forward and cry out, "These are violations of the law of God, and are evil and wicked God hates sin, and does not delight in its growth and

development, and is not in favor of having His children wink at and do nothing about godlessness, the profaning of His Name, Word, works, or Day, the lawless disrespect of authority, murder, stealing, extortion, adultery, fornication, lasciviousness, dishonesty, perjury, lying, slander, and the satisfaction of man's unlawful desires! These things must be stopped or at least slowed down as much as possible!"

Even though the Bible predicts that evil men will grow worse and worse, and that the cultures and societies in the world will become increasingly secularized, nevertheless Christians are called on to struggle against the development of evil in the world, and to resist the corruption and deterioration of their culture and society. Christians are called upon to be salt -- to try to hold back corruption in the world; they are called on to be light -- to shine the light of God's law on wickedness and the light of God's gospel on sin-darkened hearts.

Scripture places a heavy responsibility on Christians to try, by God's grace, to hold back the secularization process, first by attempting, through the proclamation of the law and the gospel, to change the character and moral conduct of individuals; and second, by attempting, through the application of the law of God to their community, state, and nation, to change the present drift of their culture and society toward Secular Humanism. As they do so, they do not need to concern themselves with ultimate success, for ultimate success belongs to God in His good time, and it is assured!

But as soon as we speak of applying the law of God to our culture and society, some practical questions arise, such as, "Do Christians have any *right* to impose their moral standards on non-Christians in a pluralistic society?" "Is it of any *use* to try to impose moral standards on someone else?" "Can morality be legislated anyway?"

Christianity and Secular Humanism in a Pluralistic Society

Christians in the United States live in a pluralistic society -- one whose citizens are constitutionally guaranteed equality of opportunity to freely exercise their religious beliefs, which are many and varied. In such a society, do Christians have a right to impose their values and moral standards on non-Christians? It depends on whether we are talking about *personal* values and standards or *God's* moral values and standards. If

all values and standards are purely *personal*, as Secular Humanists claim, then they are all of *equal value*. And if they are all of equal value, then *no one* has a right to impose his or her standards on *anyone else*, not even their own children!

But if *God* has imposed His moral values and standards on all human beings, then all human beings are *bound* to obey them. And if all human beings are bound to obey them, then Christians have an *obligation* (and a God-ordained *right*) to *communicate* that fact to other human beings, and to attempt to get others to adopt God's values and obey God's standards. After all, *God* says that respect for parents and earthly rulers is right, and disrespect for them is wrong; that regard for the sanctity of life is right, and murder is wrong; that human sexuality in the bonds of marriage is right, and that casual sex, adultery, and homosexuality are wrong; that regard for property is right, and that stealing and destruction of property are wrong; that truthfulness is right and lying is wrong; that contentment with what one has is right and coveting what another has is wrong. And these standards of right and wrong conduct are binding because God says they are, no matter what *others* may say about them!

Incidentally, this is one of the features of Christianity that makes it obnoxious to Secular Humanists. Christianity holds to absolute moral values and standards, whereas Secular Humanism rejects absolutes in morality (as well as in almost every other realm). If Secular Humanists can only get Christians to drop their claim to absolutes, then Humanists can put Christianity on an equal plane with other religions and discard all of them!

This brings us to the question of whether it is of any use to impose moral standards? Can morality be *legislated* anyway? Non-Christians (and some Christians) are quick to answer that since "you can't legislate morality," therefore we should not try to impose moral values on people by incorporating those values into law.

In one sense the cliché, "you can't legislate morality," has a substantial amount of truth in it; you can't transform people who are bad on the inside into people who are good on the inside by passing laws with appropriate penalties. In another sense the cliché has a substantial amount of error in it; you can influence people to be good citizens rather than bad citizens by passing laws with appropriate penalties. Laws that are

enforced and carry penalties do *deter* most people from harming other people, and they do encourage most people to watch out for the external well-being of other people. When, for example, drivers see signs warning them of unmarked patrol cars or monetary fines for speeding, or when drivers who have had one drink too many think about the possibility of losing their license or spending time in jail, do these considerations deter them from driving in a manner that endangers the lives and property of themselves and others, and encourage them to be good drivers? For most drivers they do! Thus it is *possible* to legislate morality in the sense of outward obedience to the law, and we can legislate against immorality and restrain a certain amount of wrongdoing.

As Christians, we do not *expect* laws and penalties to produce *internal* morality and to extinguish *internal* immorality. Only the gospel and the new birth and the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work can do that. Nevertheless we *do* expect laws and penalties to help make our society as externally moral as possible, so that the greatest amount of sin and the evils it produces will be as outwardly restrained as possible. If such laws and penalties influence men and women to be better citizens, better husbands and wives, better parents, better children, better public officials, judges, legislators, and policemen, better professional people, better businessmen, better employers and workers, then those laws and penalties are a positive force for good. If they restrain human beings from lawlessness, sexual immorality, abortion, divorce, homosexuality, dishonesty and injustice, then they do help deter external immorality and encourage external morality. If laws and penalties help to discourage crime, encourage cooperation, and secure and maintain external order, peace, and justice, then it is of great use to impose moral values by incorporating them into laws. And if these moral values represent God's absolute moral standards, then such laws (and their enforcement) will help to counter the attempts of Secular Humanists to eliminate all absolutes from our culture and to prepare the way for the complete establishment of a materialistic, agnostic, and hedonistic world-view.

Finally, we must ask what specific things we Christians can do to preserve our Judaeo-Christian heritage and to combat the evils of Secular Humanism. There are at least six.

(1) We can faithfully witness to non-Christians, using the law of God to give knowledge of God's will and to convict of sin, and presenting the

gospel to give knowledge of salvation through Christ.

(2) We can enlighten others to the concepts, goals, and implications of Secular Humanism, using such documents as "Humanist Manifesto I," "Humanist Manifesto II," and "A Secular Humanist Declaration."

(3) We can attempt to elect to public office those who will seek to preserve our culture, rather than destroy it by the principles of Secular Humanism.

(4) We can speak, write, vote, lobby, and work to secure order, safety, justice, and external morality in our community, state and nation.

(5) As members of churches we can attempt to influence our fellow members to become involved in the struggle, and to take stands on moral issues; and we can attempt to get our churches to take public positions on such issues and to let these positions be known.

(6) We can pray for those in authority, to the end that external order, peace, and justice be maintained, so that we might have the greatest possible freedom to proclaim the gospel of salvation.

Christians are citizens of heaven and citizens of earthly societies. Their obligations to God do not conflict with their obligations to their fellow human beings. They are to love God with their entire being, and they are to love their neighbors as themselves. Implied in loving one's neighbor is the desire for their highest well-being, as translated into actions that tend toward their good. And who better understands the highest well-being and best interests of human beings than the God who created them to live for Him and to do His work in the world? Thus, when we do the specific things mentioned above, in order to preserve our Judaeo-Christian heritage against the erosion of Secular Humanism, we demonstrate our love for God and His interests as well as our love for our fellow human beings and their highest good.

It has been said that the one certain way to ensure that evil will triumph is for good men to do nothing. There is still time to do something! May God grant that many Christians will *realize* that they are still able to do something about Secular Humanism, will *become convinced* that they ought to do what they are able to do, and will *do* it!

Understanding the Bible

Essays in Theology & Apologetics

Robert J. Dunzweiler

The author taught on the seminary level for forty years till his death in 1996, first at Faith Theological Seminary and then at Biblical Theological Seminary. An amateur geologist and an avid reader, he was concerned to give full credit to the biblical text as the completely trustworthy message of the God who cannot lie, while simultaneously treating the data of nature and history in a responsible manner. Here are sixteen of his papers on a wide range of subjects, ranging from tongue-speaking to the Trinity, from evolution to eschatology. Many hundreds of his students through the years have been blessed by his faithful and careful work.

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