

Doctrine One



Bringing New Life

Doctrine One



Doctrine One

BEE World

First Edition

First Printing—May 2007

Current Printing—June 2011

© 2007, 2011 BEE World.

Every attempt has been made to provide correct information. However, the publisher does not guarantee the accuracy of the book and does not assume responsibility for information included in or omitted from it.

All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the NET Bible®, ©1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. www.bible.org All rights reserved.

This material is available in its entirety as a free download or online web use at
<http://www.netbible.org>

Scripture quotations marked as NASB are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, © 1960, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Printed in the United States of America.

All rights reserved. This publication is protected by copyright, and except for brief excerpts for review purposes, permission must be obtained from the publisher prior to any prohibited reproduction, storage in a retrieval system, or transmission in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or likewise.

For information regarding permissions or special orders, please contact:

BEE World
International Headquarters
P.O. Box 62805
Colorado Springs, CO 80962

ISBN: 978-1-934324-03-2

Contents

Course Introduction.....	1
Foreword.....	5
Student Instructions.....	9
Unit One: Introduction and Theology Proper.....	13
Lesson 1: Foundations of Theology.....	15
Topic 1: Concepts in Theology.....	16
Topic 2: Some Presuppositions.....	17
Topic 3: The Knowledge of God.....	21
Topic 4: The Revelation of God.....	23
Lesson 1 Self Check.....	36
Lesson 1 Answers.....	39
Lesson 1 Self Check Answers.....	41
Lesson 2: The Nature of God.....	42
Topic 1: The Essence of God.....	43
Topic 2: The Perfections of God.....	45
Lesson 2 Self Check.....	49
Lesson 2 Answers.....	51
Lesson 2 Self Check Answers.....	52
Lesson 3: The Names of God and the Trinity.....	53
Topic 1: The Names of God.....	54
Topic 2: The Trinity.....	56
Lesson 3 Self Check.....	68
Unit One Exam.....	69
Lesson 3 Answers.....	73
Lesson 3 Self Check Answers.....	76
Unit One Exam Answers.....	77
Unit Two: Bibliology.....	79
Lesson 4: Special Revelation and Inspiration.....	80
Topic 1: The Biblical Concepts of Revelation.....	81
Topic 2: The Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration.....	85
Lesson 4 Self Check.....	94
Lesson 4 Answers.....	95
Lesson 4 Self Check Answers.....	97
Lesson 5: Canonicity.....	99
Topic 1: Introduction.....	101
Topic 2: Development of the Old Testament Canon.....	103
Topic 3: Development of the New Testament Canon.....	107
Topic 4: The Close of the Canon.....	117
Topic 5: The Old Testament Apocrypha.....	121
Lesson 5 Self Check.....	127
Lesson 5 Answers.....	129
Lesson 5 Self Check Answers.....	131
Lesson 6: Authority and the Bible.....	133
Topic 1: The Question of Authority.....	134
Topic 2: The Interpretation of Scripture.....	142

Topic 3: The Illumination of Scripture.....	144
Lesson 6 Self Check.....	156
Unit Two Exam.....	158
Lesson 6 Answers.....	161
Lesson 6 Self Check Answers.....	164
Unit Two Exam Answers.....	165
Unit Three: God's Highest Creations—Angels and Man.....	167
Lesson 7: Angels—Good and Bad.....	168
Topic 1: Angels—Ministers of God.....	170
Topic 2: Demons—Minions of Satan.....	178
Lesson 7 Self Check.....	183
Lesson 7 Answers.....	185
Lesson 7 Self Check Answers.....	186
Lesson 8: Our Adversary the Devil.....	187
Topic 1: The Reality of Satan.....	188
Topic 2: The Creation and Sin of Satan.....	190
Topic 3: The Activities of Satan.....	192
Topic 4: Satan's World.....	195
Lesson 8 Self Check.....	199
Lesson 8 Answers.....	201
Lesson 8 Self Check Answers.....	204
Lesson 9: The Creation of Man.....	205
Topic 1: Evolution and Origins.....	206
Topic 2: The Origin of the Soul of Man.....	214
Lesson 9 Self Check.....	217
Unit Three Exam.....	219
Lesson 9 Answers.....	222
Lesson 9 Self Check Answers.....	224
Unit Three Exam Answers.....	225
Unit Four: Man, Sin, and the Christian Life.....	227
Lesson 10: The Facets and Fall of Man.....	228
Topic 1: The Facets of Man.....	229
Topic 2: The Fall of Man.....	233
Lesson 10 Self Check.....	245
Lesson 10 Answers.....	247
Lesson 10 Self Check Answers.....	248
Lesson 11: The Meaning of Sin.....	249
Topic 1: The Biblical Concept of Sin.....	250
Topic 2: Christ's Teaching Concerning Sin.....	254
Lesson 11 Self Check.....	257
Lesson 11 Answers.....	259
Lesson 11 Self Check Answers.....	260
Lesson 12: Sin and The Individual Christian.....	261
Topic 1: The Inheritance of Sin.....	262
Topic 2: The Imputation of Sin.....	265
Topic 3: Personal Sins.....	269
Topic 4: The Christian and Sin.....	270
Lesson 12 Self Check.....	277

Unit Four Exam.....	279
Lesson 12 Answers.....	282
Lesson 12 Self Check Answers.....	284
Unit Four Exam Answers.....	285
Basic Theology.....	287

Course Introduction

Description of the Course

This course offers an overview of the major teachings of the Bible concerning the person and work of God, the Word of God, history, angels, man, sin, and other subjects. Even though this is not a course on the evidences for the Christian faith, it will at times refer to historical and scientific evidence that supports the biblical view of the world and the truthfulness of the Scriptures. This course will also be giving special attention to some of the objections that have been raised against the central teachings of Christianity.

The study of theology requires clear thinking, intellectual application, and a great deal of time and study. It is not an unimportant part of the Christian life. It is true that it can become purely intellectual and impractical, but this is essentially and practically not so.

Doctrine is ultimately the most practical of all disciplines in the Christian life, for it is the basis for everything we do. Whenever a Christian prays, makes a righteous decision, goes to church, or does something loving or kind, he/she is making practical application of doctrine.

Why does a Christian pray? The reason is that the Bible tells us that God wants fellowship with us through prayer and answers our prayers according to His will. Why does a Christian have peace and joy in the midst of trials and tragedies? The answer is that the believer has learned from the Bible that God is in control and has a purpose in these events and actions and that, even if the trial were to result in death, heaven and fellowship with the Lord await the Christian. Why does a Christian go to church? The Bible teaches us the importance of corporate worship. Why does a Christian seek to do something loving? The Bible teaches that God is love and that His children should emulate that characteristic.

All these actions and attitudes are based on something learned from the Bible. In fact, this is a simple definition of doctrine or theology: what we learn and apply from the Bible. Therefore, it becomes intensely practical to know doctrine.

As Christian leaders it is vitally important that we have a working knowledge of doctrine, or to put it more formally, of systematic theology. Many believers are struggling in their Christian lives because of a lack of clear theological teaching from the pulpit. With the knowledge gained in this course, you will be able to strengthen the faith of many as you grow in your knowledge of biblical theology.

Objectives of the Course

All of the Internet Biblical Seminary courses are based on the conviction that every Christian has a ministry. God has a purpose for your life and ministry. When you finish this course you should be able to:

- Explain the major doctrines presented in this course.
- Display greater submission to the authority and discipline of the Word of God in all matters pertaining to life and ministry.
- Defend the Christian faith against several objections raised by critics.
- Discern spiritual truths so that you may grow as a wise counselor to others.
- Confront the teachings of many cults and explain from the Scriptures why they are in error.

- Exhibit a sense of balance in understanding and applying scriptural truth.
- Cite, from memory, book and chapter references which relate to the doctrines discussed in this course.
- Prepare and teach this course to others in your own ministry setting.

Units of Study

The lessons are grouped into four units:

Unit 1: Introduction and Theology Proper

- Lesson 1: Foundations of Theology
- Lesson 2: The Nature of God
- Lesson 3: The Names of God and the Trinity

Unit 2: Bibliology

- Lesson 4: Special Revelation and Inspiration
- Lesson 5: Canonicity
- Lesson 6: Authority and the Bible

Unit 3: God's Highest Creations—Angels and Man

- Lesson 7: Angels—Good and Bad
- Lesson 8: Our Adversary the Devil
- Lesson 9: The Creation of Man

Unit 4: Man, Sin, and the Christian Life

- Lesson 10: The Facets and Fall of Man
- Lesson 11: The Meaning of Sin
- Lesson 12: Sin and the Individual Christian

As you plan your study schedule, decide the dates for when you want to finish each unit. You can then divide this time into study periods for each lesson.

We suggest that you try to do a lesson a week or three lessons per month. You can do this if you study about one hour each day.

Lesson Organization

Please give careful attention to every part of the lesson:

- Title
- Lesson Outline
- Lesson Objectives
- Lesson Assignments
- Lesson Development
- Illustrations

The title, outline, and objectives provide a preview of the lesson. Your mind will be more alert and receptive, and you will learn better because of this preview. The lesson assignments describe how and in what order to complete the lesson. The word study prepares you for special terms in the lesson. The lesson development follows the lesson outline. Its comments, suggestions, and

questions all help you reach the lesson objectives. Be sure to check your answers with the ones given for the study questions. These will fix your attention once more on the main points of the lesson. This procedure is designed to make your learning more effective and long lasting. Make special note of the maps, charts, and other illustrations because they will help you to identify with a part of the early church, sharing its problems and letting the tremendous truths of these letters grip your heart. Also, you will find these illustrations useful in your preaching and teaching.

Textbooks for the Course

Your Bible is the main textbook for this course. To help you interpret and apply its teachings, you will use *Basic Theology* by Dr. Charles C. Ryrie with this course.

Foreword

You are about to begin an exciting and important study of the Scriptures. We believe that your life will be significantly impacted as you contemplate the knowledge of God in the following lessons.

We have chosen *Basic Theology*, a book written by Dr. Charles C. Ryrie, as our text for this course. This book fairly presents alternative views of controversial doctrines and does it with a gentle and nonthreatening spirit. Also, we believe that you will find the way Dr. Ryrie carefully outlines his many points and subpoints to be very helpful to the preparation of Bible studies and sermons.

If you look at the table of contents of Dr. Ryrie's book, you will note that he presents his topics in a number of categories. These categories are, for the most part, as first organized by John Calvin in his famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. In one form or another, most Protestant systematic theologies have followed them.

Take a moment before going on to familiarize yourself with this overview by reviewing each of the topic categories in the chart below.

Section / Topic Categories
I Prolegomena
II The Living and True God
III The Bible: God-breathed
IV Angels: Ministering Spirits
V Our Adversary the Devil
VI Demons: Unclean Spirits
VII Man: The Image of God
VIII Sin
IX Jesus Christ our Lord
X So Great a Salvation
XI The Holy Spirit
XII "I Will Build My Church"
XIII Things to Come
XIV Central Passages
XV Definitions

Basic Theology

by Dr. Charles Ryrie

Table of Contents
Overview

Section I — Prolegomena

1. Concepts and Definitions
2. Some Presuppositions
3. The Question of Authority

Section II — The Living and True God

4. The Knowledge of God
5. The Revelation of God
6. The Perfections of God

7. The Names of God
8. The Triunity of God

Section III — The Bible: God-Breathed

9. Special Revelation
10. The Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration
11. Defections from the Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration
12. The Inerrancy of the Bible
13. Inerrancy and the Teachings of Christ
14. Problem Passages
15. The Canon
16. The Interpretation of the Bible

Section IV — Angels: Ministering Spirits

17. The Existence of Angels
18. The Creation of Angels
19. The Nature of Angels
20. The Organization of the Angels
21. The Ministry of Angels

Section V — Our Adversary the Devil

22. The Reality of Satan
23. The Creation and Sin of Satan
24. The Activities of Satan
25. Satan's World

Section VI — Demons: Unclean Spirits

26. The Reality of Demons
27. What Are Demons Like?
28. What Do Demons Do?

Section VII — Man: The Image of God

29. Evolution and Origins
30. The Bible and Origins
31. The Creation of Man
32. The Facets of Man
33. The Fall of Man

Section VIII — Sin

34. The Biblical Concept of Sin
35. Christ's Teaching Concerning Sin
36. The Inheritance of Sin
37. The Imputation of Sin
38. Personal Sins
39. The Christian and Sin

Section IX — Jesus Christ Our Lord

40. The Preincarnate Christ
41. The Incarnation of Christ
42. The Person of Christ Incarnate
43. Christ: Prophet, Priest, and King
44. The Self-Emptying of Christ

- 45. The Sinlessness of Christ
- 46. The Resurrection and Ascension of Christ
- 47. The Post-Ascension Ministries of Christ

Section X — So Great a Salvation

- 48. Some Introductory Considerations
- 49. The Biblical Terminology
- 50. The Passion of Christ
- 51. The Meaning of the Death of Christ
- 52. Some Results of Salvation
- 53. Theories of the Atonement
- 54. The Doctrine of Election
- 55. The Extent of the Atonement
- 56. The Application of Salvation
- 57. The Security of the Believer
- 58. What Is the Gospel?

Section XI — The Holy Spirit

- 59. Who Is the Holy Spirit?
- 60. The Holy Spirit in Old Testament Times
- 61. The Holy Spirit in the Life of Our Lord
- 62. The Spirit Indwelling
- 63. The Spirit Sealing
- 64. The Spirit Baptizing
- 65. The Spirit Gifting
- 66. The Spirit Filling
- 67. Other Ministries of the Spirit
- 68. History of the Doctrine of the Spirit

Section XII — “I Will Build My Church”

- 69. What Is the Church?
- 70. The Distinctiveness of the Church
- 71. Principles and/or Pattern?
- 72. Types of Church Government
- 73. Qualified Leadership for the Church
- 74. Ordinances for the Church
- 75. The Worship of the Church
- 76. Other Ministries of the Church

Section XIII — Things to Come

- 77. Introduction to Eschatology
- 78. A Survey of Postmillennialism
- 79. A Survey of Amillennialism
- 80. A Survey of Premillennialism
- 81. God’s Covenant with Abraham
- 82. God’s Covenant with David
- 83. An Outline of Future Events
- 84. The Tribulation Period
- 85. The Rapture of the Church
- 86. The Pretribulational Rapture View

- 87. Populating the Millennial Kingdom
- 88. The Midtribulational Rapture View
- 89. The Posttribulational Rapture View
- 90. The Millennium
- 91. Future Judgments
- 92. Resurrection and Eternal Destiny

Section XIV — Central Passages

- 93. Some Central Passages for the Study of Theology

Section XV — Definitions

- 94. Some Definitions for the Study of Theology

Student Instructions

As you read through the course Table of Contents and Introduction, you saw that this course offers an overview of the major teachings of the Bible concerning the person and work of God, the Word of God, history, angels, man, sin, and other subjects. In order to benefit most from your study of this material, you should plan to work through the lessons in the order they are presented. In other words, we would encourage you to work through the course systematically, rather than choosing a topic in the middle of the course as a place to begin.

You should allow yourself a minimum of six hours of study time to complete each lesson. This would include doing the required reading, answering the questions, doing the exercises, and completing the study projects.

If you plan to teach this course to someone else later on, you may want to keep track of how many hours you needed to complete each lesson. In addition, you might wish to note any problems encountered or questions raised as you work through the course.

Course Design

In the Course Introduction you also found a list of course objectives which summarize the most important things you will learn as you work through the following lessons. Study these objectives attentively and refer to them periodically to gauge your mastery of the course material. They will also serve as guidelines for the final examination found at the back of this study guide.

Since most individuals taking this course are extremely busy people, we have designed each lesson with clearly defined steps for easy reference. Also, if you study the course and lesson objectives, you will know from the start which topics to spend the most time on.

The material covered in Lesson 1 is a review of what was discussed during the first seminar. Sometime between Seminar 1 and Seminar 2, review the contents of Lesson 1, do the exercises, and answer the questions if you have not already done so. The answers will be discussed during Seminar 2.

Your group leader will tell you whether the final examination is to be done by each student at home or together as a class.

Lesson Design

Several standard components are built into each lesson to facilitate your study and develop your skills. They are explained below so that you may recognize and use them to full advantage:

1. **Lesson Outlines** provide an overview of the sections of each lesson. In this way you can anticipate the flow and sequence of the various topics to be covered before you begin your study.
2. **Lesson Objectives** are provided to help you identify the most crucial parts of each lesson. They give you guidance in the effective use of your study time and will be used by your group leader for class discussion, so be prepared!
3. **Repetition and review** are woven into the course to help you learn new concepts.
4. **Questions** are posed from time to time in most lessons to help you interact with the material being covered. Whenever you see the heading "Question," stop and write an

answer in your Life Notebook. Check your answers with those provided at the end of each lesson.

5. **Study Projects** give you the opportunity to further examine concepts explored in a lesson. The projects will be discussed and evaluated during the seminar.
6. **Examination** is an important component of this course. There is an examination after each unit covering concepts learned in the unit. The exam results will contribute to your final course grade.

Materials Needed

To work through this course, you will need a Bible, preferably with cross-references, a copy of this workbook, and a personal notebook entitled Life Notebook for all written work. All the Scripture references and Scripture quotations in this workbook are from the Net Bible. Every time you see the heading “Question” or “Study Project,” you should respond by writing an answer in your Life Notebook.

We suggest that you divide your Life Notebook into two major sections: the first one-third should be reserved for your answers to all questions and written assignments given throughout the course. The remaining two-third of the notebook should be reserved for your study projects. (NOTE: If you would like to keep a separate notebook for this second half, please do so, as it may serve as a study commentary later on.) If at all possible, keep together all the work you do on a particular book or passage for future reference.

Reference books, such as a concordance and Bible dictionary, will also be helpful in the completion of some assigned work. Instructions will indicate when the use of supplementary reference books is advisable.

Your Questions about Theology

What questions would you like to have answered about theology? How do you expect to benefit by working through this course? Take a few minutes to write down your questions and expectations in your notebook. Refer to this list periodically during the course to check your progress.

Course Grading System

Read through the grading system outlined below and be prepared to discuss it with your group leader. The group leader should designate someone to keep the records for the course.

The grading scale is intended to accomplish the following:

1. Help determine a **final grade** for the course
2. Identify **definite standards** for the completion of the course
3. Reflect a **balanced concern** for the student’s personal development in the areas of academics, faithfulness in attendance, and practical involvement
4. Serve as an **evaluation tool** in identifying areas of need and growth in the life of each student.

Grading

The final grade is based upon four things:

Average of all exam scores 25%

Lessons completed	25%
Attendance	25%

Seminar Assignments 25%

Each area of the course (exams, lesson completion, attendance, and assignment completion) is given a 25% weighting.

The numerical grade you report to us is based upon the following:

94 – 100 = 1

85 – 93 = 2

75 – 84 = 3

65 – 74 = 4

Below 65 = 5. We no longer have a 6. The lowest score is a 5. We will record all current 6's as 5's.

To earn a certificate, a student must score a 75 or above (grade 1, 2, or 3). If he receives a four or a five, and wants to apply to retake the exam or do the missing work, we will do that on an individual basis.

Guidelines to Follow in Determining the Grade

1. **Grade.** The final grade is determined on the basis of the minimum standards completed for **all** parts of the course.
2. **Exams.** There are four unit examinations.
3. **Workbook.** Completion of a lesson includes **all** related reading and written exercises and projects.
4. **Attendance.** Attendance is impossible to make-up. The student should be personally counseled to determine if he or she should continue in further course work. If, however, reasons for absence are **valid**, credit can be given but only under extraordinary circumstances
5. **Study Projects.** The student must complete all study projects based upon the stated instructions in the workbook and share the results of his study in the seminars as instructed by the facilitator.

Unit One: Introduction and Theology Proper

Although the word “theology” does not appear in the Bible, the concept of theology and the formulation of theological information are very much present. One must distinguish, however, between systematic theology and the truths of Scripture. The Bible contains divine truth that is timeless and unalterable, inviolable throughout all generations. Theology, on the other hand, needs to be freshly understood by each generation. As language and culture change, theology should be refined (not redefined) to express the eternal, absolute truths of the Scripture in terms that are relevant to the contemporary scene. As new problems and issues confront the church, theology must bring forth new emphases and clarifications. Theology must draw upon unchanging biblical truth to speak to the present situation and to protect the purity of each generation’s knowledge of God.

One of the acknowledged dangers of studying theology is the risk that whatever is learned will remain mere head knowledge. A student may accumulate an abundance of facts, but if they are left untranslated into life, then they have virtually no value. Our desire is to lead you into this wealth of information and at the same time guide you to apply these wonderful truths in your daily walk with the Lord.

The first unit of the course will orient you to the discipline of systematic theology and the Person of God. What you learn in the first unit will be the foundation for the rest of the course. Enter this study with an expectant heart, seeking to know God in all His glory. Begin by reading the preface in the text, “Who Should Read Theology?”

Unit Outline

Lesson 1: Foundations of Theology

Lesson 2: The Nature of God

Lesson 3: The Names of God and the Trinity

Unit Objectives

When you have completed this unit, you will be able to:

- Define systematic theology and compare it with other kinds of theological study
- Explain the presuppositions that underlie a study of systematic theology
- Discuss the four avenues through which God’s general revelation is made known
- Defend the existence of God by using material covered in this unit on the general revelation of God
- Outline the four progressive steps in man’s response to the revelation of God as presented in Romans 1:18-32
- Define and tell the difference between anthropopathisms and anthropomorphisms
- List and explain the perfections and names of God

- Discuss the theological basis for the doctrine of the Trinity
- List, define, and refute each of the five major errors associated historically with the doctrine of the Trinity
- Cite Scripture references for each of the key biblical concepts listed at the end of each lesson and explain how each reference supports the concept

Lesson 1: Foundations of Theology

Lesson Introduction

In any study it is important to establish the frame of reference within which you will work. This involves things like definitions, presuppositions, and the extent of study.

It is no different with the study of theology. In fact, many problems involved with theological study and debates over various positions are related to unclear or imprecise definitions of terms, concepts, and presuppositions. Thus, this first lesson lays the foundation for the study of theology.

In Topic 1, we will consider various approaches to the study of theology, such as historical theology and biblical theology. The approach taken in this course is called systematic theology.

In Topic 2, we will consider the presuppositions which underlie our approach to the study of theology.

In Topic 3, we will consider the possibility of the knowledge of God and the characteristics of that knowledge. Is it really possible to have accurate knowledge of the Creator? We can only know God if He has chosen to reveal Himself. And in His wonderful grace, He has chosen to do so.

Finally, in Topic 4, we will consider the revelation of God. A central claim of Christianity is that it claims to be a revealed religion. God has revealed Himself. In this lesson we will take a careful look at Romans 1:18-32, tracing out God's revelation to man and man's response. We will also consider the question: How can we prove that God exists?

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: Concepts in Theology

Topic 2: Some Presuppositions

 Basic Presuppositions

 Interpretive Presuppositions

 Plain Interpretation and New Testament Priority

 Systematic Presuppositions

Topic 3: The Knowledge of God

 The Possibility of the Knowledge of God

 Characteristics of the Knowledge of God

Topic 4: The Revelation of God

 Avenues of General Revelation

 Cosmological Argument—Creation

 Teleological Argument—Man

 Anthropological Argument

 Ontological Argument

 Content of General Revelation

 Value of General Revelation

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Define theology and compare the three approaches to theology that are explained in Ryrie, chapter 1
- Name at least two of your presuppositions and explain how they affect the way your theology is formed and organized
- Define “incomprehensibility” and “knowability” in relation to the knowledge of God, supporting each one with a Scripture reference
- Name and describe four logical arguments which provide evidence for the existence of God as He has revealed Himself in nature (the “general revelation” of God)

Memory Verse

In this lesson you are to memorize Psalm 90:2, relating to God’s eternity. Be prepared to quote it from memory.

Reading Assignment

In this lesson your readings from Ryrie will be chapters 1, 2, 4, and 5. You may read them all at one time or as they are indicated.

Topic 1: Concepts in Theology

Objective 1—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to define theology and compare the three approaches to theology that are explained in Ryrie, chapter 1.

The word “theology” is a compound of two words, *theos*, meaning God, and *logos*, which relates to the idea of rational expression. This reflects the definition of Christian theology as the study of, and organized statement about, the revelation of God. However, as this lesson will show, there are various approaches to the subject of theology: historical, biblical, and systematic. It is important to understand these different types of theology. This course is primarily a study of systematic theology. How does this differ from the other two?

Basic to a study in any area is an understanding of the terms and concepts that will be used. If you have not already read Ryrie, chapter 1, “Concepts and Definitions,” please do so now.

QUESTION 1

Match the type of theology with the correct definition.

Type of Theology	Definition
Historical Theology	Organizes the progressive revelation of God’s truth throughout the Bible
Biblical Theology	Correlates the data from all of the Bible and organizes it into the major topics of biblical teaching
Systematic Theology	Focuses on what those who studied the Bible thought about its teaching

QUESTION 2

Which items in the list below, according to Ryrie, are characteristics of biblical theology? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Presented in systematic form
- B. Pays attention to history in which God's revelation came
- C. Studies revelation in a progressive sequence
- D. Correlates all the data of biblical revelation into topics
- E. Finds its source material in the Bible
- F. Traces the thinking of great theologians

Topic 2: Some Presuppositions

Objective 2—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to name at least two of your presuppositions and explain how they affect the way your theology is formed and organized.

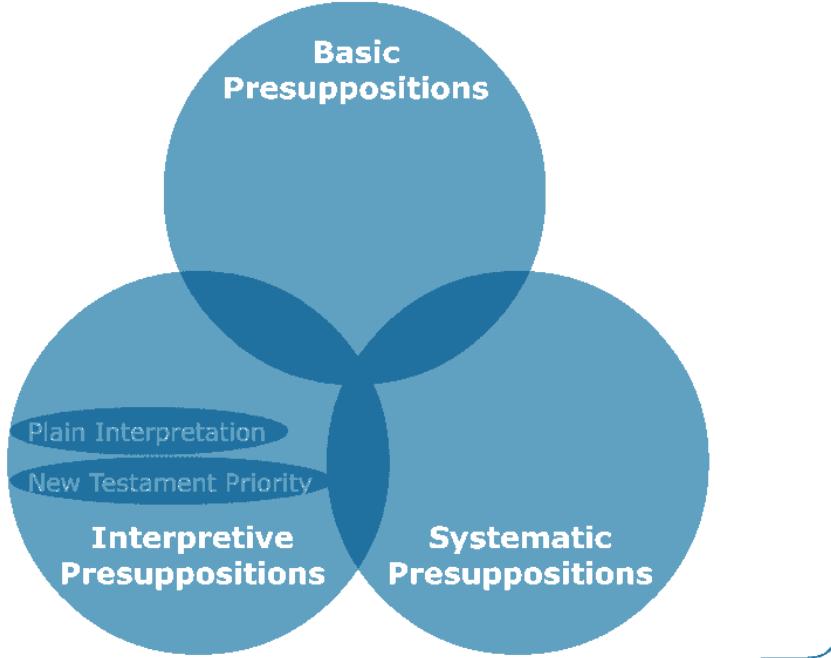
An important point to realize in thinking about philosophy, religion, life, and morals is that everyone, absolutely everyone, has presuppositions. Some have many; some have few. But everyone operates on some kind of presuppositions. Do not ever let anyone accuse you of being biased or close-minded because you believe in God and the Bible as basic presuppositions. That person may have presuppositions against God and the Bible and be as influenced by his presuppositions as you are by yours. Thus, the question ultimately becomes one of determining whose presuppositions are the most likely to produce a philosophy or a lifestyle that is true and realistic.

If you have not already read Ryrie, chapter 2, "Some Presuppositions," please do so now.

In order to answer questions 3–5, review the theological presuppositions outlined in the diagram on the next page.

Theological Presuppositions

Learn more about each presupposition by clicking on each title.



Basic Presuppositions

The Christian has many important presuppositions. The fundamental presupposition, however, is a belief in the truthfulness and authority of the Bible as the Word of God.

For Christian theology, we derive our source of information from the Scriptures. It is the task of the theology to organize and correlate this material into a systematic and comprehensive presentation of what the Bible teaches on a particular subject.

Interpretive Presuppositions

It is obvious that the Bible has been interpreted in countless different ways. The fanciful theories that men come up with, all based on the Bible, are endless. So there must be some controls on how the Bible is to be interpreted. Thus, we must seek to determine the most accurate means of understanding what the Bible says.

Plain Interpretation and New Testament Priority:

Plain interpretation:

If a person had to depend on just one principle of interpretation, this would be the most essential. If taken seriously in all its implications, normal, plain interpretation (or historical-grammatical interpretation) guards against excesses and focuses attention on language that is to be taken at face value. By plain interpretation, we mean that our quest is to discern the intended meaning of the original human author of Scripture as it would be understood by his hearers in their cultural context.

A common misconception of this method is that it treats figures of speech, poetry, and parables in exactly the same way as historical narrative or epistolary literature. Instead, normal interpretation recognizes all figurative, stylistic, or symbolic elements of literature but with a view to understanding the literal meaning they intend to convey.

When it is literal, the meaning is normally more obvious. When it is in figurative language, it may require more effort and thought to determine the literal idea, i.e., the intended idea of the original author, but the meaning is there and must be sought.

New Testament Priority:

The text says that in the issue of interpretation, the New Testament holds priority over the Old Testament. Why is this so? The Bible did not come to us all at once. Rather God progressively and gradually revealed Himself through many authors over a period of over 1500 years. The Old Testament points to that which the New Testament fulfills. The writer to the Hebrews says, “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,” (Heb 1:1-2, NASB). Thus in the New Testament we find the culmination and finality of biblical revelation. That which was only shadow and anticipation in the Old is now reality in the New. For this reason, the New Testament is often the interpreter of the Old.

Systematic Presuppositions

Simply put, theology has to do with correlating, not creating, scriptural truth. The main task is to understand what Scripture already says in context and then to organize it so that it can be understood thematically.

There are limitations in systematizing the truth of God’s Word. First, we must recognize that we will never achieve a complete systematization of truth. The desire to organize the thoughts of God, as found in the Scriptures, is honorable and good; but let us not be frustrated if we cannot find, or have difficulty finding, a place for every single piece of information.

Second, students of theology must be conscientious about how they handle biblical data. Ideas must neither be forced onto the text, nor into categories where they do not belong, just because it would make the organization more orderly. Logic must not go beyond what the facts allow; answers must not be provided where there is little or no basis for them. The systematizing must deal with what is known, not what is uncertain or speculative.

QUESTION 3

According to Ryrie, for the believer, the Bible’s truthfulness is the fundamental presupposition. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Ryrie states that “the New Testament holds priority over the Old Testament.” What exactly does that mean? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Old Testament revelation was preparatory and partial, while New Testament revelation is climactic and complete.
- B. Old Testament revelation is inferior in divine inspiration and needs to be set aside when compared to New Testament revelation.
- C. While Old Testament revelation may be partial, it is complementary to New Testament revelation. That is, both are needed for a full understanding of doctrine and theology.
- D. Old Testament theology is important and has its place in God’s plan, but it is incomplete without the contribution of New Testament truth.

QUESTION 5

Why did God NOT give us His truth already systematized? Select the best answer below.

- A. He wanted us to pursue truth in His Word and experience spiritual growth.
- B. He wanted us to humbly depend on His Spirit as our teacher in seeking understanding.
- C. He wanted us to avoid the danger of worshiping a beautiful “package” and not the God it reveals.
- D. He does not tell us, but all of the above reasons help explain why God gave truth in this form.

QUESTION 6

How do you think your theological presuppositions might affect your view of God? Match the theological presupposition with the correct view of God.

<i>Theological Presupposition</i>	<i>View of God</i>
God is an angry father who is always watching to see if you make mistakes.	My theology of God would develop into an unhealthy understanding of the relationship I have with Him and would cause discouragement and failure to fulfill His plan for my life.
God is a loving father who loves me even with my weaknesses and failures and wants the best for me, providing all the necessary resources to fulfill His destiny for my life.	My theology of God would develop into a theology of judgment and appeasement. I would never be good enough and would always have to prove my faithfulness.
God loves me but knows that I am a sinner with many weaknesses and therefore cannot trust me with too many responsibilities.	My theology of God would develop into a healthy understanding of the relationship I have with Him and would encourage me to be faithful and to learn more about Him and His plan for my life.

This completes our look at the introductory matters presented in our text. But before beginning our study of theology itself, we want to stress that such study is more than an academic exercise. It is meant to affect our lives and the lives of those we touch.

QUESTION 7

In your Life Notebook, describe how you think the study of theology can and should affect the development of Christian character.

QUESTION 8

Which of the following answers best describe how the study of theology prepares a person for effective Christian service? It prepares them: (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. By filling their minds with a purely academic understanding of the Bible
- B. By giving them a deeper knowledge of God
- C. By showing them how to live for God's glory
- D. By preparing them with facts to refute those who disagree
- E. By producing effective servants committed to helping others

In summary, systematic theology is a crucial discipline for the Christian. Having revealed Himself to men, God invites them to understand all that they can about Him. To neglect that invitation or to ignore the challenge of theological study would be a tragedy. Let us pursue the knowledge of God with vigor and wisdom.

Topic 3: The Knowledge of God

Believing that the Bible (in the *autograph*, the original manuscripts of the Scriptures) is the inerrant and inspired record of God's revelation, it is only logical for us to investigate what that record has to say about the God whom we worship. God is the source of all things, the cause of all things, and the sustainer of all things. The more we know about God, the more we can understand the meaning of our existence.

But how do we arrive at accurate knowledge of God? The only way that can happen is if God chooses to reveal Himself. He has, of course, revealed Himself in a general way through creation. As the psalmist says, "The heavens declare God's glory" (Ps 19:1). But for us to understand His love and purposes, we need special revelation. This revelation we call the Bible.

Objective 3—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to define "incomprehensibility" and "knowability" in relation to the knowledge of God, supporting each one with a Scripture reference.

The Possibility of the Knowledge of God

If you have not already read Ryrie, chapter 4, "The Knowledge of God," please do so now. In chapter 4 Ryrie asks and answers the question, Is it possible to know God? It is clear from the countless religions in the history of the world that mankind in general wants to know, at least, if there is a God. Many sincerely want to know Him. Many means and methods have been used to try to achieve that knowledge.

According to Ryrie, God can be known, but He cannot be known completely or exhaustively. He has revealed enough of Himself that we can know all that we need to know about Him.

QUESTION 9

Write down what might be some of the consequences of having a God who is either completely comprehensible or completely unknowable.

Characteristics of the Knowledge of God

Ryrie deals with the characteristics of the knowledge of God in four categories: their source, content, progressiveness, and purpose.

Source:

The source of our knowledge about God, is God Himself, made known through the Word of God. Although man can learn much about God through creation, unless God graciously chooses to reveal himself in more detail, we can never know him, love him, or know about salvation.

Content:

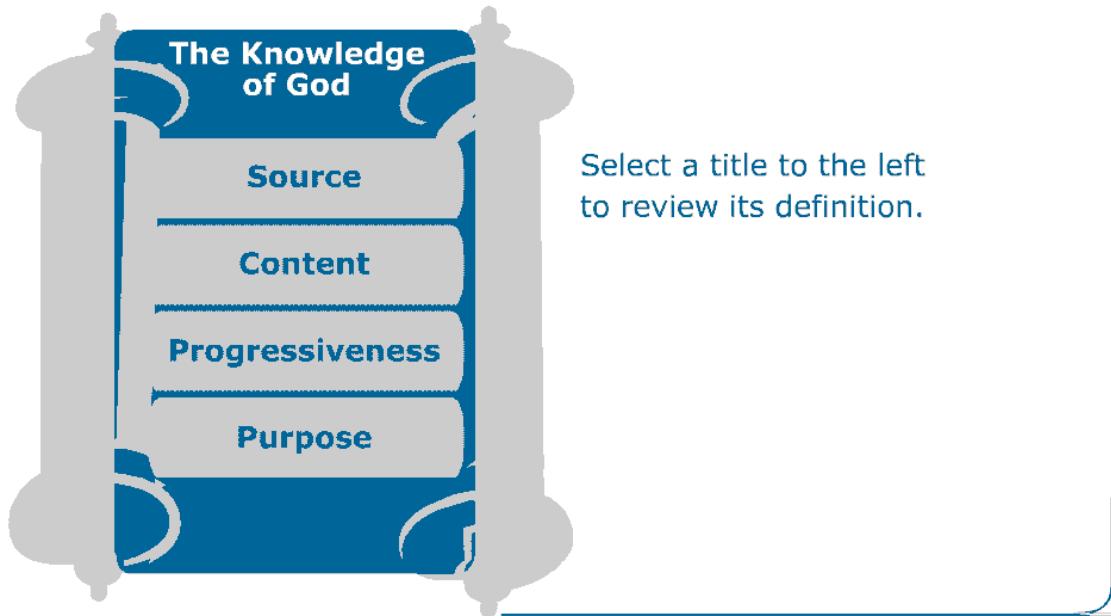
The content of the knowledge of God is both personal and factual so that a factual knowledge of Him should cause us to want to know Him better personally. Theology is intended to do more than enrich our comprehension, it has a very personal dimension to it. The more we accurately understand God, the more we can love him and serve him. So theology is not just teaching, it includes personal application and counsel on how to live as a Christian.

Progressiveness:

The knowledge of God is progressive. This means that the knowledge of God has been revealed progressively, not all at once, so that we need to search all the Scripture and trace this progress if we are to know God fully. Furthermore, this means that we cannot always read New Testament understandings back into the Old. Later revelation had not been revealed. Therefore we must interpret how, say, Moses would have understood a certain revelation or concept based upon the prior revelation which Moses had received up to his time and not based upon revelation which occurred after he lived.

Purpose:

Why study the knowledge of God? What is the purpose of such study? Theology is intended to help us to know God, think great thoughts about Him, warn us of judgment, and draw us into worship.



QUESTION 10

Review the four categories above: Source, Content, Progressiveness, and Purpose. Which of the following are true statements? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Because the knowledge of God is progressive, we must not always interpret the Old Testament in light of the New.
- B. The primary purpose of the knowledge of God is to lead us to worship.
- C. The primary source of our knowledge of God is in His creation.
- D. There is a distinctly relational and personal dimension to theology.
- E. The main purpose of the study of the knowledge of God is to enrich our comprehension of Him.
- F. It is not legitimate to conclude that Moses understood that the sacrifices described the crucified Lamb of God, Jesus, who died for the sins of the world.

QUESTION 11

Why is it so important to hold fast to the idea that the ultimate source of our knowledge of God, and indeed all truth, must come only from God?

Topic 4: The Revelation of God

Objective 4—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to name and describe four logical arguments which provide evidence for the existence of God as He has revealed Himself in nature (the “general revelation” of God).

A central claim of Christianity is that it claims to be a revealed religion. In other words, God is not silent, but He has spoken. The only way we could know about His purposes, the meaning of

Christ's death, and numerous other things is if God graciously chose to reveal them to us. This He has done.

Most theologies handle the revelation of God from a twofold perspective: general revelation and special revelation. General revelation deals primarily with the revelation of God in nature, while special revelation focuses on the revelation of God in His Word and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you have not already read Ryrie, chapter 5, "The Revelation of God," please do so now.

QUESTION 12

Briefly describe the characteristics of general revelation and tell how it is different from special revelation.

Avenues of General Revelation

In the thirteenth century several Roman Catholic scholars, Thomas Aquinas among them, formulated a series of "proofs of God's existence." These lines of argument have been discussed, refuted, and reintroduced into theological debate over many centuries. While it cannot be maintained that they prove the existence of God, they certainly point toward the reasonableness of belief in a Supreme Being.

Your mastery of the information in the text and the workbook dealing with these evidences can be a valuable tool for helping others come to believe in the Lord.

Cosmological Argument

This is the most obvious avenue of God's revelation of Himself. The world must have a cause; therefore, there must be a creator. "Cosmological" refers to creation, the "cosmos."

Objection: If Everything Has a Cause, Then So Does God

The cosmological argument has a weakness that has been eloquently stated by rationalist British philosopher Bertrand Russell in his 1927 lecture, "*Why I Am Not a Christian.*" He argued this way: If everything needs a cause, then so does God. And if God does not need a cause, then neither does the world. But if the world needs no cause, then there is no God. Therefore, whether everything needs a cause or does not need a cause, there is no God. If everything needs a cause, then we launch an infinite regress and never reach the first cause, i.e., God.

Russell's criticism of the cosmological argument is built upon a misconception of the principle of causality. Only dependent, changing, and finite beings require a cause for their existence. If God is infinite, then by definition there can be no cause of His existence because nothing can exist apart from Him. Furthermore, if all of the parts of an infinite series are dependent upon one another, then the whole series must be dependent upon something. But if the whole series is dependent upon something, then the series itself has a cause. Thus, an infinite regress is impossible.

Objection: A Self-Caused Being Is Impossible

Another weakness in the cosmological argument was set forth by French existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre in his 1943 essay, “Being and Nothingness.” He contended that the cosmological argument leads to an impossible self-caused being. If everything must have a cause, this cause must come either from inside or outside of itself. If God has no cause from outside of Himself, then God must be a self-caused being. But a self-caused being is impossible, because to cause oneself to exist, one would have to exist prior to existing.

The answer to Sartre’s argument is similar to the answer to the Russell objection. Since only finite, dependent beings need a cause, God must not necessarily be a self-caused being. Therefore, the principle of causality does lead to an infinite Being that needs no cause.

Cosmological Argument—Creation

Probably the most obvious avenue of God’s revelation of Himself is through creation. The belief that God has indeed revealed Himself in this way is often called the cosmological argument because it refers to the creation of the world, the cosmos.

Ryrie says there are three possibilities for the originating cause of the cosmos:

1. Eternal matter or eternal cosmos (impersonal)
2. Chance as an eternal principle (impersonal)
3. God the eternal Being (personal)

Most people would not seriously try to hold to the eternity of matter, especially in view of the laws of thermodynamics and entropy. Therefore, two main options remain within the realm of something eternal: chance or God. This usually means a choice between impersonal evolution or a personal God.

At this point it becomes a matter of faith against faith, not reason (or science) against faith. There is a body of evidence related to the creation of the world for which there is no final, absolute, verifiable proof. A person chooses to believe that the evidence points either to chance as the creator or God as the Creator. The big question is: Where is it most reasonable to place your faith—in chance or in God?

To modify Ryrie’s outline slightly, the presentation of the cosmological argument looks like this:

1. World created by nothing (secular view)
2. World created by something eternal
 - a. By eternal matter (not widely held)
 - b. By eternal chance (an issue of faith)
 - c. By eternal God (an issue of faith)



Select the argument name to the left to review its discussion for "Proof of the Existence of God."

QUESTION 13

Review the cosmological argument, then open your Life Notebook and complete the five assignments below. This will enable you to develop, in your own words, how you might use this argument in helping a non-Christian come to faith in God.

1. Give the essence of the argument for God's existence, as presented by Ryrie.
2. Give the essence of any supporting arguments.
3. Provide one or two illustrations that convey the impact of the argument.
4. List two main passages of Scripture that support the argument.
5. Write down any significant objections and your refutation to them.

Teleological Argument

Design always implies a designer. The following illustration emphasizes this point. Imagine yourself walking along the seashore one windy morning. As you feel the surf splashing against your legs, you look down and observe ripple marks made by the tide that form a pattern of lines in the sand. These ripple marks represent a degree of order, but they convey no information. They show only the aesthetic beauty of symmetry created by the working of nature.

Suddenly your attention is riveted to a second pattern of ripple marks unlike anything you have ever seen. The “marks” carve out an intelligent message in the sand: “John loves Mary.” You immediately assume that there was intelligence behind this “message.” Symmetric ripples on the seashore are one thing, but the message “John loves Mary” is entirely another. Two different degrees of order are involved. No one would think for a moment that “John loves Mary” was caused by random action of ocean waves. The reasonable assumption would be that someone must have carved this into the sand. There must have been a designer.

Numerous examples of design exist in nature. One of the most interesting comes from the field of molecular biology. As scientists have learned more and more about the basic building blocks of life, they have discovered that messages even more complex than “John loves Mary” are encoded upon the strands and spirals of DNA and RNA molecules in genes. These molecules contain a language with a four-letter alphabet (specific sequences of certain chemicals in living cells) that communicates an amount of information equal to a twenty-volume encyclopedia. The information contained in these chemical sequences determines the exact characteristics of any organism.

It is easier to believe that the random movement of the tide could spell out the message “John loves Mary” in the sand than it is to believe that random movements of atoms and energy could encode such complex and specific genetic instructions on DNA and RNA molecules. Randomness does not create order. Design implies a designer.

Some people object that the teleological argument does not prove that the creator of the world is a personal God. And even if He were personal, it would not prove either the unity, eternity, or infinity of God.

In addition, others contend that the teleological argument is of limited value because:

1. There are things in the universe that have no apparent purpose. Take, for example, the organs in the body, such as the appendix. They argue that these no longer serve a function but are seen to be vestiges of their evolutionary past. (Studies have shown that many of these “vestigial” organs do indeed have a current purpose.)
2. All the physical disorder and harm found in nature could not be the product of a loving, personal God. This second objection usually points to phenomena such as hurricanes and earthquakes as evidence that no intelligent, loving, personal God would create such things.

No single argument will prove the existence of our personal God of the Bible. But the arguments do build on each other and acquire cumulative force. With the teleological argument we take a step forward along with the cosmological argument. “The causative power which we have proved by the cosmological argument has now become an intelligent and voluntary power” (Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology*, three volumes in one [1907; reprint ed., Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, n.d.], p. 80).

Another major avenue that God has used to reveal Himself is the design, order, and organization of the universe. As you read this section, look for the *syllogism* that nicely expresses this argument. A syllogism is a deductive statement that reasons from general to specific, using major and minor premises and a conclusion. For example,

All people are sinners (major premise).

I am a person (minor premise).

Therefore, I am a sinner (conclusion).

In ancient pagan religions, local deities and nature were viewed as one. Because the deities were capricious, nature was also viewed as susceptible to sudden change. To examine nature too closely involved one in the sacrilege of studying the gods. This conception of the world hindered scientific investigation. If nature is viewed as capricious, then men cannot conduct experiments that have predictive value, for when repeated, they would never produce the same results.

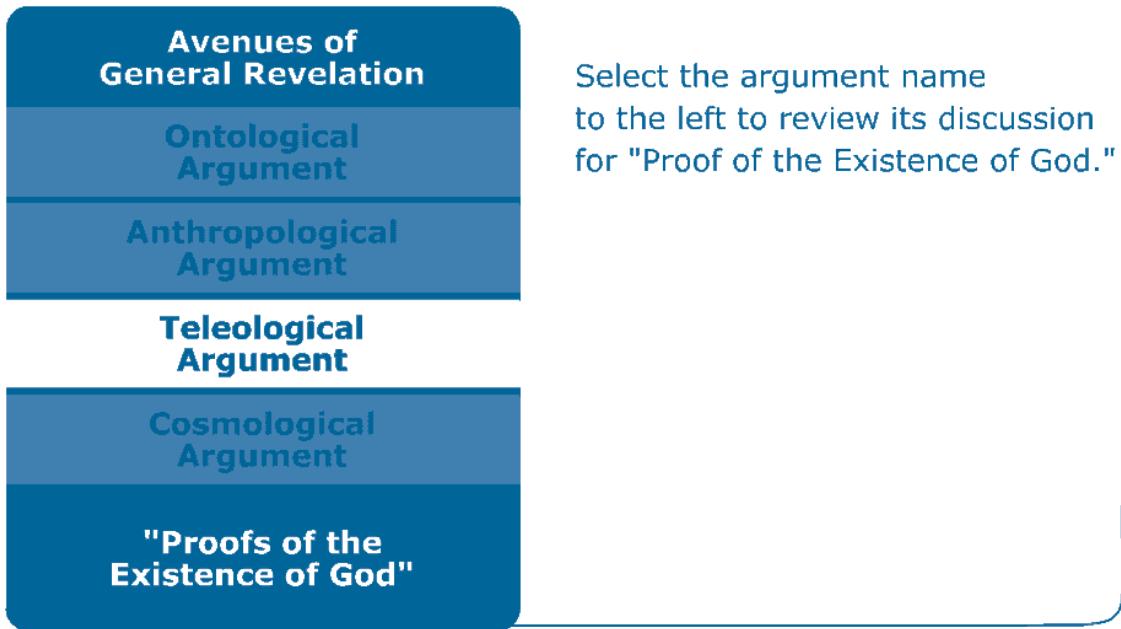
Yet some men noted that there was design in nature. In fact, the evidence of design (seen to point to an orderly designer) was a principal factor in the birth of modern science. Before scientific investigation of the universe could begin, a new conception of the relationship between nature and God had to be introduced. If nature was not part of God but separate from Him, man was free to study it.

Since God had revealed Himself as a God of order, it was assumed that His creation was likewise a reflection of His orderliness. A scientist could assume that there was an underlying order behind the cosmos.

Riding upon the philosophical foundation that God and nature are separate in essence and that men are free to study nature as an orderly creation of God, Johann Kepler discovered the laws of planetary motion, and Sir Isaac Newton worked out the formulations found in his 1687 masterpiece, *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*.

Most of the prominent scientists who launched the scientific revolution were committed Christians. They believed that, as they examined the cosmos, they were discovering the handiwork of a God of order. They were confident that their research would lead to concrete answers, because they believed that a designer was behind the evident order in nature.

Such thinking is the basis of the teleological argument for the existence of God.



QUESTION 14

In your Life Notebook summarize the teleological argument by following the instructions below, based on your reading of Ryrie and other articles.

1. Summarize the teleological argument by creating a syllogism based on the information in this section of the workbook:

Major Premise:
Minor Premise:
Conclusion:
2. Cite two scriptural examples of this argument, as well as giving any comments as to why they are significant.
3. Develop an illustration that would help an unbeliever understand the teleological argument.
4. List any significant objections and your refutations.

To conclude this discussion of the various avenues that God has chosen to reveal Himself, we must remember that the arguments associated with these avenues are not final, absolute proofs of His existence. They are, though, strong evidence in favor of it.

Anthropological Argument—Man

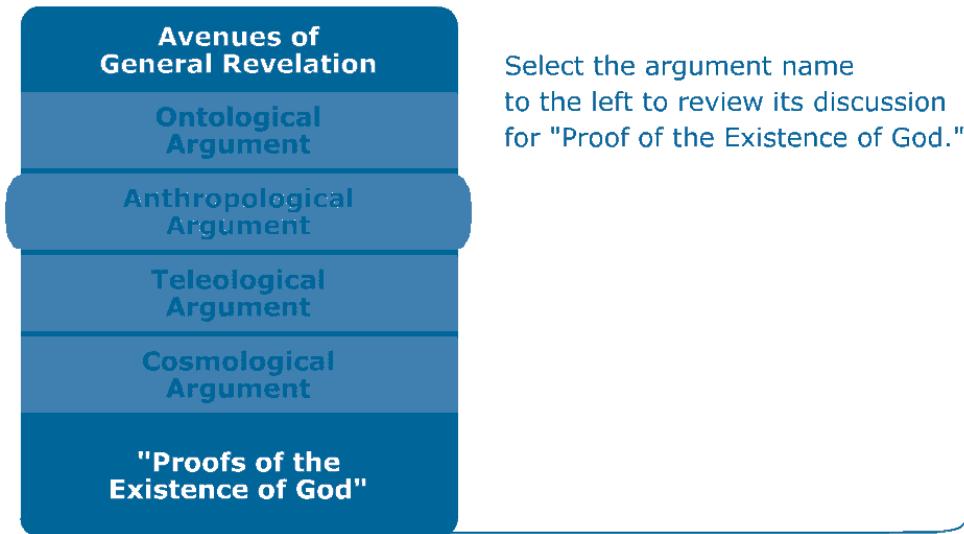
As this heading suggests, God is revealed in the existence and constitution of man. What is it about man that makes him evidence for the existence of God? This argument may be separated into three parts: (Ibid., pp. 81–83.)

1. Man's intellectual and moral nature strongly suggests its author is an intellectual and moral being.
2. Man's moral nature serves as evidence for the existence of a holy lawgiver and judge.
3. Man's emotional and voluntary nature gives credence to the existence of a being who is a satisfying object of human affection and an end which will call forth man's highest activities and ensure his highest progress.

Without going into detail on each of these points, the essence of the argument is that since man possesses these qualities, his creator must be a sufficient cause of them. Thus, the creator must be a moral lawgiver who is able to satisfy the demands of the human soul. These requirements fit the God of the Bible perfectly.

Even though the anthropological argument has its limitations regarding the existence of God, it generally fills in what is missing in the previous two arguments, making a sound case for the existence of the personal biblical God. Strong emphasizes:

Among the arguments for the existence of God, however, we assign to this the chief place, since it adds to the ideas of causative power (which we derived from the cosmological argument) and of contriving intelligence (which we derived from the teleological argument), the far wider ideas of personality and righteous lordship. (Ibid., p. 84)



Because man was created in the image of God, it follows that, if we study man, we might discern characteristics of his creator. Furthermore, it seems inconceivable that the cause of man could be less than man. This would seem to rule out the idea that man was “created” by random processes over eons of time via evolution. Review the anthropological argument above and follow the instructions below:

QUESTION 15

In your Life Notebook, record your thoughtful study results.

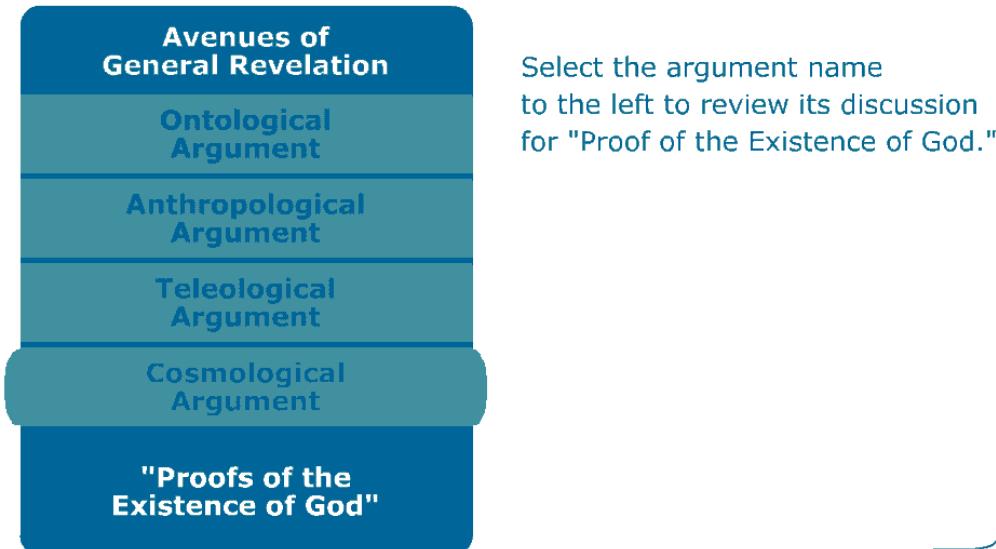
1. Summarize the essence of the anthropological argument.
2. Cite two passages of Scripture that support it and state why they are significant.
3. Answer the question, Why do material forces, evolutions, or pagan gods not qualify as sufficient causes for man's existence?

Ontological Argument

The ontological argument begins with an assumption and then attempts to prove that assumption. It is less significant than the other arguments for the existence of God. The term ontological comes from the Greek present participle *ontos* (from the verb *eimi*) and means “being” or “existence.” The argument reasons: “If man could conceive of a Perfect God who does not exist, then he could conceive of someone greater than God himself which is impossible. Therefore God exists.” The argument rests on the fact that all men have an awareness of God. Because the concept of God is universal, God must have placed the idea within man.

A fourth avenue through which many believe God has chosen to reveal Himself is the *idea* of the existence of God. This is one of the most abstract of the arguments for God’s existence. The ontological argument states that the idea of a most perfect being would be impossible unless such a being actually existed. This is because part of the idea of perfection includes existence.

Ryrie explains the inductive aspect to this argument, which is not often mentioned. It is similar to the other arguments because it relates cause to effect. That is, the effect is the very idea of God. This idea must be accounted for. That is, we must seek to explain its cause (where it came from) and the fact that it is so widespread among nearly every culture in every era. This cannot be done from nontheistic data.



QUESTION 16

Summarize the essence of the ontological argument. To conclude this discussion of the various avenues that God has chosen to reveal Himself, we must remember that the arguments associated with these avenues are not final, absolute proofs of His existence. They are, though, strong evidence in favor of it.

Content of General Revelation

There is evidence in the world of a creator who is, among other things, personal, moral, living, powerful, and intelligent. If this evidence is true, it will be supported by the Scriptures—our presupposition. The text suggests eight qualities that the Bible says general revelation should tell us about God. (For your own personal use and knowledge, become familiar with them and the Scriptures associated with them.)

Value of General Revelation

Even though general revelation and the arguments for God's existence are not final and absolute proof, they have considerable value. In general, the value is twofold: (1) positive—awakening in men an awareness of God's existence and drawing them to Him; and (2) negative—condemning those who reject Him.

Of special significance is a third category (3) that deals with the rejection of general revelation by unbelievers. Because general revelation is universal, no one can say he never had a chance. God has given enough light to every man in the entire history of the world to justly condemn the man who does not believe.

Romans 1:18-28 contains a detailed discussion of this specific value of general revelation. In this passage the apostle Paul explains the nature and purpose of general revelation, as well as the historical response of man to that revelation. The teaching of this passage may be better understood if the following four propositions about general revelation, drawn from the passage, are considered. Read Romans 1:18-28 twice before proceeding.

These four propositions build upon each other, as steps of understanding, toward “The Revelation of God.”

Proposition 1:

General revelation is sufficient to leave men without excuse for their unbelief if they do not respond to it (Rom 1:18-20).

Paul notes that God’s wrath has come upon men because they have suppressed the truth of God that He made plain to them (revelation). God’s revelation has been clear and understandable. Therefore, the one who chooses not to believe what God has revealed about Himself has no excuse for his unbelief. He deserves the wrath of God.

Proposition 2:

General revelation does not merely reveal a “first cause” but a divine being properly called “God” (Rom 1:19).

Nature tells man that the power that created the world is eternal and that it comes from a divine being. For this latter concept Paul uses the Greek word *theiotes*. It is one of two weak Greek words that refer to God or deity. It speaks of “the Gentile awareness of the deity.” Since Paul could have used the stronger word *theotes* (Col 2:9), he apparently intends to say only that nature reveals that the creator is divine, “of a different nature from ourselves, and accompanied by distinct attributes, and those of the highest order — which we call divine.”

It would be going too far, then, to say that man could understand from nature that the creator is the true God of the Bible. But he can recognize that he is looking in the face of divinity, God, and that he is therefore responsible to worship this God and to seek to know more about Him. Thus, this general revelation of God is sufficient to condemn man if he does not respond appropriately.

Proposition 3:

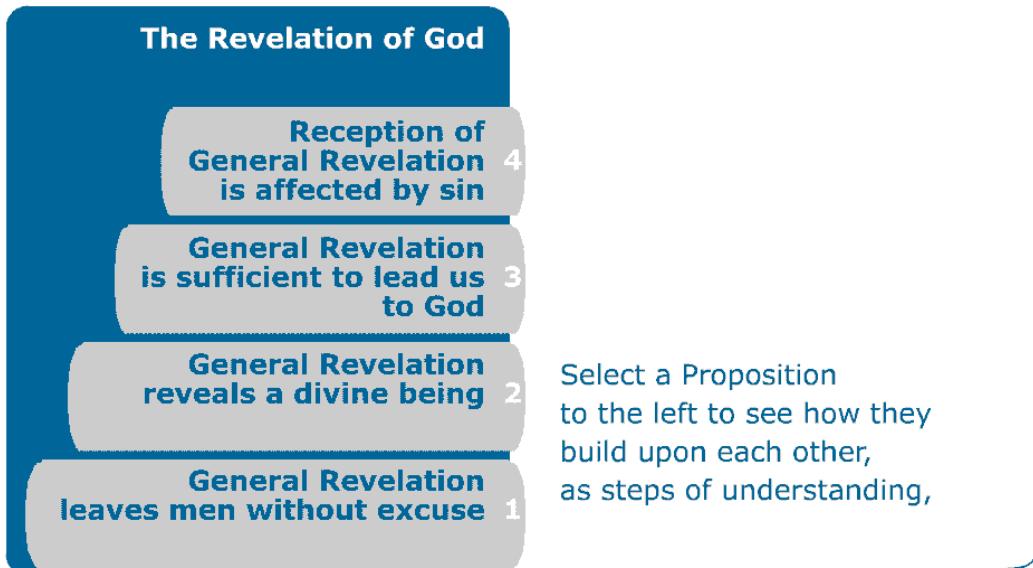
General revelation supplies sufficient evidence to lead us to God, but it is not able to lead us to all we need to know about the God of the Bible.

General revelation does not tell us that God is a Trinity or that He loves us in spite of our sin or that He has provided redemption from sin. It does thoroughly give us sufficient information to lead us to God. Men of ancient times, according to Paul, deliberately ignored this data. Modern man does the same.

Proposition 4:

The reception of general revelation is subjectively affected by sin (Rom 1:28; 1 Cor 2:14).

Because man is sinful, general revelation is obscure to him. Man is able but unwilling to understand general revelation, and he is incapable of understanding it fully. God must miraculously intervene. He does this by means of special revelation (which will be discussed later in this course).



QUESTION 17

Match the propositions with the correct concept. Review the content above to get information on each proposition.

Proposition	Concept
Proposition 1	The reception of general revelation is subjectively affected by sin (Rom 1:28; 1 Cor 2:14).
Proposition 2	General revelation reveals a being of a different nature than ours.
Proposition 3	General revelation is clear and understandable.
Proposition 4	General revelation does not tell us that God is a Trinity or that He loves us.

Conclusion

This discussion of the general revelation of God leads naturally into a closer look at the nature and character of this God who has revealed Himself. We will focus on that subject in the next lesson.

Key Biblical Concepts

The following biblical concepts were covered in this lesson. They are listed here as a matching question to help you summarize and remember the major topics covered. Before doing the Lesson Self Check at the end of this lesson, commit them to memory, and be prepared to explain how each reference supports its respective concept. Question 18 will help you associate these concepts with particular Scriptures.

QUESTION 18

Match the biblical concept with the correct verse(s).

<i>Biblical Concept</i>	<i>Verse(s)</i>
General revelation in nature	Psalm 19
The response of man to general revelation	Romans 1:18-20
Cosmological argument	Psalm 19:1-6; Acts 14:17
Teleological argument	Psalm 94:9; Acts 17:24-31
Anthropological argument	Romans 1:21-32; Psalm 139:13-16

Lesson 1 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Historical theology focuses on what those who studied the Bible thought about its teaching. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

Systematic theology correlates the data from the entire Bible and organizes it into the major topics of biblical teaching. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

According to Ryrie, for the believer the belief in God or the Trinity is the fundamental presupposition. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Because the knowledge of God is progressive, we must not always interpret the Old Testament in light of the New Testament. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

Why did God NOT give us His truth already systematized? Select the best answer below.

- A. He wanted us to pursue truth in His Word and experience spiritual growth.
- B. He wanted us to humbly depend on His Spirit as our teacher in seeking understanding.
- C. He wanted us to avoid the danger of worshiping a beautiful “package” and not the God it reveals.
- D. He does not tell us, but all of the above reasons help explain why God gave truth in this form.

QUESTION 6

The general revelation of God in nature is described in _____.

- A. Psalm 19:1-6; Acts 14:17
- B. Psalm 94:9; Acts 17:24-31
- C. Romans 1:18-20
- D. Romans 1:21-32; Psalm 139:13-16

QUESTION 7

The response of man to general revelation is described in _____.

- A. Psalm 19:1-6; Acts 14:17
- B. Psalm 94:9; Acts 17:24-31
- C. Romans 1:18-20
- D. Romans 1:21-32; Psalm 139:13-16

QUESTION 8

The anthropological argument is described in _____.

- A. Psalm 19:1-6; Acts 14:17
- B. Psalm 94:9; Acts 17:24-31
- C. Romans 1:18-20
- D. Romans 1:21-32; Psalm 139:13-16

QUESTION 9

_____ theology organizes the progressive revelation of God's truth throughout the Bible.

QUESTION 10

The cosmological argument is described in _____.

Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

Type of Theology	Definition
Historical Theology	Focuses on what those who studied the Bible thought about its teaching
Biblical Theology	Organizes the progressive revelation of God's truth throughout the Bible
Systematic Theology	Correlates the data from all of the Bible and organizes it into the major topics of biblical teaching

QUESTION 2:

- A. Presented in systematic form
- B. Pays attention to history in which God's revelation came
- C. Studies revelation in a progressive sequence
- E. Finds its source material in the Bible

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4:

- A. Old Testament revelation was preparatory and partial, while New Testament revelation is climactic and complete.
- C. While Old Testament revelation may be partial, it is complementary to New Testament revelation. That is, both are needed for a full understanding of doctrine and theology.
- D. Old Testament theology is important and has its place in God's plan, but it is incomplete without the contribution of New Testament truth.

QUESTION 5:

- D. He does not tell us, but all of the above reasons help explain why God gave truth in this form.

QUESTION 6:

Theological Presupposition	View of God
God is an angry father who is always watching to see if you make mistakes.	My theology of God would develop into a theology of judgment and appeasement. I would never be good enough and would always have to prove my faithfulness.
God is a loving father who loves me even with my weaknesses and failures and wants the best for me, providing all the necessary resources to fulfill His destiny for my life.	My theology of God would develop into a healthy understanding of the relationship I have with Him and would encourage me to be faithful and to learn more about Him and His plan for my life.
God loves me but knows that I am a sinner with many weaknesses and therefore cannot trust me with too many responsibilities.	My theology of God would develop into an unhealthy understanding of the relationship I have with Him and would cause discouragement and failure to fulfill His plan for my life.

QUESTION 7: Your answer

QUESTION 8:

- B. By giving them a deeper knowledge of God
- C. By showing them how to live for God's glory
- E. By producing effective servants committed to helping others

QUESTION 9:

The fundamental idea is that, if He were comprehensible, He would not be a worthy God to worship, because we might consider ourselves able to be God too. If He were unknowable, we would not know what to think of Him, what to expect from Him, or how to respond to Him. We would not know how to please or worship Him. We would not know what He considers right and wrong. It would produce lives of fear and uncertainty.

QUESTION 10:

- A. Because the knowledge of God is progressive, we must not always interpret the Old Testament in light of the New.
- B. The primary purpose of the knowledge of God is to lead us to worship.
- D. There is a distinctly relational and personal dimension to theology.
- F. It is not legitimate to conclude that Moses understood that the sacrifices described the crucified Lamb of God, Jesus, who died for the sins of the world.

QUESTION 11:

The basic idea is that only God's truth is reliable. All other areas of "truth" have been affected by sin and the thinking of sinful man. While there is real truth in most areas of life, only that which comes directly from God is to be treated as authoritative.

QUESTION 12:

General revelation reaches all people in all places and all times through the general means of nature. Special revelation touches specific people in a specific place and time through various means but primarily through the Bible and the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

QUESTION 13: *Your answer*

QUESTION 14: *Your answer*

QUESTION 15: *Your answer*

QUESTION 16:

Your summary of the essence of the ontological argument should convey this: If we have an idea of a most perfect being, it would include existence, because a perfect being who did not exist would not be as perfect as one who did. Since the idea of the most perfect being includes existence, the most perfect being must exist. The widespread concept of God's existence is an effect that must have been caused.

QUESTION 17:

<i>Proposition</i>	<i>Concept</i>
Proposition 1	General revelation is clear and understandable.
Proposition 2	General revelation reveals a being of a different nature than ours.
Proposition 3	General revelation does not tell us that God is a Trinity or that He loves us.
Proposition 4	The reception of general revelation is subjectively affected by sin (Rom 1:28; 1 Cor 2:14).

QUESTION 18:

<i>Biblical Concept</i>	<i>Verse(s)</i>
General revelation in nature	Romans 1:18-20
The response of man to general revelation	Romans 1:21-32; Psalm 139:13-16
Cosmological argument	Psalm 19
Teleological argument	Psalm 19:1-6; Acts 14:17
Anthropological argument	Psalm 94:9; Acts 17:24-31

Lesson 1 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3: False

QUESTION 4: True

QUESTION 5: D. He wanted us to avoid the danger of worshiping a beautiful “package” and not the God it reveals.

QUESTION 6: C. Romans 1:18-20

QUESTION 7: D. Romans 1:21-32; Psalm 139:13-16

QUESTION 8: B. Psalm 94:9; Acts 17:24-31

QUESTION 9: Biblical

QUESTION 10: Correct answers include:

Psalm 19

Ps 19

Lesson 2: The Nature of God

Lesson Introduction

It has sometimes been said that no nation can rise above its concept of God. It is certainly true that the individual believer cannot rise above his understanding of the divine being. In the modern world, there are many different definitions and concepts of God. It is obvious, is it not, that God cannot be equal to all of them. God exists and is characterized in certain ways irrespective of the ideas men may hold regarding Him. A French philosopher once said, “God has created man in His own image and man has returned the compliment.”

God is the only God. He is not simply the greatest of many gods; He is the only true God. God is the *living* God. This separates Him from all other gods and idols, which are merely forms humans have created in the image of things God created.

In Topic 1 we will consider what is sometimes called the “essence” of God. God is a spirit, but what else can we say about His essential nature?

When we begin to attempt to define God and His nature, we find that no word or phrase can adequately define Him. However, if the definition is descriptive, it is possible to describe God topically, though not exhaustively.

The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* illustrates a descriptive definition of God as “Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.” More descriptive terms can be added like love, mercy, and freedom.

The God of the Bible is, then, not an impersonal force like gravity, exerting influence in some mechanical, automatic way. He has personal characteristics, just as we do. God is living, working in His world, and relating to His people. He is aware of what is going on, makes plans, and carries them out. He forms relationships and has purpose and will. In Topic 2 we will consider His personal characteristics, called “perfection.” Understanding His love, holiness, justice, infinity, and other attributes are the most important truths for living a trusting faithful life. As we understand Him better, we begin to love Him more and trust Him fully. There is no more important study for the Christian than the perfections of the Divine Being.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: The Essence of God

 God’s Essence/Nature

 The Facets of God’s Essence/Nature

Topic 2: The Perfections of God

 Characteristics of the Perfections/Attributes of God

 Catalog of the Perfections/Attributes

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Define essence as it relates to God
- Define and tell the difference between anthropopathisms and anthropomorphisms
- List and define each of the perfections, or attributes, of God and describe how to apply the truths of His perfections to life

Memory Verse

In this lesson you are to memorize Malachi 3:6, relating to God's perfection of *immutability*. Be prepared to quote it from memory.

Reading Assignment

Your reading from Ryrie for this lesson will be chapter 6. You should read it now.

Topic 1: The Essence of God

When speaking of the nature of God, we are also referring to His *essence*. Essence is the basic element of a thing, its essential or basic nature. Essence implies both being and identity. Therefore, without this essence, a thing would not be what it actually is.

In our study *essence* refers to God's perfections, or attributes, which have always existed. Without His essence, God would not be God. We will use the terms "essence," "nature," "attributes," and "perfections" interchangeably, but "essence" is synonymous with "nature," while "attributes" is synonymous with "perfections." The totality of God's perfections, or attributes, is His essence, or nature.

Essence describes God's very nature, or divine substance. He has revealed His essence in the canon of Scripture, and it is here that the believer must look to understand correctly what God is like.

Objective 1—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to define essence as it relates to God.

God's Essence/Nature

Essence in a being is that which underlies all outward manifestations and is both permanent and unchangeable. Essence remains stable in change.

But God Himself is more than the sum total of His attributes. The attributes of God belong to the three Persons of the Godhead: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, who are one God in essence.

God's nature is spirit. Some people refer to His nature as His spirituality. "Spirituality" is often used with reference to man to mean that he possesses a spirit, has a spiritual orientation, or is spiritually mature. Those are different than describing God's nature. Therefore, saying God is spirit is a more clearly understood expression.

In John 4:24 Jesus says, "God is spirit" (not "God is a spirit," as some have mistranslated). Jesus is not saying that God belongs with others in a class of spiritual beings. Rather, He is, by His very nature and in His essence, spirit.

QUESTION 1

We could simply define the perfections of God as distinctive qualities that help summarize in human language what He is like. *True or False?*

Objective 2—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to define and tell the difference between anthropopathisms and anthropomorphisms.

The Facets of God's Essence/Nature

To help us better understand the nature of God, let us consider the various facets that comprise it, an immaterial, incorporeal, and invisible substance. We must say that a spirit has substance because that which does not have substance at all does not exist. But it is spiritual substance. God is not an idea, a wish projection, or a thought. He is a Person.

A mathematical point on a line is not an entity. It has no substantial being. Consider the differences between spiritual and material substance as outlined in the following chart:

Material Substance

- Can be affected by material forces
- Is visible
- Has properties of weight, parts, and dimensions
- Is moved by external forces

Spiritual Substance

- Cannot be affected by material forces
- Is invisible
- Has no physical properties
- Is moved by internal/spiritual forces

How then is a spiritual substance detected or comprehended? Perhaps the analogy of the human soul is helpful. We think of the human soul as having no form or parts; it is a spiritual substance. Even though we cannot see it, we can visualize its existence.

A substance may be detected by its effects. Even though we cannot see, taste, touch, smell, or hear God, we can detect His presence by His effect in our lives. For instance, by looking at creation, the result of His work, we can detect the workmanship and, therefore, the existence of an infinite personal spirit.

Scriptures strongly condemn idolatry because this includes the ascribing of material form and resemblance to God (Deut 4:15-16). Because God is a spiritual substance, He can be present everywhere at once, while not being in everything or anything. When man makes an idol and bows down to it as God, he defines God as localized, material, and limited. His god is less than God.

Even though God is spirit, He is often said to act in human ways or possess human body parts. God is said to be angry, jealous, and compassionate.

QUESTION 2

Some Scripture verses describe God as having human body parts (e.g., Ps 31:2 [ear]; Ps 33:6 [mouth]; Isa 1:15 [hands]; Hab 1:13 [eyes and tongue]; 1 Pet 3:12 [eyes]). How would you explain these passages in light of the command in Exodus 20:4? Record your answer in your Life Notebook.

Here it is important to understand two theological terms that help us comprehend this occurrence: anthropopathism and anthropomorphism.

An *anthropopathism* ascribes to God human feelings, or sensibilities, so that we might understand His divine policy or attitude. Anthropopathism is a language of accommodation. For instance, God

is said to be angry and to be jealous. These represent God's attitude toward sin and His protective relationship with His people, but they are not the same as human anger or jealousy.

An *anthropomorphism* ascribes to God a human body part, a part which God does not have since He is spirit but which is used to aid human understanding of God and His actions toward man. For instance, the Bible states that we are in God's hands or that God's eyes are upon us. Both of these are anthropomorphisms that help us to understand God's care, omnipotence, and omnipresence.

QUESTION 3

Which of the following answers would be anthropopathisms? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. God loves me.
- B. God hates sin.
- C. God watches over me with His eyes.
- D. God is jealous of His people.
- E. God holds our destinies in His hands.

Topic 2: The Perfections of God

In our text Ryrie prefers the use of "perfections" to that of "attributes." The student should remember, however, that the terms can be used interchangeably.

The various perfections of God are not His component parts. Each describes His total being. Love, for example, is not just a part of God's nature; God in His total being is love. While God may show one quality or another at a given time, no quality is independent of, or preeminent over, any of the others. Even when God displays His wrath, He is still love. When He shows His love, He does not abandon His holiness.

Objective 3—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to list and define each of the perfections of God and describe how to apply the truths of God's perfections to life.

If you have not already done so, read Ryrie, chapter 6, "The Perfections of God." We urge you to read this chapter carefully and thoughtfully in preparation for your work in the lesson materials that follow.

Characteristics of the Perfections/Attributes of God

The point we want to emphasize is that the perfections are not parts of God. In His very nature, God is completely—not partly—each one of these perfections. He is no more one than the other.

For example, God is no more love than He is righteous. He is no more eternal than He is immutable. He is all those things. Or to state it more positively, He is as completely righteous as He is love.

To illustrate, we do not usually think of someone as partly patient and partly honest. We think of him as simply being honest or patient without thought of parts or separation of qualities.

So it is with God. He simply is each of His perfections. We emphasize this because many people consciously or subconsciously miss this point. They think of God's perfections as parts of Him. This yields the possibility of some perfections being more important than others. Thus, these people detract from His nature and their understanding of who He truly is.

Some perfections of God may come into more prominence than others. Some may be mentioned more often than others. But none of them is more important than others. They are all equally who God is. Now let us look at each of these wonderful perfections of God.

Catalog of the Perfections/Attributes

The complete and detailed study of each of the perfections of God at this point would be highly profitable, but such a study in this format is impossible because of time and space. Yet we do not want you to miss the theological and personal rewards of this vitally important study. Therefore, after reading chapter 6 in Ryrie and examining his list of perfections, we encourage you to answer the following question with care and expectation of great spiritual enrichment.

QUESTION 4

In your Life Notebook, create your own personal study of the various perfections of God. This could consist of a separate page for each of the fourteen perfections. Each page should have four sections entitled “Meaning,” “Scripture,” “Observations,” and “Application.”

As you consider each of the perfections of God, do the following:

1. Think about the meaning of the attribute. Then rewrite it in your own words in your Life Notebook
2. Look up the related Scriptures given in the textbook and tell how the verse(s) support the meaning.
3. Under “Observations” make personal comments about the perfections, and write down questions for which you may seek answers later.
4. Under “Application” record specific ways in which you can apply the truth of the perfection in your life.

You may later wish to copy these applications into your Life Notebook and cross-reference them to this study. This will remind you of what you desire to do with these truths.

Key Biblical Concepts

Reread Ryrie, chapter 6, and answer the following question on the seven perfections/attributes of God listed below (the book has fourteen). Before taking the Lesson Self Check, review each passage, read it carefully, and be prepared to explain how each reference supports its respective perfection/attribute.

QUESTION 5

Match the perfections/attributes with the correct definitions and related Scriptures.

<i>Perfections/Attributes</i>	<i>Definition and Related Scriptures</i>
Immutability	God seeks the highest good for His creatures - John 3:16; 1 John 4:8.
Holiness	God is unchanging and unchangeable - Malachi 3:6; James 1:17.
Love	God knows all things actual and possible, immediately and without effort - Psalm 139; Matthew 11:21.
Omniscience	God is able to do anything He wills - Genesis 17:1.
Omnipresence	God is totally separate from His creation in essence and purity - Leviticus 11:44; 1 John 1:5.
Omnipotence	God is everywhere present at all times with all of His being - Psalm 139.
Sovereignty	God rules as supreme governor of the universe, in total authority - Ephesians 1.

Conclusion

This lesson has been devoted to one of the most important (if not the most important) subjects in theology—the nature of God. We encourage you to spend as much time as possible meditating on what you have learned here so that you might know God better. The Person of God is the foundation for everything in your spiritual life. How well you know Him and relate to Him will determine how well you live your life and thus glorify Him.

Lesson 2 Self Check

QUESTION 1

God's self-existence is grounded in His nature. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

It is probably best to categorize God's perfections as either moral or nonmoral. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

God's divine nature is numerically and eternally one with three eternal distinctions (or Persons) in the one essence. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Goodness, justice, grace, and longsuffering do not relate to God's love. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

God's favor in sending Christ to those who did not deserve it is called:

- A. Goodness
- B. Grace
- C. Love
- D. Mercy

QUESTION 6

The perfection of God's nature by which He is eternally moved to seek the highest good and glory of His own perfections is called:

- A .Goodness
- B. Grace
- C. Love
- D. Mercy

QUESTION 7

God's goodness manifested toward those who are in misery and distress is called:

- A. Goodness
- B. Grace
- C. Love
- D. Mercy

QUESTION 8

God's way of dealing in a bountiful, tender, and kind way with all of His creatures is called:

- A. Goodness
- B. Grace
- C. Love
- D. Mercy

QUESTION 9

Psalm 90:2 and the statement “God is infinite with regard to time” are the biblical reference and the corresponding definition of God’s perfection known as _____.

QUESTION 10

Psalm 139 with Matthew 11:21 and the statement “God knows all things actual and possible, immediately and without effort” are the biblical references and the corresponding definition of God’s perfection known as _____.

Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2: *Your answer*

QUESTION 3:

- A. God loves me.
- B. God hates sin.
- D. God is jealous of His people.

QUESTION 4: *Your answer*

QUESTION 5:

<i>Perfections/Attributes</i>	<i>Definition and Related Scriptures</i>
Immutability	God is unchanging and unchangeable - Malachi 3:6; James 1:17.
Holiness	God is totally separate from His creation in essence and purity - Leviticus 11:44; 1 John 1:5.
Love	God seeks the highest good for His creatures - John 3:16; 1 John 4:8.
Omniscience	God knows all things actual and possible, immediately and without effort - Psalm 139; Matthew 11:21.
Omnipresence	God is everywhere present at all times with all of His being - Psalm 139.
Omnipotence	God is able to do anything He wills - Genesis 17:1.
Sovereignty	God rules as supreme governor of the universe, in total authority - Ephesians 1.

Lesson 2 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5: B. Grace

QUESTION 6: C. Love

QUESTION 7: D. Mercy

QUESTION 8: A. Goodness

QUESTION 9: Eternity

QUESTION 10: Omnipotence

Lesson 3: The Names of God and the Trinity

Lesson Introduction

Thinking about who God is involves more than a discussion of His perfections. It includes such things as His names and His existence as the Trinity.

The names of God are more than just labels to distinguish one person from another; they are ascriptions of character. These names are His own descriptions of Himself. As such they reveal aspects of His character. Therefore, this lesson naturally builds on our previous study of the perfections of God.

In Topic 1 we will look at the concept of a name in biblical times and how the names of God reflect parts of His character.

Even when no particular name is used, the phrase “the name of the Lord” reveals something about His character. To call on the name of the Lord was to worship Him (Gen 21:33). To take His name in vain was to dishonor Him (Ex 20:7). Not to follow His requirements involved profaning His name (Lev 22:2, 32). The priests performed their duties in the name of the Lord (Deut 21:5). His name pledged the continuation of the nation.

Ha Shem in Hebrew means “the Name” and was uttered as a replacement term whenever the sacred name of the Lord (*Yahweh*) was encountered in the Hebrew Scriptures.

In Topic 2 we will consider the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. Like the names of God, the Trinity also has to do with the nature of God, because the title and doctrine involves the relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

This is possibly one of the most important doctrines you will study. Be sure that you give proper attention to your understanding of and the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. Every area of your life as a believer in Christ is affected by the doctrine of the Trinity.

The relationship of the doctrine of the Trinity to the names of God is also vital in your understanding of your relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Once this lesson is completed, you will be able to understand and interact with the principles, names, and passages of Scripture that refer to the names of God and the Trinity.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: The Names of God

- The Concept of a Name
- Specific Names of God

Topic 2: The Trinity

- The Contribution of the Old Testament
- The Contribution of the New Testament
- Theological Statement of the Doctrine of the Trinity
- The Relationships of the Persons of the Godhead
- Illustrating the Trinity
- Errors Associated with the Doctrine of the Trinity
- The Inscrutability of the Doctrine of the Trinity

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Explain the concept of a name as understood in biblical times
- List and explain the significance of each of the names of God covered in the text
- Describe the doctrine of the Trinity, by using Scripture references and explanatory notes, and summarize the three propositions in this lesson
- Defend the doctrine of the Trinity with Scripture, including the basis for believing that the Persons of the Son of God and the Holy Spirit are deity
- Write a clear statement of the doctrine of the Trinity
- Describe the five major errors associated historically with the doctrine of the Trinity and refute them with Scripture

Definitions of Key Terms

Arianism—the name of the heresy which subordinates two of the three Persons of the Godhead, started by Arius of Alexandria in the fourth century.

Heresy—an idea, doctrine, or teaching which is contrary to biblical truth.

Modalism—the name of the heresy which denies the existence of three Persons in the Trinity but sees instead the three Persons as modes by which the one God communicates at different times. Example: God acts like the Father, then acts like the Son, then acts like the Spirit.

Trinity - Its basic concept is that the LORD is one God in three Persons and three Persons in one God. The Persons are distinct but not separate and are all equally of the same essence, or nature.

Tritheism—the name of the heresy which teaches that there exists three distinct “gods,” thus denying the oneness of the Godhead.

Unitarianism—the name of the heresy which teaches the existence of God as only one Person, thus denying the “threeness” of the Godhead.

Memory Verse

In this lesson you are to memorize 1 Kings 8:27, which speaks of God’s infinity. Be prepared to quote it from memory.

Reading Assignment

Your readings from Ryrie for this lesson are chapters 7 and 8. You may read them both now or each as it is indicated in the lesson.

Topic 1: The Names of God

All throughout history names have carried meaning and significance. When certain names are mentioned, it immediately calls to mind an image, a meaning, or a definition that is connected with that name. Mention Martin Luther and the Reformation, and the doctrine of justification by faith should come to mind. Mention John Calvin and the Reformation, and his book *Institutes of the Christian Religion* might flash into your thoughts. Mention the name Judas, and immediately

we think of the deception of a traitor. But when we think of God, He is not limited to one name that classifies and defines His character and work. Each of His many names represents characteristics of God that help us to understand Him, know Him, and develop a deeper relationship with Him.

Therefore, God's character is expressed not only in the perfections discussed in Lesson 2 but also in the various names that are used of and by Him in the Scriptures. A brief survey of these names will help us to know our God better.

Objective 1—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to explain the concept of a name as understood in biblical times.

If you have not already read Ryrie, chapter 7, "The Names of God," please do so now.

The Concept of a Name

In the Bible and in the ancient world a name was something significantly more than a label to identify someone. The idea of "name" carried with it primarily the concepts of existence, reputation, character, and authority.

For example, "to cut off the name" was an expression for killing a person (cf. Deut 7:24). Parents often expressed their wishes for their newborn child's character by the name they gave the child (cf. Gen 35:10; Mt 1:21). "To call one's name" over something indicated ownership, possession, and protection (2 Sam 12:28).

Without going more deeply into this concept, it is clear that the names of God must be understood as having deeper significance than mere titles. Primarily, they reveal Him and His character.

QUESTION 1

In your Life Notebook, answer these questions: What new contribution has this section on the names of God made to your understanding of who God is? What name do you usually use when you pray or call on God? What does that name suggest to you about God? Explain briefly.

Specific Names of God

Objective 2—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to list and explain the significance of each of the names of God covered in the text.

Because both the perfections and names of God reveal something of God's character, let us seek to understand their interrelatedness by exploring the following question:

QUESTION 2

This question takes into consideration the fourteen perfections and the names of God found in Ryrie's text. Match God's perfection (from Lesson 2) with the correct name (from this lesson). For example, sovereignty seems most naturally to be associated with Elohim.

<i>God's Perfection</i>	<i>God's Name</i>
Immutability & Eternity & Infinity	Elohim
Righteousness	El Olam
Holiness	El Roi
Omniscience	Yahweh/Jehovah Tsidkenu
Omnipresence	Yahweh/Jehovah Sabbaoth
Omnipotence	Yahweh/Jehovah Shammah
Sovereignty	Yahweh/Jehovah Maccaddeshcem

Topic 2: The Trinity

"Trinity" is, of course, not a biblical word but a theological term. Even though the word "trinity" does not appear in the Bible, the concept is clearly biblical. The doctrine of the Trinity of God is a very difficult mystery to understand, but it is essential to believe it.

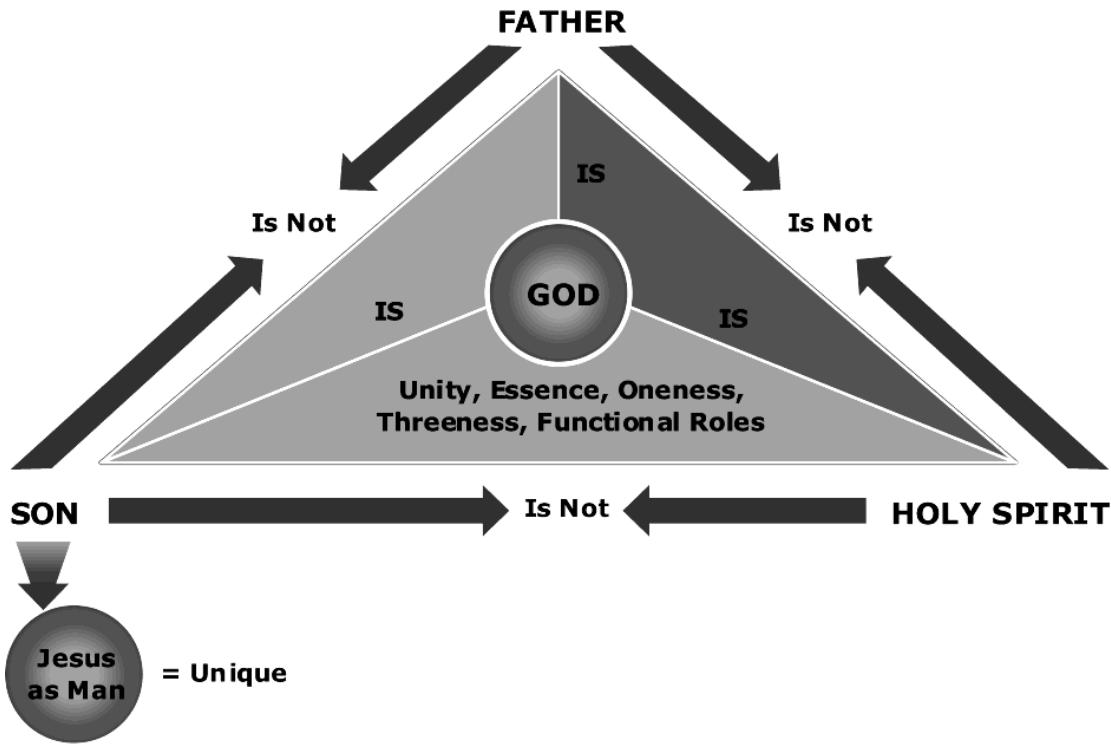
When the word "Trinity" is used in the context of Christian theology, it means the "three-in-oneness" of God, designating one God in three Persons. Perhaps a more accurate term would be "triunity." It signifies that within the one numerical essence of God there are three distinct Persons.

As noted, the basic concept of the Trinity is that the LORD is one God in three Persons and three Persons in one God. The Persons are distinct but not separate and are all equally of the same essence, or nature. The Father is declared to be God (Jn 6:27). The Son is declared to be God (Heb 1:8). The Holy Spirit is declared to be God (Acts 5:3-4). Yet the three Persons are identified equally as one (Mt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14).

If you have not already read Ryrie, chapter 8, "The Triunity of God," please do so now.

Relationships in the Trinity

Based on a Diagram of Relationships in the Trinity (BTCP, Course 5, p. 76)



Objective 3—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to describe the doctrine of the Trinity, by using Scripture references and explanatory notes, and summarize the three propositions in this lesson.

QUESTION 3

Match the proposition with the related passages of Scripture. Be able to explain how they support the proposition when you discuss your findings at your next group meeting. Think about each of these propositions as if you were defending the doctrine of the Trinity to an unbelieving friend. The theological basis for the doctrine of the Trinity may be summarized in three propositions:

Proposition	Scripture
There is only one God: He is indivisible in His essence, being, and substance (Evidence of Oneness).	Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Romans 8:26-27, 34
This one God exists eternally in three Persons. The Father is God; the Son is God; and Spirit is God (evidence of Threeness).	Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 6:3-8; John 14:9; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; Ephesians 4:3-6; James 2:19
These three Persons are fully equal and possess alike the fullness of the divine essence (Evidence of Triunity).	John 6:27; 1 Peter 1:2; Matthew 9:4; 28:18-19; John 12:9; Colossians 1:17; John 1:3; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 2:10; John 3:5-6, 8

Since the doctrine of the Trinity is unique in the entire world, it must not have come from the thinking of men but exclusively by revelation from God. Reason can lead men to believe in the existence and unity of God, but belief in the Trinity must come from biblical revelation. The following sections will consider the doctrine of the Trinity from the perspective of the teachings of the Old and New Testaments.

Objective 4—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to defend the doctrine of the Trinity using the Old and New Testaments, including the basis for believing that the Persons of the Son of God and the Holy Spirit are deity.

The Contribution of the Old Testament

The doctrine of the Trinity was not fully revealed in the Old Testament, but certain initial indications are found there. Your text by Ryrie lists five. Two are worthy of special attention.

Deuteronomy 6:4 primarily stresses the unity of God. But the Hebrew word for “one,” *echad*, is a word that suggests diversity in unity. It is the same word that we translate as “one flesh” when speaking of the unity of two people, as with Adam and Eve (Gen 2:24). *Echad*, even though difficult to translate precisely, leaves itself open to the revelation of the Trinity.

The plural form of the word for God, *Elohim*, also provides a basis for plurality in the Godhead. Even though, as indicated above, the plural form of the Hebrew noun for God can be seen as a plural of majesty, it allows for the possibility of later revelation of the Trinity.

Similarly, the use of this plural form and plural pronouns (Gen 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Isa 6:8) with both plural and singular verbs (Gen 1:26; 3:22; 11:6-7) must be taken into consideration as possible indicators of plurality in the one God.

The Contribution of the New Testament

The evidence for the Trinity in the New Testament is much more specific than that in the Old Testament.

QUESTION 4

According to Ryrie, which two lines of evidence in the New Testament indicate the validity of the doctrine of the Trinity? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. One insists that there is only one true God (this usually refers to the Father).
- B. One insists that there are three gods and that they play different roles.
- C. Another presents the deity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; the New Testament claims that both are God.
- D. Another insists that there is one God who plays the role of three different gods.

QUESTION 5

Match the Scripture with the related paraphrase illustrating how it supports the deity of Christ.

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Deity of Christ</i>
Matthew 1:23	He holds all things together.
Mark 2:1-12	He called God His Father, making Himself equal with God.
John 1:1	He raised Lazarus from the dead.
John 5:18	He forgives sins.
John 12:9	He is called God by John.
Colossians 1:17	His name means “God is with us.”

The evidence for the deity of Christ is abundant. The evidence for the deity of the Holy Spirit is less abundant but no less certain.

QUESTION 6

Match the Scripture with the correct summation showing how it provides evidence for the deity of the Holy Spirit.

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Deity of the Holy Spirit.</i>
Job 33:4	The Spirit gives life, regenerates.
Psalm 139:7-12	The Spirit is called creator.
John 3:5-6, 8	The Spirit is called the Lord.
Acts 5:3-4	The Spirit is omnipresent.
2 Corinthians 3:17-18	The Spirit is called God by comparing parallel statements.

Several verses in the Bible equate the words and works of God with those of the Holy Spirit, thus giving further evidence of the Spirit's deity.

QUESTION 7

Match the Scripture with the correct statements detailing how it helps to prove the doctrine of the Trinity.

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Doctrine of the Trinity</i>
Matthew 3:16-17	Those who believed were to be baptized in water. Such an act would associate a believer with the Person of Jesus Christ and with the triune God. The God whom they served is one God and yet is three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
Matthew 28:19	Paul had referred to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit earlier. Now he stressed the unity of the Godhead in relation to the different spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit gives a diversity of gifts.
John 14:16; 16:7	God repeated these words about Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt 17:5). All three Persons of the Godhead were present at this event: the Father who spoke of His Son, the Son who was being baptized, and the Spirit who descended on the Son as a dove. This verified for John that Jesus is the Son of God (Jn 1:32-34).
1 Corinthians 12:4-6	Paul invoked the blessing of the triune God so that the grace manifested by Christ, the love expressed by God the Father, and the fellowship created by the Holy Spirit might be experienced in Corinth.
2 Corinthians 13:14	In a sense He has now replaced Jesus' physical presence, and He mediates God to believers. The Spirit is in a believer forever (cf. Rom 8:9). He is also the Spirit of Truth (lit. "Spirit of the truth"; cf. Jn 15:26; 16:13) and thus would guide the apostles.

All of the above information provides both direct statements and deductions that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are individually presented as God. It also presents each of them on the same level with each other as God. Taken all together, the evidence is clear that God is one and yet three, a triunity. Thus, in view of all this evidence, it is necessary to formulate a statement, articulating as precisely and as biblically as possible the doctrine of the Trinity.

Objective 5—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to write a clear statement of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Theological Statement of the Doctrine of the Trinity

The biblical revelation leads only to an acknowledgment of the doctrine of the Trinity. Therefore, it is important for clarity of understanding to systematize the biblical data. This systematization of the biblical data produces a theological statement of the doctrine of the Trinity.

QUESTION 8

Ryrie likes Warfield's definition of the Trinity (see "III. Some Considerations of a Definition"). Basing your answer on what Ryrie views as the strengths of the definition, which of the following are reasons why it is a good definition? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. It removes the incentives of false teachers to deny the Trinity.
- B. It puts each of the Persons into their proper rank.
- C. It preserves the balance between oneness and threeness.
- D. The use of "persons" guards against modalism.
- E. The use of "subsistence" will be easily understood.
- F. "The same in substance" guards against tritheism.

The Relationships of the Persons of the Godhead

One of the aspects of the Trinity most difficult to understand is how the three Persons of the Godhead relate to each other. The text deals with the ontological and administrative aspects of the concept of the Trinity. Familiarize yourself with the issues and answers by answering the following questions:

QUESTION 9

Match the term with the correct definition.

Term	Definition
Opera ad intra	_____ have to do with works done outside the internal relationships between the Persons of the Godhead. They refer to specific actions, or ministries, of each of the Persons.
Opera ad extra	_____ have to do with works within the relationships of the Trinity. In particular, the term refers to the issues of eternal generation and the procession of the Spirit.

QUESTION 10

What must NEVER be implied about the Persons of the Trinity in the midst of such a discussion or presentation? There must never be an implication that: (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Any Person of the Trinity is inferior to another
- B. Any Person of the Trinity is not as much God as the others
- C. Any Person of the Trinity has greater dignity than another
- D. Any Person of the Trinity is less "eternal" than another
- E. Any Person of the Trinity is greater in deity than another
- F. Any Person of the Trinity created one or more of the others

In discussing the *opera ad intra*, theologians have traditionally used two terms—eternal generation and eternal procession—to define these relationships. The following excerpt is a good summary of eternal generation:

This is the phrase used to denote the *inter-Trinitarian* relationship between the Father and the Son as is taught by the Bible. "Generation" makes it plain that there is a divine Sonship prior to the incarnation (cf. Jn 1:18; 1 Jn 4:9), that

there is thus a distinction of persons within the one Godhead (Jn 5:26), and that between these persons there is a superiority and subordination of order (cf. Jn 5:19; 8:28). “Eternal” reinforces the fact that the generation is not merely economic (i.e., for the purpose of human salvation, as in the incarnation, cf. Lk 1:35), but essential, and that as such it cannot be construed in the categories of natural or human generation. Thus it does not imply a time when the Son was not, as Arianism argued. Nor is there to be expected a final absorption of the Son. Nor does the fact that the Son is a distinct person mean that He is separate in essence. Nor does His subordination imply inferiority. (Geoffrey W. Bromiley, “Eternal Generation” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984], p. 368)

It is significant that the Bible never implies that the Father created the Son. If the Father created the Son, then the Son would be inferior to the Father, as angels and humans are inferior. Since the Father generated the Son, however, it is implied that they have the same nature. Thus, the doctrine of the generation of the Son helps guard the truth that the Father and the Son are one in essence.

As Ryrie says, eternal procession is the term used to describe the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the other two Persons of the Trinity, the Father and the Son. John 15:26 is the central passage for the doctrine of eternal procession. In this verse the Spirit is said to proceed from the Father. Since John 15:26 teaches that both the Father and the Son send the Spirit, we are justified in inferring that the Spirit proceeds from both Father and Son in the intratrinitarian relationship. Not to say this is to divorce the Spirit from the Son in contradiction of the passages that speak of Him as the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9; Gal 4:6).

Illustrating the Trinity

The text presents two illustrations of the Trinity. Three things must be said about illustrations in general and the Trinity in particular. First, illustrations should never be used to prove something. All illustrations of the Trinity break down at some point because the uniqueness of the Godhead defies complete comprehension. They are just pictures, not arguments or proofs. Second, they normally should be limited to one point. Third, do not, therefore, try to make them say more than the main point of the analogy. For example, with regard to the water illustration as a representation of the Trinity, do not go on to talk about the fact that water refreshes, quenches thirst, or any other such connotation. Keep the illustration to its one point.

Objective 6—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to describe the five major errors associated historically with the doctrine of the Trinity and refute them with Scripture.

Errors Associated with the Doctrine of the Trinity

Many heresies that have appeared throughout history have resulted from an improper understanding of God’s triunity. Of those, five major errors are related to the true doctrine of the Trinity. These errors are known as tritheism, subordinationism, modalism, Arianism, and adoptionism. They are still apparent today in many of the cults that have roots in Christianity.

Although the Bible clearly teaches the doctrine of the Trinity, for some people it has seemed implausible that God could exist as one in essence and yet as three distinct Persons. Therefore, those people would deny either the unity of God’s essence or the distinctiveness of the Persons, either of which would be erroneous. It is this confusion in the minds of some which has led to a

number of major heresies regarding the Trinity throughout history. Following is a description of a few of these heresies.

Tritheism is the heretical belief that God exists as three Gods. Tritheists deny that God is numerically one in essence. This particular belief system has had very little influence because the unity of God is so clearly taught in the Scriptures. The clear revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity did not come until later in the history of Israel. Perhaps one reason for this was that God desired to consistently and forcefully teach the Israelites the truth of His unity of essence: “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!” (Deut 6:4, NASB). The Israelites were surrounded by polytheistic belief systems, and throughout their history they had the tendency to adopt (or at least syncretize) these polytheistic belief systems into their monotheism.

Subordinationism or *Monarchianism* is another heretical teaching which developed from the false assumption that the doctrine of the Trinity did not support the idea of the unity of God. Thus, the idea was to preserve the concept of the unity of the Godhead. It was felt that the only way this could be done was to think of the Persons of the Godhead as somehow subordinate to one another. Thus, this heresy denied that the Son is the same essence as the Father and that He is a lesser being than the Father. Forms of this heresy often hold that the Son was created and not generated.

Modalism is the heretical teaching that has also been named monarchial modalism or Sabellianism. Sabellius lived in the third century and taught that God was indeed one and that throughout history this one God appeared in different forms. The illustration that is often given is from the theater. Suppose a play has more roles than actors to fill those roles. One actor can play more than one part, so he changes his appearance to let the audience know what part he is playing at any one time. Thus, Sabellius taught that God appears at certain points in history as the Father, at other times as the Son, and still at other times as the Spirit.

Arianism is yet another heretical teaching. It is the belief that the Son is not eternal as the Father is, but rather that the Son was “generated” by the Father. Thus, the Son had a beginning, whereas the Father has always existed from eternity past and had no beginning. It also teaches that the Holy Spirit was the first thing created by the Son, since all things were made by the Son.

Finally, *adoptionism* or *Dynamic Monarchianism* is a form of subordinationism which views Jesus as a man who was given special power by the Holy Spirit at His baptism.

QUESTION 11

Match each heresy with its description

<i>Heresy</i>	<i>Description</i>
Tritheism	Jesus was a man given special power by the Holy Spirit at His baptism.
Arianism	This usually results in the denial that the Son is God. It retains the distinction of Persons between the Father and the Son, but it denies that the Son is of the same essence as the Father. In other words, the Son is viewed as a lesser being than the Father. Thus, it often holds that the Son was created and not generated.
Subordinationism, or Monarchianism (also Patriconianism)	This denies the oneness of God and teaches that there are three distinct gods in Christianity.
Adoptionism	The Son was generated by the Father and thus had a beginning and was not eternal. This teaches that Jesus was only a creature, whose first creation was the Spirit.
Sabellianism, or Modalism	The Persons of the Godhead were modes or only roles in which God manifested Himself.

QUESTION 12

Carefully study the following Scriptures: Deuteronomy 4:35, 39; 6:4, Matthew 28:19, John 5:18; 8:58; 10:30, and Acts 5:3-4, 9. In your Life Notebook, record which of the above heresy/heresies are refuted by each passage.

QUESTION 13

Why does the error of subordinationism destroy the work of redemption? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. If the Son is not one with God and the Son is a lesser being than the Father, the doctrine of redemption loses its meaning.
- B. Redemption is destroyed because the one who really loves us, who suffered for us, and bore the burden of redemption, is only the Son and no longer God.
- C. If the Father and Son do not share the same essence, and another being bore the cost of redemption, then the Father could not expend very much of that cost.
- D. If the Son is not one with God and is a lesser being than the Father, then the Father becomes only the keeper of justice, not its provider.
- E. If the Father and Son are not one in essence, then God Himself did not bear the penalty for our sin, expressing His limitless love.

QUESTION 14

Subordinationism is the error reflected by which of the following statements? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Jesus Christ is not the father of the spirits who have taken or shall take bodies upon this earth, for He is one of the spirits (Mormonism).
- B. The divinity of Jesus Christ is the truth that now requires to be re-perceived—the divinity of Jesus and the divinity of all other noble and saintly souls, insofar as they too have been inflamed by a spark of deity (Mormonism).
- C. Jesus Christ may be called god but not Jehovah God. He is a mighty one but not almighty as Jehovah God is (Jehovah's Witnesses).
- D. The Father is God Himself, the Son is God objectifying Himself, and the Spirit is God returning to Himself (Hegel, liberal theology).
- E. The Father is the underlying unity of all things, the Son is God as coming to conscious personality in man, and the Spirit is God as living in the church (Schleiermacher, liberal theology).
- F. The theory of three Persons in one God (that is, a personal Trinity or Triunity) suggests heathen gods, rather than the one ever-present "I Am" (Christian Science and New Thought).

QUESTION 15

Modalism is the error reflected by which of the following statements? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Jesus Christ is not the father of the spirits who have taken or shall take bodies upon this earth, for He is one of the spirits (Mormonism).
- B. The divinity of Jesus Christ is the truth that now requires to be re-perceived—the divinity of Jesus and the divinity of all other noble and saintly souls, insofar as they too have been inflamed by a spark of deity (Mormonism).
- C. Jesus Christ may be called god but not Jehovah God. He is a mighty one but not almighty as Jehovah God is (Jehovah's Witnesses).
- D. The Father is God Himself, the Son is God objectifying Himself, and the Spirit is God returning to Himself (Hegel, liberal theology).
- E. The Father is the underlying unity of all things, the Son is God as coming to conscious personality in man, and the Spirit is God as living in the church (Schleiermacher, liberal theology).
- F. The theory of three Persons in one God (that is, a personal Trinity or Triunity) suggests heathen gods, rather than the one ever-present "I Am" (Christian Science and New Thought).

QUESTION 16

Tritheism is the error reflected by which of the following statements?

- A. Jesus Christ is not the father of the spirits who have taken or shall take bodies upon this earth, for He is one of the spirits (Mormonism).
- B. The divinity of Jesus Christ is the truth that now requires to be re-perceived—the divinity of Jesus and the divinity of all other noble and saintly souls, insofar as they too have been inflamed by a spark of deity (Mormonism).
- C. Jesus Christ may be called god but not Jehovah God. He is a mighty one but not almighty as Jehovah God is (Jehovah's Witnesses).
- D. The Father is God Himself, the Son is God objectifying Himself, and the Spirit is God returning to Himself (Hegel, liberal theology).
- E. The Father is the underlying unity of all things, the Son is God as coming to conscious personality in man, and the Spirit is God as living in the church (Schleiermacher, liberal theology).
- F. The theory of three Persons in one God (that is, a personal Trinity or Triunity) suggests heathen gods, rather than the one ever-present "I Am" (Christian Science and New Thought).

The Inscrutability of the Doctrine of the Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity is inscrutable, but it is not absurd. It is a mystery both in the biblical sense of something once hidden and now revealed and in the sense of something that may be apprehended but not comprehended by man. From the biblical data God is clearly tri-personal. Therefore, within the Godhead exists a relationship in which the personal pronouns "I," "You," and "He" can be truly used. How there can be, within unity of being, "I," "You," and "He" is something that we cannot fathom. There is no true parallel within our own experience because we are uni-personal beings.

When we address someone as "you," it means not only a distinction but also a separation. But in the Godhead the "I-You-He" relationship involves distinction but not separation. Ultimately, all we can do is make statements about the Trinity that are in keeping with the biblical revelation and see to it that errors are avoided.

Conclusion

The study of the nature of God is an unending quest. No matter how much we know of God, there is always more to learn. The study of the nature of God is also a beneficial task. The more we know about God intellectually, the better we may know Him experientially. God is worthy of our worship. Praise His holy name!

Key Biblical Concepts

As before, review the following key biblical concepts that are foundational to systematic theology. Know the concepts and their related Scriptures, and be prepared to explain how each reference supports its related concept. You will have to know one reference for each concept for the Lesson Self Check.

1. Unity of the Godhead - Deuteronomy 6:4

2. Trinity:
 - a. Implied in the Old Testament - Genesis 1:26
 - b. Implied in the New Testament - Matthew 3:16-17
3. Holy Spirit
 - a. Has “person” characteristics - Romans 8:26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-11; 12:11
 - b. Recognized as God - Acts 5:3-4
4. Son: His deity - John 1:1-14
5. Father: Recognized as God—Romans 1:7

Lesson 3 Self Check

QUESTION 1

The words *Elohim* and *echad* prove that God is a triune God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

El Elyon means “the Most High God.” *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

The Council of Nicea resulted in decisions against the doctrine of Arius. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

The application of the name *kurios* to the Lord Jesus proves that He is God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

The Father generates; the Son is generated. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

John 1:1-14 explains that “the Word” (Jesus) was with God and was God. This “Word” was involved in creation, was life and light, gave the right to those who believe in His name to become children of God, and became flesh and dwelt among men. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

Romans 1:7 states “God our Father,” and this implies that He is a Person. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

El or *Elohim* means _____.

QUESTION 9

_____ is God’s personal name, related to the verb “to be,” meaning something like “I am that I am” or “I will be what I will be.”

QUESTION 10

The word *kurios* can be translated as _____.

Unit One Exam

QUESTION 1

God's divine nature is numerically and eternally one with three eternal distinctions (or persons) in the one essence. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

There are certain things God cannot do. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

The basic idea of righteousness is conformity to a standard. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Yahweh means "strong one." *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

The words *Elohim* and *echad* teach that God is a triune God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

The application of the name *kurios* to the Lord Jesus proves that He is God.
True or False?

QUESTION 7

El Elyon means "the Most High God." *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

The Council of Nicea resulted in decisions against the doctrine of Arius. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

The Father generates; the Son is generated. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

Covenant love is a very important implication of the name Yahweh.

QUESTION 11

It is probably best to categorize God's perfections as moral or non-moral.

QUESTION 12

Psalm 139:7-10 provides support for which of the following views?

- A. God the Father
- B. God the Son
- C. God the Holy Spirit
- D. Trinity

QUESTION 13

Matthew 28:19 provides support for which of the following views?

- A. God the Father
- B. God the Son
- C. God the Holy Spirit
- D. Trinity

QUESTION 14

2 Corinthians 3 provides support for which of the following views?

- A. God the Father
- B. God the Son
- C. God the Holy Spirit
- D. Trinity

QUESTION 15

John 5 provides support for which of the following views?

- A. God the Father
- B. God the Son
- C. God the Holy Spirit
- D. Trinity

QUESTION 16

Colossians 1:13-20 provides support for which of the following views?

- A. God the Father
- B. God the Son
- C. God the Holy Spirit
- D. Trinity

QUESTION 17

1 Peter 1 provides support for which of the following views?

- A. God the Father
- B. God the Son
- C. God the Holy Spirit
- D. Trinity

QUESTION 18

2 Corinthians 13:14 provides support for which of the following views?

- A. God the Father
- B. God the Son
- C. God the Holy Spirit
- D. Trinity

QUESTION 19

John 1:1-34 provides support for which of the following views?

- A. God the Father
- B. God the Son
- C. God the Holy Spirit
- D. Trinity

QUESTION 20

John 6:26-58 provides support for which of the following views?

- A. God the Father
- B. God the Son
- C. God the Holy Spirit
- D. Trinity

QUESTION 21

Job 33:4 provides support for which of the following views?

- A. God the Father
- B. God the Son
- C. God the Holy Spirit
- D. Trinity

Choose from these words to answer the following questions: Goodness, Grace, Longsuffering, Love, and Mercy.

QUESTION 22

God's favor in sending Christ to those who did not deserve it.

QUESTION 23

The perfection of God's nature by which He is eternally moved to seek the highest good and glory of His own perfection is_____

QUESTION 24:

God's goodness manifested towards those who are in misery and distress is_____.

QUESTION 25

God's way of dealing in a bountiful, tender, and kind way with all of His creatures is_____.

Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1: Your answer

QUESTION 2:

<i>God's Perfection</i>	<i>God's Name</i>
Immutability & Eternity & Infinity	El Olam
Righteousness	Yahweh/Jehovah Tsidkenu
Holiness	Yahweh/Jehovah Maccaddeshcem
Omniscience	El Roi
Omnipresence	Yahweh/Jehovah Shammah
Omnipotence	Yahweh/Jehovah Sabaoth
Sovereignty	Elohim

QUESTION 3:

<i>Proposition</i>	<i>Scripture</i>
There is only one God: He is indivisible in His essence, being, and substance (Evidence of Oneness).	Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 6:3-8; John 14:9; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; Ephesians 4:3-6; James 2:19
This one God exists eternally in three Persons. The Father is God; the Son is God; and Spirit is God (evidence of Threeness).	John 6:27; 1 Peter 1:2; Matthew 9:4; 28:18-19; John 12:9; Colossians. 1:17; John 1:3; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 2:10; John 3:5-6, 8
These three Persons are fully equal and possess alike the fullness of the divine essence (Evidence of Trinity).	Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Romans 8:26-27, 34

QUESTION 4:

- A. One insists that there is only one true God (this usually refers to the Father).
- C. Another presents the deity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; the New Testament claims that both are God.

QUESTION 5:

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Deity of Christ</i>
Matthew 1:23	His name means "God is with us."
Mark 2:1-12	He forgives sins.
John 1:1	He is called God by John.
John 5:18	He called God His Father, making Himself equal with God.
John 12:9	He raised Lazarus from the dead.
Colossians 1:17	He holds all things together.

QUESTION 6:

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Deity of the Holy Spirit.</i>
Job 33:4	The Spirit is called creator.
Psalm 139:7-12	The Spirit is omnipresent.
John 3:5-6, 8	The Spirit gives life, regenerates.
Acts 5:3-4	The Spirit is called God by comparing parallel statements.
2 Corinthians 3:17-18	The Spirit is called the Lord.

QUESTION 7:

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Doctrine of the Trinity</i>
Matthew 3:16-17	God repeated these words about Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt 17:5). All three Persons of the Godhead were present at this event: the Father who spoke of His Son, the Son who was being baptized, and the Spirit who descended on the Son as a dove. This verified for John that Jesus is the Son of God (Jn 1:32-34).
Matthew 28:19	Those who believed were to be baptized in water. Such an act would associate a believer with the Person of Jesus Christ and with the triune God. The God whom they served is one God and yet is three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
John 14:16; 16:7	In a sense He has now replaced Jesus' physical presence, and He mediates God to believers. The Spirit is in a believer forever (Rom 8:9). He is also the Spirit of Truth (lit. "Spirit of the truth"; Jn 15:26; 16:13) and thus would guide the apostles.
1 Corinthians 12:4-6	Paul had referred to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit earlier. Now he stressed the unity of the Godhead in relation to the different spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit gives a diversity of gifts.
2 Corinthians 13:14	Paul invoked the blessing of the triune God so that the grace manifested by Christ, the love expressed by God the Father, and the fellowship created by the Holy Spirit might be experienced in Corinth.

QUESTION 8:

- C. It preserves the balance between oneness and threeness.
- D. The use of "persons" guards against modalism.
- E. The use of "subsistence" will be easily understood.

QUESTION 9:

<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Opera ad intra	_____ have to do with works within the relationships of the Trinity. In particular, the term refers to the issues of eternal generation and the procession of the Spirit.
Opera ad extra	_____ have to do with works done outside the internal relationships between the Persons of the Godhead. They refer to specific actions, or ministries, of each of the Persons.

QUESTION 10:

- A. Any Person of the Trinity is inferior to another
- B. Any Person of the Trinity is not as much God as the others
- C. Any Person of the Trinity has greater dignity than another
- D. Any Person of the Trinity is less "eternal" than another
- E. Any Person of the Trinity is greater in deity than another
- F. Any Person of the Trinity created one or more of the others

QUESTION 11:

<i>Heresy</i>	<i>Description</i>
Tritheism	This denies the oneness of God and teaches that there are three distinct gods in Christianity.
Arianism	The Son was generated by the Father and thus had a beginning and was not eternal. This teaches that Jesus was only a creature, whose first creation was the Spirit.
Subordinationism, or Monarchianism (also Patriconianism)	This usually results in the denial that the Son is God. It retains the distinction of Persons between the Father and the Son, but it denies that the Son is of the same essence as the Father. In other words, the Son is viewed as a lesser being than the Father. Thus, it often holds that the Son was created and not generated.
Adoptionism	Jesus was a man given special power by the Holy Spirit at His baptism.
Sabellianism, or Modalism	The Persons of the Godhead were modes or only roles in which God manifested Himself.

QUESTION 12: *Your answer***QUESTION 13:**

- A. If the Son is not one with God and the Son is a lesser being than the Father, the doctrine of redemption loses its meaning.
- B. Redemption is destroyed because the one who really loves us, who suffered for us, and bore the burden of redemption, is only the Son and no longer God.
- C. If the Father and Son do not share the same essence, and another being bore the cost of redemption, then the Father could not expend very much of that cost.
- D. If the Son is not one with God and is a lesser being than the Father, then the Father becomes only the keeper of justice, not its provider.
- E. If the Father and Son are not one in essence, then God Himself did not bear the penalty for our sin, expressing His limitless love.

QUESTION 14:

- A. Jesus Christ is not the father of the spirits who have taken or shall take bodies upon this earth, for He is one of the spirits (Mormonism).
- B. The divinity of Jesus Christ is the truth that now requires to be re-perceived—the divinity of Jesus and the divinity of all other noble and saintly souls, insofar as they too have been inflamed by a spark of deity (Mormonism).
- C. Jesus Christ may be called god but not Jehovah God. He is a mighty one but not almighty as Jehovah God is (Jehovah's Witnesses).

QUESTION 15:

- D. The Father is God Himself, the Son is God objectifying Himself, and the Spirit is God returning to Himself (Hegel, liberal theology).
- E. The Father is the underlying unity of all things, the Son is God as coming to conscious personality in man, and the Spirit is God as living in the church (Schleiermacher, liberal theology).

QUESTION 16:

- F. The theory of three Persons in one God (that is, a personal Trinity or Triunity) suggests heathen gods, rather than the one ever-present "I Am" (Christian Science and New Thought).

Lesson 3 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: False

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5: True

QUESTION 6: True

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8: Correct answers include:

Strong one

Deity

Leader

QUESTION 9: Correct answers include:

Yahweh

YHWH

Jehovah

QUESTION 10: Correct answers include:

Lord

Sir

Rabbi

Unit One Exam Answers

- QUESTION 1:** True
- QUESTION 2:** True
- QUESTION 3:** True
- QUESTION 4:** False
- QUESTION 5:** False
- QUESTION 6:** False
- QUESTION 7:** True
- QUESTION 8:** True
- QUESTION 9:** True
- QUESTION 10:** True
- QUESTION 11:** False
- QUESTION 12:** C. God the Holy Spirit
- QUESTION 13:** D. Trinity
- QUESTION 14:** C. God the Holy Spirit
- QUESTION 15:** B. God the Son
- QUESTION 16:** B. God the Son
- QUESTION 17:** A. God the Father
- QUESTION 18:** D. Trinity
- QUESTION 19:** B. God the Son
- QUESTION 20:** A. God the Father
- QUESTION 21:** C. God the Holy Spirit
- QUESTION 22:** Grace
- QUESTION 23:** Love
- QUESTION 24:** Mercy
- QUESTION 25:** Goodness

Unit Two: Bibliology

In this unit you will focus on the study of bibliology. Since your theology should be based on the Bible's teachings, you must verify for yourself its accuracy. How is God's will expressed through the written Word? Who determined what books would make up the Bible, and what criteria did they use? Can the Bible be trusted when it speaks on spiritual matters? Historical matters? Scientific matters? In what it teaches about God? What authority does the Bible have over Christians and the church? When you have answered these questions for yourself, you will be ready to accurately place the Bible in its proper place as a source of, and authority in, the rest of theology.

Unit Outline

Lesson 4: Special Revelation and Inspiration

Lesson 5: Canonicity

Lesson 6: Authority and the Bible

Unit Objectives

When you have completed this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain how and why God has specifically revealed Himself to man
- Recognize and differentiate between various views of revelation and terms used in the discussion of revelation and inspiration
- Define and defend the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture
- Describe the formation of the canon of Scripture
- Distinguish between erroneous bases and the true basis of biblical authority
- Describe the process followed by the believer as he gathers and interprets the spiritual information needed to guide him in decision making
- Describe how the basic principles of interpretation would be applied to a passage of Scripture
- Cite Scripture references of key theological concepts taught in this unit and explain how each reference supports the concept

Lesson 4: Special Revelation and Inspiration

Lesson Introduction

Understanding and believing the doctrine of inspiration is absolutely foundational to a proper evaluation and use of the Bible. It is the basis upon which the believer can trust that the Bible is indeed an accurate and authoritative record of God's revelation to men.

The study of the Bible is called bibliology. If believers are to grow in their knowledge about God and their walk with God, they must be confident that the Bible is indeed a trustworthy record of God's revelation. In Topic 1 the subject of revelation will be our focus.

The Scriptures are the written embodiment of divine revelation. They are the source of all theology. In them God has spoken. If man is to understand and respond to God, he must carefully search and study the Bible.

In the past one hundred years the Bible has come under attack by skeptics and even theologians, seeking to destroy its credibility as God's revelation to men. Therefore, it is vital for the believer to have supreme confidence that the Bible is credible and an accurate record of God's revelation.

Before people can believe the Bible, they must be convinced that it is true; before people can obey the Bible, they must be convinced that it is the authoritative Word of God.

Since this lesson deals with the Bible, one of God's two primary means of special revelation, this lesson begins with a look at the concept of special revelation.

But the Bible not only claims to be a revelation from God, it also claims to be inspired. This doctrine will be the subject of Topic 2. Included will be a discussion of the biblical claims for inspiration and other views of inspiration that portray the Bible as less than fully inspired.

It is only reasonable that one who believes in God would want to know more about Him. We are thankful that God has not chosen to limit man's knowledge of Himself to what can be gleaned from creation, conscience, morality, and reason. God has revealed much about Himself to man. The Bible is the most comprehensive record of that revelation; therefore, it is to be studied and revered as the authoritative source of knowledge about God.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: The Biblical Concepts of Revelation

 Historical Views of Special Revelation

 Contemporary Views of Special Revelation

Topic 2: The Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration

 Related Terms

 Biblical Data

 Defective Views of Inspiration

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Explain how God has specifically revealed Himself to man and the primary purpose of special revelation

- Recognize how other contemporary views of revelation differ from that presented in this course
- Understand and differentiate between the following terms: revelation, inspiration, and inerrancy; and analyze the relationship of the divine and human elements in inspiration
- Define and refute at least four defective views of inspiration covered in Ryrie

Definitions of Key Terms

Authority—related to bibliology. It is the doctrine emphasizing that the Bible commands obedience of all men and affirms its trustworthiness in all matters because it is the inspired revelation of a sovereign God.

Inerrancy—the doctrine stating that regardless of subject (history, science, geography, or redemption), the Bible in its original manuscripts is without error.

Inspiration—the ministry of the Holy Spirit whereby He so superintended human authors that, through the medium of their individual personalities, they recorded exactly what God wanted in the Scriptures. The end product of this ministry was the written Word of God, inerrant and infallible.

Plenary Inspiration—the doctrine that the totality of Scripture is inspired in the original manuscripts.

Revelation—related to bibliology. It is the supernatural work of God whereby He takes the initiative to reveal Himself through verbal truth and inspired explanations of His activities in history.

Verbal Inspiration—the doctrine that states that the superintending influence of the Holy Spirit included the very words of Scripture and not just the concepts.

Memory Verses

In this lesson you are to memorize 1 John 1:5, which describes God's holiness; 2 Peter 1:20-21 and 2 Timothy 3:16, which speak of the doctrine of inspiration. Be prepared to quote them from memory.

Reading Assignment

Your readings from Ryrie for this lesson are chapters 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14. You may read them now or as they are indicated later in the lesson.

Topic 1: The Biblical Concepts of Revelation

Ryrie begins chapter 9 by saying, “In the preceding section we examined the matter of general revelation—how God reveals Himself to all people in general. If the total revelation from God may be labeled The Book of Revelation, volume 1 contains general revelation. Volume 2, then, contains special revelation that, by contrast, does not necessarily come to all people.”

Special revelation has come through various avenues (see below) and has made known God's will in various situations, not necessarily related to salvation (e.g., the Urim and Thummim). The two

primary avenues of special revelation are Jesus Christ, as the Living Word (Jn 1:14-18; 14:6-9; Heb 1:1-3), and the Bible, as the written Word (2 Tim 3:15-17; Jn 5:39-40).

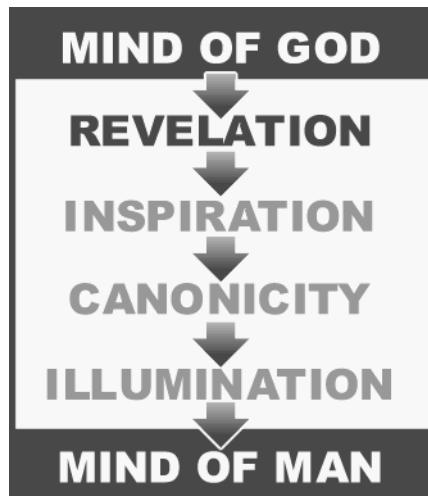
The doctrine of the Bible is perhaps the most critical, foundational doctrine of all, for what we really know about God and our relationship to Him comes from the Scriptures. What we believe about the Bible will determine in large measure what we believe about the other major doctrines we will study.

Historical Views of Special Revelation

Objective 1—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to explain how God has specifically revealed Himself to man and the primary purpose of special revelation.

If you have not already done so, read chapter 9 in Ryrie now.

In Lesson 1 we saw that God has made Himself known in a general way to all people all over the world through what we know as general revelation. But He has also revealed Himself in more detail through special revelation. The following graphic illustrates how God has communicated His thoughts to man by the Holy Spirit.



The Meaning of Special Revelation

Special revelation, in the broadest sense, refers to “those acts of God whereby he makes himself and his truth known at special times and to specific peoples” (Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, rev. ed., ed. Vernon D. Doerksen [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979], p. 10).

The Content of Special Revelation

The complete record of special revelation is contained in the Bible. The content of general revelation is primarily creation. The content of special revelation is multifaceted, depending on its context and purpose, but in particular and most importantly, God has “unveiled,” or revealed, Himself in the Bible and in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God has spoken to man directly (Heb 1:1). He has revealed Himself by acting in, and ordering the events of, history. In particular, He has inspired a written record and explanation of His revelatory words and deeds in order to make later generations wise unto salvation (Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:11; 2

Cor 3:15-16). We now turn to a study of that written Word, the Bible—God's special, inspired, inerrant, and authoritative revelation. The study of the incarnate Word (Jesus Christ) is reserved for Christology.

The Need for Special Revelation

Why was special revelation needed? We have seen that general revelation is sufficient to let man know there is a God with whom he must reckon. Also, general revelation is sufficient to condemn a man if he rejects that revelation, although it is insufficient to fully reveal the details of God's nature or to show him the way of salvation from sin.

Combined with that is the fact that man is sinful. Thus, not only is general revelation insufficient to redeem man, but man's sinfulness makes him rebellious against revelation. Thus, something more than general revelation is needed if intimacy and fellowship with God are to be restored.

Special revelation in the Bible and in Jesus Christ fills that need. While it provides important information about God, its **primary purpose is to show the way back to God**. Man may still choose to reject this revelation, but at least the character and nature of God are clear. In this manner man has specific instructions as to how he may have his sins forgiven and thus enter into a redemptive relationship with God. Through the Word of God man can now know God truly and personally.

This is not to say that general revelation is unnecessary. Since both general and special revelation are from God, both are necessary. The relationship is not one of inferior/superior but of general/specific or undeveloped/developed. General revelation is to special revelation as a foundation is to a building; it is the basis for special revelation. Special revelation clarifies general revelation. Thus, the two work together, the one developing out of the other, to reveal all that man needs in order to know God truly, though not exhaustively.

The Avenues of Special Revelation

The divinely appointed means of revelation vary. Ryrie deals with these various avenues in a summary fashion. Read over the list of the avenues of special revelation in the text.

QUESTION 1

List Ryrie's avenues of special revelation in your Life Notebook. Select the one you believe is the most important avenue of revelation for you today. Tell why you have chosen that answer. Then next to each of the others make a brief comment indicating whether or not you consider it an avenue of special revelation for you and other believers today.

QUESTION 2

Theophanies are preincarnate appearances of the Son of God. Since He has now entered history as the Lord Jesus Christ, He will no longer appear in theophanic form. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

While neither Ryrie nor the workbook states how to determine when an event is a means of special revelation, what two conditions would be necessary? They must be:

- A. (1) nonhistorical and mythical and (2) interpreted through divine guidance
- B. (1) literal and actual and (2) corroborated by prophetic utterance
- C. (1) historical and factual and (2) interpreted through divine inspiration
- D. (1) symbolical and typological and (2) interpreted through divine illumination.

QUESTION 4

The main danger in interpreting the significance of events if the right answer above (in Question 3) is not accepted is that the interpretation becomes subjective and there is no objective control for telling the difference between what is revelation and what is not. *True or False?*

STUDY PROJECT #1 FOR LESSON 4

Prepare a written response with scriptural support for each of the following questions:

1. What was God's primary purpose in using special avenues of revelation in communicating with mankind?
2. Why should we seek divine guidance primarily from the Bible?
Seek an opportunity to share your answers with at least one person before your next group meeting.

Contemporary Views of Special Revelation

Objective 2—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to recognize how other contemporary views of revelation differ from that presented in this course.

In the past hundred years many theologians have redefined the meaning of the word “revelation” as it relates to bibliology. Most liberal theologians have abandoned the biblical view that revelation is the verbal communication of the thoughts of God to the mind of man.

Because of this abandonment, modern theology is in a crisis. There is a lack of divine authority. Never before in the history of the church have there been so many different interpretations of the essence of Christianity. These interpretations largely revolve around the meaning and nature of biblical revelation.

QUESTION 5

Read Section II, “Some Contemporary Views of Revelation,” in chapter 9 of Ryrie. Open your Life Notebook and write a paragraph explaining the weaknesses in the contemporary views of revelation found in your reading.

The Bible is historical, factual, propositional truth. It is truth in and of itself. When we fail to see this, we obscure the distinction between absolute truth and error.

The process God uses to communicate with men through the Bible consists of three basic steps: *revelation, inspiration, and illumination*. In the ministry of revelation God reveals His thoughts. In inspiration He superintends, or oversees, the recording of those thoughts. In illumination He clarifies those recorded thoughts.

QUESTION 6

Select the best answer that summarizes the danger of the two contemporary views found in Ryrie's text.

- A. Because the contemporary views are subjective (based on experience, not fact), they are unstable and elevate the mind of man over the material God has revealed.
- B. Because the contemporary views recognize God's mighty acts in history, they are similar to the biblical view and should be accepted.
- C. The contemporary views are basically objective (based on fact, not experience) and can be trusted as stable, elevating God over the mind of man.
- D. The contemporary views accept revelation as an ongoing process that extends historically beyond the Bible.

In the next part of this lesson we will examine the inspiration of the Bible. Understanding and believing the doctrine of inspiration is absolutely foundational to a proper evaluation and use of the Bible. It is the basis upon which the believer can trust that the Bible is indeed an accurate and authoritative record of God's revelation to men. If the Bible is not inspired, it is merely a book of the thoughts of men about God. Doubt or uncertainty about the Bible damages the believer's perception and response to God.

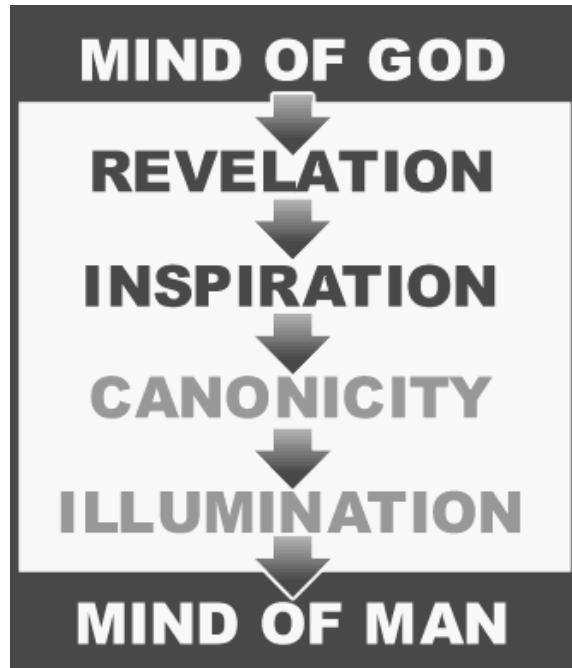
Topic 2: The Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration

Objective 3—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to understand and differentiate between the following terms: revelation, inspiration, and inerrancy, and analyze the relationship of the divine and human elements in inspiration.

The doctrine of the Bible and specifically the doctrine of inspiration is perhaps the most serious, foundational doctrine of all. Why? Because what we know about God and our relationship to Him comes from the Scripture.

What we believe about the Bible, its revelation, its inspiration, and its inerrancy will determine what we believe about the other major doctrines in theology.

If you have not already read Ryrie, chapter 10, "The Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration," please do so now.



Related Terms

As we study bibliology in this unit, we will read and use several terms that should be briefly defined at the outset. They are revelation, inspiration, inerrancy, and authority.

Revelation, as related to bibliology, is the supernatural work of God whereby He takes the initiative to reveal Himself through verbal truth and inspired explanations of His activities in history.

Inspiration concerns the recording of that message, assuring us that Scripture has been accurately recorded. Inspiration guarantees that what is recorded is exactly what God wanted written as His Word to us. Notice Ryrie's definition in chapter 10, "God superintended the human authors of the Bible so that they composed and recorded without error His message to mankind in the words of their original writings."

Inerrancy means that regardless of subject (history, science, geography, or redemption), the Bible in its original manuscripts is without error.

The Bible's **authority** is certified by its origin. If Scripture originates in God, it must be true (therefore we must *believe* it) and it must have authority (therefore we must *obey* it).

Biblical Data

There is considerable evidence in the Bible to substantiate the claim that it is inspired of God. It is vital that you become well acquainted with this biblical data concerning inspiration.

God-Breathed

A proper understanding of the biblical teaching on inspiration requires a correct interpretation of the Greek word *theopneustos*. This is traditionally translated as "inspired" in 2 Timothy 3:16.

Misunderstanding the term *theopneustos* has led to erroneous conclusions about inspiration. Properly understood, the word stresses the divine origin of the Scriptures as God's "exhaled

breath.” Because the word has been misunderstood, some have concluded that inspiration is a quality that relates to people rather than to writings. In other words, God breathed into the men who wrote the Scriptures, thus inspiring the authors but not the Scriptures themselves. That view, however, is contrary to the teaching of 2 Timothy 3:16. This text says that it is the Scriptures that are inspired, not the men who wrote them. Inspiration, then, was a process initiated by God by which He worked through men to produce the Scriptures.

Benjamin Warfield documents the fact that the concept of “origin” is the stress of *theopneustos* in every instance in which it is used in Greek literature. He notes that this conclusion fits in well with the literal meaning of the term “God-breathed” and with the Hebrew concept of the creative breath of God as expressed throughout the Old Testament. For example, Psalm 33:6 reads, “By the LORD’s decree the heavens were made, by a mere word from his mouth all the stars in the sky were created.” The idea of the breath of God having a creative function is well documented in the Old Testament (Gen 2:7). (See Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* [Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948], pp. 245–96, which include this conclusion on p. 296: “What [*theopneustos*] affirms is that the Scriptures owe their origin to an activity of God the Holy Ghost and are in the highest and truest sense His creation. It is on this foundation of Divine origin that all the high attributes of Scripture are built.”)

Human and Divine Authorship

Inspiration involves dual authorship. The Holy Spirit is the ultimate source of the Bible, but He used human authors to write down the Scriptures. The Spirit did this in such a way that God’s Word was accurately recorded without stifling the expression of the writers’ individual personalities (2 Pet 1:21). That is why the Bible has both a human and a divine authorship.

There is human emotion in the Bible, as well as different writing styles, personalities, and temperaments. For example, the writings of the apostle John have a somewhat mystical bent in contrast to those of the more analytical apostle Paul. The Bible was written by poets, prophets, historians, a doctor, preachers, a fisherman, and many others. The human imprint on the Bible is obvious. Yet this did not interfere with the precise, inerrant transmission of the revelation of God from heaven to earth.

QUESTION 7

Each description below concerns an important aspect of the doctrine of inspiration. Read each of the passages, and then match the Scripture passages with the appropriate description.

Scripture	Description
Acts 1:16; Acts 28:25; 1 Corinthians 14:37	All Scripture ultimately originated with God.
Psalm 139; Jeremiah 1:5; Galatians 1:15	God interacted with the human authors in the production of the Bible.
Exodus 24:1-11; 1 Kings 22:19; Isaiah 6:1-5	Many biblical authors had supernatural experiences of communion with God in receiving His revelation.
2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21	God used men as active agents in communicating with men.
2 Peter 1:20-21	God chose and providentially prepared those who would be His spokesmen even before they came into His service, even before birth.

The interaction of human and divine activity in inspiration is described in 2 Peter 1:20-21: “Above all, you do well if you recognize this: no prophecy of scripture ever comes about by the prophet’s own imagination, for no prophecy was ever borne of human impulse; rather, men carried along by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

In the context of 2 Peter 1:16-21 the phrase “prophecy of Scripture” probably refers to prophecy of the coming of Christ and His kingdom, confirmed at the Transfiguration (vv. 16-19). But in a discussion about the inspiration of Scripture it is not unreasonable for this phrase to be seen as equivalent to the phrase “all Scripture” found in 2 Timothy 3:16. Specific prophecies of the Bible are divine communications from God to man in the same way that the entire Bible is divine communication from God to man. Therefore, whatever is true about the inspiration of prophecies is true about the inspiration of the entire Bible.

The meaning of the clause “no prophecy of scripture ever comes about by the prophet’s own imagination” seems to be that no prophecy of Scripture was merely the product of the mind of the prophet. When a prophet wrote down what he had seen or heard from God, his writing did not originate from his own human thinking. Instead, it was what God revealed to him.

The word “for” of the next verse (2 Peter 1:21) introduces the substantiation of verse 20: Individual prophecies cannot come from the mind of the prophet, for no prophecy comes from human impulse but from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The word translated “borne of” and “carried along” in 2 Peter 1:21 is translated “conveyed to” in 2 Peter 1:17-18. In this context the connection between them is divine utterance. As the Father conveyed divine truth to the apostles on the Mount of Transfiguration, so the Holy Spirit conveyed divine truth to (that is, inspired) holy men of God, who then spoke it to us in the Scriptures.

The two verses, 2 Peter 1:20-21, can be thus paraphrased: “No prophecy of scripture comes from the human mind of the prophet, because no prophecy ever comes from the human mind. Instead, prophecy comes only from the Holy Spirit through holy men of God.”

Note that it is the *authors* of Scripture who were carried along (inspired), not the subsequent copyists. Inspiration is only claimed for the original manuscripts that were written under the “conveying” influence of the Holy Spirit.

Now how exactly did this happen? We know, of course, that these books were not produced suddenly by some miraculous act and handed down from heaven complete. It seems clear that, like many things in God’s providence, they are the effect of many processes, coalescing over a long period of time.

Man and Material

Preparation centers on two areas: men and material. **First**, the men who wrote the books had to be prepared. This preparation involved lifelong physical, intellectual, and spiritual processes. It began with their remote ancestors. Thus, when the Lord wanted to write the epistle to the Romans, He did not suddenly select any man and dictate it from heaven. He first prepared a man who would write precisely what He wanted without having to overrule the man’s human personality or distinctives.

Second, God used many different kinds of material in the inspiration of His Word. Not all of it was a message directly from heaven. While much of it came in that way, the Lord also directed His writers to research or record known historical, geographical, and sociological information, sometimes from records and sometimes from personal observation and experience. This would include, for example, the entire history of Israel and the experiences of the prophets in the Old

Testament. Before these events could be recorded under inspiration, the events had to have transpired in history.



The design of a cathedral window serves as a helpful illustration of how inspiration works: As light shines through a colored cathedral window, it comes from heaven but is stained by the tints of the glass through which it passes. This illustration is instructive. But we are sometimes told that in a similar way any Word of God that is passed through human authors must come out discolored and stained by the personality through which it is given. To the degree that it is stained, it contains error and is imperfect, no longer the pure Word of God.

Suppose, however, that God Himself formed the personality into precisely what He desired and formed it for the express purpose of communicating the Word with the color and tint He wanted. What if the architect purposefully designed the colors of the stained glass window to give to the light a precise tone and quality? (See Warfield, *Inspiration*, pp. 155–56.)

Inspiration Explained

Inspiration, technically, is the work of the Holy Spirit at the end of this lengthy, providential preparation that lifts the writer above the human level and guarantees that what he writes will be precisely what God wants written. The divine product thus produced is unobtainable by the writers alone.

The incarnation of Christ has been used to illustrate the combining of divine and human elements. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit (divine factor) in the womb of Mary (human factor); the merger of the divine and human factors produced the God-man, Jesus Christ. In the same way the Holy Spirit (divine factor) inspired the biblical authors (human factor) to write a holy book, the Bible (divine-human book).

A misunderstanding of inspiration has resulted from the following mistranslation of 2 Timothy 3:16: “Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable . . .” (American Standard Version). This translation implies that some Scripture may not be inspired. In other words, it

suggests that the portions of Scripture that are inspired have great value but that not all Scripture is inspired. This translation, and the resulting misunderstanding of inspiration of the Bible, is contrary to the normally accepted interpretation of the grammatical and linguistic data of 2 Timothy 3:16. The normal, or historical-grammatical, translation of the verse is, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable....”

Plenary inspiration means that inspiration extends to all Scriptures, not just those parts that seem to be significant theologically. (Note Romans 15:4, NASB where the phrase “whatever was written in earlier times” is equated with the term “Scriptures.”)

It is popular in modern liberal theology to draw a distinction between the Word of God and the text of Scripture. This distinction is made to support the idea that the concepts of the Bible are inspired but the words of Scripture are not. In contrast to this, we believe that divine inspiration is verbal; that is, inspiration extends to the very words of Scripture and not just the thoughts of the writers. How can we imagine a meaningful “concept” without words?

QUESTION 8

Match the verse(s) with the correct answer.

Verse(s)	Answer
Matthew 4:4	In this verse Jesus argues that the inspiration of Scripture extends right down to the letters themselves and even to the very corners of the letters.
Matthew 5:17-18	In this verse Jesus hangs His entire response to the Sadducees on the inspiration of the present tense of a verb. He says, “I am” and not “I was.” In other words, He argues from the present tense that God is still the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In other words, they must still be alive. He is, therefore, refuting the Sadducees, who denied the doctrine of the resurrection, by using the present tense of a verb.
Matthew 22:23-33	This verse speaks of “every word” of God, not just thoughts or ideas as being inspired of God.

Defective Views of Inspiration

Objective 4—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to define and refute at least four defective views of inspiration covered in Ryrie.

If you have not already read Ryrie, chapters 11, 12, 13, and 14, please do so now.

There are those, particularly modern liberal theologians, who will always seek to weaken the doctrines related to the belief that the Bible is the Word of God. This is true in regards to the doctrine of inspiration.

Inspiration Produces Inerrant Scripture

Since the Holy Spirit is the “Spirit of truth” (Jn 16:13), the Bible, having its source in the Spirit, is therefore true and trustworthy in all that it teaches. Inerrancy attests that the Bible always tells the truth and is free from all falsehood or mistakes.

Some theologians have affirmed that the Bible is inspired but say that it may contain errors. This view of Scripture, however, is inconsistent with the teachings of Christ and of other portions of the Bible itself. The Bible consistently affirms that it is both true and authoritative (Mt 5:17-18; Lk 24:25-27, 44; Jn 10:35; Acts 3:21-24; Acts 28:23-25; 2 Tim 3:16).

Let us explore this aspect a little further. At this time review Ryrie, chapter 12, “The Inerrancy of the Bible,” and answer the following questions:

QUESTION 9

Which of the following correctly describe the importance of inerrancy, according to Ryrie? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Rejecting inerrancy may include a denial of the historical fall of Adam.
- B. Rejecting inerrancy may include explaining away some of the miracles of both the Old and New Testaments.
- C. Rejecting inerrancy may NOT include a failure morally in the areas of adultery, homosexuality, divorce, and remarriage.
- D. Rejecting inerrancy may include accepting liberal views of the Scripture, post-modernism, and the major issues surrounding the philosophical approach to the Bible.

QUESTION 10

Ryrie prefers to say that the Bible tells the truth, rather than stating that it is without error. What value is there in Ryrie’s approach? This positive definition of inerrancy: (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Allows for selectivity in reporting
- B. Means that God dictated every word of Scripture
- C. Allows for new revelation today
- D. Encompasses the idea of spiritual truth that is not necessarily historical
- E. Allows for approximations
- F. Allows for the language of appearances

QUESTION 11

Ryrie stresses that the incarnation shows that it is completely possible and acceptable that the human and divine can come together in revelation without the involvement of human error. *True or False?*

Inspiration Produces Authority

Inspiration guarantees the authority of the Bible. God has ultimate authority in the universe. He performs exactly what He wills; He commands absolute obedience. Therefore, since the Bible is God’s written revelation, it has divine authority in all matters upon which it touches. It is to be believed as God’s instruction in all that it teaches, obeyed as God’s command in all that it requires, and embraced as God’s pledge in all that it promises.

Ironically and tragically we Christians often claim to believe in the authority of the Bible and yet in many ways contradict it in practice by the way we live and respond to the Word.

QUESTION 12

All that is inspired is also authoritative for teaching and conduct. (Consider Genesis 3:4; Matthew 16:22-23; and Acts 5:38 in your answer.) *True or False?*

Objections to the Biblical View of Inspiration

Many have challenged the claims of the Bible concerning inspiration, inerrancy, and authority. Objections have arisen because of an inadequate approach in study (e.g., drawing conclusions based upon faulty investigation of the nature of biblical literature), presuppositions that are contradictory to the Bible's supernatural nature (e.g., assuming that miracles and predictive prophecy are impossible), and ethical problems (e.g., failure to understand the role of the Old Testament law).

In our text, chapter 14, "Problem Passages," Ryrie discusses several passages that are commonly considered problems for the doctrine of inerrancy. Rather than asking you to try to remember all the information in the chapter, we merely ask you to carefully review it at this time. (You may find it helpful to create an outline as you go, but that is not a specific assignment.)

Any time the Bible presents a truth that runs contrary to the presuppositions of secular man, there will be objections to it. Warfield discusses this issue in relation to plenary inspiration.

But, it may be said, there are difficulties in the way. Of course there are. There are difficulties in the way of believing anything. There are difficulties in the way of believing that God is, or that Jesus Christ is God's Son who came into the world to save sinners. There are difficulties in the way of believing that we ourselves really exist, or that anything has real existence, besides ourselves. When men give their undivided attention to these difficulties, they may become, and they have become, so perplexed in mind, that they have felt unable to believe that God is, or that they themselves exist, or that there is any external world without themselves. It would be a strange thing if it might not so fare with plenary inspiration also. Difficulties? Of course there are difficulties. It is nothing to the purpose to point out this fact. . . . The question is not, whether the doctrine of plenary inspiration has difficulties to face. The question is, whether these difficulties are greater than the difficulty of believing that the whole church of God from the beginning has been deceived in her estimate of the Scriptures committed to her charge, are greater than the difficulty of believing that the whole college of the apostles, yes and Christ himself at their head, were themselves deceived as to the nature of those Scriptures which they gave the church as its precious possession, and have deceived with them twenty Christian centuries, and are likely to deceive twenty more before our boasted advancing light has corrected their error, are greater than the difficulty of believing that we have no sure foundation for our faith and no certain warrant for our trust in Christ for salvation. We believe this doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures primarily because it is the doctrine which Christ and his apostles believed, and which they have taught us. It may sometimes seem difficult to take our stand frankly by the side of Christ and his apostles. It will always be found safe. (Warfield, *Inspiration*, pp. 127–28)

Conclusion

Review the major concepts you have studied in this lesson. Memorize the following verses: 1 John 1:5, 1 Peter 1:20-21, and 2 Timothy 3:16. Refer to these as you work through the following questions and Study Project #2.

QUESTION 13

Write these verses in your Life Notebook from memory.

QUESTION 14

Match the following terms with their descriptions.

<i>Terms</i>	<i>Descriptions:</i>
Revelation	What was recorded was without error.
Inspiration	Deals with the content of the message from God.
Inerrancy	Has to do with the recording of the message.

QUESTION 15

_____ means that there are no errors of fact in the Bible. (Choose from the following: plenary, verbal, inerrant)

QUESTION 16

_____ refers to the belief that the words, and not just the thoughts, are inspired.

QUESTION 17

_____ means “full,” that all of Scripture, not just certain parts, is inspired.

QUESTION 18

The basic idea in the relationship between inspiration and authority is that, since the Bible is God-breathed, or inspired, and since the words in every part of the Bible are recorded without error, the whole Bible is God’s Word. Since it is a message from God, it must have the authority of God. This means that it is binding on our entire lives. *True or False?*

QUESTION 19

In the translation of your choice, look over 1 John 1:5,2 Peter 1:20-21, and 2 Timothy 3:16, and then write them in your Life Notebook

STUDY PROJECT #2 FOR LESSON 4

Now that you have completed this lesson, develop an outline that you could use to explain the doctrine of inspiration. Give special attention to the theological concepts of inerrancy and authority. Be prepared to teach on at least one of these concepts at your next group meeting.

Lesson 4 Self Check

QUESTION 1

The main element that contemporary views of revelation have in common is that they are subjective in nature. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

Inspiration extends only to the original manuscripts. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

Inspiration and inerrancy are two different ways of saying the same thing. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Degree inspiration theory maintains that, while some parts of the Bible are inspired, others are not. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

Regarding the issue of the credibility of the scriptural revelation, the empiricists believe that the Bible is self-authenticating and, therefore, does not need validation from historical evidences. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

One of the two main Bible passages in support of inspiration is _____.

QUESTION 7

Ryrie's "bare bones" definition of inspiration is: God so _____ that they wrote His message in the Bible.

QUESTION 8

In 2 Timothy 3:16 the Greek word _____ implies that God breathed into the Scriptures His authority, thus making it His Word.

QUESTION 9

The Barthians believe that the Bible becomes the Word of God when we personally _____ it.

QUESTION 10

An important purpose of special revelation is to replace _____ revelation by providing the necessary details about how men can come to know God personally

Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1: *Your answer*

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3: C. (1) historical and factual and (2) interpreted through divine inspiration

QUESTION 4: True

QUESTION 5: *Your answer*

QUESTION 6: A. Because the contemporary views are subjective (based on experience, not fact), they are unstable and elevate the mind of man over the material God has revealed.

QUESTION 7:

Scripture	Description
Acts 1:16; Acts 28:25; 1 Corinthians 14:37	God used men as active agents in communicating with men.
Psalm 139; Jeremiah 1:5; Galatians 1:15	God chose and providentially prepared those who would be His spokesmen even before they came into His service, even before birth.
Exodus 24:1-11; 1 Kings 22:19; Isaiah 6:1-5	Many biblical authors had supernatural experiences of communion with God in receiving His revelation.
2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21	All Scripture ultimately originated with God.
2 Peter 1:20-21	God interacted with the human authors in the production of the Bible.

QUESTION 8:

Verse(s)	Answer
Matthew 4:4	This verse speaks of “every word” of God, not just thoughts or ideas as being inspired of God.
Matthew 5:17-18	In this verse Jesus argues that the inspiration of Scripture extends right down to the letters themselves and even to the very corners of the letters.
Matthew 22:23-33	In this verse Jesus hangs His entire response to the Sadducees on the inspiration of the present tense of a verb. He says, “I am” and not “I was.” In other words, He argues from the present tense that God is still the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In other words, they must still be alive. He is, therefore, refuting the Sadducees, who denied the doctrine of the resurrection, by using the present tense of a verb.

QUESTION 9:

- A. Rejecting inerrancy may include a denial of the historical fall of Adam.
- B. Rejecting inerrancy may include explaining away some of the miracles of both the Old and New Testaments.
- D. Rejecting inerrancy may include accepting liberal views of the Scripture, post-modernism, and the major issues surrounding the philosophical approach to the Bible.

QUESTION 10:

- A. Allows for selectivity in reporting
- E. Allows for approximations
- F. Allows for the language of appearances

QUESTION 11: True

QUESTION 12: True

QUESTION 13: *Your answer*

QUESTION 14:

<i>Terms</i>	<i>Descriptions:</i>
Revelation	Deals with the content of the message from God.
Inspiration	Has to do with the recording of the message.
Inerrancy	What was recorded was without error.

QUESTION 15: Inerrant**QUESTION 16:** Verbal**QUESTION 17:** Plenary**QUESTION 18:** True**QUESTION 19:** *Your answer*

Lesson 4 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3: False

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5: False

QUESTION 6:

Correct answers include:

2 Timothy 3:16 or 2 Peter 1:20-21

QUESTION 7: Carried men along

QUESTION 8: Theopneustos

QUESTION 9:

Correct answers include:

Experience

Encounter

Power

QUESTION 10: General

Lesson 5: Canonicity

Lesson Introduction

The Scriptures are a divinely inspired record of God's revelation. Because they are a divine product, they are also inerrant. The Bibles we have today, however, are many years and many copies away from the autograph, the original manuscripts of the Scriptures.

The subject of the canon involves the question of how many books belong in the Bible. Canon then refers to the authoritative list of the books of the Bible. Of course, the individual books were written over a long period of time by various human authors.

How then were they collected, and who decided which ones went into the canon of Holy Scriptures? How can we be sure that the books in our modern Bibles are the right books from God? Is it possible that over the years some books that are not inspired have found their way into the Bible? How can we be sure that some inspired books were not left out accidentally?

These are important questions. If we do not have confidence that the Bible contains a complete record of God's revelation, then we have no sound basis for faith. The goal of this lesson is to fortify our confidence in the Bible by answering these questions.

Topic 1 will begin our study with a general overview of canonicity to prepare for a more detailed study as we progress through the lesson.

We will move on to consider how the Old Testament canon developed and what the criteria were for including certain books and excluding others in Topic 2.

Then, in Topic 3 we will try to answer the same questions in regard to the New Testament canon. The central criterion for acceptance of certain books in the New Testament was the association that the book had with an apostle of Christ.

Is the canon closed? Are there new Scriptures being written today? Many of the non-Christian cults such as the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses answer "yes." In Topic 4 we will examine the evidence that revelation ended with Christ and the apostles and that no new books of the Bible are being written today.

Finally, in Topic 5, the question of the Apocrypha will be considered.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: Introduction

- The Meaning of "Canon"
- Preliminary Considerations
- The Concept of Authority

Topic 2: Development of the Old Testament Canon

- The Evidence for Canonicity
- The Three-Part Division of the Old Testament Canon
- Criteria for Acceptance

Topic 3: Development of the New Testament Canon

- The Historical Development of the New Testament Canon
- Criteria for Acceptance
- Preauthentication (Preconfirmation) of the New Testament by Jesus Christ
- Apostolic Claims for Inspiration and Authority

- Books of Questioned Apostolic Authority
- The Patristic Testimony (Testimony of the Church Fathers) to Apostolic Authority
- Other Tests
- Topic 4: The Close of the Canon
 - Scriptural Indications That the Canon Is Closed
 - The Death of the Apostles Automatically Closed the Canon
 - A Chart of the Canons of the First Four Centuries
- Topic 5: The Old Testament Apocrypha
 - The Apocrypha of the Old Testament
 - The Apocrypha and the Two-Canon Theory
 - Arguments for Accepting the Apocrypha
 - Arguments against Accepting the Apocrypha

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Describe how the books of the Old Testament were selected and designated as canonical.
- Describe how the books of the New Testament were selected and designated as canonical.
- List criteria used to justify the acceptance of the Old and New Testaments as part of the canon of Scripture.
- Describe the reasons why the canon of Scripture is now considered complete and closed to additional writings.
- Cite and explain three reasons why the Apocrypha should not be included as part of the canon.

Definitions of Key Terms

Apocrypha—the name given to certain ancient books that found a place in the Septuagint (LXX) and Latin Vulgate versions of the Old Testament and are used by Catholics today. They are not accepted as Scripture by Protestants or Jews. They were appended to all the great Bible translations made from the LXX and Vulgate in the sixteenth century. They should not, however, be regarded in any sense as parts of the inspired Word.

Canon—the group of books acknowledged by the early church as the complete embodiment of the written revelation of God.

Inerrancy - the doctrine that the Bible in its original manuscripts and correctly interpreted is entirely true and never false in all that it teaches, whether relating to doctrine, ethics, history, or science.

Textual Criticism - a study of the various copies of biblical texts with the purpose of determining the readings of the original manuscripts.

Memory Verse

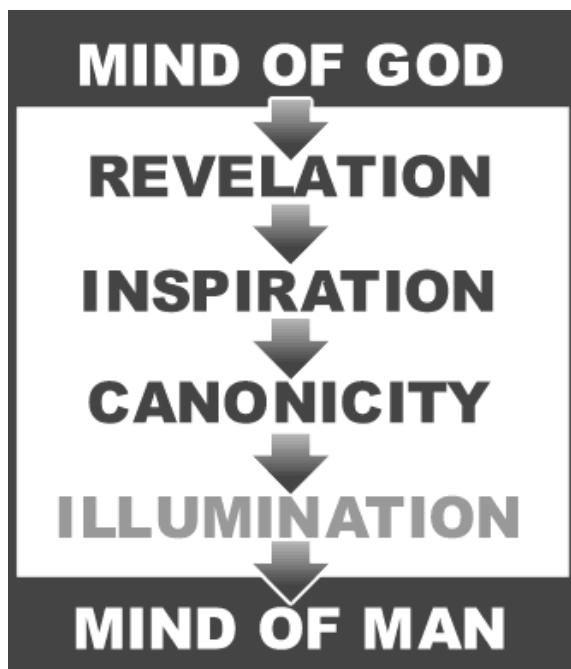
In this lesson you are to memorize 1 John 4:8, which expressly describes the divine attribute of love. Be prepared to quote it from memory.

Reading Assignment

Your reading from Ryrie for this lesson is chapter 15.

Topic 1: Introduction

In tracing the communication of the thoughts of God to the mind of man, we come to canonicity. We have learned that God has revealed His Word to the chosen writers and it has been accurately recorded through inspiration. But a problem arises in that these inspired books exist among many other books that were being written and circulated at the time. So, the next step is to determine which books are God's Word and which, though perhaps highly valuable, are merely human writings.



The Meaning of "Canon"

If you have not already read Ryrie, chapter 15, "The Canon," please do so now. Most religions have a set of sacred writings that are their source for inspiration, guidance, truth, and knowledge about their god. Christianity is no different, having the Bible as its guide. It is customary to speak of such a collection of writings as a "canon." But what do we mean when we speak of the "canon of Scripture"? F. F. Bruce gives a good summary of this word's meaning as it refers to the Scripture.

Our English word "canon" goes back through Latin to the Greek *kanon*, which in its turn was borrowed from a Semitic word, which in Hebrew takes the form *qaneh*. The root meaning of the word is "reed" It then acquires a number of derivative senses; since a reed might be used as a measuring rod, *kanon* is found with this meaning, and also with the meaning of a rule or standard in a metaphorical sense. It is in this last sense that a Greek Father like Origen used the word *kanon* to denote what we call the "rule of faith", the standard by which we are to measure and evaluate everything that may be offered to us as an article of

belief . . . Then there is a further use of *kanon* in the sense of a list or index This is the sense that lies behind the expression “the canon of Scripture”; the canon of Scripture is the list of books that are reckoned as Holy Scripture. But since the books which are reckoned as Holy Scripture are those which are reckoned as supremely authoritative for belief and conduct, the sense of “rule” or “standard” is never far away when we speak of the canon of Scripture. (F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, 3rd ed., rev. [Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1963], p. 95) (The foreign words have diacritical marks in the original text.)

IMPORTANT: From Bruce’s discussion, the canon of Scripture can be defined as the list of books that the church considers to be the complete and inspired embodiment of the revelation of God. It has the authority to provide the church its rule, or standard, for faith.

Preliminary Considerations

Before entering into the main discussion of canonicity, we call your attention to several underlying considerations in studying the canon.

It is very important to understand that the books of the Bible are in the canon because they are authoritative and true. Many people believe that the books of the Bible were made authoritative or derive their authority because they were placed into the canon.

In order to help you visualize this concept, picture a coin to illustrate the authority and value of individual books of the Bible. Assume that you are walking along the street one day, and you find a coin. You take it to a museum that contains one of the finest collections of valuable coins in the world, and you give it to the curator. What would he normally do? He would look at the coin to see if it were possibly a rare, valuable coin. Let us assume that you have, in fact, found one of the most valuable coins in the world, one that the curator had been waiting for years to find. What would he do? He would add it immediately to the collection of other valuable coins and pay you generously in return.

Notice that the coin had built-in or natural value because of its rarity. The curator recognized its inherent worth. It was only when he recognized its great value that he added it to the collection. It had to be valuable first before it qualified to go into the collection. You would have thought it ludicrous if the curator had taken the coin, not given it a glance, placed it in the collection of valuable coins, and then announced that the coin was now valuable because he had put it with the others.

So it is with the books of the Bible. They are inherently authoritative because they come from God. The human beings involved in establishing the canon merely looked carefully at the different writings to see if they were inherently worthy to be in the canon. If they were, they were placed in the canon. If they were not, they were rejected. But the books were placed in the canon because of their inherent worth. They did not gain worth or authority by being placed in the canon.

The Concept of Authority

Which books are authoritative for faith? In one sense this question has already been answered. Sixty-six books in the biblical canon have been handed down as authoritative. Among Protestants there is virtual unanimity that these books, and these alone, belong in the canon. Roman Catholics and others also include in their Bibles other books which are called the Apocrypha. We will examine later the Apocrypha and why it is rejected.

But how did these books come to be recognized as authoritative? How did they come to be associated together in one canon? How can we be sure that the right books were included in our canon? To help answer these questions, we will now briefly explore the development of the Old Testament and New Testament canons.

Topic 2: Development of the Old Testament Canon

Objective 1—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to describe how the books of the Old Testament were selected and designated as canonical.

If you have not done so, read chapter 15 in Ryrie.

Tracing the development of the Old Testament canon is difficult because of the relative lack of information. The existence of the canon is beyond dispute, but no one is completely sure how it was formed. This section looks at the evidence for canonicity and then considers how the Old Testament was formed.

QUESTION 1

Review Ryrie's discussion entitled "Some Underlying Considerations in Investigating Canonicity." Which statements below best summarize Ryrie's thoughts? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The books of the Bible were canonical, i.e., authoritative, the moment they were written because they were breathed out by God.
- B. Men and councils had to make decisions regarding the recognition of the books of the canon because, though all candidates were later approved, there were questions about them initially.
- C. Men and councils had to make decisions regarding the recognition of the books of the canon because there were some candidates that were not inspired.
- D. The books of the Bible were not canonical, i.e., authoritative, until years after they were written and they could be independently verified.

The Evidence for Canonicity

Several sources give us evidence for the canonicity of the Old Testament: the Old Testament itself, the Dead Sea Scrolls, historical data, and the New Testament.

Old Testament Data

We start naturally with the testimony of Scripture itself and in particular that of the Old Testament. Review the section in Ryrie entitled "The Canon of the Old Testament" and answer the following questions.

QUESTION 2

The writings of Moses and the prophets were NOT seen as having authority as God's Word. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

Malachi 4:5 indicates the end of prophetic witness until the New Testament period. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

In Exodus 24:3-7, 2 Chronicles 29:30, and Daniel 9:2-11 there is a clear teaching that each of the passages was accepted as a legitimate and authoritative record of God's revelation soon after it was written. *True or False?*

Dead Sea Scrolls Data

These scrolls were first discovered in 1947 in caves near the ruins of a settlement of a sect of Jewish monastics along the shores of the Dead Sea at Qumran. This group seems to have flourished from the second century BC until after the time of Christ. The scrolls found here include Bible texts as well as ceremonial and civil accounts of the Qumran community. They are valuable for many different things, including a study of language, verification of the Old Testament text (textual criticism), and a study of life in Palestine near the time of Christ. Prior to the scrolls' discovery, the earliest existing Old Testament manuscripts were from the Middle Ages. These were thought by liberal scholars to be so recent as to be unreliable. But the scrolls revealed that in a thousand years of hand copying the Old Testament, the text had not changed significantly. The differences were minor, and none altered basic meanings or doctrinal teachings.

It is true that portions of the apocryphal books, as well as various documents written by the Qumran community itself, were also found. Some think that this indicates the acceptance of apocryphal books as Scripture by the community. These books, however, were never quoted as Scripture in the literature produced by the community. Further, the hesitancy of the rest of Judaism to accept the Apocrypha as Scripture would lead one to believe that the community at Qumran also rejected these books as inspired.



Qumran: The site of a renegade Jewish community prior to the fall of Jerusalem. When that community faced destruction during the Jewish war against Rome in AD 66–70, they hid their precious religious scrolls in the surrounding caves.



Qumran Jars: In 1947 and the years following, hundreds of scrolls were found throughout the region sealed up in protective jars at the time of Titus's siege of Jerusalem. Among these were copies or segments of all parts of the Hebrew Bible except for the book of Esther.

QUESTION 5

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls did give helpful evidence of the canonicity of the Old Testament. *True or False?*

Historical Data

In addition, certain historical data give further evidence that the Old Testament was viewed as authoritative.

QUESTION 6

After reading the section “Other Evidence” in Ryrie, chapter 15, which of the following statements are true as to their contributing to the canonicity of the Old Testament? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Ecclesiasticus (more commonly known as Sirach) mentions the threefold division of the Old Testament at a date soon after the completion of the Old Testament.
- B. Philo likewise mentions the same threefold division.
- C. Josephus’s reference to twenty-two books showed the Jews accepted fewer Old Testament books than today.
- D. The council at Jamnia (AD 90) had discussions referring to a canon that already existed.
- E. The church fathers did not accept the current books of the Old Testament.

New Testament Data

The written record of God’s revelation used by Jesus and the earliest church was limited to the Old Testament. There was no New Testament until many years after the death and resurrection of our Lord. It is certain that the Old Testament was authoritative for them. This is seen by the way the authors of the New Testament consistently and frequently quote the Old Testament as their authority. Only seven Old Testament books are not clearly quoted in the New Testament. R. L. Saucy notes:

The New Testament writers also taught the inspiration of the entire Old Testament and indicated its authoritativeness by citing from all parts of it. Citations from the Old Testament come from every Old Testament book except Obadiah, Nahum, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes. Nahum and Obadiah, however, were part of one book in the Hebrew canon called the book of the twelve prophets. This book was amply quoted. Ezra and Nehemiah originally formed one book with Chronicles. Esther, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes belong to the group of books known as the writings, to which the Psalms also belongs. Considering these groupings we can say that the New Testament writers cited from every portion of the Old Testament, giving evidence of their belief in its entire canonicity. (R. L. Saucy, *The Bible Breathed From God* [Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1978], p. 97)

Besides the testimony of the New Testament writers, Jesus gives witness to the authority of the traditional Old Testament canon. In Luke 24:44 Jesus is undoubtedly referring to the threefold division of the Old Testament when He speaks of “the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms.” This is direct evidence to the authority of the books contained in commonly designated divisions, the Law and Prophets (Mt 5:17). Another possible reference to the traditionally accepted Old Testament canon is in Matthew 23:35 (see also Lk 11:51), where Jesus mentions the first and last murder in the Hebrew Old Testament as showing the span of the canon. He does not list the last murder in the Apocrypha.

The Three-Part Division of the Old Testament Canon

The threefold division noted in the text is a reference to the way the Jews viewed the Old Testament. They saw it as composed of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings (the term “Writings” was not as fixed as the terms “Law” and “Prophets” until many years later). The books in these divisions included the Law (the five books of Moses), the Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve Minor Prophets), and the Writings (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles). (F. F. Bruce, *Tradition: Old and New* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970], p. 130)

By 200 BC the threefold division of the Old Testament canon existed. Josephus says this canon was completed in the reign of Artaxerxes, i.e., during Ezra’s lifetime. For this reason it is thought among many scholars that Ezra formed this three-part division.

Earlier in the study you looked at Exodus 24:3-7, 2 Chronicles 29:30, and Daniel 9:2-11. Do these verses support the theory that Ezra collected the canon? Why or why not? Ponder this for a moment or two before proceeding.

While not proving that Ezra collected the canon, the verses do not disallow it either. They indicate that by the time of Ezra there was a large body of material that was considered to be the authoritative message of God. Therefore, Ezra had available the materials needed to collect the canon.

Unfortunately, extant historical sources say little about how the books of the Old Testament were collected. Because no canonical writings appeared after the time of Artaxerxes until the New Testament, we can only say that it is reasonable that Ezra, a learned scribe and spiritual leader, categorized the books into their threefold division.

Although the history of the development of the Old Testament canon is uncertain, the resulting canon need not be questioned. The Jews accepted all of the present Old Testament books as

canonical, and the Lord Himself confirmed this decision. But why these books? What sets them apart from all others? Why are they alone canonical?

Criteria for Acceptance

The traditional Jewish justification for which books were accepted into the canon was that these books were all of prophetic origin and were consistent theologically. Since their authors were prophets, they were considered to be authoritative. It was accepted that all were written before the spirit of prophecy departed from Israel after the exile. Note the comment of the Jewish historian Josephus, “Our history has also been written in detail from Artaxerxes to our own times, but is not esteemed equally authoritative with the books already mentioned [i.e., the canonical books] because there was not then an exact succession of prophets” (Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, I:8).

Since all of the Old Testament books were of prophetic origin, there is a very close connection between the doctrine of inspiration and the finalization of the canon. Since the prophets were men through whom God spoke, it is logical to assume that God also inspired what they wrote. Their writings, as well as their spoken messages, were authoritative because they came from God. The process of forming the canon was the acknowledgment that certain writings were inspired by God, while other writings, no matter how edifying, were of man (see Deut 18:18-22) and therefore not to be included in the canon. This brings us to a consideration of the New Testament canon.

Topic 3: Development of the New Testament Canon

Objective 2—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to describe how the books of the New Testament were selected and designated as canonical.

As we saw in Topic 2, the limits, or extent, of the Old Testament canon is indicated in the teaching of Christ and the apostles. The same is true for the New Testament. Christ authenticated the writings of the apostles before they were even written. Furthermore, the apostles spoke with the assumption of divine authority—a hallmark of the canonical books.

The development of the canon was a historical process by which the early church decided which books of the New Testament were already canonical. Strictly speaking, by virtue of inspiration, each New Testament book became canonical the moment it was written.

The Historical Development of the New Testament Canon

Recognition of a formal canon of the New Testament did not occur until long after the time of its writing. The collection and recognition of all the New Testament books was a gradual process. During the first century of the church (from Pentecost to about AD 140), there was only a very slow distribution and recognition of the writings that later were brought together and recognized as inspired. After AD 140 a more rapid recognition of the canonical books occurred. By the end of the second century almost all of the books were known and recognized as authoritative. Finally, by the end of the fourth century the official canon of the New Testament was recognized and fixed.

Why did it take so long for the authority of all the New Testament books to be acknowledged by the church? First, the New Testament church already had a canon of Scripture—the Old

Testament—which was considered all that was needed in the church “for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16).

Second, as long as the apostles were alive, there was little felt need for an authoritative body of writings. The early church already had the Old Testament and the living apostles to teach them (Acts 2:42). There was no urgency to copy and distribute the New Testament books so that they could be widely known and acknowledged.

Third, the recipients of the New Testament books were spread all across the Mediterranean basin. It is likely that churches would share with other churches any authoritative books that they received from the apostles. But because of poor communication and the slow production of books, no single church would always know about all of the apostolic writings in existence. Churches would receive various portions of the New Testament without knowing what portions other churches possessed.

The Witness of the Apostolic Period

Most of the books of the New Testament were received as authoritative Scripture as soon as they were written. Paul expressly claimed divine authority for his writings (1 Cor 14:37), and his claim was supported by Peter (2 Pet 3:15-16).

QUESTION 7

Paul gives us an additional witness from the apostolic period in 1 Timothy 5:18. The significance of this witness is that it quotes an Old Testament verse and a New Testament verse and calls them Scripture. Thus, before Paul dies, he is recognizing the writings of Luke as Scripture, on the same level as Deuteronomy. Look up the four passages below. Which are the verses Paul quotes? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Deuteronomy 25:4
- B. Deuteronomy 32:39
- C. Luke 1:1-3
- D. Luke 10:7

The Witness of the Period AD 70–170

This period, immediately following the establishment of the church and the writing of the New Testament (except perhaps for John’s writings), provides clear evidence for the authority of today’s New Testament books.

Ironically, heresy was partly responsible for stimulating the desire to formally identify the books of the canon. For example, about AD 140 a man named Marcion visited the church in Rome and soon became a popular teacher. When the elders of the church opposed some of his heretical teachings, he split from them to form a rival church.

Marcion rejected the authority of the Old Testament and of all of the apostles except Paul. He actually published his own canon, including only the Scriptures that he felt were authoritative (an edited version of Luke and the first ten of Paul’s epistles). This forced the church to clarify which books it considered authoritative. After the controversy with Marcion all of the Gospels, Acts, and all of Paul’s epistles were accepted without question. God providentially used Marcion to help solidify at least part of the canon.

QUESTION 8

What main points does the text make about the witness from AD 70–170?

- A. That there are numerous sources but they are not verifiable due to the lack of independent witnesses.
- B. That all the New Testament books are quoted in other writings, that the church fathers viewed them as canonical, and that evidence from Marcion shows the letters of Paul were being collected at an early date.
- C. That the evidence from Marcion cannot be trusted since his teachings were heretical, and because each church father does not mention all twenty-seven New Testament books, they cannot be viewed as canonical.
- D. That most of the evidence was assembled during the Council of Ephesus, just after the death of the Apostle John.

The Witness of the Period AD 170–350

By this time most of the books of the New Testament were widely accepted. Most of the evidence here merely confirms what had come before.

The Council of Carthage (AD 397)

This is the landmark event when the canon of the New Testament was officially recognized and fixed (see also the Council of Hippo, AD 393, and the second Council at Carthage, AD 419). It should be stressed again that these councils did not make the books of the New Testament canonical. These events in no way gave the books authority that they did not already possess. The councils merely confirmed the judgment of individual Christians throughout the history of the church that these books and these alone were a sound basis for faith and doctrine. Since this time, there have been no serious challenges to the New Testament canon.

QUESTION 9

From the text, note the witness of the period from AD 170 to 350. Which of the following are accurate statements? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Martin Luther rejected James's epistle as a forgery.
- B. The Muratonian canon (AD 170) had all the New Testament books except Hebrews, James, and 1 and 2 Peter. These may have been in the canon since there is a break in the manuscript. It also rejects the noncanonical Shepherd of Hermas.
- C. The Old Syriac Version (about AD 200) contained all except 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation. Notably, there were no other books added to the list.
- D. Most of the New Testament books had been qualified through apostolic succession by AD 250.
- E. The Old Latin version (about AD 200) likewise added no extra books and only lacked 2 Peter, James, and Hebrews.
- F. During this time all unqualified candidates were rejected, most New Testament books were accepted, and only a few were debated.

In addition to heresy, God used another surprising force to solidify the remaining portions of the canon—persecution. During the last imperial persecution of the Christians under Diocletian (AD 284–305), an edict was issued that required the destruction of churches, confiscation of

Scriptures, torture of ministers, and other severe measures. During this time Christians were forced to turn over their Scriptures for destruction or face severe punishment and even death. Since it was considered a serious sin to yield to these requests, Christians were forced to decide which books were worth suffering and dying for and which were not!

During this period of time particularly, the authority of several books was debated. James, Jude, 2 and 3 John, 2 Peter, Hebrews, and Revelation were sometimes omitted from canonical lists or at least questioned. In light of the conditions of the times and the criteria for acceptance, this is understandable. The apostolic origin or affirmations of some were questioned. Others may not have been widely accepted since they contained less doctrinal material than the other canonical books. The apocalyptic and cryptic language of Revelation may have caused many to question its authenticity. The fact that some sources questioned any given book did not necessarily prove that it was not authoritative.

More often these particular books were simply omitted from canonical lists rather than questioned. This suggests that these books simply took longer to circulate among the churches. Because they were not widely known, they would have had less credibility than more widely circulated books.

After the Diocletian persecution there was virtual unanimity about the extent of the New Testament canon. Eusebius's three-part classification list (AD 315) contained all of the New Testament books, plus others considered noncanonical. He divided his list as follows: (1) those which were generally acknowledged as canonical (twenty-two books, including the four Gospels, Acts, the letters of Paul, Hebrews, 1 John, 1 Peter, and Revelation); (2) five books which had wide, but not universal, acceptance (including the rest of the New Testament books); and (3) those books which were definitely noncanonical (*Eusebius*, 3.25).

The next important testimony comes from the Greek church father Athanasius (AD 293–373), when for the first time we find all of the books known and accepted as canonical today.

The New Testament canon was formed gradually under divine guidance. The different books, as they were written, came into the possession of the Christian associations that began to be formed soon after the day of Pentecost. Thus, the canon slowly increased until all the books were gathered together into one collection, containing all of the twenty-seven inspired books of the New Testament. Historical evidence shows that from about the middle of the second century this New Testament collection was substantially such as we now possess. Each book in it is proved to have, on its own ground, a right to its place, and thus the whole is of divine authority. Remember that the books were inspired when they were written and thus canonical. The church only attested to what was inherently true.

Criteria for Acceptance

Objective 3—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to list criteria used to justify the acceptance of the Old and New Testaments as part of the canon of Scripture.

What were the guiding principles the church used to discover which books were inspired and thus should be recognized as part of the canon?

Apostolicity

The primary test was apostolic origin or confirmation. Therefore, it is appropriate to study the nature of apostleship.

The Nature of Apostleship

“Apostle” comes from the Greek verb *apostellein*, meaning “to send forth.” More specifically, it “emphasizes the elements of commission—authority of and responsibility to the sender” (Everett F. Harrison, “Apostle, Apostleship,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984], p. 71).

In the New Testament *apostellein* was used to mean “to send forth to service in the kingdom of God with full authority (grounded in God)” (Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, “*apostello*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, 10 vols. [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–76], 1:406).

The noun *apostolos*, therefore, contained the idea of “one who is authorized.” It designated one who acted as a legally authorized representative of another, regardless of the nature of the task for which one was sent (Rengstorf, *TDNT*, pp. 1:407, 414–15).

Thus, an apostle was one sent by the commission and with the authority of God or of Jesus Christ.

QUESTION 10

Look up the following passages, and summarize what each group teaches about the concept of an apostle. Record your answer in your Life Notebook. Write a summary statement to go with each group of passages. Be prepared to discuss your findings at your next group meeting.

1. Mark 3:14-15
2. 1 Corinthians 14:37; 2 Corinthians 10:8; 13:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:7;
2 Peter 3:2
3. Ephesians 2:20
4. Acts 1:21-22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:29-32; 10:40-43; 26:16; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:3-9
5. Acts 8:18; Romans 1:11; 2 Corinthians 12:12; 2 Timothy 1:6; Hebrews 2:3-4
6. John 14:26; 16:12-15; Ephesians 3:5

As the definition of *apostolos* suggests, the New Testament apostles were the legally authorized representatives of Jesus Christ. Their teaching and authority were therefore considered absolute and final. As eyewitnesses of the resurrection, their mission was to lay the foundation of the church by receiving and recording the revelation of God.

Two categories of apostles seem to appear in the New Testament: the official list of twelve appointed by Christ (including the replacement of Judas with Matthias in Acts 1) and another group, which included Paul, Barnabas, Junias, and others. The members of this second group were apostles in the sense that they also were legal representatives of the Lord. They were considered “sent ones” probably in a sense equivalent to our modern-day missionaries.

QUESTION 11

Look up the following Scriptures, and note the requirements for apostleship. Closely look at the issue of whether these passages indicate that apostles are still being given to the church today and how this bears on the question of new revelation. Match the passages with the requirement they describe.

Passages	Requirement
Mark 3:14; Luke 6:13; Acts 1:2; Galatians 1:1; 1 Timothy 2:7	He must have performed authenticating signs.
Acts 1:22; 1 Corinthians 9:1-2	He must have been appointed by Christ.
2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3-4	He must have seen Christ in resurrection state.

As an apostle a man had the authority of his master, even being identified with his master's abilities. Jesus' apostles, for example, could perform miracles in His name, that is, in His authority (Lk 9:49; Acts 4:10). Had the disciples been unable to perform miracles, they would have invalidated their apostolic claim of being sent by Him. The miracles of the New Testament, therefore, were absolutely essential to validate the apostolic claim and thus to affirm that their message and their writings were inspired (2 Cor 12:12).

In the New Testament we find that these authenticating, miraculous gifts were imparted to others only by the apostles (Acts 8:18; 10:44; 19:6; Rom 1:11; 2 Tim 1:6-7; 1 Tim 4:14). Douglas Bannerman in his classic volume on the church says: "But none save the apostles, so far as we have evidence in Scripture, had the power of transmitting miraculous gifts to others, as we find was done repeatedly by members of the original apostolic college and by Paul (Acts 6:6, 8; 8:13-20; 19:2-6)" (Douglas Bannerman, *The Scripture Doctrine of the Church* [Edinburgh: N.P., 1887; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1976], pp. 262-63).

The primary test for canonicity is apostolic origin or affirmation. It is next to impossible that there are any apostles today, because no one can meet the qualifications. It would logically follow, then, that the canon of Scripture given to the church by the apostles is complete and final.

Cults, such as the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses, claim to be the possessors of new revelation from God. They add writings, such as the Book of Mormon, to the canon, arguing that additional revelations (and miracles to authenticate the revelations) are necessary for every generation, to make the Bible continually relevant. William Shedd has responded well to this argument:

The credentials and authority of the first preachers of Christianity did not need continual repetition from age to age. One age of miracles, well authenticated, is sufficient to establish the divine origin of the message. This is true in a human court of law. We do not require an indefinite series of witnesses to receive testimony as valid. 'By the mouth of two or three witnesses,' the facts are established. The case once decided is not reopened. (William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* [n.p.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889; reprint, Minneapolis, MN: Klock & Klock, 1979])

Preauthentication (Preconfirmation) of the New Testament by Jesus Christ

In view of the gift of apostleship and the esteem with which a man's apostles were held, it is not surprising that Jesus Himself anticipated that additional revelation would come through these

designated representatives. This additional revelation would be the New Testament Scriptures and would be virtually the words of Christ Himself spoken through His apostolic band.

QUESTION 12

Look at the following passages, and match them with the observations concerning the promises that Christ made to His apostles.

Passages	Observations
John 14:25-26	He promises the apostles that they will be guided into “all the truth” and that they will receive additional prophetic revelations concerning “what is to come.”
John 16:12-15	The Lord says that the Comforter will teach them “all things” and bring to the minds of the apostles remembrance of all that Christ taught.

The careful interpreter will note that not all of the verses in John 13–17 are to be applied to the church at large. Many of the verses probably apply only to the apostles. John 16:13 is not a promise to all Christians in general. It is a promise of preauthentication of the New Testament to the apostles. In a similar way, in John 14:26, NASB Jesus declares that the Holy Spirit will teach “all things” and bring to the minds of the apostles remembrance of “all that I said to you.” As Shedd states: “In this specific setting it is clear that the work of the Holy Spirit was to reveal truth to the apostles and also to remind them of things that Christ had already told them. This is a work of revelation, and is not applicable to Christians in general” (Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, p. 232).

In these verses Jesus is authenticating in advance the message of His apostles and, by implication, their writings as well. The apostles were to be His authorized representatives and would preach and write in accordance with the revealing and inspiring ministries of the Holy Spirit. The early church recognized the Christ-given authority of the apostles. As a consequence, they held apostolic authorship or affirmation as the primary criterion for discerning which books were inspired and thus belonged to the canon.

Apostolic Claims for Inspiration and Authority

What did the apostles think about their positions? Were they aware that what they were writing was authoritative? Let us consider the statements they make in the Bible about these issues.

QUESTION 13

Look up the following passages regarding the inspiration of the New Testament. Match the Scripture reference with the correct statement.

Scripture Reference	Statement
1 Corinthians 2:13	“Commandments of the apostles are on same level as Old Testament Scriptures” implies that Paul’s letters are on the same level as the “rest of the scriptures,” a reference to the Old Testament.
1 Corinthians 14:37	Apostles speak the Lord’s command.
2 Corinthians 10:8-18	Apostles speak in words taught by the Spirit.
2 Peter 3:2	A person is blessed if he reads “this book,” an inspired record of divine revelation, which cannot be added to nor taken away from.
2 Peter 3:15-16	Author claims to speak with authority given by the Lord.
Revelation 1:3; 1:19; 22:18	Author claims his writings are the Lord’s commandment.

When an apostle began an epistle with “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ,” he was in effect saying, “What follows is inspired and authoritative and shall be considered to be the words of Christ” (Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, pp. 227–28).

Additionally, we are told in Ephesians 2:20 that the apostles are the foundation of the church.

We may conclude then that the bulk of the New Testament claims to be inspired by virtue of the apostolic introductions and the claims of the other New Testament writers for the inspiration of one another’s books. Any book that is genuinely written by an apostle and claims to be inspired is an inspired book.

QUESTION 14

Note how Paul uses Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7 together in 1 Timothy 5:18. By equating the writings of Luke with the writings of Moses under the same phrase “Scripture says,” Paul is placing Luke’s writing on a par with the Old Testament. *True or False?*

Books of Questioned Apostolic Authority

There are some books in the New Testament for which the claim of apostolic authorship has been questioned: Mark, James, Jude, Luke, Acts, and Hebrews. Let us look at these individually.

Mark

Although the gospel of Mark has no direct internal evidence of authorship, the early church unanimously testified that John Mark wrote this gospel. (The most important evidence for the authorship of the gospel of Mark comes from Papias [AD 140].)

Quoting an even earlier source, Papias notes that Mark was a close associate of Peter and that Mark received his information of the things Jesus said and did from Peter.

This information probably did not come in the form of a sequential account of Jesus' life but through the preaching of Peter as he ministered to the needs of the early gatherings of believers. Papias asserts that Mark's record of Peter's material is accurate. Therefore, it is best to view the gospel of Mark as an accurate record of the preaching of Peter, shaped by John Mark. Since the material in the gospel originated with Peter, it can be ascribed an apostolic origin.

James and Jude

The books of James and Jude are traditionally ascribed to Jesus' physical half brothers of those names. There is no convincing reason why this should not be so, and no more likely candidates have been proposed. It is quite likely that both of these two men, like Paul, became apostles after the resurrection of Christ.

Both would have met all of the requirements for apostleship. "James, the Lord's brother," is referred to as an apostle and a "pillar" of the church by Paul in Galatians 1:19; 2:9. He was one of the select individuals to whom Christ appeared after His resurrection (1 Cor 15:7), and he was a leader in the important Council of Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15. It is important to note that Tertullian, one of the early church fathers, specified that Jude was an apostle.

Luke and Acts

In regard to the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, one must take into account that Luke, the author of both, was a companion of the apostle Paul. Many times in Acts, Luke makes use of the personal pronoun "we" to describe his travels with Paul. Paul had such a high regard for Luke's writings that in 1 Timothy 5:18 the apostle designated Luke's gospel as "Scripture." Luke certainly had the apostolic affirmation of Paul as he composed his two-volume work.

Hebrews

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews does not identify himself. For many years it was believed that Paul was the writer, but since the Reformation it has been widely held that Paul himself was probably not the writer.

Eusebius evidently held the view that Paul did write Hebrews (*The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus*, 3.3). Undoubtedly the differences in style and content between Hebrews and the other Pauline epistles make this a very speculative association. It is possible, however, to explain these differences as did Clement of Alexandria (AD 215). Clement suggests that Hebrews was written by Paul to the Hebrews in the Hebrew tongue and later translated into Greek by Luke so that it could be published also among the Gentiles. This, suggests Clement, explains some of the similarities in style between Acts and Hebrews. He goes on to postulate that Paul did not append his name to the epistle because the Jews had strong prejudices against him and would not have read the letter if they knew it was written by him (Eusebius, *History*, 6.14).

There is no conflict between the teaching of Hebrews and the epistles of Paul, but stylistic considerations do lead one to question whether Paul penned it. The following quote summarizes two of the most probable suggestions for the authorship of the book:

The earliest suggestion of authorship is found in Tertullian's *De Pudicitia*, 20 (c.200), in which he quotes from "an epistle to the Hebrews under the name of Barnabas." From the letter itself it is clear that the writer must have had authority in the apostolic church and was an intellectual Hebrew Christian well versed in the OT. Barnabas meets these requirements. He was a Jew of the priestly tribe of Levi (Acts 4:36) who became a close friend of Paul after the latter's conversion.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church at Antioch commissioned Barnabas and Paul for the work of evangelism and sent them off on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-4).

The other leading candidate for authorship is Apollos, whose name was first suggested by Martin Luther and who is favored by many scholars today. Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, was also a Jewish Christian with notable intellectual and oratorical abilities. Luke tells us that “he was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures” (Acts 18:24). We also know that Apollos was associated with Paul in the early years of the church in Corinth (1 Cor 1:12; 3:4-6, 22) (Kenneth L. Barker, gen. ed., *The NIV Study Bible* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985], p. 1857).

Another reasonable scenario is that it is an epistle of Paul, but that Barnabas or someone else actually penned it. This would explain why it was unquestionably accepted. It would also explain the variation in style from Paul’s. (In the ancient church the epistle to the Hebrews was accepted as canonical in only those places where it was considered to be a work of Paul.)

Although the authorship of Hebrews is not certain, the book has, from the very beginning, been recognized as inspired due to the authority and power of its message. Whether the book has an apostolic origin or merely apostolic affirmation, it is perfectly in harmony with apostolic teaching.

Since the determining criterion of canonicity for the New Testament books is their relationship to the apostles, all of the questioned books can be legitimately viewed as canonical, given their probable apostolic origin or at least apostolic affirmation.

The Patristic Testimony (Testimony of the Church Fathers) to Apostolic Authority

Apostolic origin or affirmation was also the main consideration of the church fathers in regard to the inspiration of individual books.

Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyons from AD 180 to 192, makes the following comments regarding the apostles in his famous treatise *Against Heresies*:

Thus did the apostles simply, and without respect of persons, deliver to all what they had learned from the Lord.

The apostles, likewise, being disciples of the truth, are above all falsehood. For the apostles . . . certainly did not address them in accordance with their opinion at the time, but according to revealed truth.

For the Lord of all gave to His apostles the power of the Gospel, through whom also we have known the truth, that is, the doctrine of the Son of God; to whom also did the Lord declare: “He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me, and Him that sent Me.” (Irenaeus, “Against Heresies,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. The Rev. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, rev. A. Cleveland Coxe, 10 vols. [Edinburgh: N.P., 1867; American reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981], 1:438, 417, 418, 414)

These quotations indicate that Irenaeus considered apostolicity to be the principal test of true revelation of the Lord.

Another witness from the church fathers is Tertullian (AD 160–220). This African moralist, apologist, and theologian had great influence on the African church and on the subsequent theology of western Christianity by providing terminology for classical Trinitarian and Christological arguments or concepts. He is principally known as an apologist. In his *The*

Prescription Against Heretics he refers to John 16:12-13 as being a specific promise to the apostles as the bearers of New Testament revelation:

He had once said, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now;” but even then He added, “When He, the Spirit of truth, shall come, He will lead you into all truth.” He (thus) shows that there was nothing of which they were ignorant, to whom He had promised the future attainment of all truth by help of the Spirit of truth. And assuredly He fulfilled His promise, since it is proved in the Acts of the Apostles that the Holy Ghost did come down. (Tertullian, “The Prescription Against Heretics,” in ANF, (reprint, 1980), 3:253)

Clement of Alexandria (AD 155–220), known as the first Christian scholar, taught in the North African city of Alexandria, where he was engaged in a perpetual debate with the Gnostics. Like Tertullian and the other church fathers, he appealed to apostolic authority to settle questions in theological debates. Note how he ascribes full authority to the apostles in the following statement:

We have, as the source of the teaching, the Lord, both by the prophets, the Gospel, and the blessed apostles, “in divers manners and at sundry times,” leading from the beginning of knowledge to the end. (Clement, “Stromata,” in ANF, (reprint, 1983), 2:551)

Many references could be cited that substantiate the thesis that the church fathers considered the apostles to have absolute authority. Scattered throughout their writings and the writings of the later fathers are decisions on canonicity that hinged on whether or not a certain work was considered to be apostolic. Quite often the reason for doubting the canonicity of a certain book, such as Jude or Hebrews, was that there was uncertainty as to its relationship to the apostles.

Other Tests

Briefly stated, the other tests of canonicity, not necessarily in order of importance, are (1) suitability to public reading, (2) universal reception by the Christian community, (3) high spiritual character worthy of the rank of Scripture, and (4) evident inspiration by the Holy Spirit (Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, rev. ed., ed. Vernon D. Doerksen [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979], p. 60).

Topic 4: The Close of the Canon

Cults, such as the Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Christian Scientists, claim to be possessors of latter-day revelations that have equal authority with the inspired twenty-seven books of the New Testament. Several passages in the New Testament indicate, however, that the body of truth communicated through Christ and the apostles is final and complete.

Scriptural Indications That the Canon Is Closed

Objective 4—when you have completed this topic, you will be able to describe the reasons why the canon of Scripture is now considered complete and closed to additional writings.

The biblical writers do not directly address the issue of the close of the canon. But there are a number of indications scattered throughout the New Testament which, when taken as a whole, imply that the idea of finality and completeness was in their minds.

The close of the canon is implied in several passages, three of which are considered here. In **John 16:12-15** Jesus tells His apostles that, when the Holy Spirit comes, He will lead them into “all the truth.” If “all the truth” was to come to the apostles, then there could be no subsequent additions to “all the truth” after the apostles had died.

Jude 3 refers to “the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.” The presence of the article “the” in front of the word “faith” marks it as the body of doctrine and teaching, which the church considered authoritative. Jude, probably written around AD 70, states that the body of teaching given by Christ and the apostles has been once and for all delivered to the saints. This implies a consciousness on the author’s part that what was presently being taught was final and complete. The term “once for all” is used of the unique, finished death of Christ in Hebrews 7:27; 9:12.

Revelation 22:18 says that nothing may be added to the book of Revelation. This statement reflects the idea of finality and completeness that seems to have been common in the early church.

Canonicity is based upon inspiration, and the above passages indicate that revelation and inspiration were being completed through Christ and the apostles. It would, therefore, follow that the canon is closed.

The Death of the Apostles Automatically Closed the Canon

Since prophetic (Old Testament) and apostolic (New Testament) authorship was such an important criterion for accepting the authority of the canonical books in the Old and New Testaments, the death of the prophets and apostles is a very significant factor in the discussion of the closing of the canon.

Even among those Christians who believe that God still bestows the gift of prophecy today, few would consider this gift equal in stature to that which was given to the Old Testament prophets or New Testament apostles. Few would be willing to claim authority equal to that of Isaiah or Paul, for example.

If there are no more prophets and apostles who are equal in authority with those of the Old and New Testaments, then no one has the authority to create new Scriptures. (See the section of this lesson dealing with “The Nature of Apostleship.”)

Since the fourth century there has been no serious attempt to add new Scriptures to the canon, except by heretical cults such as the ones previously mentioned. If the presently accepted canon has been sufficient to edify the church over the last twenty centuries, it should be sufficient until the Lord returns. If Paul were alive today, surely he would apply 2 Timothy 3:16-17 to both the New and the Old Testaments. Our Bible is completely profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness that we might be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. We need no other Scriptures.

QUESTION 15

In view of the above discussion, assume you must respond to the claims of a Mormon missionary that the Book of Mormon is the latter-day revelation of God. Match the Scripture with the correct response.

Scripture	Response
John 16:12-15	Refers to “the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.” The presence of the article “the” in front of the word “faith” marks it as the body of doctrine and teaching that the church considered authoritative. Jude, probably written around AD 70, states that the body of teaching given by Christ and the apostles has been “once and for all” delivered to the saints. This implies a consciousness on the author’s part that what was presently being taught was final and complete. The term “once for all” is the same one used of the unique, finished death of Christ in Hebrews 7:27; 9:12.
Jude 3	Says that nothing may be added to the book of Revelation. This statement reflects the idea of finality and completeness that seems to have been common in the early church.
Revelation 22:18	Jesus tells His apostles that, when the Holy Spirit comes, He will lead them into “all the truth.” If “all the truth” was to come to the apostles, then there could be no subsequent additions to “all the truth” after the apostles had died.

A Chart of the Canons of the First Four Centuries

To help you visualize the information concerning the development of the New Testament, we have provided the following chart. It shows when the books of the New Testament were known or recognized as authoritative by various church fathers and finally by the church councils that represented the church as a whole (Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961], p. 430).

A Chart of the Canons of the First Four Centuries

BOOKS	INDIVIDUALS					CANONS	COUNCILS
	DATE	Clement (Rome)	95	150	150		
SOURCE		Clement (Rome)	95	Polycarp	150	Didache	150
Matthew	" " "	"	●	"	"	Justin Martyr	c.140
Mark				"	●	"	"
Luke		"		"	●	"	"
John				●	●	"	"
Acts				"	●	"	"
Romans	" "			"	●	●	"
I Corinthians	● "			"	●	●	"
II Corinthians	"			"	●	●	"
Galatians	"			"	●	●	"
Ephesians	"			"	●	●	"
Philippians	"			"	●	●	"
Colossians	"			"	●	●	"
I Thessalonians	"			"	●	●	"
II Thessalonians	"			"	●	●	"
I Timothy	"			"	●	●	"
II Timothy				"		●	"
Titus				"	●	●	"
Philemon						●	"
Hebrews	" " "			"	●	○	"
James						○	"
I Peter	"			"	●	●	"
II Peter						○ ○	"
I John	"			●	●	●	"
II John				"	○ ○	○ ○	"
III John					○ ○	○ ○	"
Jude				"	●	○	"
Revelation				"	●	●	"

SYMBOLS: " - denotes quotation or allusion

○ - denotes that the book is mentioned as doubtful

● - means that it is mentioned by name and considered authentic

Be prepared to discuss the development of the New Testament canon at your next group meeting, using the above chart as a guide.

Having completed a discussion of the complete canon, a person might ask why the Old Testament Apocrypha was not included. The controversy between Protestants and Catholics over the Apocrypha necessitates a closer look at why it is not included in the Protestant canon.

Topic 5: The Old Testament Apocrypha

The Apocrypha consists of up to fourteen books written during the period between the Old Testament and the New Testament that were included in the Latin Vulgate and the original King James Version and are still a part of the [Roman] Catholic and New English Bibles today. The apocryphal (hidden or secret) books have not been recognized generally by most conservative evangelicals because they do not meet the tests of canonicity. They have very little spiritual value and cannot be harmonized with Scripture. When one reads them, it becomes clear that they are not inspired by God. This topic deals with why we reject these books. (Dennis Mock, *Bible Training Centre for Pastors and Church Leaders*, Course manual, Bible Doctrine Survey [Atlanta: Dennis J. Mock, 1989], p. 98)

The Apocrypha of the Old Testament

Objective 5—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to cite and explain three reasons why the Apocrypha should not be included as part of the canon.

The Old Testament Apocrypha consist of the books of 1 and 2 Esdras, The Prayer of Manasseh, Baruch, The Letter of Jeremiah, The Prayer of Azariah and Song of the Three Young Men, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach), Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Additions to Esther, Tobit, and The Wisdom of Solomon. Roman Catholics consider these books canonical. They also use the term “apocrypha” to refer to other books, in particular the books that Protestants call the Pseudepigrapha (literally “false inscriptions” because they falsely claim to be authored by famous biblical characters).

The term “apocrypha” literally means “hidden.” This can have either a favorable or unfavorable meaning, depending upon one’s perspective. From the point of view of those who accept the Apocrypha as authoritative, it means that they were hidden from common use because they contained spiritual truths too profound for the common man. From another point of view, one could see them as deserving to be hidden because they were of inferior quality or even in some places heretical (Bruce Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1957], p. 5). It seems that Jerome first used the term “apocrypha” to refer to the books not included in the canon. He used the term neither as a pejorative nor as a laudatory designation. His intent was merely to give these books a name to distinguish them from the canonical books.

The Apocrypha and the Two-Canon Theory

(Much of the material concerning the Apocrypha is adapted from Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1968], pp. 167–78.)

Since the Reformation, Protestants have not considered the apocryphal books to be part of the canon of Scripture. The question naturally arises, Why does the Roman Catholic Church consider them to be canonical?

The answer to that leads us back to some confusion that apparently developed in the early church over two different canons: the Palestinian canon, which arose in Palestine and was accepted by the Jews; and the Alexandrian canon (the Greek canon), which allegedly arose in Alexandria, Egypt. Supposedly the Alexandrian canon contained the Apocrypha, while the Palestinian canon did not. The basis for belief in the existence of the larger Alexandrian canon is the inclusion of

the fifteen apocryphal books in the earliest extant copies of the Greek Septuagint (LXX), which date from about the fourth century AD (The Hebrew Bible, preserved by the Masoretes, has only the familiar thirty-nine Old Testament books.)

QUESTION 16

Open your Life Notebook. Title one page “Arguments for the Apocrypha” and another page “Arguments against the Apocrypha.” As you read the following material, write the main points under each heading.

Arguments for Accepting the Apocrypha

A number of arguments have been advanced for accepting the Apocrypha into the canon. For example, when the New Testament authors referred to the Old Testament, they usually quoted from the Septuagint (LXX), which presumably contained the Apocrypha. It is also true that some of the early church fathers quoted the Apocrypha as Scripture and used them in public worship. Some of the fathers (for example, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria) accepted all of the books of the Apocrypha as canonical. An important Greek manuscript of the Bible (designated Aleph) interposes the Apocrypha among the Old Testament books.

The Syriac church accepted the Apocrypha in the fourth century. Augustine and the councils he presided over at Hippo (AD 393) and Carthage (AD 397) also accepted them.

Today the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church accept the Apocrypha as authoritative. The Roman Catholic Church proclaimed the books as canonical at the Council of Trent (AD 1546).

Arguments against Accepting the Apocrypha

While it is true that the fourth-century manuscripts of the Septuagint included the Apocrypha, there is no evidence that the Greek manuscripts of the Old Testament used in the first century contained them. Thus, the very existence of the so-called “Alexandrian canon” is suspect. Although Jesus and the apostles employ many quotes from the canonical books of the Old Testament, they *never quote* from the apocryphal books: a strange omission indeed, since they probably used the Greek translation of the Old Testament in their teaching.

(The only possible exceptions to this statement are the probable references in Jude 9, 14-15 to Jewish pseudepigraphical writings: the Book of Enoch and the Assumption of Moses. Two things must be said. First, these are not part of the Apocrypha discussed in this workbook. Second, quotation of a noncanonical source does not attribute authority to it. It recognizes a truth but does not call it Scripture [cf. Acts 17:28]).

There is no evidence that the apostolic church considered the Apocrypha to be canonical.

It should also be noted that two important Jewish philosophers and historians ignore the Apocrypha. Philo of Alexandria (20 BC–AD 40) never quotes the Apocrypha, although he quotes from the Old Testament extensively. Josephus (AD 30–100) explicitly excludes the Apocrypha, and he cites the number of books in the Old Testament as twenty-two, the number in the commonly accepted Palestinian canon (without Apocrypha).

The Jewish scholars of Jamnia (AD 90) did not recognize the apocryphal books. While some individuals in the early church had high esteem for the Apocrypha, no council of the church during the first three centuries favored them. In fact, there were many leaders of the early church

(including Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Origen, and Jerome) who were strongly opposed to them.

The Apocrypha was also not included in the earliest Syriac Bible (second century AD). The Syrian church did not accept these books until the fourth century AD.

Augustine is the most significant voice of antiquity who recognizes the Apocrypha. Yet he rejects Baruch and 2 Esdras, while accepting 1 Esdras. On the one hand, Augustine says, “These [referring to the apocryphal books] are held as canonical, not by the Jews, but by the Church on account of the extreme and wonderful sufferings of certain martyrs” (Augustine, “The City of God,” in *Basic Writings of Saint Augustine*, ed. Whitney J. Oates, 2 vols. [Random House, 1948; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980], 2:443 [XVIII, 36]).

On the other hand, Augustine seems to view the Apocrypha as canonical in a different sense from the other Old Testament books. In the same passage from *The City of God*, as quoted above, for example, he refers to the source of certain historical dates, “not in the Holy Scriptures which are called canonical, but in others, among which are also the books of the Maccabees.” Augustine acknowledges that the Jews did not consider the apocryphal books as canonical. He also distinguishes their canonicity from that of the Holy Scriptures.

Jerome (AD 340–420), the great scholar and translator of the Vulgate (the Latin Bible still in use by some Roman Catholics today), rejected the Apocrypha as part of the canon. He refused to translate the apocryphal books into Latin but later, under pressure, made a hurried translation of a few of them.

The Orthodox Church has not always accepted the Apocrypha, nor is their present position unequivocal. Not until the Synods of Constantinople (1638), Jaffa (1648), and Jerusalem (1672) were these books declared canonical, and even as late as 1839 the larger catechism expressly omitted the Apocrypha on the grounds that they did not exist in Hebrew.

The Council of Trent (1546) made the first official proclamation by the Roman Catholic Church that the Apocrypha were canonical. This belated recognition came sixteen hundred years after the books were written.

Many think the decision at Trent to include the Apocrypha in the canon was a reaction against Protestantism. In view of the fact that Luther had particularly attacked the Catholic Church on the issue of salvation by works and prayers for the dead, it is probably not coincidental that, only twenty-nine years after Luther posted his ninety-five theses, books that included these doctrines were suddenly declared canonical. Furthermore, no major scholar of the Catholic Church was even present at the Council of Trent.

Geisler notes:

Apocryphal books appeared in Protestant Bibles prior to the Council of Trent, and were generally placed in a separate section, as they were not considered to be of equal authority. Even Roman Catholic scholars through the Reformation period made the distinction between the Apocrypha and the canon. Cardinal Ximenes made this distinction in his Complutensian Polyglot (1514-17) on the very eve of the Reformation. Cardinal Cajetan, who opposed Luther at Augsburg in 1518, published a commentary on all the authentic historical books of the Old Testament that did not include the Apocrypha in A.D. 1532. (Geisler and Nix, p. 172)

When compared with the books included in the Palestinian canon and with the books of the New Testament canon, the apocryphal books are inferior in many ways. For example, they contain unbiblical and even heretical teachings. Prayers for the dead are mentioned in 2 Maccabees

12:45-46, but the canonical books of the Bible are against such prayers (Heb 9:27; Lk 16:25-26). Salvation by works is taught in Tobit 12:9, while the Old and New Testaments unequivocally reject the possibility of salvation by works (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:5; Gal 3:11; Eph 2:8-9). In general, many of the stories seem fanciful and have the evidence of being legends.

Because the Old Testament Apocrypha were written in the post-biblical, intertestamental period, Jewish tradition precluded the possibility that they were canonical. Josephus wrote about the Apocrypha:

It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes, very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time. . . .
(Josephus, *Against Apion*, I:8)

The Talmud adds a similar thought as it records, “After the later prophets, Haggai, Zechariah . . . and Malachi, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel” (Michael L. Rodkinson, “Tractate Sanhedrin,” *Babylonian Talmud*, 7-8, 24).

Since, as Josephus reported, the apocryphal books were all written after Artexerxes’ time (200 BC), they were well after Malachi’s time (400 BC). Thus, they could not be considered inspired because they were written after the time the prophetic Spirit was said to have departed from Israel.

The people of Israel and the priests never viewed the apocryphal books as equal to the books of the canon. They believed that, in order for a book to be canonical, it must satisfy the following tests: Was it written by a prophet of God? Did it come with the authority of God? Did it have the power of God? Did it tell the truth about God and man?

The Apocrypha also contain many historical errors. The book of Tobit, for example, states that Tobit was alive when the Assyrians conquered Israel (722 BC) as well as when Jeroboam revolted against Judah (931 BC)—a span of at least 209 years. Yet his total life span is said to be only 112 years (Tob 14:2). Another example of a historical error is that the book of Judith speaks of Nebuchadnezzar reigning in Nineveh instead of in Babylon (1:1).

The arguments presented above indicate that the Apocrypha should not be considered in the canon of Scripture. Whatever value these books may have for devotional reading or for historical information during the intertestamental period, they are not on the same plane as the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments.

Conclusion

In view of the preceding evidence we can confidently say that the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament are the only books that constitute the written Word of God. The Bible contains everything we need to know for salvation and life. Thus, there will never be any other books added to this collection. Let us devote ourselves to reading, understanding, and applying God’s Word. The next lesson will deal with how to interpret the Scriptures through the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit.

QUESTION 17

Review the following key biblical concepts that were covered in this lesson and the Scripture references that support them. Look up the verse(s) and match (them) with the correct biblical concept.

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Biblical Concept</i>
Luke 24:44	Jesus describes the span of the Old Testament canon as between the first and last murder
Matthew 23:35	The apostolic claim to authority to write the Lord's commandments
2 Corinthians 12:1	Peter's assertion that the writings of Paul were Scripture
1 Corinthians 14:37; 2 Peter 3:2	Scriptural evidence for the close of the canon
2 Peter 3:15-16	Paul quotes a portion of the New Testament (Lk 10:7) and identifies it as Scripture
1 Timothy 5:18-19	Jesus confirms the authority of the Law, Prophets, and Psalms
Jude 3; Revelation 22:18	The signs of an apostle

STUDY PROJECT FOR LESSON 5

As a basis for discussion, summarize in your Life Notebook the essential aspects of canonicity, based upon your study of this lesson and Ryrie, chapter 15:

1. State the meaning of the term "canon."
2. The Canon of the Old Testament
 - a. List the most significant evidences for Old Testament canonicity.
 - b. List the three most significant criteria for the selection of writings to be included as part of the Old Testament canon.
3. The Canon of the New Testament
 - a. Outline the major events leading to the formation of the New Testament canon.
 - b. List the three most significant criteria for the selection of writings to be included as part of the New Testament canon.
4. The Close of the Canon
Write a paragraph explaining why we believe the canon of Scripture to be closed.
5. The Old Testament Apocrypha
Cite and explain three reasons why the Apocrypha should not be included as part of the canon of Scripture.

Lesson 5 Self Check

QUESTION 1

The three divisions of the Old Testament were formed chronologically as the books were written. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

All of the books of the Old Testament are quoted in the Dead Sea Scrolls. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

Martin Luther thought that the book of James should not be in the canon. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

The council at Jamnia merely confirmed but did not give authority to the books of the New Testament. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

The word “apostle” means “one who is authorized.” *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

Which of the following sources outside the Bible itself is NOT evidence for the canon of the Old Testament?

- A. The Dead Sea Scrolls: All Old Testament books except Esther are represented in these scrolls. They give positive evidence for the canonicity of all books except Chronicles, Esther, and the Song of Solomon.
- B. Prologue to Ecclesiasticus: The threefold division of the Old Testament is mentioned.
- C. Philo: He referred to the same threefold division.
- D. The Egyptian Hieroglyphics: They referred to the building of the Pyramids by Joseph.
- E. Josephus: He said Jews held twenty-two books (representing our current thirty-nine books) as sacred.
- F. Jamnia council: It discussed an existing canon with regard to whether or not Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon should be excluded.

QUESTION 7

The term _____ means “hidden.”

QUESTION 8

The apostles did NOT believe that their writings were authoritative or inspired. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

Heresy forced the early believers to think carefully about what books should be included in the canon. They did not want to believe anything that was false. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

The texts found at Qumran were nearly a thousand years older than the previously known manuscripts, and yet both texts showed a very high degree of agreement. Thus, it indicates that the Old Testament text had been transmitted with extreme care and accuracy. *True or False?*

Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

- A. The books of the Bible were canonical, i.e., authoritative, the moment they were written because they were breathed out by God.
- C. Men and councils had to make decisions regarding the recognition of the books of the canon because there were some candidates that were not inspired.

QUESTION 2: False

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4: True

QUESTION 5: True

QUESTION 6:

- A. Ecclesiasticus (more commonly known as Sirach) mentions the threefold division of the Old Testament at a date soon after the completion of the Old Testament.
- B. Philo likewise mentions the same threefold division.
- D. The council at Jamnia (AD 90) had discussions referring to a canon that already existed.

QUESTION 7:

- A. Deuteronomy 25:4
- D. Luke 10:7

QUESTION 8:

- B. That all the New Testament books are quoted in other writings, that the church fathers viewed them as canonical, and that evidence from Marcion shows the letters of Paul were being collected at an early date.

QUESTION 9:

- B. The Muratonian canon (AD 170) had all the New Testament books except Hebrews, James, and 1 and 2 Peter. These may have been in the canon since there is a break in the manuscript. It also rejects the noncanonical Shepherd of Hermas.
- C. The Old Syriac Version (about AD 200) contained all except 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation. Notably, there were no other books added to the list.
- E. The Old Latin version (about AD 200) likewise added no extra books and only lacked 2 Peter, James, and Hebrews.
- F. During this time all unqualified candidates were rejected, most New Testament books were accepted, and only a few were debated.

QUESTION 11:

Passages	Requirement
Mark 3:14; Luke 6:13; Acts 1:2; Galatians 1:1; 1 Timothy 2:7	He must have been appointed by Christ.
Acts 1:22; 1 Corinthians 9:1-2	He must have seen Christ in resurrection state.
2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3-4	He must have performed authenticating signs.

QUESTION 12:

Passages	Observations
John 14:25-26	The Lord says that the Comforter will teach them “all things” and bring to the minds of the apostles remembrance of all that Christ taught.
John 16:12-15	He promises the apostles that they will be guided into “all the truth” and that they will receive additional prophetic revelations concerning “what is to come.”

QUESTION 13:

<i>Scripture Reference</i>	<i>Statement</i>
1 Corinthians 2:13	Apostles speak in words taught by the Spirit.
1 Corinthians 14:37	Author claims his writings are the Lord's commandment.
2 Corinthians 10:8-18	Author claims to speak with authority given by the Lord.
2 Peter 3:2	Apostles speak the Lord's command.
2 Peter 3:15-16	"Commandments of the apostles are on same level as Old Testament Scriptures" implies that Paul's letters are on the same level as the "rest of the scriptures," a reference to the Old Testament.
Revelation 1:3; 1:19; 22:18	A person is blessed if he reads "this book," an inspired record of divine revelation, which cannot be added to nor taken away from.

QUESTION 14: True**QUESTION 15:**

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Response</i>
John 16:12-15	Jesus tells His apostles that, when the Holy Spirit comes, He will lead them into "all the truth." If "all the truth" was to come to the apostles, then there could be no subsequent additions to "all the truth" after the apostles had died.
Jude 3	Refers to "the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints." The presence of the article "the" in front of the word "faith" marks it as the body of doctrine and teaching that the church considered authoritative. Jude, probably written around AD 70, states that the body of teaching given by Christ and the apostles has been "once and for all" delivered to the saints. This implies a consciousness on the author's part that what was presently being taught was final and complete. The term "once for all" is the same one used of the unique, finished death of Christ in Hebrews 7:27; 9:12.
Revelation 22:18	Says that nothing may be added to the book of Revelation. This statement reflects the idea of finality and completeness that seems to have been common in the early church.

QUESTION 16: Your answer**QUESTION 17:**

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Biblical Concept</i>
Luke 24:44	Jesus confirms the authority of the Law, Prophets, and Psalms
Matthew 23:35	Jesus describes the span of the Old Testament canon as between the first and last murder
2 Corinthians 12:12	The signs of an apostle
1 Corinthians 14:37; 2 Peter 3:2	The apostolic claim to authority to write the Lord's commandments
2 Peter 3:15-16	Peter's assertion that the writings of Paul were Scripture
1 Timothy 5:18-19	Paul quotes a portion of the New Testament (Lk 10:7) and identifies it as Scripture
Jude 3; Revelation 22:18	Scriptural evidence for the close of the canon

Lesson 5 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: False

QUESTION 2: False

QUESTION 3: False

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5: True

QUESTION 6: D. The Egyptian Hieroglyphics: They referred to the building of the Pyramids by Joseph.

QUESTION 7: Apocrypha

QUESTION 8: False

QUESTION 9: True

QUESTION 10: True

Lesson 6: Authority and the Bible

Lesson Introduction

In considering the study of theology and the Bible, we bring with us certain preconceived ideas about authority. You might ask, Where will I find truth? What will I use as an authoritative source for determining what is true and what is false? What will I use as the final authority over faith and practice? Only by accepting the Bible as our final authority for life and faith can we be enabled to accurately evaluate ourselves and others and successfully counter false concepts of authority. So, what is biblical authority? This will be the subject of Topic 1.

Biblical authority refers to the divinely derived right and power of the Bible as God's Word. We recognize three principles on the authority of the Bible over all life and faith.

1. The Bible authoritatively sets forth a trustworthy, dependable, objective standard of absolute truth by which to measure everything else.
2. The Bible authoritatively determines right belief and correct behavior for all human beings and for His Church.
3. The Bible authoritatively constitutes the only reliable source of knowledge about God and the spiritual nature of man.

Therefore, the authority of God's Word is higher than man's traditions, cultural practices, experience, church teaching, philosophy, and opinions. This lesson will address this issue of the authority of God's Word over all His creation, the basic principles of hermeneutics that govern our interpretation of God's Word and ultimately its authority over us, and how the ministry of the Holy Spirit enables us to understand the message of the Bible.

Granting that the teaching of the Bible is authoritative, the next question is, How do we determine what the Bible teaches? In Topic 2 the subject of interpretation will engage us.

Finally, we must consider the ministry of the Holy Spirit in helping us to understand and apply Scripture to our lives. This will be the subject of Topic 3.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: The Question of Authority

- Erosion of the Biblical View of Revelation
- Authority in Liberalism
- Authority in Neoorthodoxy
- Neoorthodoxy and the Biblical View of Revelation
- Authority in Conservatism

Topic 2: The Interpretation of Scripture

Topic 3: The Illumination of Scripture

- The Biblical Doctrine of Illumination
- False Mysticism and Illumination

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed the lesson, you will be able to:

- Identify and describe several erroneous views of biblical authority
- Distinguish between erroneous bases and the true basis of biblical authority

- Understand and explain the relative importance and authority of the creeds, church tradition, and religious experience in relation to the Bible
- Understand and use the basic principles of normal hermeneutics (or historical-grammatical interpretation of Scripture) as covered in Ryrie, chapter 16
- Understand and define the doctrine of illumination and then compare and contrast the biblical view of illumination with the false view of mysticism

Definitions of Key Terms

Core Meaning—a term we use in this workbook to describe the meaning of a word that would immediately come to mind when you hear a given word alone, outside of a specific context. For example, in English when a person hears only the word “bread,” he would most likely first think of the food, not the idiomatic meaning of “money.” Or, when a person hears only the word “book,” he would most likely think of the volume to read, not the act of reserving a room in a hotel.

Exegesis—a transliteration of the Greek noun *exegesis* (verb *exegeomai*, meaning “to declare, tell”), it is the process of seeking the meaning of the specific statements of the biblical text (see Jn 1:18). It primarily refers to the study of the original text, though it is sometimes used to describe the same process in one’s mother tongue.

Hermeneutics—the study of the principles of interpretation.

Illumination—the ministry of the Holy Spirit in which He enables us to understand the message of the Bible.

Neoorthodoxy—a theological approach that began as a denial of Protestant scholasticism and liberal rationalism. In relation to bibliology, neoorthodoxy teaches that the Bible is not the Word of God but that it contains the Word of God. It also teaches that revelation is not verbal and propositional, but personal.

Rationalism—the faulty view of liberal theologians that the human mind is to be the arbiter of all truth. This is in opposition to the biblical view that Scripture is to be the ultimate standard and judge of all truth.

Memory Verse

Memorize Matthew 28:18 and be prepared to quote it from memory.

Reading Assignment

Your readings for this lesson are chapters 3 and 16 from our text by Ryrie. Please read these chapters now before you begin.

Topic 1: The Question of Authority

In religious matters the question of authority is closely related to the nature of revelation. If the revelation of God’s truth for life and faith is outside of humanity or human invention, and from God alone, then man has an authority base or source that is above and superior to anything mankind can define. If, on the other hand, by “revelation” we mean only the conclusions or

suggestions of religious thinkers or human mystical or intuitive religious insights, then authority is ultimately human, and mankind finds its authority base in its mind or emotions.

True revelation is God making Himself known to mankind. The biblical words used for revelation refer to an unveiling of something that was hidden. This involves both the words and deeds of God. God has spoken to man (Heb 1:1). He has also revealed Himself by acting in, and ordering the events of, history. In addition, God has inspired a written record and explanation of His revelatory words and deeds in order to make later generations wise unto salvation (Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:11; 2 Cor 3:15-16). J. I. Packer sums up the concept of revelation and the priority of God's verbal revelation:

It is clear . . . that the Bible conceives of revelation as primarily and fundamentally verbal communication—God's *tora* (teaching, instruction, law), or *debarim* (words), in the Old Testament, and his *logos* or *rhema*, “word, utterance”, in the New. The thought of God as revealed in His actions is secondary, and depends for its validity on the presupposition of verbal revelation. For men can only “know that He is Yahweh” from seeing His works in history if He speaks to make it clear that they are His works, and to explain what they mean. Equally, men could never have guessed or deduced who and what Jesus of Nazareth was apart from God's statements about Him in the Old Testament, and Jesus' own self-testimony (cf. Jn 5:37-39; 8:13-18). (J. I. Packer, “Revelation,” in *The New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J. D. Douglas [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962], p. 1093) (The foreign words have diacritical marks in the original text.)

Objective 1—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to identify and describe several erroneous views of biblical authority.

If you have not already read Ryrie, chapter 3, “The Question of Authority,” please do so now.

Erosion of the Biblical View of Revelation

In the past one hundred years many theologians have redefined the meaning of the word “revelation” as it relates to bibliology. Most liberal theologians have abandoned the biblical view of revelation—the verbal communication of the thoughts of God to the mind of man.

Because of its abandonment of the biblical view of revelation, modern theology is in a crisis. There is a lack of divine authority. Never before in the history of the church have there been so many different interpretations of the essence of Christianity. These interpretations largely revolve around the meaning and nature of biblical revelation.

Authority in Liberalism

Historically, the slow destruction of the Bible as the authority for life and faith can be traced to the beginning of the twentieth century when classic liberalism dominated the religious scene. Liberal theology rejected the divine authority of the scriptural text itself, because critical scholarship in German seminaries had affirmed that the Bible's content belonged to the world of myth. Liberal scholars taught that the Bible was a collection of the many religious views circulating throughout the ancient Middle East. They assumed that the parallels between Bible stories and ancient myths indicated a direct borrowing by the biblical authors from other religious writers. Thus, according to this view, revelation consisted of the enlightened religious insights of the people who wrote the Bible.

This view of the Bible led to a reevaluation of the person of Christ. The “Jesus of history” was sharply distinguished from “the Christ of faith.” “The Christ of faith” was said to be the apostles’ misinterpretation of the actual Jesus, “the Jesus of history.” Liberal theologians asserted that modern man could know very little of the real Jesus. They denied that Jesus performed any miracles, and they rejected both the deity of Christ and the fact that He ever claimed to be God. This liberal theology exists today under new names and disguises but is still actively challenging evangelical faith.

Liberalism and Reason

Given liberalism’s view of the Bible, it is little wonder that its theologians have upheld the intellect as the basis of authority. In their eyes the Scriptures are so mythical that the human mind has become the supreme arbiter of all truth. Instead of submitting their minds (as well as their wills) to Scripture, liberal theologians place Scripture in submission to their minds. This is called *rationalism*.

In rationalism anything that is not consistent with a person’s particular philosophical presuppositions is rejected. For example, if a rationalist has embraced an anti-supernatural world view, then he would maintain that those portions of Scripture that contain predictive prophecy (which is definitely supernatural) must have been written after the fulfillment of the events described, even if compelling evidence points to their genuinely predictive validity.

Begin to interact with the text’s treatment of liberalism by answering the following questions:

QUESTION 1

Which of the following are ways Christians should view reason? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Christians should object to the use of reason.
- B. The mind and reasoning have been given to us by God to be used in understanding His Word.
- C. The mind and reasoning have been given to us by God to relate to life and to what others, believers and unbelievers, say and teach.
- D. Reason must be seen as the sole source of authority.

QUESTION 2

How do liberals regard reason, according to the text? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Liberals regard reason as limited and fallible.
- B. Liberals often regard reason as the creator of truth.
- C. Liberals regard reason with deep suspicion.
- D. Liberals regard reason as the judge of truth.
- E. Liberals regard reason as the highest authority.

Liberalism and Feelings

For German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, on the other hand, reason was not the answer. He offered a different basis of authority—feelings or human emotion.

QUESTION 3

Schleiermacher emphasized feelings as a reaction against reason. His thinking was not wrong to the extent that feelings can and should be a part of the study of theology and the knowledge of God. But he was wrong to the extent that they become the basis of authority. *True or False?*

Liberalism and Conscience

Immanuel Kant found both reason and feelings to be insufficient bases of moral authority. He looked to conscience—or the moral aspect of man—as the guiding authority for our moral lives. Kant believed that knowledge was too unreliable and limited but that our moral instincts were stable. Thus, for him these instincts became a basis for authority.

Authority in Neoorthodoxy

As the churches began to empty because of the widespread abandonment of biblical authority, a reaction to liberal theology arose. This reaction is called neoorthodoxy, meaning a “new orthodoxy.” Classical liberalism had defined revelation as a religious insight on the part of the biblical author; neoorthodox theologians defined revelation as a personal encounter with God. Instead of revelation coming from within a man (religious insight), it was said to come from God, as He breaks into human experience in a specific situation in space and time. In this situation the word in the Bible would become the Word of God for the person who experiences it in that context. This was the view of Karl Barth.

Neoorthodox theologians attempted to reconcile the results of liberal criticism of the Bible with a supernatural outlook on the Bible. On the one hand, they affirmed that the Bible contains much myth and error; but, on the other hand, they claimed that it did not make any difference. The Bible could still come to man as revelation, they insisted, as man encounters God through its pages and responds with decisions to obey the experience he has had.

Thus, neoorthodox theologians might say something like, “I believe in the resurrection of Christ (in the sense that faith in that event brought me into an encounter with God), but I do not believe in the empty tomb (that is, the resurrection did not really happen in space and time).” In this way it no longer makes any difference whether the events of the Bible actually occurred. Yet Paul wrote that, if there was no literal, bodily resurrection, “we should be pitied more than anyone” (1 Cor 15:19).

Since neoorthodoxy accepts the position that modern science and scholarship supposedly have “proven” the Bible to be full of errors and moral imperfections, it cannot equate the Bible’s words with God’s words. Compared to the traditional view of revelation, neoorthodoxy denigrates God and brings Him down to a human level.

Read the section in chapter 3 of your text by Ryrie on “Authority in Neoorthodoxy.”

In each of the following four questions, explain in your Life Notebook how the neoorthodox position described could negatively affect the biblical position of authority.

QUESTION 4

Revelation comes from without, when God breaks into human experience at a certain point and Scripture becomes God’s word for that person at that point. (Barth)

QUESTION 5

The Bible contains myth and error, but it is revelation to us as we encounter God and respond. The events of the Bible do not need to be fact; what is important is the individual's encounter with God.

QUESTION 6

Christianity is much deeper than pure reason, which reduces the Scriptures to an object to be examined intellectually. It is an experience with God, and revelation occurs when He discloses Himself to us personally and experientially.

QUESTION 7

The Bible is full of errors, so it cannot be God's Word; otherwise, error would be attributed to God.

Objective 2—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to distinguish between erroneous bases and the true basis of biblical authority.

Neoorthodoxy and the Biblical View of Revelation

Keep referring to your text by Ryrie, chapter 3.

Continuing our discussion on neoorthodoxy, we want to point out that one main value worth noting in the neoorthodox point of view is its emphasis on the need for a personal encounter with God. It is possible to believe in the biblical view of revelation and yet not really know God on a personal basis. Some atheists know theological formulations as well as the most committed believer. The atheist, however, cannot understand it experientially because he does not understand it from the heart. The ultimate test of a person's Christianity cannot be limited to the knowledge of a set of doctrines.

Neoorthodoxy has helped return the focus of belief to God Himself and not just to facts about Him. To use neoorthodox terminology, the unbeliever can use reason to comprehend theology, but he cannot experience the revelation in personal communion with God. Neoorthodox theologian Emil Brunner makes this comment:

Here and here alone lies the gulf between this world and the world beyond, between reason and revelation. That is why a person who has long ago given up faith can still go on for a long time teaching correct theology. It is always at his disposal. But there is one thing that he can no longer do: he can no longer pray from his heart. (Emil Brunner, *Revelation and Reason* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1946], p. 21)

QUESTION 8

In your analysis of Ryrie match neoorthodoxy's similarities to conservatism, liberalism, and the final analysis.

Column A	Column B
Similarity to liberalism	God initiates revelation.
Similarity to conservatism	Since the Bible is not the absolute authority, neoorthodoxy's weakness is its lack of an external, objective standard of authority.
The final analysis	The Bible is flawed and full of errors.

There are three basic contrasts between the neoorthodox and biblical views of revelation.

1. Propositional versus personal. Traditional Christianity stresses that God reveals Himself to man propositionally, that is, in absolute statements of truth found in the Scriptures. The neoorthodox view maintains that God reveals Himself only in personal encounters with man, not propositionally (in absolute statements of truth) in the pages of the Bible. Neoorthodox theologian John Baillie has written, “God does not give us information by communication; He gives us Himself in communion. It is not information about God that is revealed, but God Himself” (John Baillie, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought*, trans. Olive Wyon [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1946], p. 29).

The Bible clearly demonstrates that God has communicated propositional truth in revealing Himself to man. For example, He communicated instruction and law verbally to Israel (Ex 20–39; Heb 1:1), and He revealed the future to His prophets (e.g., Dan 2:19–23). (*Although the book of Daniel is regarded as prophetic writing, in Jewish tradition it was placed among the Writings because Daniel's official position was not recognized as being that of a prophet.*)

It should be clearly stated that belief in propositional revelation, as opposed to revelation through personal encounter, does not deny the reality of a personal encounter with God. The personal encounter is to be judged by propositional revelation; it is not in itself the means of revelation.

2. Word versus deed. Traditional, biblical theology stresses that God has communicated revelation in words and acknowledges that He also revealed Himself in His deeds. (For example, the deeds of God reveal a great deal about His providence.) In the neoorthodox view, however, the divine method of communicating revelation was *only* through deeds. In this respect, the Bible, according to the neoorthodox view, is important only because it records the biblical author's interpretation of the mighty deeds of God, and not because it is an account of God's words.

The very individual words of the Bible are the means by which God reveals the meaning and significance of His deeds. Apart from the words of the Bible, it would be impossible to know the meaning of many of God's deeds. For example, how could a bystander watching one of the innumerable executions that took place beyond Jerusalem's city wall detect that the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth was the central event of all human history? No one could have interpreted that execution as God's payment for the sin of the world. It took revelation in words to communicate the meaning of that event, in which Christ died for our sins (1 Cor 15:3).

The Old Testament prophets not only viewed themselves as recorders of deeds through which God revealed Himself, but they also considered themselves as spokesmen

proclaiming the very words of God. For example, God told Moses in Exodus 4:12, “I will be with your mouth and will teach you what you must say”...

3. Submissive reading versus encounters. The central thought of most neoorthodox conceptions of revelation is that revelation does not come through the submissive reading of the written words of God in the Bible. Rather, neoorthodoxy asserts that revelation comes only through personal crisis encounters with God in life situations. Thus, revelation becomes a personal discovery of God with no objective base.

The biblical concept is that the revelation of God is objectively true whether you experience it or not. The responsibility of the believer is to search the Scriptures in order to understand the revelation of God and to submit himself to its truth.

Even though neoorthodoxy claims to base its authority in the external “Word of God,” it really has an internal authority base. According to neoorthodoxy, there is no external biblical revelation that is always true and to which we must submit. It is only in one’s personal encounter that revelatory authority is experienced. Since these encounters are subjective, the meaning of each experience or encounter is a matter of interpretation. The neoorthodox criterion for the correct interpretation must either be the subjective feelings or the rational mind. We, therefore, categorize the neoorthodox view of revelation as internal and mystical.

QUESTION 9

In your Life Notebook, summarize the information on the biblical and neoorthodox views of revelation using the chart below. Also, given your understanding of our discussion of revelation as it relates to bibliology, write a definition of revelation from a biblical stance. Use Scripture references to support your answer.

Biblical and Neoorthodox View of Revelation		
	Biblical	Neoorthodox
Nature		
Method of Communication		
Reception		
Duration		

Objective 3—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to understand and explain the relative importance and authority of the creeds, church tradition, and religious experience in relation to the Bible.

Authority in Conservatism

Finally, a discussion of authority in Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant circles, based on chapter 3 in Ryrie, is in order.

QUESTION 10

According to the liberal view, the basis of authority is external to man and objective. It is found outside of man and not in reason, feelings, or conscience, as the various forms of the conservative view contend. *True or False?*

QUESTION 11

What are the main differences within the circle of conservatism? Match the correct source of authority with the correct view.

Source of Authority	View
Pope	In Roman Catholicism authority is drawn from church tradition, councils, and the _____.
Church	In Roman Catholicism the basis of authority is the Bible as interpreted by the _____.
Bible	In the Eastern Orthodox Church authority is based on a combination of tradition, the church, and the _____.

The primary thing to remember is that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be the sole objective, propositional, eternal authority for the believer. Many helpful thoughts and ideas may be derived from other places, such as church history, creeds, church councils, and church traditions. But the ultimate authority rests solely in the Bible.

The following diagram may help to summarize what has just been said:

Proposed Bases of Systematic Theology				
	INTERNAL		EXTERNAL	
Basis	Experience	Reason	Tradition	Written Revelation
Example	Neo-orthodoxy (Mysticism)	Liberalism	Orthodoxy Catholicism	Conservative Protestantism
A Primary Source*	Institution	Mind	Institutional Church	Scripture

*Distinctive emphasis in forming the theology.

STUDY PROJECT #1 FOR LESSON 6

1. Define biblical authority.
2. Prepare a written statement on the relative importance of the creeds, church tradition, and religious experience, compared to the Bible, as the basis for authority in decision making.

Topic 2: The Interpretation of Scripture

It is no small matter that the Scriptures have been wonderfully preserved over the centuries. In Lesson 5 we noted how the Lord used many different people, organizations, and events throughout the centuries to keep the Bible and its contents intact. This is one of the evidences of its divine nature.

The science of textual criticism has been developed within the last one hundred fifty years. This science seeks to examine the manuscripts of the Scriptures, compare the differences between the manuscripts, and decide which readings appear to be the originals. To be sure, this is a human effort whose results cannot be considered to be final. In some cases, we must wait for the discovery of additional information before more absolute decisions can be made.

Regardless of some of the details and problems of this study and its results, the overriding and literally overwhelming conclusion is that the Bible has been amazingly preserved in its content. Compared to other manuscripts of the same time period, the Bible can be seen as the most reliable, most perfectly preserved piece of ancient literature. While we may not have all the answers for all the apparent problems in the Bible, we can have complete confidence in the reliability of the Scriptures to accurately reflect the thoughts—indeed the words—of the original writers.

We marvel at how God worked through human beings to produce His Word, collect it, and organize it into its present form. The Lord also used human beings to preserve it through extensive copying and comparison of texts, inviting our complete confidence that what we have now is what the original authors wrote.

With this wonderful text in hand, we are faced with the problem of how to understand and interpret the Bible to know the truth: “to ascertain what God has said in Sacred Scripture; to determine the meaning of the Word of God” (Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd rev. ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1970], p. 2). This is why we need hermeneutics, the study of the principles of interpretation.

Objective 4—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to understand and use the basic principles of normal hermeneutics (or historical-grammatical interpretation of Scripture).

Another complete course in this series is devoted to the subject of interpretation and Bible study methods. For our abbreviated discussion, however, review Ryrie, chapter 16, “The Interpretation of the Bible,” and answer the following questions:

QUESTION 12

In your Life Notebook under “Knowing,” record the results of your study for the following discussions on interpreting the Bible:

1. The best system for interpreting the Bible is that which is called the historical-grammatical interpretation of the Bible, sometimes called normal, plain, or literal. (This was dealt with briefly in Lesson 1.) In principle, this means that the language of the Bible is treated like normal, everyday language. After reading “Some Hermeneutical Systems,” the second subsection in the first section of chapter 16, you need to explain why the system of normal interpretation is the best one.
2. The section “Principles of Normal Hermeneutics” is the most important in this chapter. Read that section carefully, and outline its main points.

If just one word or thought could be selected to highlight the most important aspect of hermeneutics, that word would be “context.” The reason for that is that words, phrases, and sentences do not have intrinsic (inherent, built-in) meaning. They have meaning only in relationship with other words, phrases, and sentences. Yes, it is true that a word has, what we call, a core meaning, that is, a meaning that immediately would come to mind when a person hears a given word alone, outside of a specific context. But the usable, specific meaning or reference of a word, phrase, or sentence comes only in the context of other words, phrases, or sentences.

For example, in English when a person hears the word “story,” he would probably think first of an account, like a novel. That would be considered its core meaning. But in the sentence, “My house has three stories,” the word takes on an entirely different meaning. Or if someone said, “Don’t tell me a story,” he could be meaning, “Don’t tell me a lie.”

Or consider the English word “blue.” Most people would immediately think of the color as its core meaning. But in another sentence it could refer to a discouraged mood (“I feel blue today”), and in the plural it could refer to a kind of music (“I love to listen to the blues”). Thus, ultimately it is the context of a word, phrase, or sentence that gives it its meaning.

Can you think of words in your language where there is a core meaning that most people would think of first when they hear just the word alone, but which could have other meanings if used in certain sentences? You may wish to write down two or three words in your Life Notebook, giving the core meaning and one sentence with a different meaning for each word to share at your next group meeting.

The understanding of words and phrases in context leads to an understanding of the whole line of thinking of the author.

Context is important because thought is usually expressed in a series of related ideas. Occasionally a person does make a swift and radical departure from the train of thought he is pursuing. Sometimes thoughts are tied together loosely by a general theme. But whether ideas are thus bound by close logical union or whether the main propositions are developed by repetition, the meaning of any particular element is nearly always controlled by what precedes and what follows. (A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1963], p. 100)

Let us think about the Greek word *oikos*. Its core meaning is “house,” as in “I must stay at your house today” (Lk 19:5), the normal place where someone lives. But in Luke 6:4 it says that David “entered the house of God.” Even though this is not far from the core meaning, it is a phrase referring to the Jewish temple, not an ordinary house.

Departing still further from the core meaning, Luke 1:27 says that Joseph “was of the house of David” (Greek text). This clearly refers to the lineage of David (“a descendant of David” Net Bible), not the place where he lived. And finally Luke 1:33 tells us that Jesus as Messiah “will reign over the house of Jacob forever.” This is similar to the idea of lineage but goes farther to include a whole nation and people. Thus, one writer, Luke, uses one simple word in several ways, none of which would be clear without the context.

Let us look briefly at a whole verse, a very popular one among believers, Philippians 4:13: “I am able to do all things through the one who strengthens me.” Is that true? Can you really do all things through Christ’s strength? Could you lift a building? Could you become president of your country? Could you memorize the whole Bible? Sound extreme? Maybe so. But if “all” means “all,” then it must include those things. Obviously, it does not. Therefore, what does “all” mean? We must let the context tell us.

Read Philippians 4:10-12. What is Paul talking about? His circumstances. They were sometimes good, sometimes difficult. Thus, it seems that Philippians 4:13 is saying, “I can come through all my circumstances in peace through Christ who strengthens me.” The “all” refers to all kinds of circumstances.

QUESTION 13

Take a moment to look up the following passages, and read the full section of verses before and after each passage to become acquainted with the context. Then match the verse(s) or chapter with the best contextual meaning.

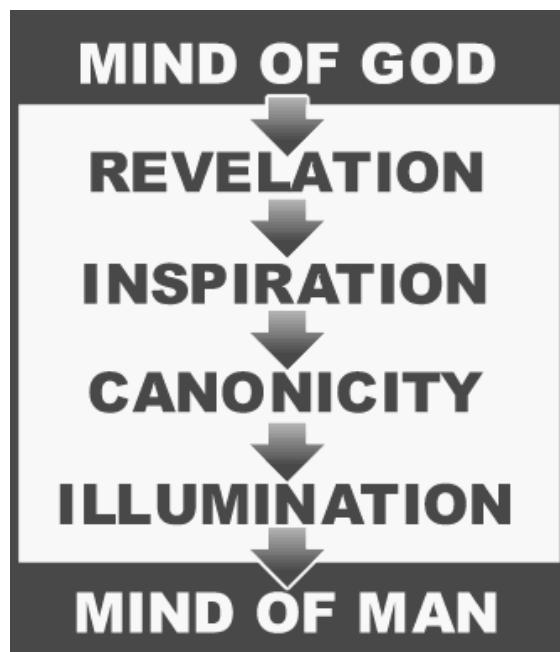
<i>Verse(s)</i>	<i>Contextual Meaning</i>
Matthew 18:19-20	This verse is usually quoted all by itself as if it is a general truth for all believers. But when a person recognizes that it is grammatically dependent on the previous verse, then the idea seems to be that as, and only as, a person humbles himself before God, can he cast his cares on the Lord.
1 Corinthians 13	This is probably not a universal promise of God’s provision for all believers. Instead, it is a promise to generous givers that, as they supply the needs of others, God will supply their needs. Thus, generous, especially sacrificial, giving is the prerequisite to the claiming of this promise.
Philippians 4:19	The thing to note is that the context has to do with a sinning brother who is brought before the church for discipline. A possible contextual interpretation sees the two or three as witnesses, and the agreement having to do with a judgment against a sinning brother.
James 1:5	The issue here is not the meaning of love but the purpose of this chapter. Usually it is thought of in terms of romantic love. While it is certainly applicable to that, it has primarily to do with a fractured, immoral church. Paul is offering tough, willful love as the answer to their problems.
1 Peter 5:7	The wisdom here is probably not intellectual wisdom, as if to know the answer to something. Instead, like the wisdom of Proverbs, it probably refers to the practical skill of knowing how to endure trials in a godly way.

Thus, the importance of context, both narrow and broad, can never be minimized. The student of Scripture must always give great and deliberate consideration to context.

Topic 3: The Illumination of Scripture

The next major phase of God’s communication of His thoughts from His mind to ours is the ministry of illumination. Due to our human limitations, He must first of all reveal truth to us. Because of our fallen nature and resultant tendency to error, He must also minister to us by inspiration. This guarantees the accurate recording of the revelations He gives. Then, He must preserve it through recognition of its authority and the reliable transmission of the text. Once we have the Bible in our hands, a final important step is necessary—illumination. Illumination is the continuing ministry of the Holy Spirit to unlock the Bible’s truths for the believer.

This topic will emphasize the relationship of the Word of God and Christ to the believer through the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of illumination also emphasizes the capacity to understand, accept, and apply God's truth (Lk 24:45; Mk 4:34). The principle of illumination is that only under the ministry of the Holy Spirit are human beings able to understand and accept the Word of God as truth.



Objective 5—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to understand and define the doctrine of illumination.

The Biblical Doctrine of Illumination

The Greek word for “enlighten” (*photizo*) means “to give light, shine”; “to light up, illumine”; and “to enlighten spiritually, imbue with saving knowledge” (Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 4th ed. [Edinburgh: Clark, 1901], 663). Roy B. Zuck points out that illumination is related to knowledge from the following verses:

For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light [*photismon*] of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. (2 Cor 4:6)

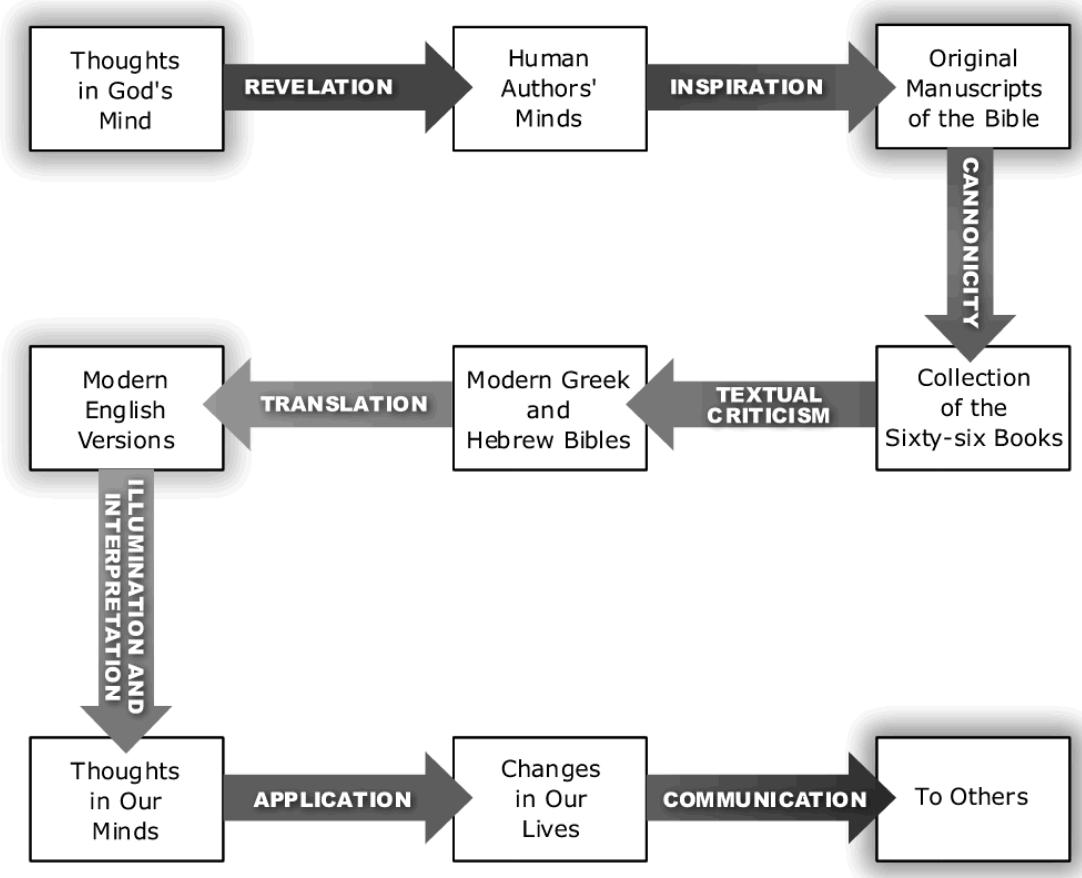
...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened [*pephotismenos*], so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might. (Eph 1:17–19) (Roy B. Zuck, *Spirit-Filled Teaching*, Swindoll Leadership Library [Nashville: Word, 1998], p. 40)

While illumination is that “supernatural work of the Spirit whereby He enables individuals to apprehend the already revealed truth of God, there are many questions that arise. Is this a work of

the Spirit on the mind only? Does illumination imply that some believers are able to penetrate Scripture to grasp new truths or ‘deep’ meanings that others cannot understand? Does illumination mean that the Holy Spirit gives sudden flashes of insight into the meaning of Scripture? Does this eliminate the need for Bible Study?” (Zuck, *Spirit-Filled Teaching*, 41). Zuck suggests five points as answers:

1. The Spirit’s illumination always relates to the Word of God (Ps 119:18; Jn 14:26; Rev 22:18).
2. Illumination is more appropriately defined as the work of the Spirit on the mind, enabling a person to understand the truth of God already revealed (Eph 1:18; Acts 16:14).
3. Illumination involves not simply the perception but also the *reception* of truth (1 Cor 2:14; Acts 17:11; 1 Thess 1:6).
4. Illumination is possible only as a believer is open to the Spirit’s sanctifying and cleansing work (1 Cor 2:14-15; 3:1-3).
5. Illumination occurs in conjunction with and not apart from a believer’s diligent study and devoted prayer (Ezra 7:10) (Zuck, *Spirit-Filled Teaching*, 41–45).

How Our Bible Came to Us



Because of sin, man is spiritually blind (2 Cor 4:4) and unable to understand spiritual truth (1 Cor 2:14). Even the believer’s understanding is hampered by sin. He needs divine enabling in order to comprehend the truth of Scripture. This divine enabling, whereby the Spirit makes clear the meaning of Scripture, is known as illumination.

QUESTION 14

Two verses, 1 John 2:20 and 1 John 2:27, teach that the “anointing” is an insight we receive as we meditate on the Scriptures. *True or False?*

The Holy Spirit indwells and teaches all believers. The next question is, what is the subject matter and content of His teaching ministry?

QUESTION 15

Read from 1 Corinthians 2:6 to 1 Corinthians 3:3. Which of the five statements below apply to either or both of these questions: What kind of men can understand spiritual truth? What is the content of the spiritual truth that they are able to understand? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The content of truth is the “things freely given to us by God,” i.e., the things of grace.
- B. If man wants to understand, with enough effort he can find the truth.
- C. Only a spiritual man can understand spiritual truth.
- D. Only a learned man can understand truth.
- E. The subject of the Spirit’s teaching ministry is the gospel as now recorded in the New Testament.

There is a strong connection between illumination and spiritual maturity in the life of a believer.

The believer must himself be maturing and in fellowship with the Lord to experience this full perception of truth, for carnality in his life will hinder the ministry of the Spirit (1 Cor 3:1-3). He also would expect to benefit from the Spirit ministering through others who have the gift of teaching (Rom 12:6-7), and such ministry can be experienced orally or through the printed page or various other media. But ultimately it is the Spirit who is the direct connection between the mind of God as revealed in the Scriptures and the mind of the believer seeking to understand the Scriptures. (Charles C. Ryrie, “Illumination,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984], p. 545)

One of the main points made by the apostle Paul in the section from 1 Corinthians 2:6 to 1 Corinthians 3:3 could be summed up in this way: “The kind of individuals we are spiritually determines the things that we see in Scripture.” This, it seems, is a key idea in the teaching ministry of the Spirit. As He brings us to spiritual maturity, we gradually become more perceptive in spiritual matters.

In physical growth, maturity determines the kind of nourishment one is able to take. So it is with spiritual truth. If you are a babe in Christ or if you are walking as one who is carnal (1 Cor 3:1-3), you partake only “milk,” the basic truths of Scripture. But if you are the opposite, a spiritual man (a mature Christian, 1 Cor 2:15), you will be able to enjoy “meat,” the deep things of God. This is the teaching ministry of the Spirit. As He sanctifies us and brings us to maturity, our understanding of spiritual truth grows.

QUESTION 16

Review the important distinctions between revelation, illumination, and inspiration, and match each term with its correct meaning.

Term	Meaning
Revelation	Guarantees that what is written in God's Word is what He wanted written and that it is without error
Illumination	The content of God's message to us.
Inspiration	Makes the meaning of the written Word clear to us.

Objective 6—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to compare and contrast the biblical view of illumination with the false view of mysticism.

False Mysticism and Illumination

As we begin this section, it will be helpful to emphasize that there is clearly a true, biblical mysticism. The believer's communion with God, his union with Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit in communicating understanding, inclining the heart, and guiding can only be called mystical. This is true biblical mysticism, and a believer can in this sense be called a biblical mystic. Yet these valid and promised biblical experiences must be contrasted with a false mysticism that has often troubled the Christian church.

Those who practice mysticism are sometimes called mystics. Hodge defines a mystic as

one who claims to see or know what is hidden from other men, whether this knowledge be attained by immediate intuition, or by inward revelation. . . . Hence, in the wide sense of the word, Mystics are those who claim to be under the immediate guidance of God or of his Spirit. . . . Any system, whether in philosophy or religion, which assigns more importance to the feelings than to the intellect, is called Mystical. (Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. [reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973], 1:61, 64)

We all recognize a supernatural influence of the Spirit of God upon the soul as He makes the Scriptures understandable and applicable to us. This is the doctrine of illumination. Others seek a closer, more intimate relationship with God. Even though this can be taken to extremes, most would view this as valid mysticism. Neither of these experiences has anything to do with revelational authority or with seeking special knowledge or information from God beyond the written Word.

But this valid kind of experience could lead to improper mysticism, a false mysticism, where experience becomes the foundation of all knowledge about God. This knowledge is treated as revelation from God and hence authoritative, as if equal to the written Word of God. Today, many sincere Christians have fallen and continue to fall into this dangerous trap by misapplying the biblical doctrine of illumination and relying on mysticism's internal authority.

An Illustration from the Life of Martin Luther

An incident from Martin Luther's life, described by Merle D'Aubigne in his book *Life and Times of Martin Luther*, brings the issue of this false mysticism into focus (J. H. Merle D'Aubigne, *The Life and Times of Martin Luther*, trans. H. White, rev. author [1846; Chicago: Moody Press, 1950]. The following summary of the account, part of which is a direct quote, is taken from pages

497–519). It would be a profitable exercise to make note of as many characteristics of mysticism you can observe as you read through this article.

It had been a lonely and yet fruitful year for Martin Luther. He had spent it in isolation in a castle called The Wartburg, far from the center of the Reformation in Wittenburg, Germany. It was March 1522, and he was now returning from his seclusion. As he traveled down the road, he was deeply troubled. The Reformation had faced many enemies, but this new one was totally unexpected. It was his battle with Rome that sent him to The Wartburg (where he translated the Bible into the language of the common man), but it was an even more serious battle with these new enemies that caused him to risk his life in a return.

Rome had maintained that the common man was not qualified to interpret Scripture. Only the trained authorities of the church could give reliable interpretations. Luther scoffed at this and maintained that the Bible was sufficiently clear; that the common man could read it and receive the help he needed for salvation and the Christian walk. The papists maintained that, if the right of private judgment in the interpretation of Scripture were established, many extremes and bizarre interpretations would result.

Martin Luther was shocked to discover that this was precisely what was happening back in Wittenburg, where he had first nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the church and launched what came to be known as the Protestant Reformation. This one problem absorbed the reformer's mind and checked the joy he held at meeting his friends once more. Although the town he was about to enter was small and obscure, his undertaking had all the importance of an event that was to influence the world.

It was a question whether that doctrine which he had derived from the word of God, and which was ordained to exert so mighty an influence on the future development of the human race, would be stronger than the destructive principles that threatened its existence. . . . The reformer's heart shuddered at the thought of the struggle that awaited him.

What was this struggle? What was the disturbance back at Wittenburg that threatened to destroy the entire Protestant Reformation? The Church of Rome delighted in what was happening. One more such struggle, they said, was all the Reformation could endure; it was on the point of ruin. What irregularity was it that caused Luther to risk his very life in coming out of seclusion? It was an outburst of mysticism. A group of men claimed to have received the New Testament gift of prophecy.

It all began when a simple tailor Nicholas Storch announced that the angel Gabriel had appeared to him during the night and, after communicating matters that he could not reveal, said to him, "Thou shalt sit on my throne." Mark Stubner, a student at the university studying the new theology of the Reformation, joined Storch and immediately abandoned his studies. He said he had received directly from God the gift of interpreting the Scriptures and thus no longer needed to study. These men proclaimed that the gift of prophecy had been restored in their midst.

They made a number of prophecies that they said came by direct revelation from God. They claimed that in five to seven years a universal desolation would come upon the world, the Turks would seize Germany and all priests would be put to

death, that no ungodly man or sinner would remain alive, the kingdom would be established, and Storch would be in possession of supreme authority in the kingdom.

Since the local pastor Hausmann, of whom Luther spoke quite highly, did not believe they had the gift of prophecy, they formed their own prayer groups and began to stir up the people with their revelations. Civil disorders broke out as the prophets instructed the faithful through prophecy to stone priests and burn the idols in the Catholic churches.

George Mohr, the master of the boys school at Wittenburg, called to the assembled citizens from the windows of his schoolroom and asked them to come and take away their children. Why should they be made to study, since Storch and Stubner had never been to the university, and yet they were prophets? A mechanic, therefore, was as well qualified as all the doctors in the world, perhaps better, to teach and interpret the Scriptures.

These prophets came to Wittenburg and in December 1521, demanded to see Martin Luther. "We are sent by God to instruct the people," they said. "We have held [personal and intimate] conversations with the Lord; we know what will happen; in a word, we are apostles and prophets, and appeal to Dr. Luther."

As the disturbances increased, Martin Luther was convinced in March 1522, that he must return and deal with it, for a vital principle was at stake. Was the Scripture alone sufficient for the common man, or must he have additional revelation to add to it and to clarify it? Would his insistence on Scripture alone and the right of private judgment lead to this kind of extremes?

Thus, Luther granted the so-called Zwickau prophets an interview. (The full description of these interviews is recorded in D'Aubigne's *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, p. 336ff.). After claiming they were prophets and outlining the revelations they had received, Luther replied, "St. Paul declares that the proofs of his apostleship were made known by miracles; prove yours in like manner."

After some more interchange in which Luther was unmoved, Stubner received a "word of knowledge" and said, "Martin Luther! I will declare what is now passing in thy soul. . . . Thou art beginning to believe that my doctrine is true." Luther, after a brief pause, exclaimed: "God chastise thee, Satan!" At these words the prophets were as if distracted and said, "The Spirit, the Spirit!" asserting apparently that the source of their "word of knowledge" was the Holy Spirit and not Satan. Luther responded, "I slap your spirit on the snout!" They were not appreciative, and the interview ended.

This raises a crucial question: Is it legitimate for a man today to claim to have direct revelation from God apart from Scripture? It is certainly true that the apostles and prophets of the New Testament had such communications. True, biblical mysticism may indeed involve a direct communication by the Holy Spirit to the soul of the believer, but this experience is tested by Scripture, is not a source of theological data, and is not treated as authoritative. **The false mystic views his impressions and visions as direct words from God and therefore authoritative.**

Biblical Christianity asserts that God's work in the life of the believer today is by spiritual illumination and leading of the Spirit. How are these precious truths to be distinguished from false mysticism?

QUESTION 17

Look up 2 Timothy 2:7 and John 7:17. What is the content of the Spirit's illuminating work?

- A. The Spirit reveals mysteries only those closest to Him can truly discern.
- B. The Spirit reveals God's truth through the understanding of His Word.
- C. The Spirit reveals the deep things of God below the surface of the text of Scripture.
- D. The Spirit reveals the source of new truths for new generations committed to obedience.

According to the biblical doctrine of spiritual illumination, God does communicate to men today by enabling them to understand the Scriptures. This, however, differs from false mysticism in three respects: a different object, a different means of achieving the object, and a different effect.

A Different Object. The object of biblical spiritual illumination is to enable us to understand and discern the truth and beauty of what is already objectively revealed in the Bible. The illumination claimed by the false mystic communicates truth independently of its objective revelation. It is not intended to enable us to appreciate what we already know but to communicate new knowledge.

A Different Means of Achieving the Object. The biblical doctrine of spiritual illumination says that this illumination comes through appointed means—prayer and the diligent study of God's Word. The mystic, however, may at times feel free to attain his illumination independent of diligent study of the Word. He circumvents all of this labor and lets immediate impressions on his heart tell him what the Scripture says. Thus, the intellect is bypassed.

The biblical doctrine of illumination speaks of illuminating what is already written and not the additional revelations of the false mystic. We are to come to Scripture with hearts aflame for God, believing Him in faith, and prayerfully search for the meaning of the text. We are to diligently search and examine the Scriptures, just as the writers of the New Testament did in their expositions of the Old Testament.

The false mystic bypasses this prayerful method of study. He simply waits passively, setting his intellect aside, and receives his impressions from beyond. One has to question the source of the false mystic's impressions: God, self, or Satan. He may be treading into dangerous territory.

QUESTION 18

In contrast to false mysticism as a means of gathering spiritual information, write in your Life Notebook characteristics of the Bible student as exemplified in the following verses:

- a. Acts 17:11
- b. 1 Timothy 4:13
- c. 2 Timothy 2:15
- d. Titus 1:9

Your answer might be something like this: Three characteristics of a student of theology are as follows, based on these examples:

- a. In Acts 17:11 the Berean Jews, though unbelievers, provide an excellent example of how a student of theology should always check the Scriptures to see if what someone teaches is accurate or not.

The next three verses are exhortations to Timothy and Titus as pastors in their respective churches. These pastoral standards serve as worthy examples for students of theology to emulate:

- b. In 1 Timothy 4:13 Paul exhorts Timothy to give attention to public reading of the Word, to exhortation, and to teaching.
- c. The example of 2 Timothy 2:15 is to be diligent to be a worker of whom God can approve, especially by handling the Word of God accurately.
- d. Titus 1:9 is an encouragement to steadfastly believe in and live by the Word of God to be able to exhort in sound doctrine and refute false doctrine.

A Different Effect. The effect of spiritual illumination is that the Word dwells in us “in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (Col 1:9). What dwells in the mind of the false mystic are his own imaginings, the character of which depend upon his own subjective state. This was true of Storch and Stubner in the Reformation days.

False Mysticism and the Leading of the Holy Spirit

The doctrine of the leading of the Spirit is to be contrasted with mysticism. How does God lead His children today according to Scripture? The Bible indicates that God’s leading comes primarily through six channels: Scripture (Ps 119:9; 119:23-24; 119:33-35; 119:97-106), counselors (Prov 12:15; 19:20; 20:18), observing life (Prov 6:6-11; Prov 30:24-28; Isa 42:20; Mt 6:28-30), obeying leaders (Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 2:13-14; Lk 2:51), gathering research (Josh 2; Neh 2:11-16), and circumstances (Eph 1:11; 1 Cor 16:8-9). Scripture also speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit speaking directly to the soul by inclining the heart (Phil 2:13; Ps 4:7; Ps 10:7; Ps 119:36), by placing thoughts in the mind (Neh 2:8), by giving understanding, teaching, and direction (Ps 119:33-36; Ps 25:4-14), and by confiding with the upright (Ps 25:14). This latter form of leading could certainly be called a true biblical mysticism. Yet that leading must be tested by Scripture and is never considered by the true mystic as a source of authority or of new revelation or theological knowledge.

Objections to False Mysticism as a Source of Theological Data

First of all, Scripture does not seem to provide much of a basis for mysticism. Scripture does not promise that the Spirit will be the immediate revealer of truth to “every man.” Passages containing mystical elements of revelation (e.g., Jn 16:13) only refer to the apostles and prophets. The men of the Bible who were led this way were selected as prophets. They were authenticated as divine messengers by miracles, and their instructions for the people were authoritative.

In like manner Jesus selected apostles and rendered them infallible teachers and required all men to receive their instruction as the words of God (1 Cor 14:37; 2 Cor 13:10).

Today God speaks theological data to us by his Spirit through His Word. While He certainly confides with the believer and directs him in some inner way, He spoke His Word by revelation through the apostles, and they wrote it down under inspiration. God burns it into our hearts by illumination. But, second, not only is false mysticism not found in Scripture, it is contrary to Scripture. Nowhere are we told to seek for a source of theological data or revelation by the inner light.

On the contrary, it is to the outward Word that our attention is directed. Men are required to hear and obey what the Spirit reveals to His selected messengers, apostles, and prophets. They are never commanded to obey inner impressions (Rom 10:14; 1 Cor 1:18, 21).

A final objection to mysticism is that there is no criterion by which to judge the source of inward suggestions. How does one know that his inner impression is from the Holy Spirit or from his own internal emotional dynamics? Many men sincerely believe that they have been inspired and

are under the influence of the Holy Spirit. But they are deluding themselves. An example of this was an American evangelist named Jim Jones who led himself and those who followed him to mass suicide in South America.

Thousands have been and still are fully convinced that the false is true and what is wrong is right. To tell men to look within themselves for an authoritative, nonbiblical voice and to trust their irresistible impressions and convictions is to give them a guide that may in some cases lead them straight to hell.

The doctrine of the inward teaching of the Holy Spirit is blessed and true. But He teaches the truths of Scripture and shows us how to apply them to life. **The Spirit does not give us additional information independent of the Scripture, nor will He ever lead or illumine in any way contradictory to the written Word of God.**

QUESTION 19

A pastor of a number of churches has just spent a week visiting many people. Because he placed visitation and other things higher on his priority list than study, he finds himself without a sermon on Sunday morning. On the way to church an idea comes to him. "That is it!" he exclaims. "That is what God wants me to speak on." He then steps into the pulpit and talks about that subject for forty-five minutes. Indicate which kind of leading is described.

- A. Spiritual Illumination
- B. Mysticism
- C. Leading by the Holy Spirit
- D. Scriptural Leading

QUESTION 20

Perplexed about what God wants him to do, an elder prays and opens his Bible at random. He determines to find the answer by fixing his attention on the first verse his eyes fall upon. The verse is somehow generally applicable. Relieved, he makes his decision convinced that God has spoken to him. Indicate which kind of leading is described.

- A. Spiritual Illumination
- B. Mysticism
- C. Leading by the Holy Spirit
- D. Scriptural Leading

QUESTION 21

About ten minutes after the pastor begins his sermon, a man walks in the back door. As soon as the congregation recognizes him, they all stand in respect. The pastor has to stop preaching. What this man has to say is of more importance than the pastor's sermon. This man claims to have the gift of prophecy. What do you think of the congregation's response? Indicate which kind of leading is described.

- A. Spiritual Illumination
- B. Mysticism
- C. Leading by the Holy Spirit
- D. Scriptural Leading

QUESTION 22

A young man is faced with two future ministry opportunities. They are both appealing. He has been praying about the matter for several months. During this time he has been studying the book of Philippians every night for one hour. As he studies, he asks the Lord to reveal principles to him that may apply to the decision he must make. One night a particular passage seems to leap off the page. The passage did not tell him which decision to make, but the passage revealed something to him about his own immaturity in certain areas. Once he examined his life against the mirror of the Word, it became clear to him that he was not yet qualified for one of the ministry opportunities. He concluded that God was leading him to take the other opportunity. Indicate which kind of leading is described.

- A. Spiritual Illumination
- B. Mysticism
- C. Leading by the Holy Spirit
- D. Scriptural Leading

QUESTION 23

A young seminarian has been assigned the responsibility of preparing a sermon for one of his classes on a difficult New Testament passage. It is one he has read and thought about before but was never quite sure what it meant. Now at seminary he set about to study carefully, discuss it with fellow students and professors, and to read commentaries and other helpful reference works. Throughout this time he asks the Lord to guide him in his study and understanding of the passage. One night, after several weeks of study, he is meditating on the passage, and it becomes clear to him. He is sure he has come to a proper understanding of the passage. Indicate which kind of leading is described.

- A. Spiritual Illumination
- B. Mysticism
- C. Leading by the Holy Spirit
- D. Scriptural Leading

Conclusion

Two verses of Scripture summarize our thinking on the doctrines of inspiration and illumination:

Every scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. (2 Tim 3:16)

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. (Jn 16:13a)

God has given all that we need to understand the Bible—the Spirit who illuminates us.

Key Biblical Concepts

Review the following biblical concepts and related references, and memorize them before taking the Lesson Self Check. Be prepared to explain how each reference supports its respective concept:

1. Illumination is a work of the Holy Spirit to lead a believer into an understanding and application of the truth of the Word of God - 2 Timothy 2:7.

2. Only a person empowered by the Holy Spirit can expect to benefit from this ministry - 1 Corinthians 2:14 to 1 Corinthians 3:2.

STUDY PROJECT #2 FOR LESSON 6

Reviewing Lesson 6 and using the diagram at the beginning of Topic 3 in this lesson as a guide, do the following:

1. Define biblical revelation, inspiration, authority, and illumination.
2. Explain the importance of each of these doctrines as the believer seeks to comprehend the thoughts of God revealed in the Bible and seeks to put them into practice in his daily life.

The diagram is also found at the end of chapter 16 in Ryrie.

Lesson 6 Self Check

QUESTION 1

The doctrine of illumination applies only to the text of Scripture as opposed to visions, dreams, or mental impressions from God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

There is a strong connection between illumination and spiritual maturity in the life of a believer. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

Conservative Roman Catholics and Protestants agree that revelation comes from within the individual. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

The system of interpretation that stands in contrast to literal interpretation is _____ hermeneutics.

QUESTION 5

A believer can hinder the work of illumination by the Spirit through _____.

QUESTION 6

Illumination comes primarily through prayer and _____.

QUESTION 7

Another way of expressing the idea of normal interpretation is:

- A. What I feel it means when I read it
- B. What the author's intended meaning is
- C. How the church has traditionally interpreted it
- D. What I have usually been taught it means

QUESTION 8

It is probably most accurate to classify neoorthodoxy's source of authority as:

- A. External, because it emphasizes the sovereignty of God
- B. External, because it claims that revelation comes through Scripture
- C. Internal, because it relies on personal encounters with God through Scripture
- D. Internal, because it relies on the mind to understand the meaning of propositional statements in Scripture

QUESTION 9

Illumination and mysticism are alike in that:

- A. They both rely primarily on the Bible
- B. They both involve communication from God to the minds of people
- C. They both rely primarily on direct communication with God
- D. They both involve reliance on times of quiet meditation

QUESTION 10

The main problem that results from the use of a nonliteral, allegorical system of hermeneutics is:

- A. The need to understand all the different kinds of figurative language
- B. The reliance on a thorough knowledge of the cultural background of each biblical book
- C. The emphasis on the author's style and not the meaning of the passage
- D. The loss of control on the intended meaning

Unit Two Exam

QUESTION 1

The main element that contemporary views of revelation have in common is that they are subjective in nature. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

Inspiration extends only to the original manuscripts. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

Inspiration and inerrancy are two different ways of saying the same thing. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Degree inspiration theory maintains that, while some parts of the Bible are inspired, others are not. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

Regarding the issue of the credibility of the scriptural revelation, the empiricists believe that the Bible is self-authenticating and therefore does not need validation from historical evidences. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

The three divisions of the Old Testament were formed chronologically as the books were written. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

All of the books of the Old Testament are quoted in the Dead Sea Scrolls. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

Martin Luther thought that the book of James should not be in the canon. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

The council at Jamnia merely confirmed but did not give authority to the books of the New Testament. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

The word “apostle” means “one who is authorized.” *True or False?*

QUESTION 11

The apostles did not believe their writings were authoritative or inspired. *True or False?*

QUESTION 12

Heresy forced the early believers to think carefully about what books should be included in the canon. They did not want to believe anything that was false. *True or False?*

QUESTION 13

The texts found at Qumran were nearly one thousand years older than the previously known manuscripts, and yet both texts showed a very high degree of agreement. Thus, it indicates that the Old Testament text had been transmitted with extreme care and accuracy. *True or False?*

QUESTION 14

The doctrine of illumination applies only to the text of Scripture as opposed to visions, dreams, or mental impressions from God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 15

There is a strong connection between illumination and spiritual maturity in the life of a believer. *True or False?*

QUESTION 16

Which of the following sources outside the Bible itself is NOT evidence for the canon of the Old Testament?

- A. The Dead Sea Scrolls: All Old Testament books except Esther are represented in these scrolls. They give positive evidence for the canonicity of all books except Chronicles, Esther, and the Song of Solomon.
- B. Prologue to Ecclesiasticus: The threefold division of the Old Testament is mentioned.
- C. Philo: He referred to the same threefold division
- D. The Egyptian Hieroglyphics referring to the building of the Pyramids by Joseph. Josephus: He said Jews held twenty-two books (representing our current thirty-nine books) as sacred.

QUESTION 17

Another way of expressing the idea of normal interpretation is:

- A. What I feel it means when I read it
- B. What the author's intended meaning is
- C. How the church has traditionally interpreted it
- D. What I have usually been taught it means

QUESTION 18

It is probably most accurate to classify neoorthodoxy's source of authority as:

- A. External, because it emphasizes the sovereignty of God
- B. External, because it claims that revelation comes through Scripture
- C. Internal, because it relies on personal encounters with God through Scripture
- D. Internal, because it relies on the mind to understand the meaning of propositional statements in Scripture.

QUESTION 19

Illumination and mysticism are alike in that:

- A. They both rely primarily on the Bible
- B. They both rely primarily on direct communication with God
- C. They both involve communication from God to the spirits of people
- D. They both involve reliance on times of quiet meditation

QUESTION 20

The main problem which results from the use of a nonliteral, allegorical system of hermeneutics is:

- A. The need to understand all the different kinds of figurative language
- B. The reliance on a thorough knowledge of the cultural background of each biblical book
- C. The emphasis on the author's style and not the meaning of the passage
- D. The loss of control on the intended meaning

QUESTION 21

The Barthians believe that the Bible becomes the Word of God when we personally _____ it.

QUESTION 22

An important purpose of special revelation is to replace _____ revelation by providing the necessary details about how men can come to know God personally.

QUESTION 23

The term _____ means "hidden."

QUESTION 24

The system of interpretation that stands in contrast to literal interpretation is _____ hermeneutics.

QUESTION 25:

A believer can hinder the work of illumination by the Spirit through _____.

Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

- B. The mind and reasoning have been given to us by God to be used in understanding His Word.
- C. The mind and reasoning have been given to us by God to relate to life and to what others, believers and unbelievers, say and teach.

QUESTION 2:

- B. Liberals often regard reason as the creator of truth.
- D. Liberals regard reason as the judge of truth.
- E. Liberals regard reason as the highest authority.

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4: My experience becomes my final authority.

QUESTION 5: Since the Bible has error and things that are not true, I have to depend on what I define as stumbling upon or encountering “God.” I am therefore free to define what it means to encounter God and make that my authority for life and action.

QUESTION 6: The Scriptures do not speak to me as my authority, only the “voice” of God who speaks to me personally. Therefore, what I perceive to be the voice of God is my authority.

QUESTION 7: I believe in God, but I don’t believe in the Bible. I therefore set the Bible aside and trust in what I believe God to be as my authority.

QUESTION 8:

Column A	Column B
Similarity to liberalism	The Bible is flawed and full of errors.
Similarity to conservatism	God initiates revelation.
The final analysis	Since the Bible is not the absolute authority, neoorthodoxy’s weakness is its lack of an external, objective standard of authority.

QUESTION 9: Your answer

QUESTION 10: False

QUESTION 11:

Source of Authority	View
Pope	In Roman Catholicism authority is drawn from church tradition, councils, and the _____.
Church	In Roman Catholicism the basis of authority is the Bible as interpreted by the _____.
Bible	In the Eastern Orthodox Church authority is based on a combination of tradition, the church, and the _____.

QUESTION 12: Your answer

The answer should focus on the idea that grammatical-historical interpretation fits the purpose of language—to communicate—and that it prevents excesses of interpretation because it forces us to stay within the limits of what is grammatically and historically true. For example, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, the Pharisee and Levite refer to those actual historical religious groups with all their strengths and weaknesses. The Good Samaritan represents a Samaritan, who as a person of mixed blood was repugnant to a pious Jew, and yet it was the lowly Samaritan, not the religious people, who helped the beaten man. Thus, the point of the story is made strongly through these contrasting historical realities. Thus, it would go beyond the bounds of

grammatical-historical (i.e., normal) interpretation to say that the beaten man represents fallen Adam, that Jerusalem stands for the place from which Adam fell, that the thieves refer to the devil and his angels, that the priest and Levite represent the Old Testament ministry, that the Samaritan is Jesus Christ, that the oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, and that the inn speaks of the church (see Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 2d ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982], p. 136). These are all unfounded, allegorical misrepresentations of what Luke, or the Lord through Luke, was trying to say

QUESTION 13:

Verse(s)	Contextual Meaning
Matthew 18:19-20	The thing to note is that the context has to do with a sinning brother who is brought before the church for discipline. A possible contextual interpretation sees the two or three as witnesses, and the agreement having to do with a judgment against a sinning brother.
1 Corinthians 13	The issue here is not the meaning of love but the purpose of this chapter. Usually it is thought of in terms of romantic love. While it is certainly applicable to that, it has primarily to do with a fractured, immoral church. Paul is offering tough, willful love as the answer to their problems.
Philippians 4:19	This is probably not a universal promise of God's provision for all believers. Instead, it is a promise to generous givers that, as they supply the needs of others, God will supply their needs. Thus, generous, especially sacrificial, giving is the prerequisite to the claiming of this promise.
James 1:5	The wisdom here is probably not intellectual wisdom, as if to know the answer to something. Instead, like the wisdom of Proverbs, it probably refers to the practical skill of knowing how to endure trials in a godly way.
1 Peter 5:7	This verse is usually quoted all by itself as if it is a general truth for all believers. But when a person recognizes that it is grammatically dependent on the previous verse, then the idea seems to be that as, and only as, a person humbles himself before God, can he cast his cares on the Lord.

QUESTION 14: False

QUESTION 15:

- A. The content of truth is the “things freely given to us by God,” i.e., the things of grace.
- C. Only a spiritual man can understand spiritual truth.
- E. The subject of the Spirit’s teaching ministry is the gospel as now recorded in the New Testament.

QUESTION 16:

Term	Meaning
Revelation	The content of God’s message to us.
Illumination	Makes the meaning of the written Word clear to us.
Inspiration	Guarantees that what is written in God’s Word is what He wanted written and that it is without error

QUESTION 17: B. The Spirit reveals God’s truth through the understanding of His Word.

QUESTION 18: Your answer

QUESTION 19: B. Mysticism

While God certainly could speak to a man this way, Scripture advocates diligent study of the Word to arrive at sermon content. It is likely that this pastor has his priorities out of order.

QUESTION 20: B. Mysticism

This is a form of divination that is forbidden in the Bible (Deut 18:9-14). God never tells us to use random verses as clues to His leading. There are no illustrations of such behavior in Scripture.

QUESTION 21: B. Mysticism

They are accepting a man who claims to have an extra-biblical source of communication of God. Only the apostles or prophets of the Old and New Testaments could claim that.

QUESTION 22: C. Leading by the Holy Spirit

The Spirit promises to lead through the Word of God in the context of diligent study.

QUESTION 23: A. Spiritual Illumination

Like question 22, the Spirit leads through the Word of God in the context of diligent study to spiritually enlighten the believer.

Lesson 6 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3: False

QUESTION 4: Allegorical

QUESTION 5: Correct answers include:

Carnality

Carnal

QUESTION 6: Correct answers include:

The Word of God (the Bible)

The Word

The Bible

Study

Scripture

Meditation

QUESTION 7: B. What the author's intended meaning is

QUESTION 8: C. Internal, because it relies on personal encounters with God through Scripture

QUESTION 9: B. They both involve communication from God to the minds of people

QUESTION 10: D. The loss of control on the intended meaning

Unit Two Exam Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3: False

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5: False

QUESTION 6: False

QUESTION 7: False

QUESTION 8: False

QUESTION 9: False

QUESTION 10: True

QUESTION 11: False

QUESTION 12: True

QUESTION 13: True

QUESTION 14: True

QUESTION 15: True

QUESTION 16: D. The Egyptian Hieroglyphics referring to the building of the Pyramids by Joseph.

QUESTION 17: B. What the author's intended meaning is

QUESTION 18: C. Internal, because it relies on personal encounters with God through Scripture

QUESTION 19: C. They both involve communication from God to the spirits of people

QUESTION 20: D. The loss of control on the intended meaning

QUESTION 21: Correct answers include:

Experience

Encounter

Overpower

QUESTION 22: General

QUESTION 23: Correct answers include:

Apocrypha

QUESTION 24

Correct answers include:

Allegorical

QUESTION 25: Correct answers include:

Carnality

Carnal

Unit Three: God's Highest Creations: Angels and Man

Of all living beings, only two classes of creatures reflect the nature of a personal God—angels and man. Both share the basic attributes of personality: intellect, will, and emotion. Both have the ability to communicate. And both have the capacity to obey or disobey God (though angels are now fixed in their status as obedient or disobedient).

On the other hand, angels are superior to man in knowledge and power. They are immaterial in nature, whereas man is both material and immaterial. But the most significant difference is the presence of the image of God in man.

Our purpose in this unit is to study these two wonders of creation. We will first investigate angels (good and evil) in general and then concentrate on the chief enemy of God—the angel Satan. Finally, we will study the creation of man.

Unit Outline

Lesson 7: Angels—Good and Bad

Lesson 8: Our Adversary the Devil

Lesson 9: The Creation of Man

Unit Objectives

When you have completed this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the biblical data concerning the origin, nature, and classification of both good and evil angels
- Compare and contrast the overall purposes of angels and demons in the world today
- Discuss the nature and fall of Satan
- Encourage other believers in their struggle with spiritual forces of wickedness, based upon the content in this unit and your study of the armor of God, as described in Ephesians 6:10-18
- Discuss the origin of man, including his immaterial nature, presenting your own view with scriptural support
- Apply the teachings of biblical anthropology to contemporary issues

Lesson 7: Angels—Good and Bad

Lesson Introduction

Man is a unique being in all the universe. Of all living beings on earth, only two categories of creatures reflect the nature of a personal God—angels and man. Both share the basic attributes of personality, intellect, will, and emotion, and both have the ability to communicate. Also, both have the capacity to obey or disobey God (though angels are now fixed in their standing as obedient or disobedient).

However, looking at it from another perspective, angels are superior to man in knowledge and power. Angels are immaterial in nature, whereas man is both material and immaterial. But the most noteworthy difference is the presence of the image of God in man.

In Topic 1 of this lesson we will consider the existence and the creation of the angels. In this age of science, angels have been passed over for the study of Unidentified Flying Objects and aliens from outer space. Our modern-day rational minds are said to be “too scientific” to believe in angels. Medieval philosophers elevated this subject to the apex of human reflection, but more recent thinkers have assigned the possibility of angelic existence to the realm of myth.

What is the essential nature of angels, and where do they live? How are they organized, and what is their ministry to believers? These important questions will engage us in Topic 1.

But not all of the angels are good. The name for those angels which fell from God and followed Satan is demons. For anyone who takes Scripture seriously, the existence of angels is not a subject to be treated contemptuously. Life is more than what we see. The believer’s warfare is greater than an evil institution, a wicked man, or his own fleshly desires. The believer fights against the demons. In Topic 2 we want to consider the reality and nature of these evil beings.

Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against principalities, powers, and world forces of this darkness, against spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies (Eph 6:12; 2 Cor 10:3). Life intersects with the unseen world, and what we fight against we cannot always see. Only by understanding the activity, purpose, and methods of the demons, can we be prepared to resist their influences.

Therefore, we need to arm ourselves with the knowledge God has declared in Scripture concerning those who aid us and those who oppose us—angels, elect and evil. The more we know about elect angels, the more we will be encouraged to fight for victory. The more we know about evil angels, the more we will be able to fight effectively and wisely.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: Angels—Ministers of God
 - The Existence of Angels
 - The Creation of Angels
 - The Nature of Angels
 - The Organization and Abode of Angels
 - The Ministry of Angels
 - Conclusion of Topic 1 (Angels)
- Topic 2: Demons—Minions of Satan
 - The Reality of Demons

The Nature of Demons
What Demons Do
Conclusion of Topic 2 (Demons)

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Discuss scriptural evidence regarding when angels were created and their spiritual state at creation
- Describe the personality and nature of angels
- Complete a chart to show the organization and rank of angels and their respective characteristics, activities, and/or position
- Describe the origin and activities of demons and be able to recognize and therefore combat their plans and objectives toward Christians

Definitions of Key Terms

A Priori Reasoning—the process of reasoning deductively, i.e., from cause to effect, from a generalization to particular instances; to come to a conclusion before an examination or analysis has been made.

A Posteriori Reasoning—the process of reasoning inductively, i.e., based on observation or experience; to reason from effect to cause, from particular instances to a generalization.

Demon Influence—the activity of demons in relation to the believer to entice or tempt him away from worshiping and obeying God.

Demon Oppression—a general term (includes influence and possession) describing the activities of demons in subjecting human beings to their designs.

Demon Possession—a condition in which one or more evil spirits or demons inhabit the body of a human being with the purpose of taking complete control of their victim at will.

Metaphysical—that which is beyond the physical or natural; incorporeal, supernatural, or transcendental.

Monistic—in philosophy it is the doctrine that there is only one ultimate substance or principle. When applied to angels, it means they are made up of only one essence, not two as man, who is both physical and immaterial (body and soul).

Terms for Angels—as you read the biblical references, you may see some of the following terms that refer to angels: angel, minister, host, chariots, watchers, sons of the Mighty, sons of God, holy ones, stars, elohim, archangels, angel of the Lord, messenger, ministering spirits, winds, and spirits.

Ubiquity—the state, fact, or capacity of being everywhere at the same time, i.e., omnipresence.

Memory Verse

In this lesson you are to memorize Psalm 139:7, which emphasizes the omnipresence of God. Be prepared to quote it from memory.

Reading Assignment

Your readings from Ryrie for this lesson are chapters 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 26, 27, and 28. You may read them all now or as they are indicated in the lesson.

Topic 1: Angels—Ministers of God

The more materialistic science becomes, the more angels shall I paint: their wings are my protest in favor of the immortality of the soul. (Burne-Jones)

Angels are the dispensers and administrators of the divine beneficence toward us. They regard our safety, undertake our defense, direct our ways and exercise a constant solicitude that no evil befall us. (John Calvin)

When was the last time that you thought about the ministry of angels in your life? When was the last time you heard a sermon on angels? How often do you thank the Lord for the presence of angels? If we were honest, most of us would have to confess that we do not entertain thoughts of angels very often. Perhaps we truly believe in them, but they rarely seem to make a difference in our daily living.

Why the study of angels is neglected is difficult to determine. Maybe the influence of unbiblical pictures of angels makes them more fit for a storybook than the Bible. Maybe we just do not think that their ministry is important, especially when compared to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Whatever the reasons, we have made a serious mistake. We should know about, and consider the importance of, angels in the Scriptures and in our lives.

The study of angels will do several things for us as students of the Bible:

- We will have a greater appreciation for our sovereign God in knowing His creative ability, control of the universe, and interventions on our behalf through angels.
- We will be comforted when we see that angels, as His ministers, demonstrate God's concern for us.
- We will be strengthened in our opposition to sin and corruption as we see the holiness and righteousness of God working through angels to oppose wickedness.
- Our understanding of God's grace will increase as we see Him withholding a worldwide judgment through the work of the angels.
- We will be reminded that the world is more than just a physical reality. It is a world of physical and spiritual realities wherein both good and evil exist.
- We will learn that we are sometimes opposed by higher powers or evil angels.
- We will be encouraged to practice greater obedience and faith as we see the total devotion that good angels demonstrate towards God.

The Existence of Angels

If you have not already read Ryrie, chapter 17, "The Existence of Angels," please do so now.

For centuries a debate has been waged over the existence of spiritual beings. Judaism was not exempted from this controversy. As indicated by Acts 23:8, the Sadducees denied the existence of angels, while the Pharisees affirmed their existence. Modern-day rationalists explain angels as personifications of divine attributes and activities. They see in the Jewish-Christian doctrine of

angels traces of an original polytheism or a borrowing from Babylonian and Persian legends. As a result, many do not believe in the living reality of angels.

QUESTION 1

In your Life Notebook prepare and document the following ministry activity.

1. What teachings in your own culture would tend to promote the denial of or belief in the doctrine of angels?
2. Conduct a survey among a few believers whom you know to find out what they believe concerning both good and evil angels. (You may select questions from the list below and, if appropriate, add others of your own on this topic.)
 - a. Do you believe angels exist today?
 - b. Is there more than one kind of angel, i.e., good and evil?
 - c. Are all angels alike in function and character?
 - d. Did the fall of man affect the role of angels in any way?
 - e. Do demons exist?
 - f. If demons do exist, can they affect our lives?
 - g. What is Satan's role in the world today?
3. As you record the answers given to your survey questions, seek to identify any misconceptions your acquaintances may have concerning angels.
4. Upon completion of steps 1-3 above, finish Lesson 7. After you have completed this lesson, prepare a Bible lesson on good and bad angels to teach to your church or other people to whom you minister. This will be the Study Project for this lesson.

Human Knowledge

As your text correctly observes, modern man has no *a priori* basis for judging what the content of the universe is or should be or can be. Thus, he can have no *a priori* objection to the existence of angels. His objections must all be *a posteriori*, that is, based on observation after the fact.

There is a sense, on the other hand, in which his objections can be *a priori*, in that he may discard, without investigation, the possibility of any supernatural existence or creatures. Denial occurs because he does not allow for any existence of a spiritual or metaphysical aspect of nature. But even that ultimately must be *a posteriori* since his attitudes will have been influenced by something after the fact.

Biblical Revelation

For the believer the strongest argument for affirming the doctrine of angels is the fact that the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) affirms it. Thirty-four of the sixty-six books of the Bible, including seventeen New Testament books, have specific references to angels. The word for "angel" is also used at least 108 times in the Old Testament and 179 times in the New Testament. Much of the Gospels and the Lord's discourses and actions would make little sense without reference to angels.

Because the existence of angels was assumed, scriptural writers made no attempt to prove their existence. The assumption was founded upon:

- The expressed declarations of Scripture (Ps 104:4; Heb 1:14)

- The descriptions of various appearances (Gen 18:2)
- The actions and teachings of Christ (Mt 4:6-7, 11; 8:28-32)

Objective 1—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to discuss scriptural evidence regarding when angels were created and their spiritual state at creation.

The Creation of Angels

Read Ryrie, chapter 18, “The Creation of Angels,” now if you have not already done so.

How did angels come to be? Have they always existed? Were they created? If so, how? When? These are some of the questions that are often asked about angels.

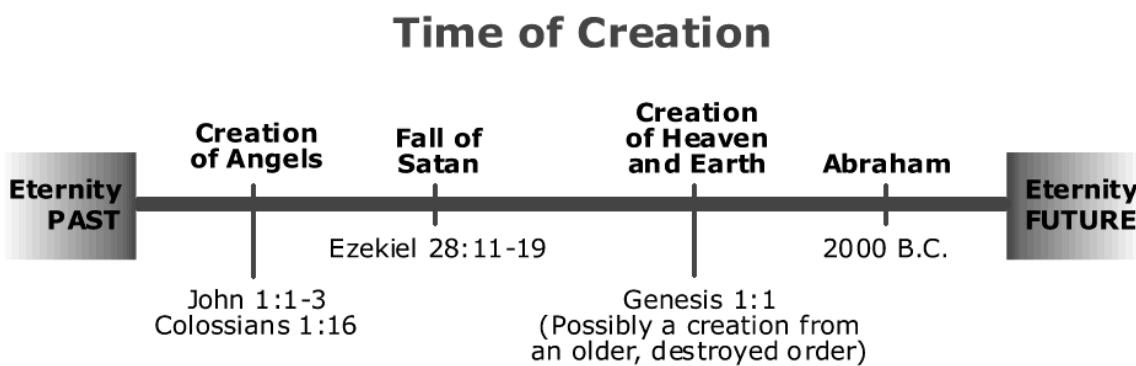
The Time of Their Creation

Support for the creation of angels before the creation of man is derived from Job 38:7, Nehemiah 9:6, Exodus 20:11, and Genesis 2:1. Some would say that angels were created on the first day. The Scriptures then speak about the creation of angels. Therefore, it is clear that they have not existed from all eternity (Neh 9:6; Ps 148:2, 5). Colossians 1:16-17 explains:

For all things in heaven and on earth were created by him—all things, whether visible or invisible, whether thrones or dominions, whether principalities or powers—all things were created through him and for him. He himself is before all things and all things are held together in him.

The time of their creation is never definitely specified, but it is most probable that it occurred in connection with the creation of the heavens in Genesis 1:1. It may be that God created the angels immediately after He had created the heavens and before He created the earth, for according to Job 38:4-7, “the sons of God shouted for joy” when He laid the foundations of the earth.

The chronology is framed only in the relative terms of eternity past where Christ’s existence is put on a par with the eternal existence of God. All of the created order, including angels, was created therefore by Christ. The following diagram illustrates this chronology:



The State of Their Creation

It is enough to say here that angels were created and that they were created holy. These two points will be discussed at greater length later in this study.

Objective 2—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to describe the personality and nature of angels.

The Nature of Angels

If you have not already read Ryrie, chapter 19, “The Nature of Angels,” please do so now.

What sort of beings are the angels that God created? The physical image presented by the Scriptures is at times frightening and even grotesque. Sometimes it even appears contradictory. Moses presents angels holding a flaming sword (Gen 3:24). Ezekiel gives them four faces: a man, a lion, a bull, and an eagle (Ezk 1:10). Ezekiel also describes them with four wings riding upon wheels within wheels full of eyes (Ezk 1:11, 18-19). John presents them as strong, glorious creatures, having the clouds as clothes and faces like the sun (Rev 10:1). Yet at other times they are so much like us that we are told to show hospitality to strangers because, in doing so, we may entertain angels unknowingly (Heb 13:2; see Gen 18:3; 19:2). How then are we to explain their nature?

They Are Personalities

The definition of personality lies with God. God’s personality is basically manifest in three faculties: intellect, sensibility (or emotion), and will. God alone is self-existent, and no creature can exist apart from Him. Yet all persons are, as the result of God’s creation, self-conscious, self-determining, moral individuals. These qualities distinguish persons from things or animals and thus make angels persons.

The angelic intelligence that Ryrie speaks about is usually classified by theologians as:

- (1) created or natural knowledge, i.e., innate knowledge coupled with reasoning ability
- (2) knowledge by revelation, i.e., by what additional things God chooses to reveal
- (3) knowledge by experience, i.e., by what they perceive in heaven and on earth.

These areas are also reflected in the angels’ ability to speak and communicate (Mt 28:5), in their ability to reason and choose (Ezk 28:12, 16), in their desire to learn (1 Pet 1:12), and through God’s enlightenment (Rev 10:5-6; 17:1-18).

QUESTION 2

In 1 Kings 8:39, Isaiah 46:9-10, and 1 Corinthians 2:10 limitations seem to be placed on the knowledge of angels. Indicate which statement is NOT correct.

- A. The extent of their knowledge is limited.
- B. They do not know the deep things of God.
- C. They know the hearts of men.
- D. They do not know the future.

QUESTION 3

According to 1 Corinthians 2:10-12, angels can read the thoughts of human beings or of God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Angels are limited in power and freewill. Match the verse(s) with the corresponding statement. This will show the limitations that are imposed on the power and will of angels.

<i>Verse(s)</i>	<i>Statement</i>
Job 1:12; 2:6	They are subject to the apostles.
Matthew 10:1; Acts 16:16-18	They are subject to the weaponry of the believer.
Luke 8:28-32	There is only a certain length of time in which they can act.
2 Corinthians 10:4	There is only a certain extent to which they can harm people.
Revelation 13:5	They are subject to Christ.

They Are Higher Creatures Than Men

While angels are higher than man, it must be remembered that they are also lower than God. They are not to be worshiped. As separate entities of creation, angels are neither God nor man but belong to a unique category of created beings. In other words, angels occupy a middle position between God and man.

The fact that angels are higher creatures than men takes on great significance when we read in Hebrews 2:7-9 that Jesus “was made lower than the angels for a little while.” This phrase speaks of the great humiliation of our Lord, since it indicates His willingness to leave the glories of heaven to suffer the indignities of humanity in order to redeem us.

They Were Originally Holy Beings

As Ryrie indicates, the Bible furnishes little information respecting the original state of angels. But several indications would lead one to believe that all the angels were originally created holy and without any inclination to evil. The following Scriptures list several arguments for the holiness of the angels. Look up the verses to see how they support this statement.

Genesis 1:31

Matthew 25:31; Mark 8:38

John 8:44; 1 Timothy 5:21; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6

They Are Limited in Ability

Attending angels’ creatureliness and nature is also a limitation in ability. This is seen in the areas of knowledge, strength, and apparent omnipresence. Their power seems to be generally applied in five ways:

1. To restrain human wickedness or create it (Gen 18-19; Num 22:22-35; Eph 6:11)
2. To execute God’s chastisement of His own sinning people (2 Sam 24:1-16) or punishment of His enemies (2 Kgs 19:35)
3. To exercise human deliverance (Acts 12:7-11; Dan 3:28) or bind people in bondage (2 Tim 2:26; 1 Pet 5:8)
4. To control the elements (Rev 7:2-3; 16:8-9)

5. To war with one another (Dan 10:13; Rev 12:7-8)

We should note, however, that according to 2 Peter 2:11 and Psalm 72:18, angels do not possess the power of creation, the power to create life, or the power to work miracles beyond what God permits.

QUESTION 5

In your Life Notebook look up the following Scriptures, and write a paragraph describing the characteristics and qualities of angels.

- a. Genesis 18:2, 13
- b. 2 Samuel 14:20
- c. Job 1:7
- d. Psalm 103:20; Matthew 28:2
- e. Matthew 24:36
- f. 1 Peter 3:22

Objective 3—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to complete a chart to show the organization and rank of angels and their respective characteristics, activities, and/or position.

The Organization and Abode of Angels

Read Ryrie, chapter 20, “The Organization of the Angels,” now if you have not already done so.

Augustine once said in reference to angels, “Do you ask for the name of their nature? It is spirit. Do you inquire concerning the name of their office? It is angel” (cited in Heinrich Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 3rd ed., rev., trans. Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs [Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1899], p. 200). Etymologically, the word “angel” signifies messenger. This designation refers not to their nature but to their office or function as an envoy. Consequently, it is used for more than just spiritual beings, since an envoy, or legate, can be human or divine.

We find it in designations for the Son of God as the uncreated Angel, or Legate (Isa 63:9; Mal 3:1; Gen 48:16; Jn 1:1, 14). It is also used with men (including prophets and priests: Hag 1:13; Mal 2:7; 3:1; Mt 11:10; Mk 1:2; Lk 7:27; Rev. 1:20). Of its 214 uses in the Old Testament it is most often used for the preincarnate Son of God. Of the 186 times the term “angel” is used in the New Testament (King James Version), only seven refer to someone other than angels.

The Number of Angels

Hebrews 12:22 speaks of myriads of angels. The term “myriads” indicates a number that cannot be counted (similar to “legions” and “host”). Ryrie’s assertion that the number equals the total number of people who have lived throughout history is attractive.

QUESTION 6

Read Matthew 25:41, 2 Peter 2:4, and Jude 6. The three general classifications of angels found in the Scriptures are (1) holy and satanic, (2) elect and fallen, and (3) good and evil. *True or False?*

Review in Ryrie the sections entitled “The Fact of Their Organization” and “The Ranking of Angels.” Then answer the following questions.

Ryrie raises a very important practical point related to the organization of the angels. In the space provided, fill in the blank with the correct answer. The same word can be used in all three blanks.

QUESTION 7

Since angels are _____ and demons are _____, Christians should also be _____, both individually and in groups. This is particularly true when fighting Satan. Christians should not always attempt this alone but should join together with other Christians.

QUESTION 8

The differences between chief princes, cherubim, and seraphim are in name only. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

Revelation 12:7 and Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1 tell us that Michael is prince over the nation Israel and has other angels under his authority. *True or False?*

“Sons of God”

A phrase that is used for angels is “sons of God.” This phrase is used in Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7 to refer to angels, including Satan. They are sons of God in the sense of being created by God. In fact, “gods” (elohim) is used for angels (Ps 8:5; Heb 2:7). Some hold that the sons of God mentioned in Genesis 6:2 are angels who cohabited with women (Jude 6; 2 Pet 2:4-5). It may, however, have reference to the godly line of Seth.

Particular Angels

Beyond those angels who are part of the leadership of the angelic host are those who have specific responsibilities.

QUESTION 10

Your text briefly comments on five leaders of the angelic host. Read each section. Then match the term with the correct description.

<i>Term</i>	<i>Description</i>
Gabriel	Have power over fire, of waters, of the abyss, and to bind Satan
Angels with Special Responsibilities	Are guardian angels over each church or their pastors, i.e., “messenger”
Angel of Yahweh	Will sound trumpets and pour out the seven last plagues
Angels Associated with Future Judgments	Is a high-ranking angel who brought important messages from God to several individuals
Angels of the seven Churches of Revelation 2-3	Is a Christophany, a preincarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ

The Angel of Yahweh

Undoubtedly, the most important of the five angels mentioned above is the Angel of Yahweh (also called the Angel of the Lord). It is a topic that is more relevant to Christology, but let us at least touch on the basic issues involved in the identification of this angel.

Two main pieces of evidence are used to establish that the Angel of Yahweh is a preincarnate manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ. First, the Angel is identified with Yahweh. In the well-known story of Moses at the burning bush, Exodus 3:2, NASB says “the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush.” Then it says in Exodus 3:4 that “God called to him from the midst of the bush.” See the other references in Ryrie for further examples of this identification.

Second, the Angel is distinct from Yahweh. In Zechariah 1:9-12, we see the Angel of Yahweh pleading to the Lord of Hosts on behalf of Israel (Gen 48:15-16; Ex 23:20-21).

Three other factors contribute to the evidence for this identification. First, the appearances of the Angel cease after the birth of Christ. Second, the Father and the Spirit never take bodily form. Third, in view of the incarnation it is likely that, whenever God manifests Himself to human beings in the Old Testament, “it is the Second Person of the Trinity who appears thus in human form” (cf. Jn 1:18; Col 1:15-17) (James Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols. in one [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1962], p. 33). We believe that the evidence is strong enough to confidently say that the Angel of Yahweh is the preincarnate Christ.

The Ministry of Angels

If you have not already read Ryrie, chapter 21, “The Ministry of Angels,” please do so now.

The fairy tale picture of angels sitting on clouds and playing harps is not only false but is a far cry from the many important ministries that good angels perform in relation both to heaven and to earth.

Ryrie mentions their ministry in relation to God and Christ. Angels are also involved in many general ministries as they serve and help believers.

QUESTION 11

Copy the Scripture references listed below into your Life Notebook. Look up each reference, and write a one-sentence summary of the angelic ministry described. This will be encouraging material for you to share in the study you are preparing.

- a. Daniel 9:20-24; Matthew 1:20; Revelation 1:1
- b. Acts 10:1-19
- c. 1 Kings 19:4-7
- d. Daniel 3:24-28; 6:20-23
- e. Daniel 10:5
- f. Acts 12:1-17
- g. Luke 16:22
- h. Genesis 19:12-29

Conclusion of Topic 1 (Angels)

You have just completed an extensive look into the subject of angels. Possibly you were surprised at the scope and content of the biblical data on angels. Praise God that we have such powerful forces ministering to us as we walk daily with Him.

Topic 2: Demons: Minions of Satan

Until recently serious study of the subject of demons was considered a relic from a prescientific age. But that is no longer the case. The presence of the occult and, more recently, media reports about the growing number of young people involved in satanic worship and activities make a study of demons timely and necessary.

Demonology has not only been studied by the Christian theologian. Students of anthropology, psychology, and religion have expressed an interest in demonology. Christian teaching, however, reaches beyond the scope of naturalistic theories to original sources and ultimate realities.

What or who are demons? Where did they come from? What can they do? These and many other questions will be addressed in this section.

Objective 4—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to describe the origin and activities of demons and able to recognize and therefore combat their plans and objectives toward Christians.

The Reality of Demons

If you have not already done so, please read Ryrie, chapter 26, “The Reality of Demons,” now.

The Testimony of Scripture

The New Testament writers believed firmly in demons. They declared their existence (1 Cor 10:20; Jas 2:19; Rev 9:20), described their nature (Lk 4:33; 6:18), reported their activity (1 Tim 4:1; Rev 16:14), mentioned their expulsion from human bodies (Lk 9:42), and indicated their abode (Lk 8:31; Rev 9:11).

Christ Himself held these same views. Note His actions and teachings in relation to them:

1. He commanded His disciples to cast out demons (Mt 10:1).
2. He cast out demons Himself (Mt 15:22, 28).
3. He rebuked demons (Mk 5:8).
4. He demonstrated His power over demons (Mt 12:29).
5. He spoke to demons (Mt 8:31-32).
6. He suggested their organization (Mt 12:26).
7. He foresaw the demons' final doom along with their master (Lk 10:17-18; Mt 25:41).
8. He taught about demons (Mt 10:8; 12:43-45).

The Origin of Demons

Four theories have been put forward as to the identification of demons. The only tenable view is that demons should be identified with Satan and those fallen angels that are not confined. If Satan's angels and demons are not identical, then no other origin of demons is anywhere explicitly revealed in Scripture.

Read the section "The Confinement of Some Fallen Angels." Then study the diagram at the end of chapter 26. Look up each verse on the chart, and note how each verse explains the divisions among the angels.

The Nature of Demons

If you have not already done so, please read Ryrie, chapter 27, "What Are Demons Like?" now. We have seen that all angels share the same basic nature and that demons are fallen angels. As you read through chapter 27, be sure to note how demons, or fallen angels, differ from good angels in their nature and the use of their power.

What Demons Do

Read Ryrie, chapter 28, "What Do Demons Do?" Then interact with the following questions. As with good angels, demons are active in all spheres of life and with all groups of people. The questions and discussion in this section will help you see more clearly what they do.

QUESTION 12

What is the overall objective of evil angels? Select the best answer.

- A. The objective of evil angels is to actively oppose God's people and the outworking of their purposes in the world.
- B. The objective of evil angels is to actively oppose evangelism and the spread of the gospel in the world.
- C. The objective of evil angels is to actively oppose God and the outworking of His purposes in the world.
- D. The objective of evil angels is to actively oppose pastors and their effective service for God in the world.

QUESTION 13

In Luke 13:10-13 and Matthew 9:33 Scripture makes a definite distinction between demon possession and physical maladies. *True or False?*

QUESTION 14

According to 1 Timothy 4:1-3, demons could be the source of much evil or immoral conduct of men today. *True or False?*

QUESTION 15

According to 2 Thessalonians 2:2 and 1 Timothy 4:1, demons spread false doctrine. *True or False?*

QUESTION 16

Ephesians 6:12 teaches that, because God limits the demons' authority, they can never oppose believers. *True or False?*

QUESTION 17

Both 2 Thessalonians 2:2 and Mark 5:8-14 prove that demon influence is the same as demon possession. *True or False?*

QUESTION 18

As seen in Judges 9:23 and 1 Kings 22:21-23, God sometimes uses the work of demons for His own purposes. *True or False?*

Demons are involved in many different activities. The following points help summarize the work of evil angels:

Demons oppose God's program

They do this by (1) promoting rebellion (2 Thess 2:3-4; Rev 16:14); (2) slandering the saints (Rev 12:10); (3) being present in idolatry (Lev 17:7; Deut 32:17; 1 Cor 10:10); (4) twisting God's Word (1 Tim 4:1-8); and (5) creating false religions (Gal 1:6-8).

Demons extend the power of Satan

Satan's host extends the power of their prince through (1) pooling their resources (Mt 12:26, 45; Lk 8:30) and (2) promoting false doctrine (Eph 2:1-2; 1 Tim 4:1-5).

Demons oppress mankind

Evil angels oppress mankind by (1) disabling the body (examples of dumbness, Mt 9:32-33; blindness, Mt 12:22; deformity, Lk 13:11-17; epilepsy, Mt 17:15-18); (2) deranging the mind (examples of insanity, Lk 8:27-29; suicidal mania, Mk 9:22); (3) driving to injury (Mk 5:5; Lk 9:39); (4) destroying life (Rev 18:2; 18:24); and (5) dominating men's bodies (Mt 8:28-34; 9:32-34; 12:22; Mk 1:23-27; 7:23-30; Lk 9:37-42; Acts 16:16-18).

Demons war against the believer

Evil angels war against the believer by (1) inflicting maladies (2 Cor 12:7); (2) disrupting the church (sowing tares, Mt 13:24-30, 36-43); (3) opposing true doctrine (1 Tim 4:1-3); and (4) countering the gospel (Acts 13:8-10).

QUESTION 19

Based upon your understanding, match the individual(s) or group(s) with the related action of evil angels.

<i>Individual(s)/Group(s)</i>	<i>Evil Angels' Actions</i>
In Relation to Unbelievers	Evil angels oppose their work.
In Relation to Believers	Evil angels help carry out his plan.
In Relation to Good Angels	Evil angels war against Him and His plan.
In Relation to Satan	Evil angels blind their eyes to the gospel.
In Relation to God	Evil angels attempt to separate them from fellowship with Christ and the Spirit.

In light of the above discussion on the work of evil angels, think of a few examples that illustrate the work of evil angels in your society. In all of these activities God often overrules Satan and his host. In 1 Corinthians 10:13 we read:

No trial has overtaken you that is not faced by others. And God is faithful, who will not let you be tried too much, but with the trial will also provide a way through it so that you may be able to endure.

In other words, God provides a means of escape so that Satan may not win an advantage over us. God says He is faithful to provide the ways by which we can endure as Job did (Job 1:22; 2:10; 42:7). In our endurance God is (1) creating discernment (Job 40:1-4); (2) cultivating dependence (2 Cor 12:7); (3) defeating ungodliness (Israel was involved in the suffering of some of the plagues wrought by the angels, Ps 78:49); (4) developing proven character and hope (Rom 5:3-5); and (5) displaying His righteousness (Rev 19:1-2).

Conclusion of Topic 2 (Demons)

In considering the activities of demons, we are made vividly aware of the fact that they are a living, aggressive, negative force against the works and kingdom of God. We are able to properly defend ourselves against them and indeed conquer their power in our lives, if we will but avail ourselves of the spiritual resources at our disposal. May the Lord give us the desire and strength to constantly stand against these wicked forces in the heavenlies.

Conclusion of Lesson

Now that you have finished Lesson 7, review the following biblical concepts and do the Study Project below where you will prepare the Bible lesson outline on good and bad angels to teach to your church or other people to whom you minister, completing Question 1. Think of the encouragement and help this can be to them as they fight the good fight of faith.

Key Biblical Concepts

Before taking the Lesson Self Check, review these biblical concepts and the references supporting them. Be prepared to describe briefly how each reference supports or explains its respective concept:

1. Angels (including demons) exist - Matthew 4:11; James 2:19

2. God created angels - Psalm 148:2-5
3. Angels minister constantly before the throne of God - Isaiah 6:1-3
4. Angels have rank and organization - Ephesians 3:10
5. Two specific classes are cherubim and seraphim - Genesis 3:24; Isaiah 6:2
6. Some angels fell and will be judged - Jude 6
7. Angels minister to believers - Psalm 91:11; Hebrews 1:14
8. Demon possession does occur - Matthew 15:22

STUDY PROJECT FOR LESSON 7

1. Select one of the false concepts for both good and evil angels as identified in your ministry project from Question 1 in this lesson (you should have recorded your answers in your Life Notebook). Prepare teaching material, including an outline with specific points and scriptural support, to correct these misconceptions. If possible, present this Bible study to those who participated in the survey. Be prepared to share the results of your work at the next group meeting.
2. Write a paragraph explaining how your understanding of the existence and nature of angels should affect your daily life.

Lesson 7 Self Check

QUESTION 1

God sometimes uses the work of demons for His own purposes. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

Satan and his host will one day be cast into the lake of fire. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

Demons are fallen angels. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Satan and his host have unlimited use of power, intelligence, and wisdom. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

How were angels created?

- A. By divine authoritative command.
- B. By procreation.
- C. By evolution.
- D. We cannot possibly know.

QUESTION 6

Which of the following statements about the nature of angels is FALSE?

- A. Angels are individual spirit entities.
- B. Angels possess bodies.
- C. Angels seem to have some form of embodiment.
- D. Angels can appear as humans.

QUESTION 7

When the angels fell:

- A. The creation was cursed
- B. All the angels lost their original holiness
- C. Holy angels were cast into Hades
- D. A cosmic angelic war began

QUESTION 8

If you had to select just one word to describe good angels in relation to believers, the best answer would be:

- A. Ministers
- B. Travelers
- C. Sons of God
- D. Holy Ones

QUESTION 9

The strongest argument for the existence of angels is the testimony of _____.

QUESTION 10

Angels were probably created before the creation of the world because Scripture indicates that they were present at _____.

Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1: *Your answer*

QUESTION 2: C. They know the hearts of men.

QUESTION 3: False

QUESTION 4:

Verse(s)	Statement
Job 1:12; 2:6	There is only a certain extent to which they can harm people.
Matthew 10:1; Acts 16:16-18	They are subject to the apostles.
Luke 8:28-32	They are subject to Christ.
2 Corinthians 10:4	They are subject to the weaponry of the believer.
Revelation 13:5	There is only a certain length of time in which they can act.

QUESTION 5: *Your answer*

QUESTION 6: True

QUESTION 7: Organized

QUESTION 8: False

QUESTION 9: True

QUESTION 10:

Term	Description
Gabriel	Is a high-ranking angel who brought important messages from God to several individuals
Angels with Special Responsibilities	Have power over fire, of waters, of the abyss, and to bind Satan
Angel of Yahweh	Is a Christophany, a preincarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ
Angels Associated with Future Judgments	Will sound trumpets and pour out the seven last plagues
Angels of the Seven Churches of Revelation 2-3	Are guardian angels over each church or their pastors, i.e., "messenger"

QUESTION 11: *Your answer*

QUESTION 12: C. The objective of evil angels is to actively oppose God and the outworking of His purposes in the world.

QUESTION 13: True

QUESTION 14: True

QUESTION 15: True

QUESTION 16: False

QUESTION 17: False

QUESTION 18: True

QUESTION 19:

Individual(s)/Group(s)	Evil Angels' Actions
In Relation to Unbelievers	Evil angels blind their eyes to the gospel.
In Relation to Believers	Evil angels attempt to separate them from fellowship with Christ and the Spirit.
In Relation to Good Angels	Evil angels oppose their work.
In Relation to Satan	Evil angels help carry out his plan.
In Relation to God	Evil angels war against Him and His plan.

Lesson 7 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5: A. By divine authoritative command.

QUESTION 6: B. Angels possess bodies.

QUESTION 7: D. A cosmic angelic war began.

QUESTION 8: A. Ministers

QUESTION 9

Correct answers include:

Scripture

The Bible

QUESTION 10: Creation

Lesson 8: Our Adversary the Devil

Lesson Introduction

As for you, the one who lives in the shelter of the Sovereign One, and resides in the protective shadow of the mighty king. . . . No harm will overtake you, no illness will come near your home. For he will order his angels to protect you in all you do. They will lift you up in their hands, so you will not slip and fall on a stone. (Ps 91:1, 10-12)

In the last lesson we examined the existence, creation, nature, organization, and ministry of angels. We looked at both good angels and demons. Now our attention is directed to the enemy of God, Satan. In this lesson we will review his nature and strategies of darkness and develop a plan to fight an unseen war. Guided by the Spirit of truth, the Bible permits us to discern what is normally invisible and hidden.

In Topic 1 we will explore the biblical evidence that Satan is a real personality and not just a “force” or a “principle of evil.” If one accepts the Scriptures as revelation from God, rather than merely a record of man’s thoughts about God, then the reality of Satan cannot be denied. Satan did not evolve as a personal being; he existed and acted from the earliest to the last books of God’s revelation. Seven books of the Old Testament (Genesis, 1 Chronicles, Job, Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah) teach his reality. Every writer of the New Testament affirmed his reality and activity. Christ’s teaching also assumes and affirms Satan’s existence and activity. In twenty-five of the twenty-nine passages in the Gospels that mention Satan, our Lord is speaking. In some of those passages there can be no question of Christ’s accommodating His teaching to the crowd’s supposed ignorances or faulty concepts of Satan due to Persian dualism. You should especially note passages like Matthew 13:39 and Luke 10:18; 11:18.

But where did Satan come from? Topic 2 takes us into eternity past to explore the creation of a magnificent being, Lucifer, the star of the morning. Through the sin of pride he fell from his high position and a third of the heavenly host followed in a terrible rebellion against the Almighty.

In Topic 3 of the lesson we will consider the activities of Satan. How does his presence on earth affect our lives? In order to fight the invisible war against him and his minions, it is critical that we first understand his methods of attack. The strategies of Satan against the believer and against the church will be explored.

Finally, the crucial concept of the world system which Satan directs must engage us for Topic 4. Jesus called Satan the prince of this world. The cosmos, or world, is an organized system, headed up by Satan, to challenge and refute the goals of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is through the cosmos that Satan often attacks mankind and corrupts the lives of individual believers. By understanding this false system, we are better prepared to resist his warfare against us.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: The Reality of Satan

Evidences of His Person
His Names

Topic 2: The Creation and Sin of Satan

His Creation
His Sin
The Time of His Sin

Topic 3: The Activities of Satan
 Satan's Methods and the Believer
 Satan's Methods and the Church

Topic 4: Satan's World
 The Meaning of the Cosmos
 Satan and the Cosmos
 The Christian and the Cosmos

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Describe the nature of Satan at the time of his creation and list his biblical names.
- Identify the reason for and consequences of Satan's fall
- State Satan's goal in the cosmos and how he goes about achieving it, both in the life of the believer and local churches
- List at least five ways in which the Christian experiences victory through Christ in spite of Satan's methods in the world today

Definition of Key Term

Cosmos—from the Greek word for “order,” cosmos was the ancient term for the universe. In relation to Satan, the term applies to his realm and the physical world in which he is active.

Memory Verse

In this lesson you are to memorize Ephesians 6:10-18, which describes the armor of God, and Matthew 11:21, which focuses on the omniscience of God. Be prepared to quote these verses from memory.

Reading Assignment

Your readings from Ryrie for this lesson are chapters 22, 23, 24, and 25. Please read them all now.

Topic 1: The Reality of Satan

Objective 1—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to describe the nature of Satan at the time of his creation and list his biblical names.

If you have not already done so, please read Ryrie, chapter 22, “The Reality of Satan,” now.

The reality of Satan is unquestioned for the person who believes in the Scriptures. The Bible speaks as clearly about Satan as it does about elect angels, God, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Evidences of His Person

In the same ways that elect angels have personality (mind, will, and emotion), so does Satan. In this regard, answer the following questions:

QUESTION 1

According to Ryrie, what indications are there in the Bible that Satan is a person? Cite specific verses before you check your answer.

QUESTION 2

Ezekiel 28:11-15 tells us about Satan's nature at the time of his creation. Which of the following descriptions are found in Ezekiel's account? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. He was a spirit being.
- B. He walked among fire.
- C. He was guilty.
- D. He was created perfect.
- E. He was beautiful.
- F. He was wise.

Be prepared to discuss the above two questions at your next group meeting.

His Names

As with God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and in keeping with usage in the ancient world as well as today, the name of a person denotes character. Satan has many names, the most common of which are presented in Ryrie.

QUESTION 3

Match the correct biblical passage with the name used for Satan.

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Satan's Name</i>
Isaiah 14:12	Anointed cherub
Isaiah 27:1	Beelzebul
Ezekiel 28:14	Leviathan
Matthew 4:1	Satan
Matthew 4:3	Shining one
Matthew 4:10	Devil
Matthew 12:24, 27	Tempter

QUESTION 4

Match the correct biblical passage with the name used for Satan.

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Satan's Name</i>
Matthew 13:39	Angel of light
John 8:44	Belial
John 12:31	Enemy
John 17:15	Evil one
2 Corinthians 4:4	God of this age
2 Corinthians 6:15	Murderer and liar
2 Corinthians 11:14	Ruler of the world

QUESTION 5

Match the correct biblical passage with the name used for Satan.

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Satan's Name</i>
Ephesians 2:2	Accuser
Hebrews 2:14	Apollyon
1 Peter 5:8	Holds the power of death
Revelation 9:11	Huge red dragon
Revelation 12:3, 7-9	Ruler of the kingdom of the air
Revelation 12:10	Roaring lion

Topic 2: The Creation and Sin of Satan

Objective 2—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to identify the reason for and consequences of Satan's fall.

Read Ryrie, chapter 23, "The Creation and Sin of Satan," now if you have not already done so.

Because Satan was originally an angel, he too was created. Let the text guide you in the scriptural presentation of this fact.

His Creation

The revelation concerning the creation of Satan is not nearly as clear as that of man or other angels. But if Ezekiel 28 refers to Satan at the time of his creation (at least before his fall), then we have a fairly good picture of some of the conditions at the time of his creation.

His Sin

No other being influenced Satan in his fall. Though the Bible does not explicitly say why he rebelled, it does present enough information to refute any suspicions that God was responsible for his fall. If it is correct to understand the last phrase of 1 Timothy 3:6 as meaning "punishment the devil will receive," it may indicate that Satan fell because of arrogance, or pride, in which he defied the God-ordained purpose of his own creaturehood (see also 1 Tim 6:4 and 2 Tim 3:4).

The Net Bible, on the other hand, translates that phrase to mean “the punishment that the devil will exact.” If this is the case, then nothing is said about Satan’s original sin.

In Ezekiel 28:15 the prophet exclaims of Satan: “You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until iniquity was found in you.”

This is as close as the Bible ever comes to explaining how sin entered the universe. We are never told how a sinless being can sin. We are told that the essence of Satan’s sin was pride. “Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom on account of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I placed you before kings that they might see you” (Ezek 28:17).

Apparently, the source of Satan’s pride was the very gifts God had given him: his beauty and wisdom. He became more enamored with the gifts than with the Giver. As a result, Satan was cast to the ground. At this point judgment came upon Satan. It is possible that this judgment brought forth the “formless and void” condition from which the earth would be created in Genesis 1.

It is possible that Ezekiel 28 describes a pre-Genesis world. It was from this world that Satan ruled over the angelic hosts and a portion of the pre-Genesis universe, which God had created. The reason for casting him out instead of judging him immediately was that God intended to demonstrate something: the futility of independence. Donald Grey Barnhouse, in *The Invisible War*, says:

We shall give this rebellion a thorough trial. We shall permit it to run its full course. The universe shall see what a creature, though he be the highest creature ever to spring from God’s Word, can do apart from Him. We shall watch this experiment, and permit the universe of creatures to watch it, during this brief interlude between eternity past and eternity future called time. In it the spirit of independence shall be allowed to expand to the utmost. And the wreck and ruin which shall result will demonstrate to the universe, and forever, that there is no life, no joy, no peace apart from a complete dependence upon the Most High God, the Possessor of heaven and earth. (Donald Grey Barnhouse, *The Invisible War* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1965], p. 51)

QUESTION 6

Look at Psalm 24:1-2, Acts 17:24, and Psalm 19:1, and then consider the following: An atheist once asked a Christian, “What was God’s purpose in creation?” When the atheist heard that the purpose was to manifest God’s glory, he responded, “That’s pretty egotistical, bringing this entire universe into existence simply to magnify Himself.” How would you respond to this statement?

In order to respond in a moral way that would also fully reveal His glory, God placed an inferior creature, man, into Satan’s domain. So in Genesis 1:1, God apparently refashioned the destroyed world of Satan into the earth, making it habitable for man. In it God placed Adam and instructed him to subdue the earth and have dominion over it (Gen 1:26-28). This immediately began the warfare.

QUESTION 7

Read Genesis 3:15. In keeping with the passage, which of the following are the warring parties? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The seed of Satan (Satan and the fallen angels)
- B. The seed of Michael (Michael and the holy angels)
- C. The seed of the woman (the human race)
- D. The seed of the woman (the representative man, the Lord Jesus Christ)

QUESTION 8

Read Isaiah 14:13-14. Notice also Ryrie's listing of the five "I wills" from this passage. Then in one sentence summarize the essence of what Satan wanted.

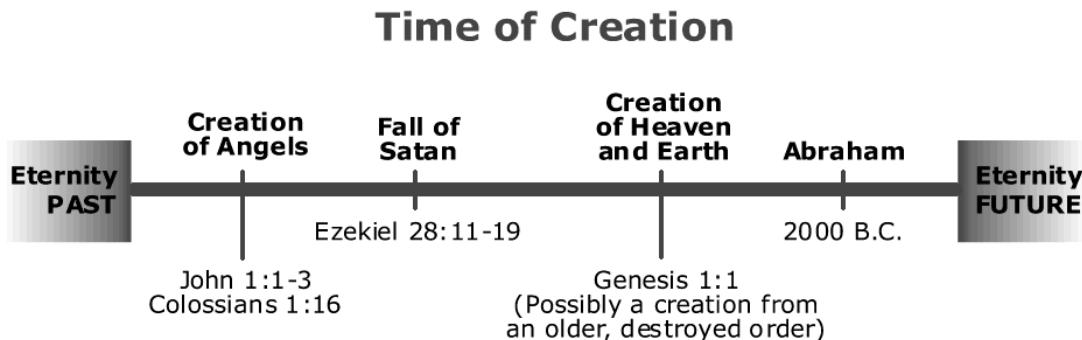
QUESTION 9

According to Ryrie, what were the effects of Satan's fall? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Affected other angels
- B. Affects all people
- C. Affects all people since he can send them to hell
- D. Positioned him as the ruler of this world
- E. Affects all the nations of the world in that he rules them as he wishes
- F. Affects all the nations of the world in that he works to deceive them

The Time of His Sin

Scripture is silent as to the exact time of the fall of Satan and his angels. The temptation narrative in Genesis 3 indicates that Satan fell before Adam sinned. The chart below indicates that Satan fell before the creation of the heaven and earth and before the creation of humankind.



Topic 3: The Activities of Satan

Objective 3—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to state Satan's goal in the cosmos and how he goes about achieving it, both in the life of the believer and local churches.

If you have not already read Ryrie, chapter 24, "The Activities of Satan," please do so now.

In Genesis 3:15 conflict was established between the seed of the woman (mankind and the Lord Jesus Christ) and the seed of Satan (fallen angels, or demons). This warfare forms the backdrop concerning Satan's activities, which Ryrie outlines in the text.

QUESTION 10

Open your Life Notebook. Copy/reproduce this chart there and fill it in, summarizing the activities of Satan, according to Ryrie's discussion in the text:

Summary of the Activities of Satan		
	Scripture	Main Activities
Christ		
God		
Nations		
Unbeliever		
Believer		

Satan's Methods and the Believer

The victory Satan gained over man in the fall is reversed through faith in Christ (1 Jn 5:4-5). Though the world has not yet changed, the believer who lives in the world has changed. The believer is said to be:

- Justified (Rom 3:24; 5:1)
- At peace with God (Rom 5:1)
- Reconciled to God (Rom 5:10)
- In Christ (Eph 1:3)
- Forgiven (Eph 1:7)
- Righteous (Rom 4:6)
- Holy and without blame (Eph 1:4)
- Cleansed (Jn 15:3)
- Secure in Christ (Rom 8)
- Blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies (Eph 1:3)
- An heir of God (Rom 8:17)
- God's possession (2 Tim 2:19)
- Empowered for service (2 Cor 10:4)
- Spiritually alive (Eph 2:5)
- Seated in the heavenlies (Eph 2:6)
- A new creature (2 Cor 5:17)
- No longer in the flesh (Rom 8:9)
- Free from the law of sin and death (Rom 8:2)
- Delivered from the wrath of God (Rom 5:9)
- Able to walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4)
- No longer a slave to sin (Rom 6:6-7)

Enslaved to God (Rom 6:22)
Empowered by the Spirit (Acts 1:8)
Able to bear fruit to God (Rom 7:4-5)
Free from law (Rom 6:14-15)
Crucified to the world (Gal 1:4; 6:14-15)
Separated from the power of death (Rom 6:9; 8:31-39)
Able to have victory over the power of the devil (Eph 6:13; 1 Jn 5:4-5)

QUESTION 11

In your Life Notebook list five points from the preceding list that are especially meaningful to you. Explain why each of these divine provisions has personal significance. Share these truths with another person or with your group.

In spite of all that the believer gains through faith in Christ, sin's power in the believer's life is not eradicated; it is only broken. The believer is still susceptible to Satan's temptations.

QUESTION 12

To see how Satan tempts, opposes, and accuses the believer today, make an outline of the section of Ryrie, chapter 24, entitled "In Relation to Believers" in your Life Notebook.

Satan's Methods and the Church

As Satan gains victory over individual believers, he also begins to hinder the work of the church. Certain situations may arise in local churches that give Satan leeway to work.

QUESTION 13

Match the passage from 1 Corinthians to the corresponding situation described at the church in Corinth. Note the ways Satan weakened the church.

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Situations</i>
1 Corinthians 1:10-17	Failure to resolve civil suits among believers brings dishonor to the body.
1 Corinthians 2:1-5	Acting on knowledge apart from love can destroy our weaker brother.
1 Corinthians 5:1-8	A diluted message makes us ineffective witnesses.
1 Corinthians 6:1-7	Failure to exercise our spiritual gifts weakens the depth of the body's maturity.
1 Corinthians 8:1-7	Unchecked immorality and sin will corrupt the whole body.
1 Corinthians 12:7	Disunity and division weaken the church and its witness.

These advantages which Satan gains over the church eventually produce the same sequence of sins found in the churches of Revelation 2 and Revelation 3. First, love dies while activity remains (Ephesus). Next, compromise takes place (Pergamum). As a result, sin increases (Thyatira). Then, the church either dies (Sardis) or becomes lukewarm (Laodicea), and it is no longer a church but simply a building full of people.

QUESTION 14

How would you evaluate your church in relation to the preceding points? Are there areas or situations that give Satan an opportunity to work to destroy your church body? If so, write in your Life Notebook what you can do to alter the situation. Make a regular habit of praying for your church about your concerns.

Primarily, then, Satan is in the business of enticing believers to evil (to sin) through the world and the flesh by seeking to cause us to have our eyes focused on self, on things, or on other people instead of on Christ, His Word, and His works (Col 2:9-10). Satan is a schemer, a liar, and a murderer from the beginning (Jn 8:44). The believer must be sober and on the alert, for Satan opposes everything that God does (1 Pet 5:8).

Topic 4: Satan's World

Objective 4—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to list at least five ways in which the Christian experiences victory through Christ in spite of Satan's methods in the world today.

Please read Ryrie, chapter 25, "Satan's World," if you have not already done so.

The main sphere of Satan's activities today is through the system known in Scripture as "the world." It is in this arena that he meets and tempts the Christian to turn away from God. What is "the world," and what is Satan's and the believer's relationship to it?

The Meaning of the Cosmos

Ryrie makes it clear that the word "world" is not in itself a negative word. It is used of very positive things in the Scriptures. But the thing to be noticed, especially with regard to Satan, is that "world" is normally used to describe what Ryrie calls "an orderly system that functions apart from God."

QUESTION 15

Match the reference(s) to the corresponding description of what each of them says about "the world":

<i>Reference(s)</i>	<i>Description of "The World"</i>
1 Corinthians 1:20; 3:19	World does not know believers and did not know the Lord Jesus Christ.
1 Corinthians 2:12	Whole world lies in power of the evil one.
James 4:4	Spirit of the world is contrary to Spirit of God.
1 John 2:15-17	Wisdom of the world is foolishness to God.
1 John 3:1	Believers should not be surprised if world hates them.
1 John 3:13	Friendship with world is hostility toward God.
1 John 5:19	Do not love the world; we cannot love God and world at same time; lusts of the world not from the Father; world is passing away.

QUESTION 16

Open your Life Notebook. Now make a list of personal responses to the things you learned about the world in the previous question. For example, list things you learned that you never realized before, things that you should do or not do, new ways of thinking about things in the world, and any other such responses to help make those truths relevant to your life today.

QUESTION 17

Write out the three facets that Ryrie says are necessary to a proper definition of the world.

Satan and the Cosmos

As strange as it may sound, Scripture says that Satan has considerable, though not absolute, authority over the world.

QUESTION 18

Match the Scripture with the phrase that best describes what it says about Satan's authority.

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Satan's Authority</i>
John 12:31	The prince of the power of the air.
2 Corinthians 4:4	The god of this world.
Ephesians 2:2	The whole world lies in his power.
1 John 5:19	The ruler of this world.

QUESTION 19

What is the aim of Satan in the cosmos? Satan's objective is to

- A. Destroy God's kingdom through religious strife and disunity
- B. Take over God's kingdom by inciting all the angels to rebel
- C. Transform his kingdom into one that is acceptable to God
- D. Create a kingdom that is independent from, and a rival to, God

QUESTION 20

According to Ryrie, Satan tries to get us to focus on ourselves and on the present time, rather than on God and eternity. *True or False?*

The Christian and the Cosmos

The Christian is commanded to be in the world but not of it. We have to live here. The only other alternative we have to living here is to leave it through death. But there are at least three problems related to that prospect. One is that, if we die, we no longer have a witness here. Second, if we die, there is no longer any need to deal with living here. Third, if we die before God's time, it will have to be by suicide, which is not a valid part of God's plan for dealing with this world.

We must learn how to live in this evil world system without being a part of it. If we become overly influenced by the world system, the following will occur:

1. We will damage or destroy our Christian testimony before our nonbelieving friends.
2. We will damage or destroy our own lives. Even though we may for a while enjoy some of the world's pleasures, it will eventually hurt us spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, and perhaps even physically, depending on how deeply involved we are.
3. We align ourselves with Satan, who is our enemy and the enemy of the loving One who redeemed us for all eternity.
4. We dishonor the One who suffered unbelievable pain and indignation before the cross and then died for us on the cross that we might be free from the judgment and effects of sin.
5. We are saying that the Lord's death is not worth very much, that it really is not that important to us.

It is clear from Scripture that we should not become a part of this world. Yet we live here, we come into daily contact with it, and the things in it tempt us. How can we live in the world but not be of it?

There is a basic offensive-defensive approach to living in the world victoriously as a Christian. The Christian can claim the power of the Holy Spirit and faith to overcome the world. While we know that this is more easily said than done, it remains true that the Christian can effectively have victory while living in this world that is hostile to him and his God.

Briefly, we can achieve a victorious Christian life by remembering and doing several things.

- First, through the power of the Holy Spirit we do not have to yield to any temptation.
- Second, if we sin, we know that true confession brings instant forgiveness from the Father. This helps us keep our attention on the Lord instead of on the sin.
- Third, we can walk in the Spirit by keeping our minds filled with the Word of God and by praying.
- Fourth, we can gain strength and help through fellowship with other believers.

If a believer were to do just these things conscientiously and consistently, he would achieve considerable victory over the world. But it must be realized that, while taking all the positive, offensive steps to maintain a growing relationship with God, we must also live defensively, as described in Ephesians 6. Let us review and highlight the main points of the believer's defense from this chapter.

- Because we are in a battle with Satan and his forces, we need to adopt the attitude of a soldier and a warrior if we expect to win. In Ephesians 6 Paul uses the everyday instruments of war to describe how God has equipped the believer to fight.
- The belt of truth emphasizes sincerity and integrity, daily conformity to the truths of Scripture. The belt of truth protects the believer from becoming entangled in the schemes of Satan (2 Tim 2:4). To gird himself for battle, the believer must be committed to a lifestyle of truthfulness and integrity.

- The breastplate of righteousness refers to the righteousness of Christ, which is imputed to each believer for eternity when he trusts in Jesus Christ and is saved (2 Cor 5:21). The breastplate of righteousness defends the believer from the accusations of Satan so that he may be assured of his standing before God.
- “Fitting your feet with the preparation that comes from the good news of peace” indicates that the believer must be prepared for action based upon the reality that he is at peace with God. This phrase may also refer to the fact that the gospel is the foundation upon which the believer has firm footing when fighting the enemy.
- The shield of faith, which is taken up in addition to all of the other pieces of equipment, represents confidence and trust in God. It is through faith that we are saved, and it is through continued daily faith that we live (Hab 2:4; Eph 2:8-9).
- The helmet of salvation emphasizes the full scope of the believer’s salvation: past, present, and future. This helmet gives the believer security, for he may know that his salvation is accomplished, active, and destined to bring him into glory (Rom 8:30).
- The sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, is the believer’s only offensive weapon. It represents the believer’s responsibility to meet the forays of Satan with specific applications of the Word of God, just as Jesus did in His temptation (Mt 4:1-11).
- Victory over Satan and his demons also requires a commitment to prayer. When Paul writes of prayer in Ephesians 6:18, he is not simply adding another piece to the armor of the believer. Prayer holds the armor together and makes it effective. It is to be the continual expression of the believer of his dependence upon God.

Conclusion

We have taken time to look closely at the person and ministry of Satan, because it is necessary if we are to have spiritual victory over Satan and his system. We must know our enemy in order to understand that the believer is victorious in Christ.

Key Biblical Concepts

As before, review the following key biblical concepts that were covered in this lesson. Memorize them and the Scripture references that support them before taking the Lesson Self Check. Be prepared to explain briefly how each reference supports each individual concept:

1. God places limitations on Satan - Job 1:12; 2:6; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-6
2. Satan’s victory is reversed in Christ - Genesis 3:15
3. The existence of Satan - 1 Peter 5:8; Matthew 4:1-11

Lesson 8 Self Check

QUESTION 1

According to Ryrie, Satan is a person because:

- A. He was born, lived, and died
- B. He is a Bible character as well as a folklore character
- C. He has personal pronouns and attributes ascribed to him by the Bible
- D. He was created in Eden and present at the Lord's temptation

QUESTION 2

At the time of his creation, Satan was without sin. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

Satan was influenced by others to commit his original sin. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Genesis 3:15 describes the great conflict in the world. Which warring party below IS NOT a participant of this conflict listed in Genesis 3:15?

- A. The seed of Satan (Satan and the fallen angels)
- B. The seed of Michael (Michael and the holy angels)
- C. The seed of the woman (the human race)
- D. The seed of the woman (the representative man, the Lord Jesus Christ)

QUESTION 5

The fall of Satan affects all people because:

- A. He can send them to hell
- B. He personally tempts each one
- C. All angels are affected
- D. He is the ruler of this world

QUESTION 6

Satan's victory over man at the fall is reversed by Jesus' victory over death at the cross. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

Which of the following is NOT a biblical name for Satan?

- A. Prince of Peace
- B. God of this world
- C. Angel of light
- D. Power of the air

QUESTION 8

What is the aim of Satan in the cosmos? Select the best answer.

- A. Satan's objective is to destroy God's kingdom through religious strife and disunity.
- B. Satan's objective is to take over God's kingdom by inciting all the angels to rebel.
- C. Satan's objective is to transform his kingdom into one that is acceptable to God.
- D. Satan's objective is to create a kingdom that is independent from, and a rival to, God.

QUESTION 9

According to Job 1 and 2, God does not restrict Satan's activity on earth. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

The armor described in Ephesians 6 prepares the believer for warfare against:

- A. Unbelievers and non-Christian religions
- B. Believers who are living in sin
- C. Satan and fallen angels
- D. Churches that do not teach biblical truth

Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

1. Personal pronouns are applied to him (Job 1; Ezk 28:14, 16; Mt 4:1-11; Jas 4:7)
2. Personal attributes are ascribed to him (Isa 14:12-14; Lk 4:3, 9; 22:31; 2 Cor 11:3; 2 Tim 2:26; Rev 12:17; 20:7-9)
3. He will be held accountable for his actions (Mt 25:41; Jn 16:11).

QUESTION 2:

- B. He walked among fire.
- D. He was created perfect.
- E. He was beautiful.
- F. **He was wise.**

QUESTION 3:

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Satan's Name</i>
Isaiah 14:12	Shining one
Isaiah 27:1	Leviathan
Ezekiel 28:14	Anointed cherub
Matthew 4:1	Devil
Matthew 4:3	Tempter
Matthew 4:10	Satan
Matthew 12:24, 27	Beelzebul

QUESTION 4:

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Satan's Name</i>
Matthew 13:39	Enemy
John 8:44	Murderer and liar
John 12:31	Ruler of the world
John 17:15	Evil one
2 Corinthians 4:4	God of this age
2 Corinthians 6:15	Belial
2 Corinthians 11:14	Angel of light

QUESTION 5:

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Satan's Name</i>
Ephesians 2:2	Ruler of the kingdom of the air
Hebrews 2:14	Holds the power of death
1 Peter 5:8	Roaring lion
Revelation 9:11	Apollyon
Revelation 12:3, 7-9	Huge red dragon
Revelation 12:10	Accuser

QUESTION 6: The atheist's problem is that he is thinking in terms of the glorification of a man, not of an infinitely holy, just, and righteous being. The word "glorify" essentially means, "make known." Therefore, God's purpose is that He be made fully known. God is infinitely loving, infinitely just, and infinitely holy. Therefore, the highest conceivable good would be that infinite love, infinite justice, and infinite holiness be made fully known, and that is the magnificent purpose of all of His creative works.

QUESTION 7:

- A. The seed of Satan (Satan and the fallen angels)
- C. The seed of the woman (the human race)
- D. The seed of the woman (the representative man, the Lord Jesus Christ)

QUESTION 8: As long as you used your Bible and Ryrie's "I wills," your answer should be fine.

QUESTION 9:

- A. Affected other angels
- B. Affects all people
- D. Positioned him as the ruler of this world
- F. Affects all the nations of the world in that he works to deceive them

QUESTION 10: *Your answer*

QUESTION 11: *Your answer*

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13:

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Situations</i>
1 Corinthians 1:10-17	Disunity and division weaken the church and its witness.
1 Corinthians 2:1-5	A diluted message makes us ineffective witnesses.
1 Corinthians 5:1-8	Unchecked immorality and sin will corrupt the whole body.
1 Corinthians 6:1-7	Failure to resolve civil suits among believers brings dishonor to the body.
1 Corinthians 8:1, 7	Acting on knowledge apart from love can destroy our weaker brother.
1 Corinthians 12:7	Failure to exercise our spiritual gifts weakens the depth of the body's maturity.

QUESTION 14: *Your answer*

QUESTION 15:

<i>Reference(s)</i>	<i>Description of "The World"</i>
1 Corinthians 1:20; 3:19	Wisdom of the world is foolishness to God.
1 Corinthians 2:12	Spirit of the world is contrary to Spirit of God.
James 4:4	Friendship with world is hostility toward God.
1 John 2:15-17	Do not love the world; we cannot love God and world at same time; lusts of the world not from the Father; world is passing away.
1 John 3:1	World does not know believers and did not know the Lord Jesus Christ.
1 John 3:13	Believers should not be surprised if world hates them.
1 John 5:19	Whole world lies in power of the evil one.

QUESTION 16: *Your answer*

QUESTION 17:

1. The idea of an ordered system.
2. The relation of Satan to it.
3. The concept of its hostility to God.

QUESTION 18:

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Satan's Authority</i>
John 12:31	The ruler of this world.
2 Corinthians 4:4	The god of this world.
Ephesians 2:2	The prince of the power of the air.
1 John 5:19	The whole world lies in his power.

QUESTION 19: D. Create a kingdom that is independent from, and a rival to, God

QUESTION 20: True

Lesson 8 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

C. He has personal pronouns and attributes ascribed to him by the Bible

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3: False

QUESTION 4:

B. The seed of Michael (Michael and the holy angels)

QUESTION 5:

D. He is the ruler of this world

QUESTION 6: True

QUESTION 7:

A. Prince of Peace

QUESTION 8:

D. Satan's objective is to create a kingdom that is independent from, and a rival to, God.

QUESTION 9: False

QUESTION 10:

C. Satan and fallen angels

Lesson 9: The Creation of Man

Lesson Introduction

Anthropology is a fascinating area of theology because we are in essence studying ourselves. The decisions reached on anthropological issues will have a dramatic bearing on one's view of marriage, divorce, abortion, the worth of man, capital punishment, the roles of man and woman, and a host of other issues of real concern to many in contemporary society. In the midst of the conflicting opinions and heated rhetoric generated by these issues, it is essential for the Christian to understand what the Bible has to say about man. A biblical anthropology is essential if one is to stand against the tide of humanistic doctrine that threatens to sweep away all traces of Christian values.

Perhaps no theory of modern man has done more damage to the faith of millions than the theory of evolution. In Topic 1 we will consider some of the biblical and scientific evidence against this theory. Three different views of man's origin will be considered, and the practical implications of each view will be discussed.

In Topic 2 the perplexing problem of the origin of the human soul will engage our attention. The implications of this are vast and relate directly to the question of abortion. If the soul is given at conception, for example, then abortion is murder.

To speak relevantly to contemporary society, the believer must have answers to the questions people are asking pertaining to the doctrine of anthropology. Above all, men want to know who they are and how they can find happiness. The Bible alone can provide the answers they seek.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: Evolution and Origins
 - Three Views of Man's Origin
 - The Pattern of Man's Creation
 - Practical Implications
- Topic 2: The Origin of the Soul of Man

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Define the three views of man's origin as presented in the text
- Identify how man, being created in God's image, reflects God's attributes in a limited way
- Compare the views of atheism and Christianity on basic issues of life: the value of human life and the purpose of man's existence
- Describe briefly each of the three theories given by Ryrie concerning how the immaterial nature of man came into existence
- Apply the teachings of biblical anthropology to many important issues in modern society

Definitions of Key Terms

Anthropology—the study of man. The term derives from the Greek words *anthropos* (man) and *logia* (study). Our study will be different from that of the secular anthropologists in that we are primarily concerned with what the Bible has to say about man (i.e. biblical anthropology).

Atheism—disbelief in or denial of the existence of God or gods; the doctrine that there is no God or gods; can also be applied to godlessness and immorality.

Darwinism—a theory of evolution holding that offspring of a given organism vary, that natural selection favors the survival of some of these variations over others, that new species have arisen and may continue to arise by these processes, and that widely different groups of plants and animals, including man, have arisen from the same ancestors.

Essence—the intrinsic or indispensable properties that serve to characterize or identify something; the most important ingredient; the crucial element; the inherent, unchanging nature of a thing or class of things; an extract that has the fundamental properties of a substance in concentrated form; one that has or shows an abundance of a quality as if highly concentrated: *a neighbor who is the essence of hospitality*; something that exists, especially a spiritual or incorporeal entity (lacking material form or substance).

Materialism—a philosophy that contends that all of reality is material. Materialism says that there is no spiritual dimension to life; man is merely a physical being. All of man's personality, emotions, and supposedly "spiritual" characteristics are to be attributed to chemical processes that occur within his body. This view of reality and of man goes hand in hand with the theory of evolution.

Nihilist Philosophy—a philosophy that grows out of the theories of evolution and materialism. Nihilism affirms that all of reality is merely the result of random physical events that have no purpose or meaning. The logical conclusion is that life and man are meaningless. The only meaning man can find in life is the meaning which he himself gives to it. Although a very depressing way to look at life, nihilism is the most realistic and honest of all atheistic philosophies. It is the logical conclusion of atheistic materialism.

Traducianism—the belief that the soul is inherited from the parents along with the body.

Memory Verses

In this lesson you are to memorize James 1:17 and John 17:17, both of which speak of God as a God of truth. Be prepared to quote them from memory.

Reading Assignment

Your assigned readings from Ryrie for this lesson are chapters 29, 30, and 31. You may read them all now or as indicated in the lesson.

Topic 1: Evolution and Origins

Objective 1—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to define the three views of man's origin, as presented in the text.

If you have not already read Ryrie, chapters 29 and 30, please do so now.

Is man merely an accident of nature, the product of uncertain and unpredictable combinations of molecules and atoms? Should man look back to a prehistoric “cosmic soup” or up to the living God to find his beginnings? Many in the contemporary world believe that the question of man’s origin is convincingly answered by the theory of evolution. Some evolutionists may even scorn those who believe in a divine being who created man.

Man’s origin is of the utmost importance to the Christian. The biblical account of creation and the affirmations of God’s role in creating man found throughout the rest of the Bible contradict the commonly held beliefs concerning an evolutionary origin for man. Both cannot be correct. Following the discussion in the text, let us first consider the various views concerning origins.

Three Views of Man’s Origin

The only way man can be absolutely certain about his origin is if someone he could trust was an eyewitness when man came into existence and could report how this transpired. Christians believe God was present at the creation of man and that He tells about our creation in the Scriptures. We believe that the Bible is an accurate record of God’s revelation and that it therefore can be trusted as an accurate account of man’s origin.

While there may be hundreds of opinions about man’s origins, most of them fit into one of three categories: (1) naturalistic (or atheistic) evolution, (2) theistic evolution, or (3) special creation.

QUESTION 1

What does the term “evolution” mean when used in relation to origins? Can a true believer in the Bible believe in evolution? Explain your answer.

QUESTION 2

Match the views concerning origins, as discussed in Ryrie chapter 29, with the description of the bases for each view.

<i>Views Concerning Origins</i>	<i>Bases for View</i>
Naturalistic Evolution	The Bible and science
Creationism	Science and faith
Theistic Evolution	The Bible

QUESTION 3

The important element stressed in naturalistic evolution is the total elimination of God in the process. *True or False?*

Surprisingly, some who claim to be Christians hold the position that God was not involved in human development. They do not deny God’s existence, of course, and in that sense are not atheistic, but they do deny that He had anything to do with man’s creation. They believe that God simply created the universe and then let the creation take its own course—the evolutionary

course. This view is unacceptable to anyone who accepts the authority of the Bible. Scripture repeatedly affirms not only that God created the universe but that He also is actively involved in its maintenance (Col 1:17).

QUESTION 4

What is the value of man according to naturalistic evolution? Write a one- or two-sentence answer.

QUESTION 5

What does the text mention as a special problem standing in the way of theistic evolution?

- A. The age of the universe
- B. The creation of Eve
- C. The fall of Satan
- D. The creation of Adam

When confronted with the Bible's statements that God created the universe and all that is in it, most theistic evolutionists say that the Bible is inaccurate in its account of creation or that the first two chapters of Genesis are merely an allegory that was never meant to be a factual report of man's origins.

The biblical view of man's origin attests that man is a special and direct creation of God. Man is not the end product of the evolutionary cycle. He is the unique and special crown of God's creation. The special creation view is the only one that fits with a normal understanding of the biblical account of creation and creation teachings found in the Scriptures.

QUESTION 6

What are the two necessary beliefs of a creationist, according to the text? Choose one answer.

- A. The fossil record is interpreted accurately, and Eve was the first woman.
- B. The biblical record is predominately accurate, and Adam was the first man.
- C. The biblical record is factually accurate, and Adam was the first man.
- D. The historical record is well documented, and Adam was the first known man.

The Pattern of Man's Creation

Objective 2—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to identify how man, being created in God's image, reflects God's attributes in a limited way.

Read Ryrie, chapter 31, "The Creation of Man," if you have not already done so.

QUESTION 7

How does Ryrie justify his position that man still has the image of God? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. If the image were lost, man would no longer be a living, rational being.
- B. If the image were lost, man would not be able to live in God's presence.
- C. The image of God in man is used later in Scripture as the basis for various teachings, and they would be without foundation if man had lost the image at the fall.
- D. The majority of religious philosophers never doubt the image of God in man.

The view that man is God's special creation carries with it some important implications. It should raise questions as to why God created man and what is man's purpose in life. The key to properly understanding these questions is found in the fact that God created man to bear His own image.

Genesis 1:26-27 plainly states:

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, after our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over all the creatures that creep on the earth." So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.

It seems obvious that man is inherently different and more valuable than all other created matter. The Bible differentiates between man and the rest of creation. This difference is based primarily on the fact that man alone bears the image of God.

There are many ways in which man is essentially different from God. For example, man has gender; God does not. Man is dependent on a variety of things to sustain his life; God is totally independent. God is the Creator; mankind His creation.

Let us consider the meaning of the words "image of God." In what sense can man then be said to be like God? He is like God in that he was created in the image of God. Basically, this means that man was designed to reflect the nature of God. A photograph reflects the image of a person and yet is not that person. Humanity reflects the image of God and yet is distinct from God Himself.

In one sense, the image of God exalts man to the highest place in creation. Gerhard von Rad, commenting on Genesis 1:26-28, notes that man is like a statue that God has placed in the world to represent His own lordship. In Genesis 1:26 the Hebrew word translated "image" is *tselem*. This Hebrew word is often used for statues representing pagan "gods." A statue was placed in a household of the kingdom to show that this house was under the sovereignty of the king. Perhaps Moses had this usage in mind when he described man as the "image" of the living God. Man was a "statue" of God, not in a physical sense but in the sense of a sign of God's sovereign rule. Von Rad comments in his *Old Testament Theology*:

In this connection it is to be noticed how strong are the expressions describing this lordship (to trample on; subdue; to tread as on grapes; to rule over). God set man in the world as the sign of His own sovereign authority, in order that man should uphold and enforce His—God's—claims as Lord. Earthly monarchs too have the habit of setting up images of themselves in their kingdom as signs of their sovereign authority—it was in that sense that Israel thought of man as the representative of God. (Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker, 2 vols. [New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1962-65], 1:146-47)

While an image (*tselem*) can represent the physical manifestation of "a god" and can even be worshiped, likeness (*demuth*) suggests only a correspondence or similarity between two objects.

Thus, man is not a physical representation of God. In comparison, he is a weak, dependent creature.

QUESTION 8

Below is a list of God's perfections. Select any five, and in your Life Notebook, state how man reflects each of the selected perfections in a limited way. If you need help in remembering what any of these attributes of God mean, you may refer back to Lesson 2.

- God is spirit
- God is a person
- God is self-existent
- God is eternal
- God is omnipresent
- God is omniscient
- God is omnipotent
- God is immutable
- God is Holy
- God is righteous
- God is good
- God is true
- God is unity
- God is sovereign

What is the meaning of the concept of image? Although Scripture teaches that man is created in the image of God, nowhere does the Word of God precisely define that image. Some believe that the command to rule over creation is the essence of the image (Gen 1:26). Yet this seems to be more of an implication of what it means to bear the image of God rather than the essence of the image.

Others have asserted that the male-female relationship is the essence of the image of God (Gen 1:27). In other words, just as the three Persons within the Trinity have relationships with one another, so also man was created to have relationships. Additionally, in man and woman we see separate personality characteristics that are brought together and perfectly integrated in God.

Still others have suggested that the image of God is primarily seen in man's personality. Man, like God, has intellect, emotions, and will. There is undoubtedly some truth in all these opinions. The text classifies various views concerning God's image in man.

- **The corporeal view** (relating to, or characteristic of, the body) holds that man represents God by his total being, including his body.
- **The noncorporeal view** (lacking material form or substance) focuses only on the immaterial, noncorporeal aspects of God's being, such as morality, dominion, will, and intellect.
- **A combination view.** Ryrie adopts this view (review this view in the text).
- **The Roman Catholic view** is contrary to the combination view held by Ryrie. This view attempts to make an important distinction between the words "image" and "likeness."

QUESTION 9

The text points to two obstacles that stand in the way of the corporeal view: (a) God is spirit and has no body, and (b) animals have bodies but are not said to bear God's image. Thus, corporeality cannot be an inherent part of God's image. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

Briefly summarize the combination view.

QUESTION 11

The Roman Catholic view fundamentally says that man was born with God's image and that likeness was added later. Likeness was then lost when man fell, although man kept the image. That which was lost in the fall of man can be added through the church's sacraments. *True or False?*

The main point of this section, according to Ryrie, shows that the image of God in man is not lost; it is just marred or defaced.

Practical Implications

Objective 3—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to compare the views of atheism and Christianity on basic issues of life: the value of human life and the purpose of man's existence.

The image of God is that which sets man apart from the rest of creation and makes him uniquely man. This image consists of all the ways in which man reflects the attributes of God. But what practical applications does this doctrine have for us today?

C. S. Lewis, one of the great Christian apologists of our era, applied some of the above truths about the image of God in man to the way Christians relate to those around them. In *The Weight of Glory* he wrote:

It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. . . . There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. . . . But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors. (C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, rev. expanded., ed. Walter Hooper [New York, NY: Macmillan, 1949; New York, NY: Macmillan, Collier Books, 1980], pp. 18-19)

QUESTION 12

Write, in your own words, the point that C. S. Lewis was making in the passage above.

QUESTION 13

Read Genesis 9:6. Which of the following statements best describes how the doctrine of the image of God relates to the issue of capital punishment?

- A. Murder is an attack on God but affects man more than God.
- B. Murder is an offense to God though it destroys man's body, not his spirit.
- C. Murder is a direct attack on man because it shows disrespect to man.
- D. Murder is a direct attack on God and defaces the image of God.

QUESTION 14

Part of bearing God's image is man's privilege of ruling over the earth (Gen 1:26). How does this responsibility relate to modern society's polluting the earth? How would it relate to cruelty to animals?

- A. It is a spiritual issue only and, therefore, does not apply to pollution and the treatment of animals.
- B. Man is not to be overly concerned with the things of this world since it will one day be burned up by God's judgment.
- C. God has given man sovereignty over creation, but it is not man's possession, and he must not abuse that which is under his care.
- D. It is easy to overreact to the problems of pollution and the inhumane treatment of animals and neglect spiritual issues, so Christians must avoid involvement, if at all possible.

Man, as created in God's image, is tremendously valuable. He has worth. His life is important because he is not merely a physical being of no more value than the rest of creation. Man is the crown of creation, and each individual is of intrinsic value because each bears the image of the living God.

The Bible upholds that the Christian can rightly understand the value of each person. An atheist, on the other hand, has no basis for believing in the intrinsic sanctity of human life. Though atheists may show care to family members or become involved in humanitarian efforts, they do so in spite of their beliefs, not because of them. Philosophically, atheists have no ultimate or absolute basis on which to value human life. At best, their sense of value is utilitarian (exhibiting or stressing utility over other values). In the final analysis the honest atheist must say that, whether an individual man lives or dies or whether mankind as a whole survives or not, it really makes no difference because man has no more purpose for living than an animal.

Nihilistic philosophers reached the logical conclusion of atheism. Although their view of life is at best depressing, they are at least honest to their own atheistic philosophy when they proclaim, "Life has no meaning!" Perhaps no philosopher is better known for his skepticism than Friedrich Nietzsche, and yet even Nietzsche could not live with this conclusion. He called upon men to become "supermen" by acknowledging that their lives were meaningless and yet acting as if life was worth living by shaping their own values and forging their own destiny.

But surely man cannot find meaning in himself if he is merely a complex system of atoms without any more value than a rock. He cannot find meaning in others, for they are the same as he. Meaning is not found in political systems, visionary causes, or hopes for a better society. Ultimately, these things are meaningless because life itself becomes meaningless. The honest atheist must say, "Life is meaningless; I am meaningless."

It is precisely for this reason that the Christian faith has so much to offer. As the world around us moves towards despair, we have a message of hope. We should affirm as loudly as possible, "Man is valuable! Life has meaning and purpose! That purpose is realized when you accept the fact that you are a creation of God and are willing to acknowledge that God alone holds the key to meaning, purpose, and hope in your life." This is how Francis Schaeffer put it in *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*:

There is something great about man. I want to add here that evangelicals have made a horrible mistake by often equating the fact that man is lost and under God's judgment with the idea that man is nothing—a zero. This is not what the Bible says. There is something great about man, and we have lost perhaps our greatest opportunity of evangelism in our generation by not insisting that it is the

Bible which explains why man is great. (Francis A. Schaeffer, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent* [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1972], p. 3)

QUESTION 15

Briefly compare the views of atheism and Christianity regarding (1) the value of human life, (2) the purpose of man's existence, and (3) man's temporal frame of reference. Record your answers in your Life Notebook.

QUESTION 16

If we really believe that we are created in the image of God, what practical differences should it make in the way we treat our spouses, our children, our unsaved neighbors, our fellow Christians? You may also want to refer to James 3:9. Open your Life Notebook and record your meditations.

QUESTION 17

How would you present the Christian view of man's creation in the image of God to a person who believes in naturalistic or atheistic evolution (someone who believes that man really is no different from the rest of creation and that man does not bear the image of God)? Record your answer in your Life Notebook.

Topic 2: The Origin of the Soul of Man

Objective 4—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to briefly describe each of the three theories given by Ryrie in the text concerning how the immaterial nature of man came into existence.

Modern science has done a fairly complete job of describing the process of man's conception and growth. It is much more difficult, however, to understand the origin of man's spiritual nature. That is, how does each person receive the immaterial aspect of his being? How is it passed from parent to child?

Since it cannot be perceived with the physical senses, many disbelieve that man possesses a spiritual dimension. Scripture clearly teaches, however, that man possesses a spiritual nature. The questions concerning its origin, or transmission, still remain. Does God create the spiritual aspect of each person? Is it inherited like the physical body from our parents? The goal of this section is to explore this issue by interacting with Ryrie.

QUESTION 18

In the section of chapter 31 entitled "The Transmission of Man's Being," Ryrie gives three theories as to how man's immaterial nature came into existence. Match each theory with its correct description.

Theory	Description
Preexistence	God creates the soul at the moment of conception or birth and immediately unites it with the body.
Creationism	Man's physical and immaterial nature is passed down through natural generation.
Traducianism	The soul has always existed, and God merely creates a body for it to

inhabit.

QUESTION 19

Open your Life Notebook and briefly state how you would argue against each theory. Be prepared to discuss with your group which position you hold and why you hold it.

QUESTION 20

The Bible does not pinpoint exactly when human life begins, but it says that God is actively at work in the process of procreation. Read Psalm 139:13-14. What implications do these verses have for abortion?

To summarize our study of the nature of man as created by God, review the following points:

1. Man is a special creation of God and not the chance product of evolution.
2. Man was created to reflect God's image. He is like a statue that God placed in the world to show forth God's own infinite glory and sovereignty over His creation. God's image gives each man infinite value.
3. Man is both a physical and spiritual being. He has a complex spiritual nature, enabling him to fellowship both with other men and with God on a spiritual level. Because man is spiritual, his life extends beyond the grave and thus has eternal significance.
4. Man probably receives his immaterial nature from his parents. Even if creationism (as opposed to traducianism) is true, man probably receives his immaterial nature at the point of conception. In either case, abortion (as widely practiced today) is clearly wrong, as is any form of birth control that operates after conception has occurred.

Objective 5—When you have completed this section, you will be able to apply the teachings of biblical anthropology to many important issues in modern society.

STUDY PROJECT FOR LESSON 9

Biblical anthropology has relevance to many important issues in modern society. Note the following: capital punishment, materialism as a philosophy of life, the intrinsic worth of man, and abortion. Write a brief summary of the most commonly held view on each issue by people in your society. Then write a concise response to each one from a biblical point of view.

Here are some points to help you respond to nonbiblical views:

1. Capital punishment
 - a. God ordered it at least during one period of history (Gen 9:5-7).
 - b. This order was based on man's creation in God's image (Gen 9:6).
 - c. Eternal condemnation for unbelievers is a form of capital punishment.
2. Materialism
 - a. Paul says that the things that are eternal are what are real (2 Cor 4:16 to 2 Cor 5:10).
 - b. God is spirit, and He is the ultimate reality (Jn 4:24).
 - c. Materialism has nothing to do with the spiritual.
 - d. Paul warns against it (1 Tim 6:17).
3. Intrinsic worth of man
 - a. Christ loves man and gave His eternally valuable life for him (Gal 2:20).
 - b. Man was created in and bears the image of God (Gen 1:26-28; 1 Cor 11:7;

Jas 3:9).

4. Birth control
 - a. Man was created to reproduce and fill the earth (Gen 1:28).
 - b. Man also has the responsibility to care for his family (1 Tim 5:8).
 - c. Therefore, it is not wrong to control birth, but it must be done by preventing conception, not by aborting conception.
5. Abortion
 - a. A fetus is a person from the very beginning (Ps 139:13-16; Lk 1:41).
 - b. Even if it could be shown that this is not so, a fetus is still meant to become a person.
 - c. Therefore, abortion is the taking of a life (which, if it were a born person, would be called murder).

Conclusion

Man is a special creature. What a privilege it is to bear God's image, to be the only creatures in the universe that were created to show forth His glory. But if man is designed to reflect the attributes of God, why does he reflect them so poorly? If man is created to reflect God's holiness, why is man so given to immorality and depravity? If man is created to reflect God's justice, why is justice so often perverted for selfish gain? If man is created to reflect God's love, why is there so much cruelty and strife?

In every area of life man falls short of the glory of God. The cause of this tragic condition will be discussed in Lesson 11 after first considering the constitution of man in Lesson 10.

Key Biblical Concepts

The following key biblical concepts were covered in this lesson. Review and memorize them before taking the Lesson Self Check. As before, be prepared to explain how each reference supports its respective concept:

1. Man was created; he did not evolve - Genesis 2:7; 2:22; Isaiah 45:12
2. Man was created in the image of God - Genesis 1:26-27
3. God uniquely creates each individual—Psalm 139:13-14

Lesson 9 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Roman Catholics make a distinction between “image” and “likeness” when speaking of how man was created. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

Two obstacles given in the text to the noncorporeal view are (1) God is spirit and has no body, and (2) animals have bodies but are not said to bear God’s image. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

As a description of atheistic evolution it can be said that man’s existence is the result of chance mutations, and God was not involved in any way. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Atheistic evolution may be defined as having no spiritual dimension to life; man is merely a physical being. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

Which statement below best describes what it means that man is created in the image of God?

- A. Man is in God’s image because he is the ruler over creation.
- B. Man was created male and female, and thus the image means man was created for relationships.
- C. Man is like a photograph or a statue that reflects the nature and attributes of God.
- D. God’s image is seen primarily in man’s personality.

QUESTION 6

That abortion is totally unacceptable is supported:

- A. Primarily by creationism
- B. Primarily by traducianism
- C. By both theological positions
- D. By neither position

QUESTION 7

That man represents God by his total being, including his body, is part of:

- A. The corporeal view
- B. The incorporeal view
- C. The combination view
- D. The Roman Catholic view

QUESTION 8

Evolution is like biblical Christianity in that it also requires:

- A. Faith
- B. Chance
- C. Long periods of time
- D. A creator

QUESTION 9

Man's existence is the result of chance mutations, in which God was NOT involved is known as _____ evolution.

QUESTION 10

Man is the product of evolution, a process in which God was involved, is known as _____ evolution.

Unit Three Exam

QUESTION 1

The Roman Catholics make a distinction between “image” and “likeness” when speaking of how man was created. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

Angels are not part of the Godhead, but God has granted them unlimited power. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

It is more consistent to be an atheistic evolutionist than a theistic evolutionist. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Words like “powers,” “dominions,” and “thrones” indicate primarily that angels have intelligence. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

The image of God in man means primarily that man like God has mind, will, and emotions. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

As Gabriel announced the birth of Jesus to Joseph, so he will announce the descent of the Lord at the rapture of the church. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

According to 1 Timothy 4:1-3, demons could be the source of much evil or immoral conduct of men today. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

The Hebrew word *Tselem* means a fashioned image, a shaped and representative figure, an image in some concrete sense (2 Kgs 11:18; Ezk. 23:14; Amos 5:26). The word is used to express that man in some way is the concrete reflection of God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

Angels are not eternal, but they are immortal. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

Demonic oppression is the activity of demons in subjecting human beings to their designs. *True or False?*

QUESTION 11

The fact that man was created in the image of God is a reasonable basis for requiring capital punishment for the act of murder. *True or False?*

QUESTION 12

The word “angel” fundamentally means “servant.” *True or False?*

QUESTION 13

Man probably receives his immaterial nature from his parents. *True or False?*

QUESTION 14

According to Ryrie, creationists sometimes hold different views regarding the days of creation, but to be a creationist one must believe that the biblical record is factually historical and that Adam was the first man. *True or False?*

QUESTION 15

The important element stressed in naturalistic evolution is the total elimination of God in the process. *True or False?*

QUESTION 16

Ryrie would probably describes man's original condition as:

- A. Complete perfection
- B. Created innocence
- C. Unconfirmed holiness
- D. A combination of complete perfection and created innocence

QUESTION 17

Demons are probably:

- A. Spirits of wicked, deceased people
- B. Fallen angels
- C. The offspring of the union described in Genesis 6:1-4
- D. The disembodied spirits of a pre-Adamic race

QUESTION 18

One reason we believe that angels have organization is:

- A. They have a leader
- B. Some are called by name
- C. Some are fallen and some are elect
- D. That they have wings

QUESTION 19

The special problem for theistic evolutionists is:

- A. The age of the universe
- B. The creation of Eve
- C. The fall of Satan
- D. The creation of Adam

QUESTION 20

Demons oppress mankind by:

- A. Deranging the mind
- B. Sending people to hell
- C. Subverting good angels
- D. Forcing people to do the demons' will

QUESTION 21

That angels were created before the creation of the heavens and earth is supported by:

- A. Job 38:7
- B. John 1:1-3
- C. Matthew 18:19
- D. Colossians 1:16

QUESTION 22

Because of the “seed of the woman,” Satan must especially:

- A. Oppose the holy angels in the heavenlies
- B. Help the unbeliever receive the gospel
- C. Oppose the Lord and His believing remnant
- D. Fear all women who give birth

QUESTION 23

Because of sin, the image of God in man:

- A. Was lost
- B. Was marred or defaced
- C. Was untouched
- D. Was improved

QUESTION 24

The verses that say that God created man in His image are:

- A. Genesis 1:26-27
- B. Genesis 2:7
- C. Genesis 2:22
- D. John 1:1

QUESTION 25

The primary activity of angels is to:

- A. Fly messages from God to man
- B. Fight demons and Satan
- C. Sing about man’s salvation
- D. Worship and glorify God

Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1: In the text Ryrie defines “evolution” as “change in any direction” (p. 171). A true believer in the Bible can believe in evolution when the meaning is that changes have taken place within certain specified limits. For example, a believer can believe in the evolution of the automobile or even in the evolution of a plant or an animal within the same species. We can believe in the evolution of the horse, but it must be the development of a horse as a horse, not the development of a horse from another animal. When talking about origins, the creation of new species, the true believer should not believe in the theory of evolution. Evolution, in relation to origins, means much more than change or development; it includes the production of new species of more complex and intricate forms from less complicated substances. The important point is to specify the kind of evolution you are talking about.

QUESTION 2:

<i>Views Concerning Origins</i>	<i>Bases for View</i>
Naturalistic Evolution	Science and faith
Creationism	The Bible
Theistic Evolution	The Bible and science

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4: According to naturalistic evolution, man is a physical creature whose atoms are arranged in a more complex manner than those of other material things. He has no more intrinsic value than a rock or a tree.

QUESTION 5: B. The creation of Eve

Its significance lies in the fact that, even conceding that Adam is the end of a long process, it is clear that Eve was a special creation. If it is possible for Eve, then why not Adam?

QUESTION 6: C. The biblical record is factually accurate, and Adam was the first man.

QUESTION 7:

- A. If the image were lost, man would no longer be a living, rational being.
- C. The image of God in man is used later in Scripture as the basis for various teachings, and they would be without foundation if man had lost the image at the fall.

QUESTION 8: *Your answer*

QUESTION 9: True

QUESTION 10: While God does not have a body, man’s body is included in the image of God because man was created a unitary being—body and soul. Man is a living being, not inanimate. Man has intellect and will, giving him the ability to make decisions and have dominion. Man is able to have unhindered fellowship with God.

QUESTION 11: True

QUESTION 12: Lewis’s point is that, since all men are immortal, they are very special. We should not take this aspect of God’s image in man for granted as we interact with people on a daily basis.

QUESTION 13: D. Murder is a direct attack on God and defaces the image of God.

Since men bear the image of God, murder is a direct attack on God’s image. Thus, murder must be punished, not only because a person has died, but also because the image of God has been defaced.

QUESTION 14: C. God has given man sovereignty over creation, but it is not man's possession, and he must not abuse that which is under his care.

Since God has entrusted to man sovereignty over creation, man should rule with caution. He should treat creation as a stewardship, rather than as his possession with which he may do as he pleases. Both the earth and its life forms belong to God, and man does not have the right to abuse them.

QUESTION 15:

(1) For the atheist, man may be no more important than trees or rocks. For the Christian, man is God's creation in His image, and therefore his life has sanctity.

(2) In the view of the atheist, there is no intrinsic purpose in man's existence. For the Christian, man's purpose is to glorify God.

(3) Since the atheist views life as having no meaning and man's existence as a chance happening, values are not relevant. One should live for the greatest pleasure at the moment. The Christian bases his values on his being created in God's image. As such he has great value and must view his actions in an eternal frame of reference.

QUESTION 16: *Your answer*

QUESTION 17: *Your answer*

QUESTION 18:

Theory	Description
Preexistence	The soul has always existed, and God merely creates a body for it to inhabit.
Creationism	God creates the soul at the moment of conception or birth and immediately unites it with the body.
Traducianism	Man's physical and immaterial nature is passed down through natural generation.

QUESTION 19: *Your answer*

QUESTION 20: Psalm 139:13-14 indicates that God has been actively involved in the process of human generation from the beginning. He is pictured as a weaver who skillfully guides the development process in the womb. Thus, any act which stops the development of the fetus after conception is an interference in the work of God.

Lesson 9 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2: False

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5:

C. Man is like a photograph or a statue that reflects the nature and attributes of God.

QUESTION 6:

C. By both theological positions

QUESTION 7:

A. The corporeal view

QUESTION 8:

A. Faith

QUESTION 9:

Correct answers include:

Atheistic

Naturalistic

QUESTION 10: Theistic

Unit Three Exam Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2: False

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5: True

QUESTION 6: False

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8: True

QUESTION 9: True

QUESTION 10: True

QUESTION 11: True

QUESTION 12: False

QUESTION 13: True

QUESTION 14: True

QUESTION 15: True

QUESTION 16:

C. Unconfirmed holiness

QUESTION 17:

B. Fallen angels

QUESTION 18: A. They have a leader

QUESTION 19:

B. The creation of Eve

QUESTION 20:

A. Deranging the mind

QUESTION 21:

A. Job 38:7

QUESTION 22:

C. Oppose the Lord and His believing remnant

QUESTION 23: B. Was marred or defaced

QUESTION 24:

A. Genesis 1:26-27

QUESTION 25:

D. Worship and glorify God

Unit Four: Man, Sin, and the Christian Life

Man, as he was originally created, was a special creation of God, intended to be a living picture to the world of God's own attributes and glory. A troubling question may occur to you as you view the behavior of men all over the world: If man was created to reflect the character and glory of God, why does he do such a poor job of this? The answer which may come to mind is that man is a sinner.

The sinfulness of man raises some questions: Why is man a sinner? What is sin and where did it come from? How are we, as believers, to live in the presence of sin? The theological term for the study of sin is hamartiology. Because sin affects each of us daily, it is important to investigate what the Bible says about sin.

To help you understand man, his fall, and your daily battle with sin, this unit is devoted to a study of man's physical and spiritual makeup (or his "constitution"), what sin is, and how sin affects the daily life of the individual Christian.

Unit Outline

Lesson 10: The Facets and Fall of Man

Lesson 11: The Meaning of Sin

Lesson 12: Sin and the Individual Christian

Unit Objectives

When you have completed this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the constitution of man
- Explain the circumstances surrounding the fall and its cause
- Outline the effects of the fall of man
- Define sin, generally and specifically
- Discuss the meaning and implications of inherited, imputed, and personal sins
- Discuss the relationship between sin and the individual walk of the believer
- Write Scripture references for key theological concepts related to sin

Lesson 10: The Facets and Fall of Man

Lesson Introduction

Man is the highest of God's creation. He differs radically from all other forms of life. What is his nature? What is a soul? A spirit? How are the various parts of man's nature related? Does man truly have an immaterial nature which will survive death? In Topic 1 we will address these issues.

Though man is noble, he is fallen. The subject of Topic 2 will be his fall into sin and the terrible implications of this for the human race. Man's failure in the world to reflect the glory of God is all too obvious. Look at yourself and the world around you, your friends, neighbors, civil leaders, and high government officials. Compared to the character of God, what do you see? Even the best of us appear to fall short. Why is this?

If man, who was created in the image of God, in all instances falls short of looking like God, some corruption must have occurred. This degradation has infected all of mankind, and affected, as we can observe, all of nature.

Even if it were not universal, it has touched you and me, and so we have reason to understand and deal with it. Why are we so far from looking like God? Why is it so difficult for us to remain faithful?

These observations reflect the two subjects we want to discuss in this lesson: man's nature as originally constituted and the fall of man, the act by which all rebellion began.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: The Facets of Man
 - The Nature of Man
 - The Immortal Aspects of Man
- Topic 2: The Fall of Man
 - The Historicity of the Fall
 - The Account of the Fall
 - The Effect of the Fall

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Describe the bipartite constitution of man
- Define both the dichotomist and trichotomist views of man's immaterial nature
- Defend your view of man's immaterial nature, giving scriptural support
- Defend the historicity of the fall of man
- Explain the biblical account of the Fall under the following headings: the tempted, the test, the tempter, and the temptation
- Describe the effects and ramifications of the Fall

Definitions of Key Terms

Bipartite Unity—the view that man is a body-soul unity that is both material and immaterial rather than merely a separate, disunited body and a soul.

Dichotomy—dichotomy teaches that man is made up of two substances, material and immaterial, each consisting of a variety within.

Trichotomy—trichotomy teaches that man is made up of three substances: the material (body) and the immaterial (soul and spirit), each consisting of a variety within. The soul and spirit are considered distinct and separate from each other.

Memory Verse

In this lesson you are to memorize John 4:24, a verse that implies the simplicity of God. Be prepared to quote it from memory.

Reading Assignment

The readings from Ryrie for this lesson are chapters 32 and 33. You may read them both now or as indicated in the lesson.

Topic 1: The Facets of Man

Objective 1—By the end of this topic you will be able to describe the bipartite constitution of man.

If you have not already read Ryrie, chapter 32, “The Facets of Man,” please do so now.

From Lesson 9 you should remember that man came directly and immediately from God, created in His image. Now, we first want to explore the nature of man, how he is constituted. Later in the lesson we will see how the Fall affected both the divine and human aspects of man’s nature.

The Nature of Man

Man, as the crown of creation, was specially created by God to portray His own attributes and authority. What God is in His infinity, man is in his finiteness. Unlike God who is spirit, man is both physical and spiritual. Furthermore, the Scriptures use a multitude of terms to describe man’s physical and spiritual nature.

Man as a Bipartite Unity

In the midst of a world obsessed with the physical part of a man’s life, the Bible describes the material, or physical, aspect as well as the immaterial aspect of man’s nature. Man is not viewed as a body and a soul but rather as a body-soul unity that is both material and immaterial. The physical part of man is equally as important as the immaterial in defining what it means to be human. The following points help to make this clear:

1. God created man to be a physical being and called this state “very good” (Gen 1:31).
2. In God’s original design the separation of the body from the immaterial part of man at death is not natural or desirable. Death tears apart man’s nature in a way not intended by God. Thus, man is in bondage to the fear of death (Heb 2:15).
3. Even death does not permanently end man’s physical existence. All men will

receive a new physical body in the resurrection (1 Cor 15:42), and it is as a physical being that they will spend eternity either in joy or despair.

Man's present physical state is transitory (Jas 4:14). Man came from dust and will soon return to dust, as emphasized by the word "flesh," which refers to man's physical nature (Ps 78:39; Isa 40:6-8). A person may be wealthy, beautiful, or powerful, but very soon all of his material reality, his possessions, even his body, will fade. He too must share the destiny of all flesh, the grave (Isa 40:6-7).

Man as flesh is weak and unreliable. Therefore, the Scriptures say it is foolish for a man to trust his own strength or the strength of others rather than God (2 Chron 32:8; Jer 17:5). Further, it is unwise to make material things our goal in life, since both will perish (see Lk 12:13-21; 1 Jn 2:15-17).

QUESTION 1

Write a short paragraph to a person in your church who is compromising his faith because he wants to enjoy the material and physical pleasures of the world. He thinks that by keeping quiet about his faith and not faithfully fellowshipping and worshiping, he will be able to advance in his job. On the other hand, if he is an active Christian, he will be held back. Focus your comments on the fact that man's physical nature is temporary.

If man were merely a physical creature, then it would be very difficult to tell anyone that he should give up the pleasures of this world. After all, once he died, his life would be over. It would make more sense for man to grab for all the pleasure he could find before his life ended.

If man recognizes, however, that he is a spiritual creature whose life extends beyond the death of his physical body, then his whole perspective changes. He must not only consider what will bring him happiness in this life but also what implications his actions will have in the life to come. All Christians believe that man possesses both a physical body and an immaterial nature. Yet there is much disagreement about man's immaterial nature. The disagreement centers on whether man is body and soul-spirit or whether he is body, soul, and spirit. In other words, is man's soul to be distinguished from his spirit, or are these terms merely two different ways of looking at the same immaterial part of man?

Although debate between dichotomists and trichotomists has dragged on for centuries, this issue cannot be completely resolved on the basis of Scripture.

Objective 2—By the end of this topic you will be able to define both the dichotomist and trichotomist views of man's immaterial nature.

Man as a Dichotomy

As the text asserts, dichotomy teaches that man is made up of two substances, material and immaterial, each consisting of a variety within. Support may be summarized as follows:

1. God breathed into man but one principle, the living soul (Gen 2:7; Job 27:3).
2. The terms "soul" and "spirit" seem to be used interchangeably in some references (Gen 41:8; Ps 42:6 [literally "my soul bows itself"]; Mt 10:28; 27:50; Jn 12:27; 13:21; Heb 12:23; Rev 6:9).
3. "Spirit" as well as "soul" are ascribed to animals (Eccl 3:21; Rev 16:3 [literally "every living soul in the sea"]).

4. “Soul” is ascribed to the Lord (Isa 42:1 [literally “my soul has accepted”]; Heb 10:38 [literally “my soul has no pleasure in him”]).
5. The highest place in religion is ascribed to the soul (Mk 2:30; Lk 1:46; Heb 6:19; Jas 1:21).
6. Body and soul (or spirit) are spoken of as constituting the whole of man (Mt 10:28; 1 Cor 5:3).
7. Consciousness testifies that two elements compose a man’s being; we cannot discriminate between soul and spirit.

Man as a Trichotomy

The support for trichotomy is as follows:

1. In Genesis 2:7 the Hebrew word for life is “lives” (i.e., more than one).
2. Paul seems to think of body, soul, and spirit as three distinct parts of man’s nature (1 Thess 5:23; see also Heb 4:12).
3. A threefold organization of man’s nature may be implied in grouping men as “natural,” “carnal,” and “spiritual” (1 Cor 2:14–3:3 thru 1 Cor 3:1-3) (Both presentations are adaptations of the material in Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, rev. ed., ed. Vernon D. Doerksen [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979], pp. 160–61).

Thiessen concludes his presentation of both views by saying:

In other words, man’s immaterial nature is looked upon as one nature, but as composed of two parts. Sometimes the parts are sharply distinguished; at other times, by metonymy, they are used for the whole being. (Thiessen, *Lectures*, p. 161).

QUESTION 2

In your Life Notebook record the results of your study of the following items. Prepare to discuss your findings at your next group meeting.

1. Define both the dichotomist and trichotomist views of man’s immaterial nature.
2. What do you think is the strongest argument for each view and why? Give scriptural support.
3. Do you agree with Ryrie that man is a dichotomy? Explain your response and support it with Scripture.
4. Is there any practical significance for holding one view over the other? Explain your response.

Objective 3—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to defend your view of man’s immaterial nature, giving scriptural support.

The Immortal Aspects of Man

Most modern theologians acknowledge that the attempt to dissect man's immortal nature fails because the Scriptures do not give a systematic picture of man's nature. The various words used to describe man do not give a precise anatomy of man. Instead, the words often overlap in meaning.

Although the words may vary, they are not intended to describe distinct parts of man's nature but are ways of looking at the totality of man's nature from different perspectives. The text uses the term "facets," indicating aspects, not parts, of the whole. For example, "soul" looks at the essence of man, or what he is in himself. On the other hand, "spirit" focuses especially upon man's relationship to God. You must pay close attention to the context in which these terms are used to determine their meaning.

The biblical discussion of man emphasizes man as a whole in relation to God. The Scriptures never intend to give us a detailed psychological breakdown of man. The focus is on man as a totality. G. C. Berkouwer argues this point well:

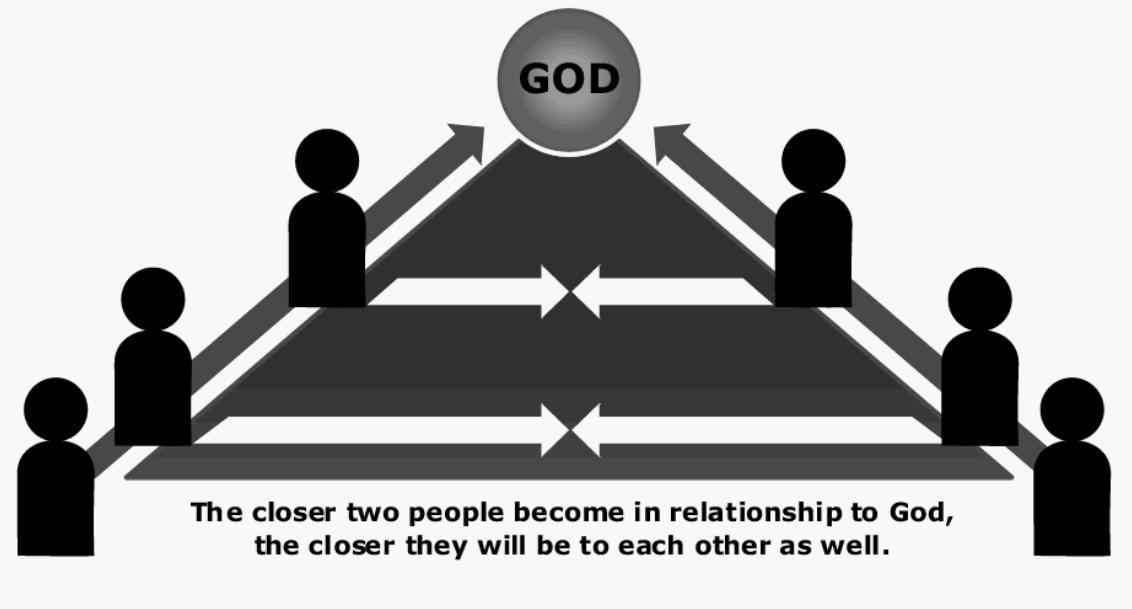
It is obviously not the intention of the divine revelation to give us exact information about man in himself and thus to anticipate what later scientific research on man offers. The scriptural anthropological concepts that vary so extremely never occur in a context that is concerned with the composition of man as such, in himself. God's revelation directs our glance towards man in his totality, in his relation to God. . . . It is indeed true that various aspects of humanness are spoken of in very concrete and extremely varied ways, but the decisive question is this, whether the intent of the Biblical witness is to reveal to us something of the composition of man, or whether it makes use of this composition as an anthropological given only incidentally, in order to speak of man as a whole. . . . No part of man is emphasized as independent of the other parts; not because the various parts are not important, but because the Word of God is concerned precisely with the whole man in his relation to God. (G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972] pp. 201)

Although a precise definition of man from the various descriptions of him in Scripture is not possible, it is still of value to seek to understand what those words mean.

QUESTION 3

If man has an immortal nature, it is logical to assume that he is able to relate to other men on more than a physical level. How would this make Christian relationships (marriage, friendships) potentially more satisfying than non-Christian relationships? Record your answer in your Life Notebook.

Christian Relationships



QUESTION 4

Since man is both a physical and spiritual creature, he can only relate to God on a spiritual level, and Satan and his demons can only relate to man's physical body. *True or False?*

Man has a dual nature. He is both a physical and a spiritual creature. His physical nature is not to be despised as inferior, but it is also not to be the focal point of life since it is weak and temporal. Because man is spiritual, he is also immortal, and his life has meaning. Most importantly, because he is spiritual, man is capable of communion with God, who is spirit.

Topic 2: The Fall of Man

Objective 4—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to defend the historicity of the fall of man.

Read Ryrie, chapter 33, “The Fall of Man,” now if you have not already done so.

The account of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden is one of the most significant portions of the Word of God. The historicity and truth of the events, or lack thereof, carry consequences of eternal magnitude.

The Historicity of the Fall

Some liberal theologians have viewed Genesis 3 as a parable or a myth that teaches unhistorical spiritual truths. Yet the Bible consistently portrays Genesis 3 as a literal, historical account of the entrance of sin into the world (see Rom 5:12-21; 2 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2:13-14). Those who hold that the Bible is the Word of God must adhere to divine revelation rather than the opinions of men.

QUESTION 5

Match the Scripture reference with what it teaches about the historicity of the Fall.

Scripture	Historicity of the Fall
Matthew 19:4-5	Jesus does not directly testify to the historicity of the Fall, but His teaching indicates that He does believe in the historicity of Adam and Eve and the Genesis account. If He accepts this as historical, He also must accept the Fall as historical.
1 Corinthians 15:21-22	The writer speaks of the deception of Eve and also testifies that Adam was a historical person.
2 Corinthians 11:3	The writer claims that the serpent deceived Eve and is afraid that false teachers might similarly deceive the Corinthians.
1 Timothy 2:13-14	The writer compares and contrasts Adam and Christ as two historical figures who had differing effects on mankind by their actions. While the writer does not speak directly of the Fall (though he says that Adam brought about death), he does make Adam a historical figure. This implies that the Genesis 3 account is also historical.

From these verses it becomes clear that the Bible accepts the Fall as a historical event. Both Paul and Jesus accepted it as historical.

QUESTION 6

What does Paul say in Romans 5:12-21 that supports the historicity of the Fall? Choose the best answer.

- A. He compares Adam's death with Christ's death as an illustration of the gospel.
- B. He compares Adam's temptation with Christ's temptation to argue his point.
- C. He compares Adam's fall with Christ's death as if both are historical events.
- D. He compares Adam's fall with Christ's death as if both are figurative stories.

If we reject a literal fall of man, we must also say that Jesus and Paul were either mistaken or misleading. Either way, their authority as teachers of spiritual truth would be compromised. But if the Fall is historical, this event has consequences for us today.

Objective 5—By the end of this topic you will be able to explain the biblical account of the Fall under the following headings: the tempted, the test, the tempter, and the temptation.

The Account of the Fall

It is important to know and understand what took place during those critical moments just before and after man succumbed to Satan's prompting to disobey God. Read Genesis 3:1-7.

The Tempted

Many questions are raised in Genesis 3 concerning: the nature of man, his relationship with the Lord before and after the Fall, the nature of the temptation, the role of Satan, the Fall itself, and the terrible consequences that came upon the sons of Adam as a result of that first act of disobedience, among other issues.

Interact with the Ryrie text, chapter 33, to answer the following questions:

QUESTION 7

How does Ryrie prefer to describe Adam's moral nature before the Fall?

- A. Adam possessed confirmed creature holiness.
- B. Adam possessed confirmed creator holiness.
- C. Adam possessed unconfirmed creature holiness.
- D. Adam possessed a positive holiness.
- E. Adam displayed a kind of passive holiness, innocent of wrong.

QUESTION 8

Adam's two main responsibilities cited by the text are (1) to exercise dominion over the earth and (2) to enjoy the fruits of his care of the garden. How does the text understand the first of these responsibilities for today?

- A. Administering the earth so that it will sustain the people who fill it.
- B. Bringing all of the world's governmental structures to come under the lordship of Christ.
- C. "Subdue the earth" is not part of Noah's mandate after the flood, so it is not applicable.
- D. "Subdue the earth" seems to be primarily a command to cultivate the land for food.
- E. Demolishing every kind of opposition to God in the world.

The Test

Man's encounter with Satan, recorded in Genesis 3, stimulates a number of questions in our minds. Did God allow Adam and Eve to be tested? Why did God not prevent the serpent from deceiving Eve in the first place? He could have easily stopped the Fall before it ever took place. Why did He allow man to be tested?

Tests of Faith Are Neutral

God does not desire for man to sin and never invites him to sin (Jas 1:13). God's desire is always for man to pass the tests he encounters. It is only when faith is tested, however, that it can be shown to be genuine. Testing purifies faith, like gold passed through the refiner's fire. Tested faith is stronger and results in a deeper commitment to God.

God rewards those who remain loyal to Him. Therefore, tests can even be the cause of rejoicing for us as Christians (Jas 1:2-4), since they are opportunities to prove our loyalty to God, to grow in our faith, and to receive a reward for our faithfulness.

The test for Adam and Eve began with the commandment of God in Genesis 2:16-17:

Then the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you must not eat, for when you eat from it you will surely die."

By using the fruit of the tree as a test, God gave man a choice between obedience and disobedience, life and death. God did not want man to be a robot who could not choose to disobey. Rather, God desired man to be as a child who chooses to obey his parents out of love and gratitude. The only way such a loving and obedient relationship could exist was if God gave man the genuine ability to exercise his choice.

Man had considerable freedom in the Garden of Eden. God allowed him to “eat freely” (the Hebrew phrase is emphatic) of every tree and only forbade one. God’s restrictions were minimal, and this test was certainly within man’s ability to pass (1 Cor 10:13).

The Tempter

Man was not left alone to face his test. Genesis 3 tells us that another creature in the garden desired man’s downfall. The Genesis account merely describes this creature as “the serpent” and does not give any indication of why he desired to make man fall.

There is some discussion as to whether Satan was the serpent or whether he just used a serpent. In the first case, the term “serpent” would be understood as a title for Satan and indicate that Satan talked directly with Eve in a way that would not repel her. In the other case, Satan would have spoken through a serpent. It would then have to be understood that it was not unusual for a serpent to speak. In either case, Satan is clearly the tempter.

QUESTION 9

According to Genesis 3:1 and Revelation 12:9; 20:2, who is the “serpent”?

- A. The serpent was a real creature, created by God and used by Satan to tempt Eve.
- B. The serpent was a real creature, created by Satan and used by Satan to tempt Eve.
- C. The serpent story was only a literary device used to explain the Fall figuratively.
- D. The serpent was a real creature which was demon possessed.

The Temptation

Satan, then, came to Eve and conversed with her in an unthreatening and an apparently inviting way, for there is no indication of fear on her part. Similarly, his speech must have been attractive, persuasive, and authoritative, for there is no indication that Eve questioned anything that he said.

This situation fits very well the suggestion of the text that Satan was operating as a counterfeit when he approached Eve. He did not begin with overt attacks on God. Instead, Satan opened with a question that planted a little seed of doubt in her mind about God’s integrity and motives.

So Eve listened further. The more she listened, the better it sounded. The serpent introduced his counterfeit plan. It appealed to her desire to satisfy self without glorifying God.

QUESTION 10

Why was Satan’s counterfeit for God’s plan so appealing to Eve? Write down your answer.

Once Satan opened up the door of doubt and apparently won her confidence, he became more direct in his denial of the goodness of God’s plan and the presentation of his scheme. He declared that she would not die but rather benefit from eating the fruit.

The statement in Genesis 3:5 can be understood in at least two ways. Satan could have been either ascribing jealousy to God, or he could have been saying that this is what God really wanted.

If Satan meant the former, then he was again casting doubt on God's goodness. He would be telling Eve that the only reason they were not to eat of this tree was that God knew they would become like Him and His position would be threatened.

If he meant the latter, then he would be more obviously counterfeiting God's plan. That is, Satan would be acknowledging that God wanted His children to be like Him. But the serpent's plan would be to achieve that by the wrong means. It would thus make it more attractive to Eve. As the text suggests, it was at this point that she began to rationalize her decision.

QUESTION 11

Review Genesis 3:1-6. In your Life Notebook under "Knowing," list and briefly consider the steps that Satan and Eve took that brought her to the point of disobedience.

So, Eve took the fruit, ate it, and gave it to Adam. He ate, and immediately they were aware that they had sinned against the Lord's express command. That was the awful act whereby sin entered the human race.

QUESTION 12

In your Life Notebook write down your responses to the following questions related to temptation. Keep in mind that this can be a useful exercise as you prepare for counseling ministry.

1. What are the three most common temptations that people in your church face?
2. For each of these temptations you listed, write what you see to be the "rewards" (temporary pleasures or benefits) and consequences of the sin. For example, the sin of adultery has the "rewards" of the temporary benefits of companionship, intimacy, and physical pleasure, but it usually leads at least to the consequences of broken relationships and destroyed families.
3. How could you use your list of "rewards" and "consequences" to counsel someone in your church who is struggling with one of these sins? (It might be helpful to have someone make such a list for himself and then talk about it together. Most people will see that the consequences of sin far outweigh its pleasures or rewards. The problem is that we see only the rewards when we are in the middle of temptation).

Objective 6—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to describe the effects and ramifications of the Fall.

The Effect of the Fall

In Genesis 3:4 we read, "The serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die'" whereas the Lord had said, "You will surely die" (Gen 2:17). The essence of this lie is that sin has no consequences. But true to God's warning, sin has deadly consequences.

Our sins affect those around us. But Adam and Eve's sin had universal and eternal consequences. The Fall affected every aspect of life.

General Effect

The various penalties center on a common theme, that of subduing rebellion and controlling creation. Before the Fall there was harmony. Everyone and everything had a place, and each operated willingly and harmoniously in their various relationships. All creation was humbled before its creator. “Humility” implies knowing one’s place before God and willingly serving in that position.

The Fall resulted in the loss of humility, i.e., submission to God. Now, through man’s sin creation rises up in rebellion and seeks to rule rather than be ruled. This rebellion must, of course, be put down by the Lord. In some cases, it merely means subduing and controlling the creature in his daily living. But in others, it means execution, death.

For this reason Scripture commands us to submit and humble ourselves before the Lord. Such submission is difficult because it calls for man to surrender his control. But such submission will bring wholeness as we are restored to the original divine intent.

Specific Effects

Consider each of the five penalties of the Fall as outlined in the text, and then answer the following questions:

QUESTION 13

What are the five categories into which the text organizes the penalties?

- A. The human race, animals, Satan, the ground, women
- B. The serpent, Satan, the ground, women, men
- C. The human race, the serpent, Satan, the ground, women
- D. The human race, the serpent, Satan, women, men
- E. The serpent, animals, Satan, the ground, men

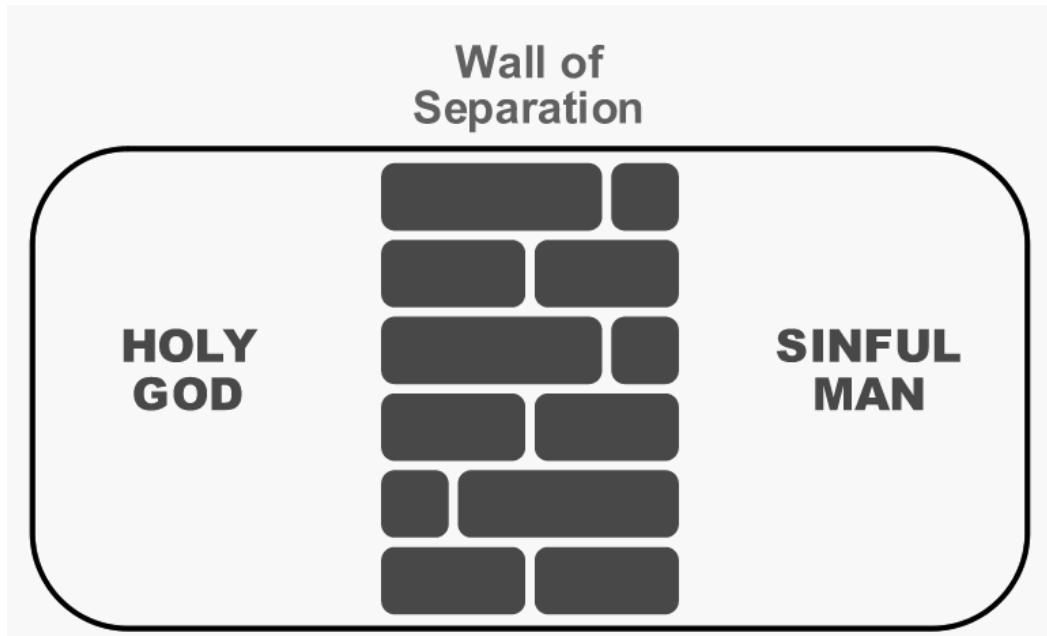
QUESTION 14

Summarize the ramifications of Adam and Eve’s sin.

The Main Effect

The greatest consequence of all, from which all daily sins emanate, was and is the impenetrable barrier erected between the holy God and the sons of Adam, preventing fellowship with God. Apart from divine intervention, this obstacle consigns the human race to eternal separation from God in hell.

Only the death of Christ could break down this wall. Some of the “bricks” in the wall will be discussed in the following pages:



Enemies of God

The first brick in the barrier between a holy God and sinful man is that God and man are no longer in fellowship with one another. Hostility has developed; men are now viewed as enemies of God.

This initial estrangement between man and God is the subject of Genesis 3. In Genesis 2 both Adam and Eve were “naked, and they were not ashamed” (Gen 2:25). They stood totally exposed to God and each other with nothing to hide. Genesis 3:7-8 paints an entirely different picture. After their sin Adam and Eve covered themselves out of shame for their actions and tried to hide from God. These actions contrast sharply with the original innocence and peace which man experienced in his relationship with God.

The actions of Adam and Eve illustrate a progression connected with sin that is evident throughout history. First there is sin, which is followed by guilt. Adam and Eve knew they were naked and for the first time experienced shame and guilt. Recognition of their nakedness was an outward expression of the guilt they felt within their hearts.

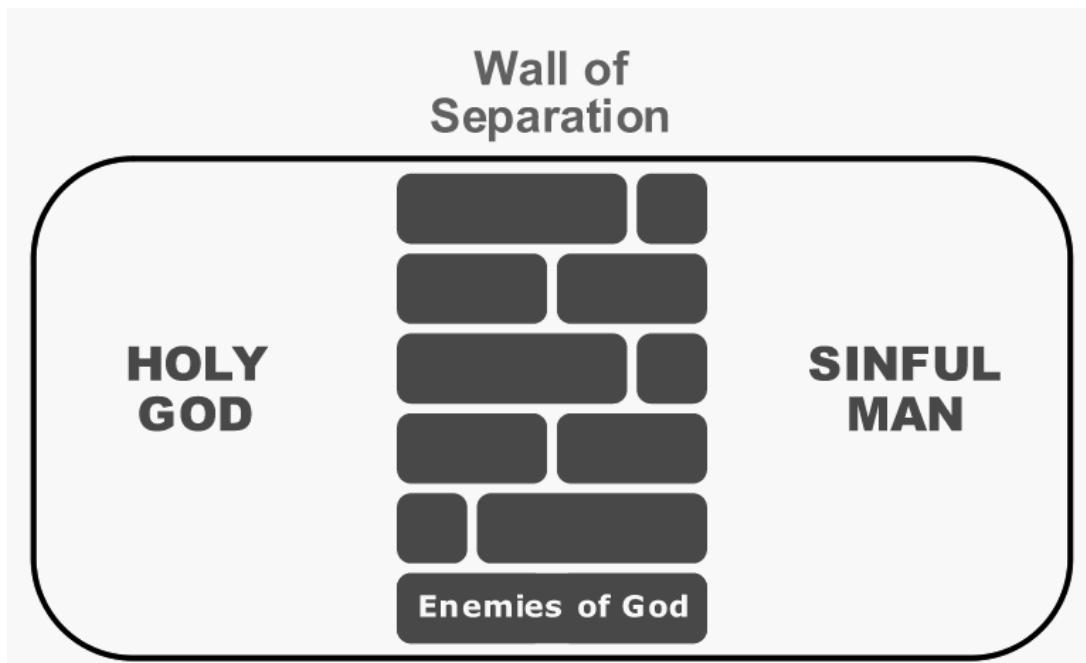
Guilt, in turn, produces fear. Adam and Eve were afraid of being exposed to each other and to God. They were also afraid of punishment. Either they could face their guilt, confess it to God, and accept the consequences, or they could seek to run away from their guilt.

Obviously, they chose the second option. They decided to hide from God. They were afraid to face each other and God. Pathetically, they sought to hide their nakedness, guilt, and fear by making coverings of fig leaves. But there was nothing they could do to hide their guilt, and they recognized this. When they heard the sound of God moving about in the garden, they hid in terror (Gen 3:8).

What a tragic picture. Man fell from innocence and freedom to guilt and fear. He cringed in terror, hiding in the bushes like a hunted animal. Finally, when confronted with his sin, man could not face the truth and made excuses for his failure. Adam’s first reaction was to blame Eve rather than to admit his guilt and bear the penalty. Note that he even blamed God! He blamed his sin on

“the woman whom you gave to me.” In other words, according to Adam, it was God’s fault that man fell because God gave Eve to Adam.

When man fell, he became estranged from God. Forfeiting the intimacy with God for which he was created, man became God’s enemy.



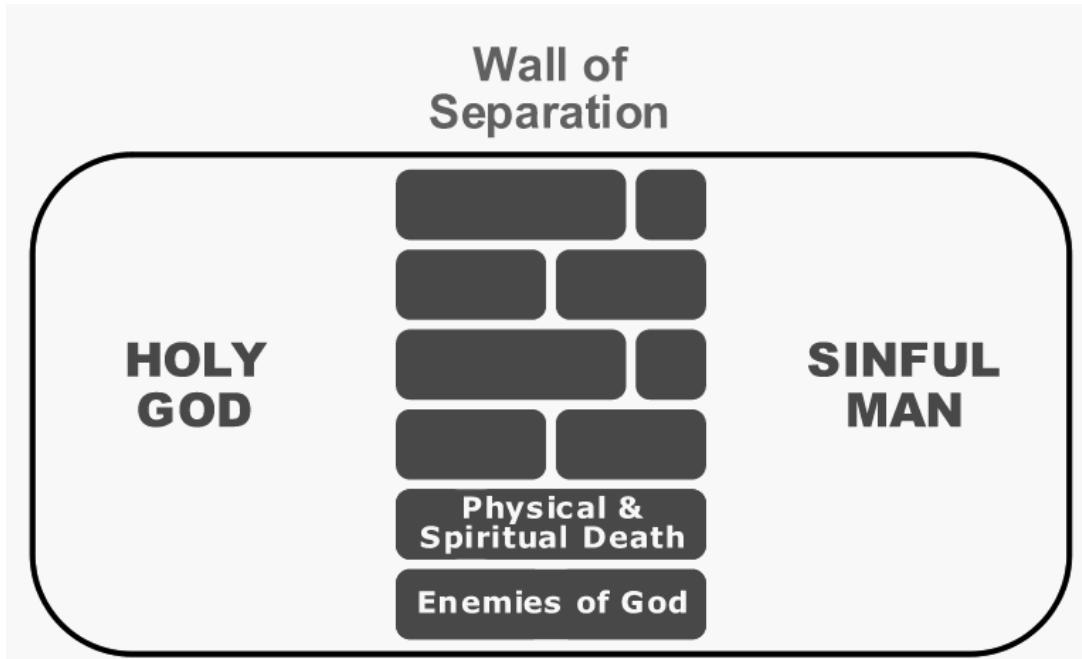
Physical and Spiritual Death

The Bible teaches unequivocally that because of Adam’s sin physical death was introduced into the world. But spiritual death also resulted from this sin. When Adam sinned, he died not only physically but also spiritually (Gen 2:17; Rom 6:23).

As a result of Adam’s sin the entire creation was subjected to death and decay (Rom 8:20-21). The “bondage of decay” in Romans 8:21 is a statement of the universal principle that scientists call the second law of thermodynamics. The second law of thermodynamics is “the universal law of decay” (also called “increased entropy”). Scientists have demonstrated this principle which states that all systems move toward disintegration and disorder.

Scientists, however, have been unable to discover why the second law is operative in the universe. Why should all systems decay and become more disorderly? The only answer is found in the biblical records: Psalm 102:25-27, Isaiah 51:6, Romans 7:21-25, Hebrews 12:27, 1 Peter 1:24-25, and Revelation 21:4; 22:3. (Note that this universal principle of decay—discovered and only formally recognized little more than a century ago—has been implicit in the biblical revelation for thousands of years.)

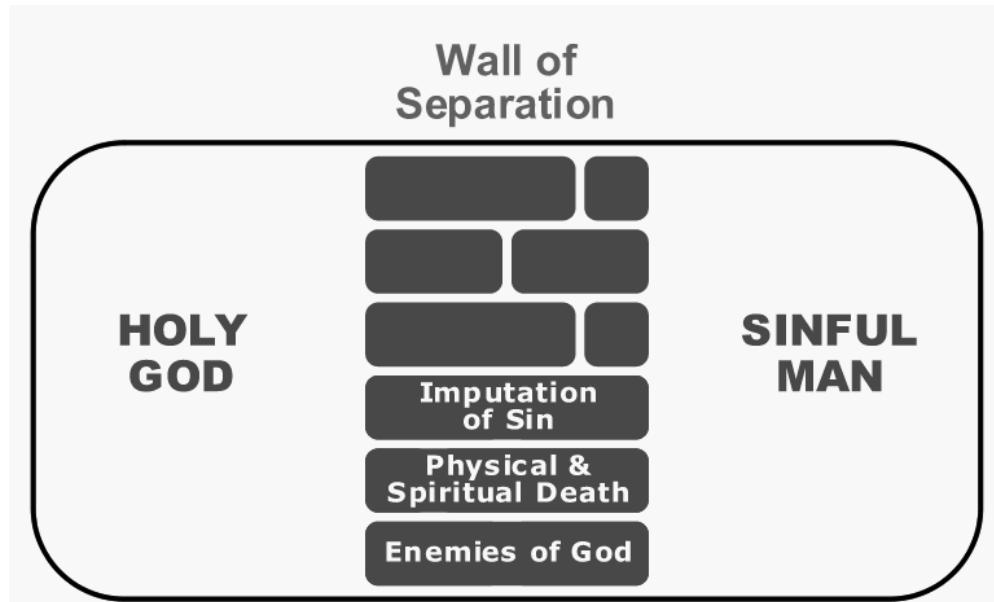
One practical result of spiritual death is what theologians call “total depravity,” or “inherited sin.” Man is a sinner because he sins, and he sins because he is by nature a sinner. Further details on this depravity will be presented in Lesson 12.



The Imputation of Sin

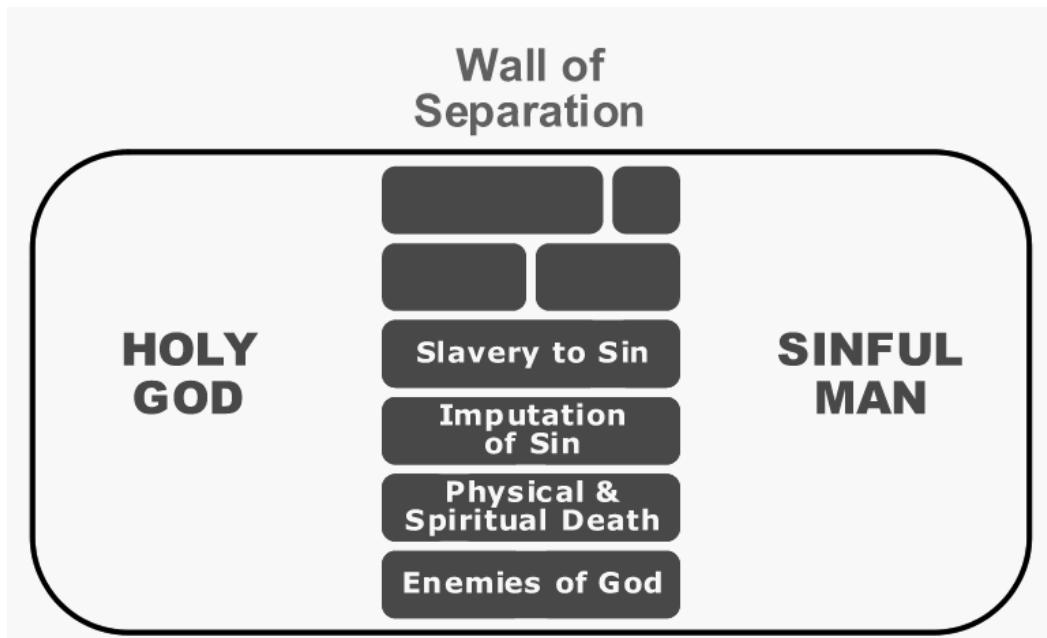
The Bible tells us the real truth: Man is a sinner. There are no exceptions to this rule. The basic concept of imputation is that all men share in the sin of Adam. Even though we did not personally commit this sin, we still share in its guilt and consequences as if we each ate from the tree. Again, a further discussion of this appears in Lesson 12.

The Fall created a break in man's relationship with God and with his fellow men and resulted in God's judgment upon all of mankind. Adam's sin was by some means imputed to the whole race so that Scripture could say that "all sinned" and became "sinners" (Rom 5:12, 19). It was as if God acted as a judge and declared the whole human race to be guilty at the Fall.



Slavery to Sin

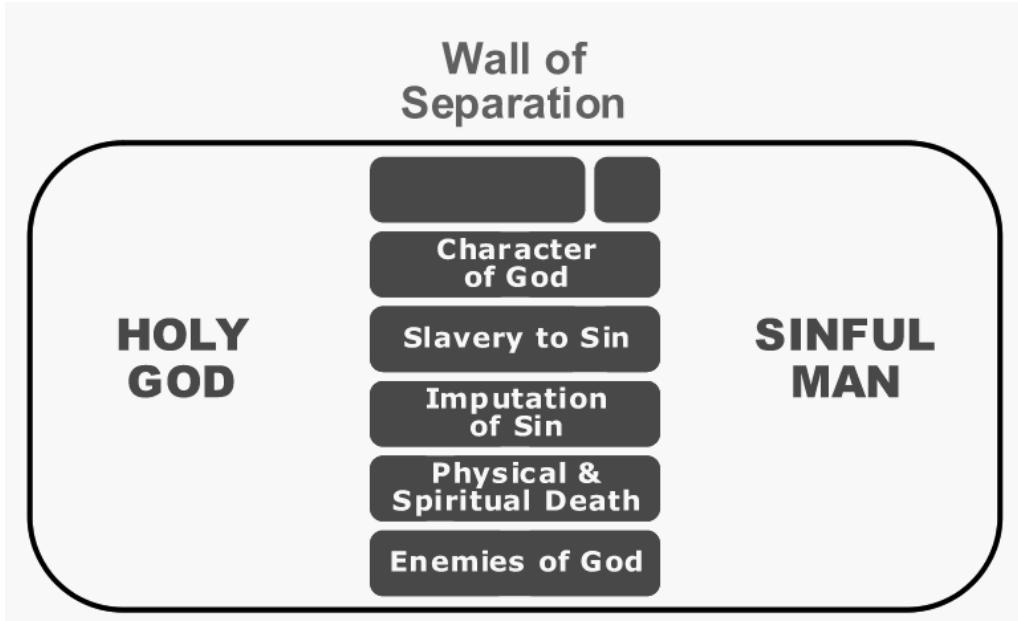
Not only does man suffer from sin's penalty, but he suffers from its dominion; he is a slave of sin. Apart from the grace of God, his every act is tinged with this bondage; he is unable to free himself for acts of righteousness.



Character of God

The next brick in the barrier between the holy God and sinful man is the character of God Himself. Guilt is the state of a moral agent after a violation of God's law. Guilt carries with it the concept of deserved punishment. God's holiness is outraged by sin. God's wrath must be satisfied. Every sin is an offense against God, and the sinner is subject to His wrath. Therefore, the entire human race finds itself under the wrath of God (Rom 1:18).

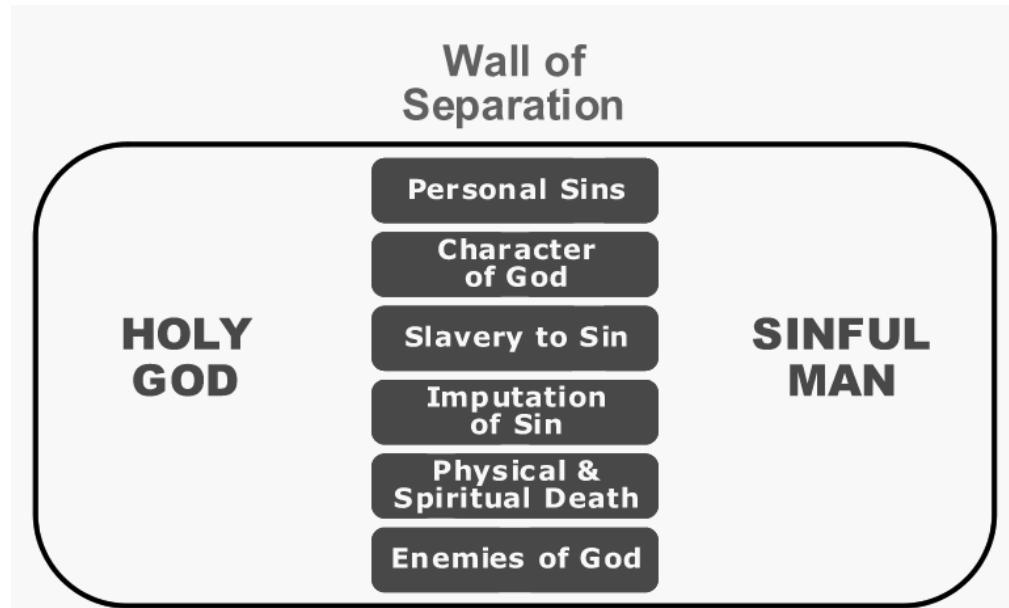
The believer must not confuse guilt with "guilt feelings." Guilt is a state of reality that may or may not be accompanied by guilt feelings. A man is guilty before God, deserving punishment for his sins, whether or not he has guilt feelings.



Personal Sins

The final brick in the barrier between God and man is the penalty earned as a result of personal sin. Romans 6:23 says, "The payoff of sin is death." Death is the nullification of life. Death also carries with it the idea of separation from life and from God.

This impenetrable barrier is the source of human dilemma. No man can scale it. The difference between Christianity and other religions is partly in the belief in this barrier. A teacher or prophet cannot remove such a barrier. Only divine justice executed upon a sinless substitute can shatter it. In Lesson 12 Ryrie develops three bricks of the barrier: spiritual death (the inheritance of sin), the imputation of sin, and the penalty that comes as a result of personal sin.



Conclusion

Man was created in the image of God. Man's God-given purpose—God's will for him—was to be like living statues in the world, reflecting the glory and attributes of God. Man failed his test in the Garden of Eden, however, and the fall of man introduced sin, death, and corruption into the human race.

God's image is the most significant thing about man's nature. How did the Fall affect the image of God in man? Was the image lost or marred at the Fall? To answer these questions, we must first realize that Scripture never directly links the image of God and the Fall. Indeed, the image of God is rarely discussed in Scripture outside of the first few chapters of Genesis. Those passages that do refer to the image of God in man seem to suggest that it was not obliterated by the Fall.

Nevertheless, man's nature has been corrupted by sin. He no longer reflects the glory of God as he did before. Prior to the Fall the image of God in man was like the sun on a cloudless day. It shone forth with brilliance. Now, however, the image is like the sun trying to break through dark and stormy clouds. Occasionally, it breaks through, and man catches a glimpse of the glory for which he was created. But all too often it is hidden behind the dark clouds of sin.

Fortunately, man's story does not end with the Fall. Redemption was in the plan of God for His creation: "But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8).

Key Biblical Concepts

Before taking the Lesson Self Check, memorize these biblical concepts and the references supporting them. Be prepared to describe briefly how each reference supports or explains its respective concept:

1. God does not tempt man to sin - James 1:13
2. Man is tempted in three basic ways - 1 John 2:15-16
3. The constitution of man is not merely physical - 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 4:12
4. Man's earthly existence is transient - Psalm 78:39; James 4:14

STUDY PROJECT FOR LESSON 10

1. Create a teaching chart or diagram in which you relate the temptation in the Garden of Eden, the temptation of Christ in the wilderness (Mt 4:1-11), and the three sources of temptation as found in 1 John 2:15-16.
2. If possible, use this in teaching a group in your church. Be prepared to share the results at your next group meeting.

Lesson 10 Self Check

QUESTION 1

It is often Satan's method to counterfeit the works of God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

One of the penalties of the Fall was that man would have to work. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

Some people believe that Genesis 3 contains truth without being true. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

“Spirit,” like “soul,” includes the whole person. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

One support for the dichotomist view is that the words “soul” and “spirit” are sometimes used interchangeably. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

The most comprehensive term related to the immaterial part of man is:

- A. Will
- B. Conscience
- C. Heart
- D. Mind

QUESTION 7

The main reason God tested Adam and Eve was because:

- A. He wanted them to become holy
- B. He wanted to prove their faithfulness
- C. He wanted to put restrictions on their lives
- D. He wanted them to freely choose to obey Him

QUESTION 8

The only one of the following points IN FAVOR OF trichotomy is:

- A. The word “life” in Genesis 2:7 is plural
- B. “Soul” is more comprehensive than “spirit”
- C. “Soul” is sometimes used where you would expect “spirit”
- D. Man is a soul but has a spirit

QUESTION 9

Satan planted doubts in Eve's mind about God during the temptation. Which of the following did Satan NOT question?

- A. His goodness
- B. His presence
- C. His love
- D. His truth

QUESTION 10

To say that man is a bipartite unity is to say that he is:

- A. Soul and spirit
- B. Material and immaterial
- C. Body and mind
- D. Flesh and bones

Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1: The emphasis should be that all he is gaining or hopes to gain through compromise will perish very quickly. He may enjoy them for a brief time, but soon he will die, and they will all be gone. This should be a difficult question to answer, as the paragraph below the question explains.

QUESTION 2: *Your answer*

QUESTION 3: Christian relationships are potentially more satisfying because Christians can relate to others on a spiritual level as well as a physical and emotional level. This spiritual dimension is missing in non-Christian relationships because they ignore this vital aspect of their relationship. They are like a car that is running on only three of four cylinders. Christian relationships can be illustrated by the use of a triangle (see p.271). The closer two people come to God (i.e., the more they nurture the spiritual part of their lives), the closer they will be to each other as well.

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5:

Scripture	Historicity of the Fall
Matthew 19:4-5	Jesus does not directly testify to the historicity of the Fall, but His teaching indicates that He does believe in the historicity of Adam and Eve and the Genesis account. If He accepts this as historical, He also must accept the Fall as historical.
1 Corinthians 15:21-22	The writer compares and contrasts Adam and Christ as two historical figures who had differing effects on mankind by their actions. While the writer does not speak directly of the Fall (though he says that Adam brought about death), he does make Adam a historical figure. This implies that the Genesis 3 account is also historical.
2 Corinthians 11:3	The writer claims that the serpent deceived Eve and is afraid that false teachers might similarly deceive the Corinthians.
1 Timothy 2:13-14	The writer speaks of the deception of Eve and also testifies that Adam was a historical person.

QUESTION 6: C. He compares Adam's fall with Christ's death as if both are historical events.

QUESTION 7: C. Adam possessed unconfirmed creature holiness.

QUESTION 8: A. Administering the earth so that it will sustain the people who fill it.

QUESTION 9: A. The serpent was a real creature, created by God and used by Satan to tempt Eve.

QUESTION 10: We normally think of restrictions as being bad. Satan used this approach to question God's goodness with Eve. Actually, restrictions are often good if they keep us from doing something that would hurt us or someone else. For instance, when a mother tells a child not to go into the street, this is a restriction of love to protect the child from injury or death.

QUESTION 11: *Your answer*

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13: D. The human race, the serpent, Satan, women, men

QUESTION 14:

The ramifications of the Fall are these:

Sin affects others, not just the sinner

Sin can never be reversed; words and actions can never be taken back

Through grace and goodness we can reduce the negative effects of sin and turn negative situations into positive ones

Lesson 10 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2: False

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5: True

QUESTION 6: C. Heart

QUESTION 7: D. He wanted them to freely choose to obey Him

QUESTION 8: A. The word “life” in Genesis 2:7 is plural

QUESTION 9: B. His presence

QUESTION 10: B. Material and immaterial

Lesson 11: The Meaning of Sin

Lesson Introduction

“Sin” is one of the most unpopular words in any language. It evokes different responses from different people. To some, it belongs to the last century; it is not relevant today. To others, it is reserved only for major misdeeds, such as robbery, murder, and adultery. To still others, it is no more significant than mistakes or misjudgments in reasoning. But the fact of the matter is that the word makes most people uncomfortable. Even in denying sin’s relevance or existence, they sense that they are accountable for something that often needs correction.

With so many differing ideas of what sin is and because sin affects each of us daily, it is important to investigate what the Bible has to say about sin. Hamartiology is the study of sin. The term comes from two Greek words, *hamartia* (sin) and *logia* (study). We will study the topic of sin in the next two lessons. In Topic 1 we will consider the key biblical terms for sin and its essential characteristics.

In Topic 2 we will consider specific sins, the categories of sin, and what Christ had to say about the subject. Specifically we want to consider five individual sins which Jesus spoke of and illustrate them and learn how to avoid them in our own lives.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: The Biblical Concept of Sin

 Key Biblical Terms for Sin

 A Definition of Sin

 Characteristics of Sin

Topic 2: Christ’s Teaching Concerning Sin

 Some Specific Sins

 Some Categories of Sin

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Complete a chart of the words used in the Old Testament to describe sin
- Define the basic concept of sin
- Summarize the biblical teaching on the effects of sin in the areas of our intellect, our emotions, and our will
- List the individual sins Jesus spoke against, giving current illustrations for five of them

Definition of Key Term

Hamartiology—the theological study of sin. The term comes from the two Greek words, *hamartia* (sin) and *logia* (study).

Memory Verse

Psalm 11:7 speaks of the righteousness of God. Memorize this verse, and be prepared to quote it from memory.

Reading Assignment

Your readings from Ryrie for this lesson are chapters 34 and 35. You may read them both now or as indicated in the lesson.

Topic 1: The Biblical Concept of Sin

Objective 1—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to complete a chart of the words used in the Old Testament to describe sin.

If you have not already done so, please read Ryrie, chapter 34, “The Biblical Concept of Sin.”

Broadly speaking, sin “embraces the gamut [whole scope, or entire range] of human failure from the transgression of a single commandment to the ruin of one’s whole existence” (Walter Guenther, “Sin,” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown, 3 vols. [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975-78], 3:573). Sin’s complexity is indicated by the many words used to describe it. For a more detailed examination of the concept of sin and to help us better understand its nature, we will look briefly at the most important words used in the Bible to describe sin.

Key Biblical Terms for Sin

The natural place to begin a study of the subject of sin is with the individual words for sin. But more is needed. It is also helpful to see sin in its types, or categories, which are reflected in the individual words.

The Individual Terms

Rather than taking a step-by-step approach of defining each word, we believe it will be more helpful for you and your ministry to create a teaching chart that reflects the content of these pages in your text.

QUESTION 1

In your Life Notebook use your own creativity to devise a chart on the words for sin. We would suggest that you make a table with four columns. Label column 1 “the word for sin”; column 2 “related word(s)”; column 3 “the meaning” of the word; and column 4 “key verses” that use the word(s). Leave space at the bottom of each chart to record conclusions. Upon completion of your chart, meditate upon it, and then at the bottom of the chart, record a summary of the meaning of the terms.

The Categorized Terms

As you have just experienced, it is very helpful to know what each word related to sin means. But to seek to give some organization to the meaning of sin expressed by these words, we have grouped them into four basic categories of meaning.

Sin as Failure

The two most common biblical word groups for sin relate to the concept of failure (Hebrew *chata* and Greek *hamartano*). Both of these words are used in Scripture, though rarely, in a physical sense of “to miss” (a target, Judg 20:16; a way, Prov 8:36; 19:2). But by far the most common use of these terms, and the one we are most concerned with here, is ethical, meaning to fail, to do wrong, or to sin. Man does not and is not able or willing to achieve the standard that God has set forth for him. God designed man to reflect His own perfections, but man falls far short of this standard. Romans 3:23 is a good description of man’s sin as failure: “For all have sinned [*hamartano*] and fall short of the glory of God.” It is important to emphasize, however, that this failure is neither passive nor accidental but willful.

The Greek words *paraptoma* and *parapipto* also relate to the concept of sin as failure. In the Septuagint LXX the noun is used of trespasses (e.g., Ps 18:13; Ezk 14:13; 15:8), and the verb is used of neglecting to do something (Est 6:10) and of committing of transgressions (e.g., Ezk 14:13; 15:8). In the New Testament the noun is, likewise, used of trespasses (Mt 6:14; Gal 6:1; Eph 2:1). The verb is used only once, to describe falling away from the faith (Heb 6:6). In Romans 5:15-17 the transgression, or failure, of Adam is contrasted with the work of Christ. Christ, the second Adam, succeeded where the first Adam failed. Christ did not sin, transgress, or fail.

QUESTION 2

The Greek and Hebrew words for “sin” that translate “miss (a target or way)” imply that sin is a mistake or unwilling failure. *True or False?*

Sin as Rebellion

Other words for sin emphasize man’s active rebellion against God’s standards. The Hebrew word *pasha*, for example, is often used for a subjugated nation seeking to throw off the rule of another nation (2 Kgs 3:7; 8:20). The word is also used to depict man as seeking to rebel against God’s rule over his life (Isa 1:28; Hos 14:9; Ps 37:38). Although Psalm 2:1-3 does not use the word *pasha*, it provides a good picture of the concept of sin as rebellion:

Why do the nations cause a commotion? Why are the countries devising plots that will fail? The kings of the earth form a united front, the rulers collaborate against the LORD and his chosen king. They say, “Let’s tear off the shackles they’ve put on us! Let’s free ourselves from their ropes!”

The Greek word *parabasis* means “a transgression” or “neglect of some duty or obligation.” It is frequently used in reference to deliberate neglect or transgression of the law of God (Mt 15:2; Rom 2:23). Very similar to this idea is the Hebrew word *abar*, which means, “to pass over” or transgress God’s law (Deut 26:13; Josh 7:15). The Greek word *anomia* also belongs in this grouping. (Read Ryrie’s description of *anomos*, the adjective form of *anomia*, at the letter “G.” under the heading “II. In the New Testament” in the text.) Literally, it means “without law” and is used to describe those who contemptuously break God’s law. It implies that such men refuse to be subject to God’s law, believing that they are a law unto themselves.

Sin as Perversion of What is Right

Under this category we would place the Hebrew word *awon*. The basic meaning of this word is “to twist” or “to distort.” It emphasizes that sin is a “distortion” of what is right. Sin is something that is abnormal; it is a perversion. The Greek word *adikia* should also be included in this group.

It literally means “without justice.” Thus, sin is a perversion of justice, a twisting of that which is right, and an opposition to whatever is true (Lk 16:8; 18:6; Rom 1:18).

Unintentional Sin or Sin Due to Ignorance

The Bible acknowledges that not all of man’s sin is due to active rebellion. Sometimes man sins unintentionally. This is the special emphasis of the Hebrew word *shegaga*, which means “sin (of ignorance or committed unintentionally)” (Lev 4:22). (Ryrie describes the related verb *shagag* in chapter 34 under letter E.)

Scripture makes it clear that, even though a man does not intend to sin, such a mistake is still sin and results in guilt before God. These inadvertent sins still had to be atoned for through the sacrificial system. Although the sinner did not die, his guilt had to be imputed to a substitute. But no sacrifice was provided for intentional sins, and the guilt and penalty fell directly on the sinner. The law demanded that those who committed intentional sin were to be excluded from the camp (Num 15:30).

God not only provided for atonement for unintentional sins in the sacrificial system, but He also established cities of refuge where those who sinned unintentionally could flee (Lev 22:14; Num 35:11). As long as they remained within the city, they would be safe from revenge. But those who sinned unintentionally suffered the penalty of having to stay within the city to ensure their safety.

QUESTION 3

There is no such thing as an unintentional sin. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

For each of the four general categories of sin described above, list a specific example of how men commit each type of sin today.

QUESTION 5

Match the Greek or Hebrew word for “sin” with the category of sin that best fits it.

<i>Word for Sin</i>	<i>Category of Sin</i>
Adikia	Sin as Failure
Chata	Sin as Rebellion
Pasha	Sin as Perversion
Shagag	Unintentional Sin

Objective 2—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to define the basic concept of sin.

A Definition of Sin

After this study of the words for sin and categories that group them together, we need to determine a basic definition of sin.

QUESTION 6

Read the discussion in the text. Then formulate and write down your own brief definition of sin in your Life Notebook. Be prepared to discuss this definition at your next group meeting.

Characteristics of Sin

Having looked at the meaning of sin, we want to consider its characteristics and how it is expressed. (The five headings and discussion are based on Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, rev. ed., ed. Vernon D. Doerksen [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979], pp. 171-75).

1. Sin Is a Specific Type of Evil

Since there is a difference between moral and physical evil, it is important to remember that sin and physical or natural catastrophe are not the same thing. Physical or natural catastrophe is evil, yet morally neutral; sin is morally evil.

2. Sin Is a Violation of the Law of God

Sin is any action that is inconsistent with the revealed will of God.

3. Sin Is a Principle of Nature as well as an Act

Acts of sin spring from an inherently sinful nature. Scripture distinguishes between an act of sin and the sin nature in man through the terms sin (Gr. *harmartia*) and sins (*harmartiae*) (Rom 6:12-14; 7:8-17).

4. Sin Includes Pollution as well as Guilt

From this perspective sin is both an offense and a principle. By the offense we stand guilty before God. But as a principle in us sin pollutes and corrupts our being (Isa 1:5; Jer 17:9; Lk 6:45; Rom 7:24; Eph 4:22). It is a condition that requires cleansing (Ps 51:2, 7; Jn 15:3; Eph 5:26; 1 Jn 1:7).

5. Sin Is Essentially Selfishness

Passages such as 2 Corinthians 5:15 confirm that sin is fundamentally selfishness.

One simple statement that seems to summarize all of this says that “sin is not only an act of wrongdoing but a state of alienation from God” (Donald G. Bloesch, “Sin,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984], p. 1012).

QUESTION 7

In this section sin's characteristics include:

- A. Specific evil, figurative struggle, pollution, and selfishness
- B. Violation of God's law, principle of nature, selfishness, and unwitting act
- C. Specific evil, figurative struggle, pollution, and unwitting act
- D. Violation of God's law, principle of nature, pollution, and selfishness

Objective 3—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to summarize the biblical teaching on the effects of sin in the areas of our intellect, our emotions, and our will.

QUESTION 8

The Bible indicates that sin's pollution has infected our intellect, emotions, and will. Note the biblical teaching on the effects of sin in these areas: intellect (Rom 1:31; 1 Cor 2:14; Eph 4:18), emotions (Rom 1:26-27), and will (Rom 7:18-20). Match the term with the correct statement.

<i>Term</i>	<i>Statement</i>
Intellect	Results in immoral practices.
Will	Lack of understanding; considering spiritual things to be foolish.
Emotions	One wants to do right, but sin controls him.

Topic 2: Christ's Teaching Concerning Sin

Objective 4—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to list the individual sins Jesus spoke against, giving current illustrations for five of them.

Read Ryrie, chapter 35, “Christ’s Teaching Concerning Sin,” now if you have not already done so.

When most people think of the Lord Jesus Christ and what He taught, the usual immediate response is to think of love, kindness, neighborliness, and other such positive themes. But it is not often recognized that sin and judgment are subjects that frequently punctuated His speeches and parables.

Some Specific Sins

As with our discussion of the biblical concept of sin, a look at the teaching of our Lord on sin can be viewed from the perspective of the individual words or sins and as categories of sin.

QUESTION 9

Open your Life Notebook to record your thoughts and reflections. Review the section of the text entitled “Some Specific Sins.” Prayerfully consider each point and subpoint. Then list the individual sins that Jesus spoke against and at least one reference for each. Also write down a current illustration for five of these sins that you have observed either in your own life or in the life of your church.

Some Categories of Sin

Comparing this set of categories with the categories under the biblical concept of sin, we see that our Lord's teaching on sin is very close to that found in that discussion. In general, sin has to do with breaking specific laws, external acts with corresponding inward attitudes that prompt the outward acts (that is, a principle of sin in our nature), and the general impurity that corrupts and pollutes man.

The Lord's teaching on sin was extensive. He did not confine His thoughts to just one kind or one area of sin. He taught on all kinds of sins. The biblical teaching on sin is consistent from Genesis to Revelation. From beginning to end sin is treated in the same way—with the same severity and with the same consequences.

QUESTION 10

Even though believers today cannot technically break the Mosaic law, since we live under grace and not under the law, how can a believer sin in the same way in principle? Choose the best answer.

- A. We break the commands of the New Testament and the eternal principles that are found throughout Scripture.
- B. We break the law of Moses consistently.
- C. We break God's law because we fail to love Him with our whole being.
- D. We fail to keep all the rules for holy living that set us apart from the world.

QUESTION 11

Open your Life Notebook. It is sometimes difficult for individuals to grasp and apply the teaching covered in this lesson. Therefore, we would ask you to develop an illustration to help clarify the meaning for three of the concepts listed below. Be prepared to discuss them at your next group meeting:

- Sin as failure
- Sin as rebellion
- Sin as perversion of what is right
- Sin as ignorance
- The sin principle and the sin act

Conclusion

In this lesson we have looked at basic concepts of sin in terms of the words used to declare it and categories that communicate its characteristics. We have also examined how our Lord viewed sin.

It is clear that sin is a subject woven throughout Scripture. Its essential destructiveness is consistent and frightening in its scope and results.

In the following lesson we will discuss some of the theological issues related to sin and how sin affects the believer's daily life.

Key Biblical Concepts

The following biblical concepts were covered in this lesson. Commit them to memory before taking the Lesson Self Check. Be prepared to explain how each reference supports its respective concept:

- Sin defined as against the character of God - Romans 3:23
- Sin defined as lawlessness - 1 John 3:4
- All sin is against God - Psalm 51:4
- Christ's statement of the inward source of sin - Mark 7:20-22

Lesson 11 Self Check

QUESTION 1

The Greek and Hebrew words for “sin” that are translated “miss (a target or way)” imply that sin is a mistake or unwilling failure. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

The Greek word *anomia* means “without law.” *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

The Hebrew word *awon* is used to describe sins of ignorance. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Sin pollutes the sinner. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

Sin is always a violation of the Mosaic law. *True or False?*

Use these Greek and Hebrew words to answer the following questions; *abar, adikia, anomos, awon, chata, hamartia, parabasis, paraptomo, pasha, and shagag.*

QUESTION 6

Greek word for “missing the mark”

QUESTION 7

Hebrew word for “intentional failure”

QUESTION 8

Hebrew word for “rebellion”

QUESTION 9

Greek word for “without justice”

QUESTION 10

Hebrew word for “unintentional sin”

Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1: *Your answer*

QUESTION 2: False

QUESTION 3: False

QUESTION 4: *Your answer*

QUESTION 5:

<i>Word for Sin</i>	<i>Category of Sin</i>
Adikia	Sin as Perversion
Chata	Sin as Failure
Pasha	Sin as Rebellion
Shagag	Unintentional Sin

QUESTION 6: *Your answer*

QUESTION 7: D. Violation of God's law, principle of nature, pollution, and selfishness

QUESTION 8:

<i>Term</i>	<i>Statement</i>
Intellect	Lack of understanding; considering spiritual things to be foolish.
Will	One wants to do right, but sin controls him.
Emotions	Results in immoral practices.

QUESTION 9: *Your answer*

QUESTION 10: A. We break the commands of the New Testament and the eternal principles that are found throughout Scripture.

QUESTION 11: *Your answer*

Lesson 11 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: False

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3: False

QUESTION 4: True

QUESTION 5: False

QUESTION 6: Hamartia

QUESTION 7: Chata

QUESTION 8: Pasha

QUESTION 9: Adikia

QUESTION 10: Shagag

Lesson 12: Sin and the Individual Christian

Lesson Introduction

One of the glorious realities of Scripture is that we can face each day with new purpose and energy because we know God is with us. Even on our last day on earth, we have the promise of eternal life with the Lord. We are the only ones who can face each day in that manner.

One of the other realities of Scripture is that we must daily battle with sin. Even though the Holy Spirit gives us power to have victory, we nevertheless get weary in the battle. Consequently, it is good to know something about sin, its eternal and daily effects on us, how it attacks us, and how we can combat it.

Topic 1 will consider how sin has been passed on to all members of the human race. Is it inherited? What is total depravity? What is the remedy for inherited sin in our lives?

In Topic 2 our attention will be directed to the perplexing issue of the imputation of sin. Not only have we inherited a sin nature, but the sin of Adam has been “imputed” to us, or reckoned to our account. What is the nature and remedy for imputed sin?

We will consider the problem of personal sin in Topic 3. Scripture is clear that all have sinned and that if we deny it we make God a liar. But how is personal sin transmitted and what are the results? Of greatest importance is the issue of the remedy for personal sin.

Finally, Topic 4 will examine the question of the Christian and sin and how to prevent it and how to remedy it in our lives.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: The Inheritance of Sin

- The Meaning of Inheritance
- Scriptural Evidence
- Total Depravity
- The Penalty Connected with Inherited Sin
- The Transmission of Inherited Sin
- The Remedy for Inherited Sin
- Some Attacks against This Doctrine

Topic 2: The Imputation of Sin

- The Meaning of Imputation
- The Imputation of Adam’s Sin
- Imputed Sin and Its Transmission, Penalty, and Remedy

Topic 3: Personal Sins

- Scriptural Evidence
- Some Characteristics of Personal Sins
- The Transmission of Personal Sins
- The Results of Personal Sins
- The Remedy for Personal Sins

Topic 4: The Christian and Sin

- The Standard for the Believer

The Enemies of Believers
The Penalties for Sin
The Preventives for Sin
The Remedy for Sins

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Define inherited sin, imputed sin, and personal sins
- Explain the transmission, penalties, and remedy for each kind of sin
- Define the term “total depravity”
- Describe the three major enemies of the believer in his fight against sin

Definition of Key Term

Imputation—to ascribe, reckon, or legally credit the righteousness or guilt of a representative to another’s account.

Memory Verse

In this lesson you are to memorize Deuteronomy 6:4, which emphasizes the unity of God. Be prepared to quote it from memory.

Reading Assignment

Your readings from Ryrie for this lesson are chapters 36, 37, 38, and 39. You may read them now or as indicated in the lesson.

Topic 1: The Inheritance of Sin

Objective 1—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to define inherited sin and explain the transmission, penalty, and remedy for it.

If you have not already done so, read Ryrie, chapter 36, “The Inheritance of Sin.”

Hamartiology concerns itself with a great many questions about sin that scholars and godly believers through the centuries have sought to understand.

The Meaning Of Inheritance

The text simply states “inheritance” is “that sinful state into which all people are born.” There is much more discussion over the precise label to use to describe this aspect of sin. Read the distinctions in the text carefully.

Sin is a universal phenomenon. Few people deny that. Even the atheist admits that man is not as good as he should be. The evolutionist may attribute this to the aggressive instinct inherited from animal ancestors. If, however, man has evolved, he certainly has not lost this instinct in the process. Indeed, history indicates that man has only progressed in his knowledge and ability to

invent more cruel and destructive ways to express evil. Man himself is unchanged. The Bible tells us the real truth: man is a sinner from conception.

Scriptural Evidence

What is the evidence in the Bible that man inherits sin from his parents through Adam?

QUESTION 1

Look up the following groups of Scriptures, and then write a short paragraph describing how they support the idea of inherited sin. (The verses in parentheses are only for further reference if you want to study more on your own. You are not being asked to spend time with them now.).

- A. Psalm 51:5; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1, 3 (Rom 7:14-23; 8:5-8)
- B. 1 Kings 8:46; Psalm 143:2; Ecclesiastes 7:20 (Ps 58:3; Prov 20:9; Lk 11:13; Rom 3:10-12)
- C. John 3:18, 36; Romans 3:19 (Jn 8:24; 1 Jn 5:12, 19)
- D. John 3:3; Acts 4:12; 1 Peter 2:24 (Acts 17:30; 2 Cor 5:14; Heb 10:12; 1 Pet 3:18).

Objective 2—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to define the term “total depravity.”

Total Depravity

As a result of this inherited sin, man’s nature is corrupt. This condition is known as “total depravity.” Today the word “depravity” has rather strong connotations of perverted behavior. It suggests someone who is totally without moral scruples. The theological use of this term does not have this precise meaning.

QUESTION 2

Open your Life Notebook. To help you interact with the material in the text on this “total depravity,” summarize in outline form Ryrie’s commentary under the following headings:

- A. The Definition
- B. Its Negative Aspects
- C. Its Positive Aspects
- D. Conclusions

QUESTION 3

What implications does the doctrine of depravity have for all religions that teach that man has the potential to get to heaven by doing good deeds? Choose the answer that agrees with the biblical doctrine of depravity.

- A. Depravity implies that no man can be good enough to earn salvation.
- B. Being justified by faith includes doing good deeds to earn favor with God.
- C. Since our good deeds are tainted by sin, they cannot save us.
- D. Even though our natural tendency is to sin, people can by good works change their nature.

The Penalty Connected with Inherited Sin

In the Garden of Eden the Lord told Adam that in the day he ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he would die. Since after Adam and Eve ate they did not die physically, the understanding is that the Lord primarily meant spiritual death, which is broken fellowship with Him. Physical death was to follow as a later part of the judgment.

If, therefore, Adam died spiritually when he sinned and if we have inherited Adam's sin, then we, too, are in a state of spiritual death by virtue of the inheritance of Adam's sin.

The following Scriptures support the idea of spiritual death as the penalty for inherited sin. Please read them now: 1 Corinthians 15:22, Ephesians 2:1-3, and Revelation 20:11-15.

The Transmission of Inherited Sin

The scriptural evidence examined above teaches us that everyone from the time of birth is a sinner, totally depraved, and unable to gain God's favor. This can only lead to the conclusion that we inherit our sin nature from our parents, who in turn received it from their parents, and so on, back to Adam and Eve.

In Genesis 4:1 and following we see that the very first children of Adam and Eve were involved in sin. This has not changed throughout history. David confesses in Psalm 51:5 that he was conceived in iniquity (sin). This does not refer to the sexual act that brought him into being. It means that from the moment of conception he bore a sin nature. Romans 5:12 makes it clear that sin came into the world through Adam and that it spread to all men. So, we receive our sin nature ultimately from Adam but immediately from our parents.

The Remedy for Inherited Sin

The remedy for all sin is clearly redemption through the blood of Christ. There are two aspects to our relationship to sin: the eternal aspect and the daily aspect.

When a person becomes a believer, every aspect of sin from the inherited guilt to the individual acts of sin are paid for and forgiven eternally—forever. Romans 8:1 says that there is no more condemnation for any sin for the believer.

On a daily level we realize that we still live with a sin nature but desire not to sin. Thus, the remedy for daily sin is the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Even this remedy is still the result of the cross, as Jesus says in John 16:7: "It is to your advantage that I am going away. For if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you." Of course, Christ's "going away" had primary reference to going back to heaven by means of the cross,

resurrection, and ascension. The Advocate (or Helper or Counselor) who was then sent is the Holy Spirit.

Some Attacks against This Doctrine

In view of all the scriptural evidence set forth above, it would seem clear that the Scriptures teach inherited sin, total depravity, and the severe consequences of this condition. But there have been those in history who have not agreed.

The text lists five different reactions to the doctrine of inherited sin. Read these over now, and then answer the question below. Look for each view's greatest weakness as you study their distinguishing characteristics.

QUESTION 4

Match the term with its correct description.

Term	Description
Pelagianism	Sin comes from our acts of sin, though we inherit pollution but not a sin nature nor guilt from Adam.
Semi-Pelagianism	Sin is man-centered and not God-centered. Since Adam was not a historical figure, his sin cannot be related to ours.
Socinianism	No transfer of Adam's nature or guilt to later generations.
Arminianism	Denies original sin, total inability, and many other fundamental Christian beliefs.
Neoorthodoxy	Man has been weakened by sin but is not totally depraved.

A related doctrine to that of inherited sin is imputed sin. The main difference between the two is that inherited sin deals primarily with our nature whereas imputed sin deals with guilt. Let us turn now to a discussion of imputed sin.

Topic 2: The Imputation of Sin

Objective 3—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to define imputed sin and explain the transmission, penalty, and remedy for it.

Read Ryrie, chapter 37, "The Imputation of Sin," now if you have not already done so.

As the physical children of Adam, we all have a sin nature. We have just looked at scriptural evidence to that fact. The history of the race has fully demonstrated this doctrine, and an honest person only needs to look at his or her own life to see that we are far from perfect.

We share in another aspect of the sin of Adam: the guilt of his deed. We are declared to be sinners in the sight of God. This aspect of Adam's sin is called the doctrine of the imputation.

The Meaning of Imputation

As the text points out, "to impute" means "to attribute or reckon or ascribe something to someone." It is not strictly a biblical term. It was used in the nonbiblical world in commerce for crediting something to someone's account (James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1930], p. 377), and in justice

“so that the thing imputed becomes a ground of reward or punishment” (Caspar Wistar Hodge, “Imputation,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 3 vols. [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980-86], 2:812). Likewise, the basic biblical concept of imputation has to do with reckoning or charging something to a person’s account.

The Imputation of Adam’s Sin

The three most important theological imputations in the Bible are listed in the text. The one we are interested in for this lesson relates to the imputation of Adam’s sin to the human race. By definition, imputation means that Adam’s sin has been credited to the account of every person who has ever lived or will ever live. Even though we did not personally commit this sin, we still share in its guilt and consequences.

Unquestionably, imputation is a very hard doctrine to understand and accept. Many may think it unfair to share in the guilt and consequences of Adam’s sin, while rejoicing that they can share in the righteousness of Christ and the consequences of His obedience. Rather than being only a source of sorrow, the doctrine of imputation is also a source of joy. It is only through imputation that our sin is imputed to Christ and His righteousness is imputed to us. As 2 Corinthians 5:21 declares, “God made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we would become the righteousness of God.”

The central passage on imputation is Romans 5:12-21. We can only touch on the important points in this section. Yet this is the most important passage in the Bible describing the connection between Adam’s sin and the sin of all men.

In considering Romans 5:12-14, two main questions arise: (1) What is the sin referred to in verse 12? and (2) What is the relationship between Adam and the rest of mankind with regard to this sin?

The significance of Romans 5:12 depends on the interpretation of the phrase “because all sinned.”

QUESTION 5

Open your life Notebook and respond to the first question. The text indicates that there are four ways of understanding the phrase “because all sinned.” Create an outline with the four views as the main headings. Then, for the subheadings record the responses to each view as stated in the text.

Additionally, in support of the view preferred by the text, it is assumed that “all sinned” means “all sinned in Adam” because Paul is already talking about Adam’s sin. So, he does not need to repeat it. A comparison with 2 Corinthians 5:14 shows a similar construction to Romans 5:12. There it says, “One died for all, therefore all died.” From the context it is clear that the implication is that, when the one, Jesus Christ, died for all, all died in Him (Frederic Louis Godet, *Commentary on Romans* [1883 under the title *Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1956; Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1977], p. 209).

Romans 5:12 starts out with sin and then death. The second part of the verse goes from death to sin. The sin of Adam (v. 12a) is compared with the sin of all. Likewise, the death in the first line (v. 12a), the result of Adam’s sin, is the same as the death in the second line (v. 12b), the result of the “all sinned” (v. 12b). “In the first half [of the verse] the accent falls upon the *entrance* of sin and death through *one man*. In the second part the accent falls upon the universal *penetration* of death and the sin of *all*. . . . To state the matter more fully: just as sin and death *entered* the world through the sin of the one man, so death *permeated* to all men because all sinned” (F. F. Bruce,

gen. ed., *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, vol. 6 [two volumes in one], *Romans*, by John Murray [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968], 1:182).

Thus, when Adam sinned, all of mankind sinned in him. That leads to the second question above: What is the relationship between Adam and the rest of mankind with regard to this sin? That is, how did we sin in Adam?

What is the relationship between Adam and the race? Thiessen says that there are six major views of this relationship (Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, rev. ed., ed. Vernon D. Doerksen (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 186-90).

They may be briefly summarized as follows:

1. **Pelagianism:** This theory holds that Adam's sin had no effect on the race.

Romans 5:12 ("all sinned") means that all men die because all commit personal sins.

2. **Arminianism/Semi-Pelagianism:** This theory teaches that Adam's sin is

indeed imputed to the race. Man is by nature a sinner, but man is not guilty of Adam's sin. God also gives each person "sufficient grace" at the time of birth. This grace counteracts the sinful tendency inherited from Adam and leaves man morally neutral. Romans 5:12 refers to personal sins. In spite of sufficient grace, each individual chooses to follow Adam into sin.

3. **Mediate Imputation:** Man inherits a sinful nature through natural generation.

As a result, all men become sinners. Romans 5:12 refers to personal sins that are the result of man's inherited depravity.

4. **Realistic (Seminal) Theory:** Adam possessed the totality of human nature in

his own body. Consequently, when he sinned, all men actually sinned with him. Romans 5:12 means that, since all men were physically present in Adam, all are co-sinners with him. Thus, they die because of their sinning with Adam rather than because of personal sins.

5. **Federal Theory:** Adam was the appointed head of the race. He represented all

mankind at the test in the Garden. When he fell, he fell for all men. Because he is the representative of all men, his sin is imputed to all men. Thus, Romans 5:12 means that all men are responsible for the sin of Adam, their representative, even though they did not personally commit that sin.

6. **Corporate Personality Theory:** The Scriptures often see the individual as

closely connected with a larger group. In Israel the sin of the individual could be imputed to the whole nation. Also, innocent men were considered guilty because of their connection with a guilty nation. Likewise, all men are somehow connected. In particular, all men are connected with Adam and can be said to be "in Adam" (1 Cor 15:22). Romans 5:12 expresses this solidarity of the race in Adam. The whole is responsible for the guilt of the one.

The most widely accepted and debated of these views are the federal view and the realistic, or seminal, view.

The approach that sees Adam's connection with us in terms of a federal headship is generally related to the creationist view of the origin of the soul. . . . Thus, we were not present psychologically or spiritually in any of our ancestors, including Adam. Adam, however, was our representative. God ordained that Adam should act not only on his own behalf, but also on our behalf. The consequences of his actions have been passed on to his descendants as well. Adam was on probation

for all of us as it were; and because Adam sinned, all of us are treated as guilty and corrupted. (Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3 vols. [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983-85], 2:635)

The realistic, or seminal, view is usually related to the traducian view of transmission of the soul. Thus, we are said to be seminally in our parents regarding our physical nature, soul, sin, and every other aspect. Likewise, they were in their parents and so on back to Adam. Thus we, along with all of our predecessors, were in Adam, not individually but seminally. So when Adam sinned, we sinned with him. He did not merely represent us; we were in him when he sinned.

Romans 5:12 teaches that all people are joined to Adam in some way, so that when he sinned, his guilt was imputed. Thus, we are all equally guilty and in need of a sufficient remedy.

One interesting problem remains to be answered regarding imputation: Why is the sin of Adam imputed to man and not the sin of Eve? The answer seems to be that the Bible views Adam as the head of the human race. He was created first, and Eve was taken from him. She was created to be a helpmate for him (Gen 2:18-25; 1 Cor 11:3, 8-9). In one sense, Adam may be seen as being guiltier than Eve: The woman was deceived by the serpent, while Adam sinned with full knowledge and by his own willful choice (1 Tim 2:12-14). Further, it was he, and not Eve, who was entrusted with the original command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17). God entrusted Adam with the destiny of the whole race. God appointed Adam as the representative of humanity and ordained that his choices would be binding for the whole race.

Imputed Sin and Its Transmission, Penalty, and Remedy

As with inherited sin, we need to take a look at how imputed sin is transmitted and what its penalty and remedy are. Answering the following questions and digesting the material in the text will accomplish this for you.

Review the section entitled “The Transmission of Imputed Sin” in chapter 37 of Ryrie, and study the diagram. Then answer the following question.

QUESTION 6

Imputed sin is transmitted directly to each individual from Adam and not through any other agency, such as parents. Inherited sin is transmitted indirectly from Adam, coming to a person through his parents and all the parents in between. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

Read 2 Corinthians 5:19-21 carefully, and review the last section in chapter 37. Describe what two important imputations took place and how one of them is the remedy for the sin that has been imputed to us.

Someone has paraphrased the meaning of 2 Corinthians 5:21 like this: “He became what we are that we might become what He is.” Christ paid the penalty for our sin and took away the condemnation. He also added to us, “to our account,” total, absolute, complete, perfect righteousness! Take some time now to reflect upon the incredible salvation we have received. God, who in His justice could have left us in our guilty, sinful state to enter into eternity condemned, chose in His love to send a redeemer to provide a way of escape for us. When Christ died on the cross, He took on Himself every single sin that we would ever commit in thought, word, or deed.

Topic 3: Personal Sins

Objective 4—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to define personal sin and explain the transmission, penalty, and remedy for it.

If you have not already done so, read Ryrie, chapter 38, “Personal Sins.”

We have been studying about sin primarily in terms of its definition and principle. We have studied more about Adam’s sin than our own. We have talked about sin, not sins. Of course, these discussions are absolutely necessary to an understanding of Scripture, of who we are as people, and of what our true relationship to God is. Moving from this foundation, we will now consider personal sins, namely, the specific sins we individuals commit every day, whether in thought, word, or deed.

Scriptural Evidence

Scripture warns us about specific sins that bring condemnation before the Lord. In one of the most scathing statements concerning sin in the Bible, Paul in Romans 3:9-20 demonstrates that all sin in thought, word, and deed brings condemnation.

Some Characteristics of Personal Sins

If man has inherited a corrupt nature, it follows that he will sin. And if all people have inherited this sin nature, then all will sin. Verse after verse of Scripture confirms that everyone sins. The most famous verse is probably Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Here the universality and essence of sin is declared and defined.

QUESTION 8

With the scriptural knowledge and practical experience that all people sin, the most critical issue is to learn how to escape sin’s threatened dominance of our lives. Of all the passages on sin, Mark 7:21-22, Romans 3:9-18, 23; 6:23; 8:13, Ephesians 1:7, Colossians. 2:13-15, and Galatians 5:19-21 are among the most comprehensive. Read these passages and then match the statement in Column A with the word that completes the statement in Column B.

Column A	Column B
Man’s personal sins confirm the condemnation and justice of God in declaring all to be _____.	Spiritual
The result of personal sins is _____ death.	Forgiveness
The cure for personal sins is the _____ provided by the shed blood of Christ on the cross.	Sinners

It is common for people to classify sins as relatively more serious and relatively less serious. Is this a valid distinction? If it is, how do we determine what is serious or not serious? Normally, we would think that robbery is more serious than laziness. But what if you own a business and one or more of your employees are lazy and therefore not putting in a full day's work. Is he not guilty of robbing you? What about the difference between murder and anger? Anyone would prefer being victimized by anger than murder. But if anger leads to gossip and a ruined reputation in the church, is that not a kind of assassination? Though some sins have more serious consequences than others, the destructive power of "lesser sins" should not be underestimated.

The Transmission of Personal Sins

We have seen that inherited sin is transmitted to us through our parents and their parents from Adam. Imputed sin was transmitted to us directly since we were in Adam when he sinned. But our personal sins have no direct connection with Adam. In fact, they are not transmitted to us but go out from within us (Mk 7:21-22). Personal sins are also transmitted by their effects on other people.

The Results of Personal Sins

The primary result, or penalty, of personal sins is the loss of fellowship with God. The distinction between the sin of the believer and the nonbeliever is significant.

The nonbeliever's sin of rejection of Jesus and His provision of salvation from the "payoff [wages] of sin" keep him from heaven. The loss the nonbeliever experiences is the loss of eternal life with God.

For the believer the loss of fellowship is only temporal (limited to time), not eternal. For example, let us assume that one of your children has done something to disobey you or offend you. This has caused a break in your fellowship. Does the child cease to be your child? No. Does the child lose the benefits of your fellowship, love, and attention? Yes. It is not because you have withheld them, but because the child has created a distance between you by his sin. But let us assume that the child returns and asks you to forgive him. The fellowship is immediately restored, and he once again enjoys all the benefits of family fellowship. Our sin in relation to God is the same. When we sin, we lose fellowship and benefits, but we are not thrown out of the family.

The Remedy for Personal Sins

The remedy has already been indicated in the example above. The remedy is forgiveness, made possible through the death and resurrection of the Lord. For the unbeliever it is the total and complete forgiveness of all his sins so that he avoids eternal condemnation. For the believer it is forgiveness that restores fellowship with God. As the text points out, we can call them, respectively, judicial forgiveness and family forgiveness.

Take time now to study the chart found at the end of chapter 38 in the text. Rather than simply trying to memorize it, think through it according to the concepts that it summarizes.

Topic 4: The Christian and Sin

Read Ryrie, chapter 39, "The Christian and Sin," now if you have not already done so.

In many respects the Christian life is harder to live than the non-Christian life. Before becoming a Christian, a person is fairly comfortable with his sin. Many times it is not even recognized as sin. So there is not much of a struggle because the non-Christian just does what he wants.

When a person becomes a Christian, there is an immediate recognition of a standard, of a difference between right and wrong, of a battle that makes doing right difficult. Thus, for the believer new and continuing struggles are introduced into his life as he becomes more and more aware of the sin principle present in his life.

This battle becomes an issue of two broad choices: to sin or to obey. To sin is to yield to the influence of the sin principle within us, and to obey is to yield to the Holy Spirit within us. Thus, the question becomes this: How are we to live in the midst of this battle?

The Standard for the Believer

As in so many areas of the Christian life and theology, there is a tendency toward extremes, creating imbalance. Two extremes are dealt with in Ryrie. The first extreme, which the text calls “false perfectionism,” says that we can come to the place where we do not sin. The second extreme, “antinomianism,” says that we are free in Christ to do what we want.

QUESTION 9

What does the text say are the biblical opposites of false perfectionism and antinomianism? Write two short phrases for your answer.

What is to be our understanding, attitude, and goal in living the Christian life? The most common metaphors of the Christian life in the New Testament are “walk,” “grow,” and “fight” (Gal 5:16; 2 Pet 3:18; 1 Tim 6:12). Their goals are personal holiness, spiritual maturity, and victory.

Here are some of the New Testament implications of pursuing the Christian life in this manner:

1. They imply a gradual process. There is a sense then in which the Christian life is more of a process than a product.
2. They are not automatic processes. Some effort must be made. To walk, a person must take steps. To grow, a person must eat. To fight, a person must use weapons. If we fail to do any of these, we will fail in our Christian lives.
3. Time will be involved. Whatever degree of arrival, maturity, or victory we achieve will not be done in a moment or overnight. For our whole earthly lives we will be walking, growing, and fighting. There is no instantaneous arrival, maturity, or victory in the Christian life.
4. Substantial achievement of the goals is possible but not guaranteed. We can achieve a degree of arrival, maturity, and victory. But as long as we live in a rebellious and sinful body, we will never arrive at perfect holiness or maturity. Thus, we can expect to be in the process all of our lives.
5. Everyone is expected to be in the process. Walking, growing, and fighting are not beyond the spiritual reach of anyone.

6. There will be battles, troubles, and difficulties. The believer has two forces, two capacities within him. Both are seeking dominance; both want the allegiance of the believer. The easiest way to handle the battle is to give in to the forces of sin. The most satisfying, fulfilling, and God-pleasing way is by faith to achieve increasing degrees of victory.
7. The ultimate issue is not success but faithfulness. God will judge us more for how we walk, grow, and fight than for what we achieve. He is more concerned that we accomplish a little by faith and trust in His power than that we accomplish a great deal by human, fleshly efforts.

Allowing for variation in the speed of walking or growing, our effectiveness in fighting Satan and sin does not minimize the standard of achievement. Personal holiness is always the goal. Emphasis on the process, that is, recognition that total perfection in this life is not possible, does not detract from the high standard believers are required to strive to achieve. Other Scriptures (Lk 19:12-26; 1 Cor 3:12-15; 2 Cor 5:10) indicate reward for degrees of achieved holiness, maturity, and victory. Thus, the desire to please the Lord who saved us, the desire to receive a “Well done, good and faithful slave” should be motivation enough to continue to press on to the ultimate victory.

QUESTION 10

Review chapter 38 in Ryrie. Then, in your Life Notebook, complete the following chart from memory:

A Comparison of the Several Aspects of Sin

Aspect	Scripture	Transmission	Principal Consequence	Remedy
Inherited sin				
Imputed sin				
Personal sins				

Objective 5—When you have completed this topic, you will be able to describe the three major enemies of the believer in his fight against sin.

The Enemies of Believers

As discussed in Lesson 8, we are in a battle with Satan and his forces. But as believers we have the armor of God (Eph 6:10-18) to help us stand strong against our enemies.

QUESTION 11

Briefly describe the three major enemies of the believer in the battle against sin. See “The Enemies of the Believer” in chapter 39 of Ryrie.

The Penalties for Sin

As there are various kinds of people who sin in various kinds of ways and degrees, so there are various kinds of penalties, commensurate with the different kinds of sin.

The unbeliever who dies without the forgiveness of his sins must suffer eternal torment in the lake of fire (Rev 20:15).

The penalty for a Christian who sins is the interruption of his relationship with the Lord, thus damaging his walk, growth, and ability to resist Satan and sin. When a Christian sins, he strays off the path toward holiness, stops growing, stops fighting, and is momentarily defeated in the battle. He loses the benefits that walking, growing, and fighting bring, slowing down his progress toward each goal.

Ryrie points to four specific penalties for the Christian who sins.

1. *Loss of fellowship. Sin brings an interruption of fellowship in the area of the sin (1 Jn 1:3, 6–7).*
2. *Loss of joy. Sin causes a loss of joy (Jn 15:11; Gal 5:22).*
3. *Darkened walk. Sin causes the believer to walk in darkness (1 Jn 1:6; 2:10).*
4. *Weak prayer. Sin brings a lack of confidence in prayer (1 Jn 3:19–22).*

Satan tries to focus attention on the “fun” or “rewards” (the temporary pleasure or benefits) of sin, while blinding people to sin’s consequences (Gal 6:7–8). Because all people have selfish desires, it is easy for them to look at the “rewards” of sin without seeing its devastating results.

James says, “But each one is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires” (Jas 1:14). Because the words “lured” and “enticed” were used in the context of fishing, James may have had that picture in mind when he wrote this verse. If so, the fish is enticed by the bait, unaware that a concealed sharp hook will result in its destruction. Only when it is too late does the fish realize it has been caught.

While the penalties just mentioned are bad enough, the penalties for a *persistently* sinning believer are still more severe. The Scriptures teach three main consequences for persistent sin. The first is discipline. The Lord in His grace will seek to bring us back through trials, difficulties, and perhaps even major losses. Hebrews 12:5–11 tells us that such discipline is from the hand of a loving Father. It breaks His heart to see His children sin and go astray. He wants them to be in fellowship with Him. Therefore, He will seek to draw them back. Thus, it is probably better to see this as discipline, not a penalty.

Second, if a believer is involved in clear, persistent, open sin, then it will become necessary for the local assembly of believers (the local church) to confront the sinner. According to Matthew 18:15–17, they are to approach him in love with a desire to see him repent. But if, after the prescribed attempts to bring him to repentance, he refuses, then the church must put him out of

their membership. This action is not to be in revenge, hate, retaliation, or anger. But it is an act of love toward God in seeking to preserve their testimony and to let the community know that they stand for righteousness. It is also an act of love toward that believer in not allowing him to go on in his sin as if it were acceptable to do so. It is a way of helping him face the consequences of his actions. The hope is that the separation from the body of Christ will in time bring sorrow, a sense of the loss of valuable fellowship, and an awareness of the emptiness of sin. This would then lead to repentance and restored fellowship in the body of believers.

Third, in some cases physical death may be a punishment for persistent sin (1 Cor 11:30; 1 Jn 5:16). If the believer refuses to confess sin and continues in persistent sin, the Lord may remove him from earth as the final discipline for a sinful lifestyle.

Remember, however, that our merciful heavenly Father is often very patient with the sinning believer, not bringing severe penalties on us. But we must never forget that sin does take its toll in many ways, internal and external, even if no obvious punishment comes. And at the judgment seat of Christ all our deeds will be examined by our Lord (2 Cor 5:10).

Regardless of who is sinning, we must remember that sin always destroys. It may destroy on the earthly plane or in eternity. But it will always destroy. Maybe the destruction will be gradual and virtually unnoticeable, but destruction is always taking place when we sin. What, then, are the preventives for sin?

The Preventives for Sin

The best preventive for sin is to maintain stability and consistency in walking, growing, and fighting. One cannot be on the path and off the path at the same time. One cannot be growing and not growing at the same time. One cannot be fighting and not fighting at the same time. Thus, if we are actively walking, growing, and fighting, there is less and less probability we will sin.

The reality is that we will never do these things perfectly, but we can perform them with a kind of consistency that will keep persistent sin out of our lives. There will always be things to distract us from walking, growing, and fighting. But if we learn to recognize what they are, how to defend against them, and what to do when we are faced with them, we will be able to maintain consistency. Thus, for example, it is best, when confessing a sin, to confess it immediately, accept God's forgiveness (1 Jn 1:9), and then concentrate once again on walking, growing, and fighting.

The Word of God

The most important means of preventing sin in our lives is filling our minds and lives with the Word of God and then acting on what we learn.

The Intercession of Christ

John 17:15, Hebrews 7:25, and 1 John 2:1-2 assure us that the Lord Jesus Christ is constantly before the Father with prayers for our protection against sin, for forgiveness of sins when we sin and confess, and for biblical perfectionism, among other things. The very fact that we realize that He is doing something for us to keep us from sinning should motivate us to avoid sin.

The Indwelling of the Spirit

Of the many ministries of the Spirit in our lives, one is to help us keep from sinning. The Spirit is the power behind the means. We cannot in the strength of our flesh, our wisdom, and our knowledge avoid sin. But the Spirit takes the truth of the Word of God, works it into our hearts,

calls our attention to it when we need it, fills our hearts with love for the Lord, gives us strength to say no to sin, and in other ways empowers us to avoid sin.

That is why Galatians 5:16 is such a key verse. It ties together the metaphor of walking with the power of the Spirit and tells us that, if we will persist in walking in fellowship with Him, we can be assured of His power to direct us toward the things of God and away from sin. The other things mentioned in the text are facets of this empowering by the Spirit.

The Remedy for Sins

The remedy for believers' sins may be stated in one word: confess (1 Jn 1:9). This does not mean to merely mouth or recite the sins. It means to see those sins as God sees them. That will surely bring repentance and the earnest desire to change. But if the same sins reoccur, the remedy remains the same.

The main verse that teaches confession is 1 John 1:9. Here it is simply the "acknowledgment of sins. The one who makes the avowal faces a fact. He tries neither to hide nor deny it. When someone acknowledges and avows his fault thus honestly, he experiences God's faithfulness and righteousness in the forgiveness of sins" (Dieter Fuerst, "Confess," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown, 3 vols. [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975-78], 1:346).

Error comes in when people attach other requirements to it. Usually the requirements are some kind of specific feelings, crying, a prescribed length of time for self-punishment, and many other such conditions. Nothing in Scripture suggests any such emotional expressions.

This is not to say that confession should not be done without feeling, without a sense of remorse or sorrow. Certainly, in correlation with other Scriptures and a sense of the Scriptures, our confession should be made with an attitude of repentance, with an intention and hope that it will not happen again (Ps 139:23-24). The very fact that we have offended our loving heavenly Father, who gave His Son on the cross to die for our sins, should cause us some internal sorrow and pain when we realize that we have sinned against Him.

The point is that such sorrow, weeping, and moaning is not literally part of confession. The main thing the Father wants us to do is to realize that we have sinned, come to Him and acknowledge it, and then go on in growth, walking in the light and seeking by His power to avoid sinning again.

Conclusion

When we contemplate sins of unbelievers, it does not seem so difficult to comprehend the enormity of sin, for we know the punishment will be eternal separation from God. But somehow when we consider sins in believers, we lighten their seriousness. But make no mistake about it. All sin grieves God. Christ had to die for the sins we committed before and after we were saved. His death was the punishment for all sins. The fact that we are members of the family of God may bring more sorrow to our heavenly Father when we sin. We ought to know better. We ought to use the power He has provided. We ought to want to please Him. We ought to struggle and fight harder and use every weapon He has given us. But above all, we ought to be making progress and showing growth in our lives.

Key Biblical Concepts

QUESTION 12

Review the key biblical concepts, read each verse carefully, and then match the concept with the correct Scripture reference(s).

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Scripture Reference(s)</i>
Imputation of sin	2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9
Imputation of Christ's righteousness to man	2 Corinthians 5:19, 21; 1 Peter 2:24
Sins of mankind imputed to Christ	Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:22
Universality of sin	Ephesians 2:1, 3
Penalty of sin	Romans 3:23
Inheritance of sin	Romans 6:23

STUDY PROJECT FOR LESSON 12

Prepare a Bible study answering the question, How can the believer avoid sin and live a godly life? Be sure to mention the role of confession in the daily life of the believer as he presses on toward maturity in Christ. Be prepared to discuss this important topic at your next group meeting.

Lesson 12 Self Check

QUESTION 1

The main penalty for the sinning believer is loss of fellowship with God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

Total depravity teaches that human beings are affected by sin in every area of life. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

While on earth, we can grow in righteousness to the point where we do not sin anymore. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

The three main preventives for sin are: (1) the Word of God, (2) the intercession of Christ, and (3) a daily time with God in prayer. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

Federal imputation says that Adam represented us when he fell. Thus, we have sinned by representation. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

The three penalties for the persistently sinning believer are: (1) discipline from the Lord, (2) excommunication from the local assembly, and (3) physical death. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

Psalm 51:5 is a verse in support of:

- A. The sinfulness of sex
- B. The imputation of sin
- C. The inheritance of sin
- D. The reality of personal sin

QUESTION 8

With regard to the inheritance of sin, Arminians believe:

- A. Man is not totally depraved but is neutral
- B. Adam was not a historical person
- C. Man was created with holiness
- D. We share in Adam's guilt

QUESTION 9

The fact that man's understanding is darkened (Eph 4:18) is evidence of _____ sin.

QUESTION 10

_____ imputation says that we were actually in Adam, in seed form, when he sinned, with the result that we actually sinned when he did.

Unit Four Exam

QUESTION 1

It is often Satan's method to counterfeit the works of God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

One of the penalties of the fall was that man would have to work. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

Some people believe that Genesis 3 contains truth without being true. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

One support for the dichotomist view is that the words "soul" and "spirit" are sometimes used interchangeably. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

"Spirit," like "soul," includes the whole person. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

The Greek and Hebrew words for "sins" which translate "missing the mark," imply that sin is a mistake or unwilling failure. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

The Greek word, *anomia* means, "without law." *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

The Hebrew word, *awon* is used to describe sins of ignorance. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

Sin is always a violation of the Mosaic Law. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

Sin pollutes the sinner. *True or False?*

QUESTION 11

The main penalty for the sinning believer is loss of fellowship with God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 12

Total depravity teaches that human beings are affected by sin in every area of life.
True or False?

QUESTION 13

We can grow in righteousness to the point where we do not sin anymore. *True or False?*

QUESTION 14

The most comprehensive term related to the immaterial part of man is:

- A. Will
- B. Conscience
- C. Heart
- D. Mind

QUESTION 15

The main reason God tested Adam and Eve was because:

- A. He wanted them to become holy
- B. He wanted to prove their faithfulness
- C. He wanted to put restrictions on their lives
- D. He wanted them to freely choose to obey Him

QUESTION 16

The only one of the following points IN FAVOR OF trichotomy is:

- A. The word “life” in Genesis 2:7 is plural
- B. “Soul” is more comprehensive than “spirit”
- C. “Soul” is sometimes used where you would expect “spirit”
- D. Man is soul but has a spirit

QUESTION 17

To say that man is a bipartite unity is to say that he is:

- A. Soul and spirit
- B. Material and nonmaterial
- C. Body and mind
- D. Flesh and bones

QUESTION 18

Psalm 51:5 is a verse in support of:

- A. The sinfulness of sex
- B. The imputation of sin
- C. The inheritance of sin
- D. The reality of personal sin

QUESTION 19

With regard to the inheritance of sin, Arminians believe:

- A. We share in Adam’s guilt
- B. Adam was not a historical person
- C. Man was created with holiness
- D. Man is not totally depraved

QUESTION 20

The fact that man’s understanding is darkened (Eph 4:18) is evidence of:

- A. Personal sin
- B. Imputed sin
- C. Inherited sin
- D. Universality of sin

Use the following Greek and Hebrew words to fill in the blanks: *Abar, Adikia, Anomos, Awon, Chata, Hamartia, Parabasis, Paraptomo, Pasha, and Shagag.*

QUESTION 21

The Greek word for “missing the mark” is _____.

QUESTION 22

The Hebrew word for “intentional failure” is _____.

QUESTION 23

The Hebrew word for “rebellion” is _____.

QUESTION 24

The Greek word for “without justice” is _____.

QUESTION 25

The word used for “unintentional sins” is _____.

Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

1. Man is spiritually dead and unable to please God by himself.
2. They all say that every man on earth sins or is not righteous. The only way the Scriptures can make such blanket statements is if every person is by nature sinful.
3. These Scriptures indicate that all people who have not become believers are under condemnation. Such a universal statement can only be made if everyone is from the time of birth in a state of sinfulness.
4. The fact that Christ needed to die for all and that all must repent and be regenerated indicates that all people must be infected by sin.

QUESTION 2: *Your answer*

QUESTION 3: A. Depravity implies that no man can be good enough to earn salvation.

QUESTION 4:

Term	Description
Pelagianism	No transfer of Adam's nature or guilt to later generations.
Semi-Pelagianism	Man has been weakened by sin but is not totally depraved.
Socinianism	Denies original sin, total inability, and many other fundamental Christian beliefs.
Arminianism	Sin comes from our acts of sin, though we inherit pollution but not a sin nature nor guilt from Adam.
Neoorthodoxy	Sin is man-centered and not God-centered. Since Adam was not a historical figure, his sin cannot be related to ours.

QUESTION 5: *Your answer*

QUESTION 6: True

QUESTION 7:

Our sin was imputed to Christ (v. 19)

His righteousness is imputed to us when we believe (v. 21)

QUESTION 8:

Column A	Column B
Man's personal sins confirm the condemnation and justice of God in declaring all to be _____.	Sinners
The result of personal sins is _____ death.	Spiritual
The cure for personal sins is the _____ provided by the shed blood of Christ on the cross.	Forgiveness

QUESTION 9: The biblical opposite of false perfectionism is biblical perfectionism, defined as ripeness, maturity, fullness, or completeness in Christ. It stands in contrast with immaturity, and it is achievable on earth. The opposite of antinomianism is obedience to the law of Christ.

QUESTION 10: *Your answer*

QUESTION 11:

Your answer should reflect the following:

- a. The world: With Satan as its prince, its main characteristic is counterfeiting. Borderline issues are often the hardest to discern.
- b. The flesh: Each believer is opposed by the flesh, that principle of sin within all of us. It produces evident deeds (Gal 5:19), is distinguished by lusts and passions, and enslaves the believer. Deeds of the flesh include overtly evil things and amoral things, as well as things that may be good in themselves but which bring no pleasure to God because they are works of the flesh.
- c. The devil: Satan's strategy is planned, persistent, and powerful.

QUESTION 12:

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Scripture Reference(s)</i>
Imputation of sin	Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:22
Imputation of Christ's righteousness to man	2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9
Sins of mankind imputed to Christ	2 Corinthians 5:19, 21; 1 Peter 2:24
Universality of sin	Romans 3:23
Penalty of sin	Romans 6:23
Inheritance of sin	Ephesians 2:1, 3

Lesson 12 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3: False

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5: True

QUESTION 6: True

QUESTION 7: C. The inheritance of sin

QUESTION 8: A. Man is not totally depraved but is neutral

QUESTION 9: Inherited

QUESTION 10: Seminal

Unit Four Exam Answers

- QUESTION 1:** True
- QUESTION 2:** False
- QUESTION 3:** True
- QUESTION 4:** True
- QUESTION 5:** False
- QUESTION 6:** False
- QUESTION 7:** True
- QUESTION 8:** False
- QUESTION 9:** False
- QUESTION 10:** True
- QUESTION 11:** True
- QUESTION 12:** True
- QUESTION 13:** False
- QUESTION 14:** C. Heart
- QUESTION 15:** D. He wanted them to freely choose to obey Him
- QUESTION 16:** A. The word "life" in Genesis 2:7 is plural
- QUESTION 17:** B. Material and nonmaterial
- QUESTION 18:** C. The inheritance of sin
- QUESTION 19:** D. Man is not totally depraved
- QUESTION 20:** C. Inherited sin
- QUESTION 21:** Hamartia
- QUESTION 22:** Chata
- QUESTION 23:** Pasha
- QUESTION 24:** Adikia
- QUESTION 25:** Shagag

Basic Theology

Charles C. Ryrie

(c) 1986, 1999 by

CHARLES C. RYRIE

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

All Scripture quotations, unless indicated, are taken from the New American Standard Bible, (c) 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, and 1977, The Lockman Foundation, La Habra, Calif. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are taken from the King James Version.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible: New International Version(r). NIV(r). Copyright (c) 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

The "NIV" and "New International Version" trademarks are registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by International Bible Society. Use of either trademark requires permission of International Bible Society.

ISBN: 0-8024-2734-0

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Printed in the United States of America

Section I

Prolegomena

1. Concepts and Definitions
2. Some Presuppositions
3. The Question of Authority

Section II

The Living and True God

4. The Knowledge of God
5. The Revelation of God
6. The Perfections of God
7. The Names of God
8. The Triunity of God

Section III

The Bible: God-Breathed

9. Special Revelation
10. The Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration
11. Defections from the Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration
12. The Inerrancy of the Bible
13. Inerrancy and the Teachings of Christ
14. Problem Passages
15. The Canon
16. The Interpretation of the Bible

Section IV

Angels: Ministering Spirits

17. The Existence of Angels
18. The Creation of Angels
19. The Nature of Angels
20. The Organization of the Angels
21. The Ministry of Angels

Section V

Our Adversary the Devil

- 22. The Reality of Satan
- 23. The Creation and Sin of Satan
- 24. The Activities of Satan
- 25. Satan's World

Section VI

Demons: Unclean Spirits

- 26. The Reality of Demons
- 27. What Are Demons Like?
- 28. What Do Demons Do?

Section VII

Man: The Image of God

- 29. Evolution and Origins
- 30. The Bible and Origins
- 31. The Creation of Man
- 32. The Facets of Man
- 33. The Fall of Man

Section VIII

Sin

- 34. The Biblical Concept of Sin
- 35. Christ's Teaching Concerning Sin
- 36. The Inheritance of Sin
- 37. The Imputation of Sin
- 38. Personal Sins
- 39. The Christian and Sin

Section IX

Jesus Christ our Lord

- 40. The Preincarnate Christ

41. The Incarnation of Christ
42. The Person of Christ Incarnate
43. Christ: Prophet, Priest, and King
44. The Self-Emptying of Christ
45. The Sinlessness of Christ
46. The Resurrection and Ascension of Christ
47. The Post-Ascension Ministries of Christ

Section X

So Great a Salvation

48. Some Introductory Considerations
49. The Biblical Terminology
50. The Passion of Christ
51. The Meaning of the Death of Christ
52. Some Results of Salvation
53. Theories of the Atonement
54. The Doctrine of Election
55. The Extent of the Atonement
56. The Application of Salvation
57. The Security of the Believer
58. What Is the Gospel?

Section XI

The Holy Spirit

59. Who Is the Holy Spirit?
60. The Holy Spirit in Old Testament Times
61. The Holy Spirit in the Life of Our Lord
62. The Spirit Indwelling
63. The Spirit Sealing
64. The Spirit Baptizing
65. The Spirit Gifting
66. The Spirit Filling
67. Other Ministries of the Spirit
68. History of the Doctrine of the Spirit

Section XII

"I Will Build My Church"

- 69. What Is the Church?
- 70. The Distinctiveness of the Church
- 71. Principles and/or Pattern?
- 72. Types of Church Government
- 73. Qualified Leadership for the Church
- 74. Ordinances for the Church
- 75. The Worship of the Church
- 76. Other Ministries of the Church

Section XIII

Things to Come

- 77. Introduction to Eschatology
- 78. A Survey of Postmillennialism
- 79. A Survey of Amillennialism
- 80. A Survey of Premillennialism
- 81. God's Covenant with Abraham
- 82. God's Covenant with David
- 83. An Outline of Future Events
- 84. The Tribulation Period
- 85. The Rapture of the Church
- 86. The Pretribulational Rapture View
- 87. Populating the Millennial Kingdom
- 88. The Midtribulational Rapture View
- 89. The Posttribulational Rapture View
- 90. The Millennium
- 91. Future Judgments
- 92. Resurrection and Eternal Destiny

Section XIV

Central Passages

- 93. Some Central Passages for the Study of Theology

Section XV

Definitions

94. Some Definitions for the Study of Theology

Index of Scripture

Index of Subjects

Who Should Read Theology?

Theology is for everyone. Indeed, everyone needs to be a theologian. In reality, everyone is a theologian-of one sort or another.

And therein lies the problem. There is nothing wrong with being an amateur theologian or a professional theologian, but there is everything wrong about being an ignorant or a sloppy theologian. Therefore, every Christian should read theology.

Theology simply means thinking about God and expressing those thoughts in some way. There will be a more precise definition in the first chapter, but in this basic sense everyone is a theologian. Even an atheist has a theology. He thinks about God, rejects His existence, and expresses that sometimes in creed and always in lifestyle. The follower of a non-Christian religion has substituted his counterfeit deity for the true God and shows off that theology in various ways.

But almost all the readers of this book will be theists if not also believers in Jesus Christ. So your thoughts, however scattered or systematized, are about the living God, the only true God who exists. Because this is so, there is all the more reason for you to study theology, for all the time and energy you give to thinking about the true God will not only expand your mind but affect your life.

As an example of how theology can affect your life, think about the subject of accountability. All of us have various levels of accountability. We are accountable to ourselves; conscience sees to that. But conscience can be warped, seared, or ignored, thus reducing accountability on that level. We have accountability to society, but different societies have different standards for legality and morality, and an individual can sometimes violate standards and escape accountability. Other units of accountability include family, local church, employment, etc. But believers in the true God recognize that they also have to be accountable to Him. Sometimes we can seem to escape present accountability to God, but no one will escape future accountability, for we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. The theology of judgment forces us to think about a facet of God that should be expressed in a sober outlook on life now.

Good theologians come in many shapes. Some are, by the world's evaluation, ignorant; but nevertheless they do understand many truths about God. Others are studious but in a nontechnical way. Still others are highly skilled and widely read. Some are professional theologians; most are not.

This book is written for the most who are not. If I had been writing to professionals, I would have done a number of things differently. I would not have made a conscious effort to keep the language simple and the explanations uncomplicated, since the professional can understand complex language and technical explanations. I would not have used illustrations (though some technical books could well use them!). I would not have kept the footnotes to a minimum. Professionals want to be sure that an author has read everything on a subject (but who has?). At least they want to see proof of a wide range of reading by the quantity of a variety of footnotes, some of which must be very contemporary. I think I have demonstrated in other books that I can do this, but in this one I have chosen to keep footnotes to a minimum. I used them when it was necessary to document a statement the reader might think untrue or to make clear that I was not creating a straw man. But mostly I have used them to indicate books and articles I felt made a

helpful contribution to the particular subject under discussion. In that way, it is possible for the reader to pursue a subject further if he desires to.

But if theology is thinking about God and expressing those thoughts, then judge this book on the basis of whether or not it reflects correct thoughts about God and expresses them accurately and plainly to you and in a manner that brings changes in your thinking and living.

The phrase "sound doctrine" that Paul used means healthy doctrine (e.g., 2 Tim 4:3; Tit 1:9). Healthy doctrine or healthy theology is always expected to result in holy living. When Paul prayed for churches, he prayed for an increase in knowledge, for he realized that this would produce holy living (e.g., Phil 1:9-11; Col 1:9-10). Healthy theology is expressed not only in creed but in fruitful living, and holy living must be based on healthy theology.

How theology affects my life or your life is our personal and individual responsibility. But to conform our lives to the image of Christ is the ultimate goal in studying theology. Yet in the final analysis no book can do that. Only God and you can.

Section I—Prologomena

Chapter 1: Concepts and Definitions

Prolegomena, the title of this section, simply means prefatory or preliminary remarks. It furnishes the author with the opportunity to let his readers know something of the general plan he has in mind, both its extent and limitations, as well as some of the presuppositions of his thinking and the procedures he plans to use. Prolegomena serve to orient the readers to what the author has in mind for the book.

I. The Concept of Theology

That a book is a work on theology says something at once about extent, focus, and limitations. The word "theology," from theos meaning God and logos meaning rational expression, means the rational interpretation of religious faith. Christian theology thus means the rational interpretation of the Christian faith.

At least three elements are included in that general concept of theology.

- (1) Theology is intelligible. It can be comprehended by the human mind in an orderly, rational manner.
- (2) Theology requires explanation. This, in turn, involves exegesis and systematization.
- (3) The Christian faith finds its source in the Bible, so Christian theology will be a Bible-based study. Theology, then, is the discovery, systematizing, and presentation of the truths about God.

II. The Varieties of Theology

Theologies can be cataloged in various ways.

- (1) By era: i.e., patristic theology, medieval theology, reformation theology, modern theology.
- (2) By viewpoint: i.e., Arminian theology, Calvinistic theology, Catholic theology, Barthian theology, liberation theology, etc.
- (3) By focus: i.e., historical theology, biblical theology, systematic theology, apologetic theology, exegetical theology, etc. Some of these distinctions are very important to anyone who studies theology.

A. Historical Theology

Historical theology focuses on what those who studied the Bible thought about its teachings either individually or collectively as in the pronouncements of church councils. It shows how the church has formulated both truth and error and serves to guide the theologian in his own understanding

and statement of doctrine. A student can be more efficient in coming to his own understanding of truth by knowing the contributions and mistakes of church history. When it seems appropriate I shall include some history of doctrine in this book.

B. Biblical Theology

Though the term biblical theology has been used in various ways, it serves to label a specific focus on the study of theology. In a nontechnical sense it can refer to a pietistic theology (in contrast to a philosophical one), or to a Bible-based theology (in contrast to one that interacts with contemporary thinkers), or to exegetical theology (in contrast to speculative theology). Some contemporary biblical theologies from a liberal perspective fall under this latter category, exegetical, though the exegesis does not faithfully represent the biblical teaching. Often too their works consist of a running commentary through the Bible held together by some large category like kingdom or covenant or God (if Old Testament biblical theology), or categories like the teachings of Jesus, Paul, and primitive Christianity (if New Testament biblical theology).

Technically, biblical theology has a much sharper focus than that. It deals systematically with the historically conditioned progress of the self-revelation of God in the Bible. Four characteristics emerge from this definition.

- (1) The results of the study of biblical theology must be presented in a systematic form. In this it is like other areas of biblical and theological studies. The system or scheme in which biblical theology is presented will not necessarily employ the same categories systematic theology uses. It does not have to use them, nor does it have to avoid them.
- (2) Biblical theology pays attention to the soil of history in which God's revelation came. It investigates the lives of the writers of the Bible, the circumstances that compelled them to write, and the historic situation of the recipients of their writings.
- (3) Biblical theology studies revelation in the progressive sequence in which it was given. It recognizes that revelation was not completed in a single act on God's part but unfolded in a series of successive stages using a variety of people. The Bible is a record of the progress of revelation, and biblical theology focuses on that. By contrast, systematic theology views revelation as a completed whole.
- (4) Biblical theology finds its source material in the Bible. Actually orthodox systematic theologies do too. This is not to say that biblical or systematic theologies could not or do not draw material from other sources, but the theology or doctrine itself does not come from anywhere but the Bible.

C. Systematic Theology

Systematic theology correlates the data of biblical revelation as a whole in order to exhibit systematically the total picture of God's self-revelation.

Systematic theology may include historical backgrounds, apologetics and defense, and exegetical work, but it focuses on the total structure of biblical doctrine.

To summarize: Theology is the discovery, systematizing, and presentation of the truths about God. Historical theology accomplishes this by focusing on what others throughout history have said about these truths. Biblical theology does this by surveying the progressive revelation of God's truth. Systematic theology presents the total structure.

Chapter 2: Some Presuppositions

I. The Basic One

Consciously or unconsciously everyone operates on the basis of some presuppositions. The atheist who says there is no God has to believe that basic presupposition. And believing it, he then views the world, mankind, and the future in entirely different ways than the theist. The agnostic not only affirms we cannot know God, but he must believe that as basic to his entire outlook on the world and life. If we can know about the true God then his whole system is smashed. The theist believes there is a God. He mounts confirmatory evidence to support that belief, but basically he believes.

The trinitarian believes God is Triunity. That is a belief gleaned from the Bible. Therefore, he also believes the Bible to be true.

This stands as the watershed presupposition. If the Bible is not true, then trinitarianism is untrue and Jesus Christ is not who He claimed to be. We learn nothing about the Trinity or Christ from nature or from the human mind. And we cannot be certain that what we learn from the Bible about the Triune God is accurate unless we believe that our source itself is accurate. Thus the belief in the truthfulness of the Bible is the basic presupposition. This will be fully discussed under inspiration and inerrancy.

II. The Interpretive Ones

If our source material is so crucial, then we must be concerned how we approach and use it. Accurate theology rests on sound exegesis. Exegetical studies must be made before theological systematization, just as bricks have to be made before a building can be built.

A. The Necessity of Normal, Plain Interpretation

Though a more thorough discussion of hermeneutics will appear in section III, we need to state here the importance of normal interpretation as the basis for proper exegesis. In giving us the revelation of Himself, God desired to communicate, not obscure, the truth. So we approach the interpretation of the Bible presupposing the use of normal canons of interpretation. Remember that when symbols, parables, types, etc. are used they depend on an underlying literal sense for their very existence, and their interpretation must always be controlled by the concept that God communicates in a normal, plain, or literal manner. Ignoring this will result in the same kind of confused exegesis that characterized the patristic and medieval interpreters.

B. The Priority of the New Testament

All Scripture is inspired and profitable, but the New Testament has greater priority as the source of doctrine. Old Testament revelation was preparatory and partial, but New Testament revelation is climactic and complete. The doctrine of the Trinity, for instance, while allowed for in the Old

Testament, was not revealed until the New Testament. Or, think how much difference exists between what is taught in the Old and New Testaments concerning atonement, justification, and resurrection. To say this is not to minimize what is taught in the Old Testament or to imply that it is any less inspired, but it is to say that in the progressive unfolding of God's revelation the Old Testament occupies a prior place chronologically and thus a preparatory and incomplete place theologically. Old Testament theology has its place, but it is incomplete without the contribution of New Testament truth.

C. The Legitimacy of Proof Texts

Liberals and Barthians have often criticized conservatives for using proof texts to substantiate their conclusions. Why do they complain? Simply because citing proof texts will lead to conservative, not liberal, conclusions. They charge it with being an illegitimate, unscholarly methodology, but it is no more illegitimate than footnotes are in a scholarly work!

To be sure, proof texts must be used properly, just as footnotes must be. They must actually be used to mean what they say; they must not be used out of context; they must not be used in part when the whole might change the meaning; and Old Testament proof texts particularly must not be forced to include truth that was only revealed later in the New Testament.

III. The Systematizing Ones

A. The Necessity of a System

The difference between exegesis and theology is the system used. Exegesis analyzes; theology correlates those analyses. Exegesis relates the meanings of texts; theology interrelates those meanings. The exegete strives to present the meaning of truth; the theologian, the system of truth. Theology's goal, whether biblical or systematic theology, is the systematization of the teachings under consideration.

B. The Limitations of a Theological System

In a word, the limitations of a theological system must coincide with the limitations of biblical revelation. In an effort to present a complete system, theologians are often tempted to fill in the gaps in the biblical evidence with logic or implications that may not be warranted.

Logic and implications do have their appropriate place. God's revelation is orderly and rational, so logic has a proper place in the scientific investigation of that revelation. When words are put together in sentences, those sentences take on implications that the theologian must try to understand.

However, when logic is used to create truth, as it were, then the theologian will be guilty of pushing his system beyond the limitations of biblical truth. Sometimes this is motivated by the desire to answer questions that the Scripture does not answer. In such cases (and there are a number of crucial ones in the Bible) the best answer is silence, not clever logic, or almost invisible implications, or wishful sentimentality. Examples of particularly tempting areas include sovereignty and responsibility, the extent of the Atonement, and the salvation of infants who die.

IV. The Personal Ones

One should also be able to presuppose certain matters about the student of theology.

A. He Must Believe

Of course unbelievers can write and study theology, but a believer has a dimension and perspective on the truth of God that no unbeliever can have. The deep things of God are taught by the Spirit, whom an unbeliever does not have (1 Cor 2:10-16).

Believers need to have faith also, for some areas of God's revelation will not be fully understood by our finite minds.

B. He Must Think

Ultimately the believer must try to think theologically. This involves thinking exegetically (to understand the precise meaning), thinking systematically (in order to correlate facts thoroughly), thinking critically (to evaluate the priority of the related evidence), and thinking synthetically (to combine and present the teaching as a whole).

Theology and exegesis should always interact. Exegesis does not provide all the answers; when there can legitimately be more than one exegetical option, theology will decide which to prefer. Some passages, for example, could seem to teach eternal security or not; one's theological system will make the decision. On the other hand, no theological system should be so hardened that it is not open to change or refinement from the insights of exegesis.

C. He Must Depend

Intellect alone does not make a theologian. If we believe in the reality of the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, then certainly this must be a factor in studying theology (Jn 16:12-15). The content of the Spirit's curriculum encompasses all the truth, focusing especially on the revelation of Christ Himself which is, of course, found in the Scriptures. To experience this will require a conscious attitude of dependence on the Spirit, which will be reflected in humility of mind and a diligent study of what the Spirit has taught others throughout history. Inductive Bible study is a beneficial way to study, but to do it only is to ignore the results of the work of others, and to do it always can be an inefficient repetition of what others have already done.

D. He Must Worship

Studying theology is no mere academic exercise, though it is that. It is an experience that changes, convicts, broadens, challenges, and ultimately leads to a deep reverence for God. Worship means to recognize the worth of the object worshiped. How can any mortal put his mind to the study of God and fail to increase his recognition of His worth?

Chapter 3: The Question of Authority

Authority constitutes the foundational principle in the study of theology. Presumably all who operate within the broadest concept of "Christian" theology would acknowledge the authority of

God as the supreme norm for truth. However, how the authority of God is conceived and expressed varies considerably within the "Christian" spectrum.

I. Authority in Liberalism

Subjectivism stands as the hallmark of liberalism, though the focus of that subjectivism may vary with different people. So one person could say, "The Word of God includes 'any act of God by which communication occurs between God and man.'"¹ That communication comes through human reason, feelings, or conscience.

A. Reason

Reason has always occupied a dominant place in liberal thought. Of course it is within the sphere of reason that concepts are formed that are the basis of communication from one person to another. Reason is a necessary channel for giving and receiving truth, and the evangelical recognizes that. But liberalism has certainly made human reason the judge of truth and often the creator of truth. Reason becomes autonomous, governed by no higher or outside authority, but also severely limited by its finitude and fallibility.

B. Feelings

As a reaction against rationalism, Schleiermacher (1768-1834) developed his theology of feeling. He emphasized the analysis of religious experience and based religion on feeling or awareness. In effect, theology became anthropology and psychology. Because of this, Karl Barth considered Schleiermacher to be the epitome of religious liberalism.

C. Conscience

This form of liberalism emphasizes conscience as the basis of authority. Our knowledge is unreliable and limited, so the basic moral instincts of the human soul become the basis for authority. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was the leader in this form of thought. Once again, theology had become anthropology.

In all forms of liberalism, human nature in one aspect or another is the source of religious truth. The Bible, then, is viewed as the product of human reasoning containing man's thoughts about God, himself, and this world. It records the historical development of man's religious experiences and beliefs, and is not, as conservatives believe, the record of a message from a transcendent God who broke into the course of history.

II. Authority in Neo-Orthodoxy

Neo-orthodoxy has sometimes been classed with liberalism and sometimes with conservatism. The reason for this confusion is that, on the one hand, it broke with liberalism by insisting that God, not man, must initiate revelation (and thus seemed to be conservative); while, on the other hand, it continued to teach liberal views concerning the Bible (and thus seemed to be liberal).

The basis of authority in neo-orthodoxy, at least as expressed by Karl Barth (1886-1968), is the Word. However, the Word is mainly Christ. The Bible witnesses to the Word, and does so fallibly, and Christian proclamation is a word about the Word.

The sovereign God took the initiative in revealing Himself, centering primarily in the revelation in Christ. The years of Christ's life exhibited the epitome of revelation, and His death was the climax of revelation. The Bible witnesses to the revelation of God, even though it is interpreted by all the canons of liberalism. The Bible, then, has no absolute authority, but only instrumental authority, since it serves as the fallible instrument by which we encounter Christ the Word. And it is that encounter of faith at the point of "crisis" in which God communicates Himself. That is absolute truth.

Though neo-orthodoxy seeks objectivity in God's sovereign initiative, it practices subjectivism in the experiences of faith's encounters. Even though the Bible is involved in those experiences, it is not allowed to be the ultimate judge of those experiences. Neo-orthodoxy lacks an external, objective standard of authority.

III. Authority in Conservatism

In conservatism the basis of authority is external to man and objective.

A. Conservative Catholicism

In Roman Catholicism authority ultimately rests in the church itself. To be sure, the Bible is believed, but it must be interpreted by the church. Furthermore, the traditions of the church are, along with the Bible, a source of divine revelation. Ecumenical councils and popes have from time to time made pronouncements that are considered infallible and therefore binding on church members.

The Eastern Church is similar as far as finding its authority in tradition, the church itself, and the Bible. Even though evangelicals reject tradition as authoritative, it should be recognized that Catholicism's authority is not found in man, as liberalism teaches.

B. Conservative Protestantism

"Conservative" eliminates liberalism's humanistic and subjective bases of authority, and "protestantism" removes the church as a base of authority. So one would agree that "orthodoxy is that branch of Christendom which limits the ground of religious authority to the Bible."² The Scriptures contain the objective revelation of God and are therefore the basis of authority for the conservative Protestant.

To be sure, understanding God's revelation in the Bible involves using the rational processes of a redeemed mind, a commitment of faith in matters not revealed or not understood, a dependence on the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, a conscience clear before God, and some insight into the lessons of history.

Sometimes in practice, though not in theory, conservatives can and do deny that the Bible is their sole basis of authority.

- (1) In practice, some traditions or denominations give their creeds coordinate authority with the Bible. Creeds can provide helpful statements of truth, but creeds can never be the authoritative judge of truth. Creedal statements must always be considered fallible, in need of possible revision, and subservient to biblical authority.

(2) In practice, some groups give tradition and accepted practice coordinate authority with the Bible. A church has a divine mandate to set authoritative guidelines for its members (Heb 13:7, 17), but these too are fallible, in need of periodic revision, and always subservient to biblical authority.

(3) In practice, some conservatives make religious experience authoritative. Healthy experience is the fruit of allegiance to biblical authority, but all experiences must be guided, governed, and guarded by the Bible. To make experience normative and authoritative is to commit the same error as liberalism by replacing an objective criterion with subjective existentialism.

Observe the point of this chart: when objective authority is supplemented, compromised, or abandoned, theism will be weakened or even relinquished.

Basis of Authority

This theological view believes in ...	objective	transcendent	theism
Orthodoxy	●	●	●
Neoorthodoxy		●	●
Liberalism			●

NOTES

1. L. Harold DeWolf, *The Case for Theology in Liberal Perspective* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959), 17.
2. Edward John Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 13.

Section II—The Living and True God

Chapter 4: The Knowledge of God

I. The Possibility of the Knowledge of God

Unquestionably the knowledge of God is desirable; the religious yearnings of mankind testify to that. But is it possible?

The Scriptures attest to two facts: the incomprehensibility of God and the knowability of God. To say that He is incomprehensible is to assert that the mind cannot grasp the knowledge of Him. To say that He is knowable is to claim that He can be known. Both are true, though neither in an absolute sense. To say that God is incomprehensible is to assert that man cannot know everything about Him. To say that He is knowable is not to assert that man can know everything about Him.

Both truths are affirmed in the Scriptures: His incomprehensibility in verses like Job 11:7 and Isa 40:18, and His knowability in verses like Jn 14:7; Jn 17:3; and 1 Jn 5:20.

II. Characteristics of the Knowledge of God

The knowledge of God may be characterized in relation to its source, its content, its progressiveness, and its purposes.

A. Its Source

God Himself is the Source of our knowledge of Him. To be sure, all truth is God's truth. But that cliché should be more carefully stated and used than it generally is. Only true truth comes from God, for since sin entered the stream of history man has created that which he calls truth but which is not. Furthermore, he has perverted, blunted, diluted, and corrupted that which was originally true truth that did come from God. For us today the only infallible canon for determining true truth is the written Word of God. Nature, though it does reveal some things about God, is limited and can be misread by mankind. The human mind, though often brilliant in what it can achieve, suffers limitations and darkening. Human experiences, even religious ones, lack reliability as sources of the true knowledge of God unless they conform to the Word of God.

Certainly the knowledge of what is true religion must come from God. In a past dispensation Judaism was revealed as God's true religion. Today Judaism is not the true religion; only Christianity is. And the true knowledge of Christianity has been revealed through Christ and the apostles. One of the purposes of our Lord's incarnation was to reveal God (Jn 1:18; Jn 14:7). The promise of the coming of the Spirit after the ascension of Christ included further revelation concerning Him and the Father (Jn 16:13-15; Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit opens the Scriptures for the believer so that he can know God more fully.

B. Its Content

A full knowledge of God is both factual and personal. To know facts about a person without knowing the person is limiting; to know a person without knowing facts about that one is shallow. God has revealed many facts about Himself, all of which are important in making our personal

relationship with Him close, intelligent, and useful. Had He only revealed facts without making it possible to know Him personally, such factual knowledge would have little, certainly not eternal, usefulness. Just as with human relationships, a divine-human relationship cannot begin without knowledge of some minimal truths about the Person; then the personal relationship generates the desire to know more facts, which in turn deepens the relationship, and so on. This kind of cycle ought to be the experience of every student of theology; a knowledge about God should deepen our relationship with Him, which in turn increases our desire to know more about Him.

C. Its Progressiveness

The knowledge of God and His works was revealed progressively throughout history. The most obvious proof is to compare incomplete Jewish theology with the fuller revelation of Christian theology in respect, for example, to such doctrines as the Trinity, Christology, the Holy Spirit, Resurrection, and eschatology. To trace that progressiveness is the task of biblical theology.

D. Its Purposes

1. To lead people to the possession of eternal life (Jn 17:3; 1 Tim 2:4).
2. To foster Christian growth (2 Pet 3:18), with doctrinal knowledge (Jn 7:17; Rom 6:9, 16; Eph 1:18) and with a discerning lifestyle (Phil 1:9-10; 2 Pet 1:5).
3. To warn of judgment to come (Hos 4:6; Heb 10:26-27).
4. To generate true worship of God (Rom 11:33-36).

III. Prerequisites to the Knowledge of God

A. God Initiated His Self-Revelation

The knowledge of God differs from all other knowledge in that man can have this knowledge only as far as God reveals it. If God did not initiate the revelation of Himself, there would be no way for man to know Him. Therefore, a human being must put himself under God who is the object of his knowledge. In other scholarly endeavors, the human being often places himself above the object of his investigation, but not so in the study of God.

B. God Gave Language for Communication

Certainly an essential part of God's revelation is a provision of means for communicating that revelation. Also the record of the personal revelation of God in Christ necessitates some means of recording and communicating that revelation. For this purpose God gave language. He devised it and gave it to the first man and woman in order that He might communicate His instructions to them (Gen 1:28-30) and that they might communicate with Him (Jn 3:8-13). It also seemed to have a part in their subduing the un fallen creation and giving names to the animals. Even after the division of the one original language into many at Babel, languages served as the means of communication on all levels. We can certainly believe that the omniscient God made provision for languages that were sufficient to communicate His self-revelation to man.

C. He Created Man in His Image

When God created man in His image and likeness He made him, like Himself, a rational being with intelligence. To be sure, human intelligence is not the same as divine intelligence, but it is a real intelligence, not fictitious. Therefore, humans have the ability to understand the meaning of words and the logic of sentences and paragraphs. Sin has removed the guarantee that human understanding is always reliable, but it does not eradicate a human being's ability to understand.

D. He Gave the Holy Spirit

To believers God has given His Holy Spirit to reveal the things of God (Jn 16:13-15; 1 Cor 2:10). This does not make the believer infallible, but it can give him the ability to distinguish truth from error (1 Jn 2:27).

These works of God make it possible for us to know and obey the many commands in Scripture to know Him (Rom 6:16; 1 Cor 3:16; 5:6; 6:19; Jas 4:4).

Chapter 5: The Revelation of God

Historically, the two avenues through which God has taken the initiative to reveal Himself have been labeled general and special revelation. General revelation includes all that God has revealed in the world around us, including man, while special revelation includes various means He used to communicate His message in what was codified in the Bible. General revelation is sometimes called natural theology, and special revelation is called revealed theology. But, of course, what is revealed in nature is also revealed in theology. Some writers use the labels prelapsarian for general revelation and postlapsarian or soteric for special revelation. However, both general and special revelation are (a) from God and (b) about God.

In this chapter we shall discuss general revelation mostly, leaving other aspects of the doctrine of revelation to section III. General revelation provides evidences for the existence of God. Special revelation, on the other hand, generally assumes His existence.

I. Characteristics of General Revelation

General revelation is exactly that-general. It is general in its scope; that is, it reaches to all people (Mt 5:45; Acts 14:17). It is general in geography; that is, it encompasses the entire globe (Ps 19:2). It is general in its methodology; that is, it employs universal means like the heat of the sun (Ps 19:4-6) and human conscience (Rom 2:14-15). Simply because it is a revelation that affects all people wherever they are and whenever they have lived it can bring light and truth to all, or, if rejected, it brings condemnation.

II. Avenues of General Revelation

General revelation comes to mankind in several ways.

A. Through Creation

1. *Statement.* Simply stated, this line of evidence (the cosmological argument for the existence of God) points out that the universe around us is an effect that requires an adequate cause.

2. *Presuppositions.* This line of evidence depends on three presuppositions: (a) every effect has a cause; (b) the effect caused depends on the cause for its existence; and (c) nature cannot originate itself.

3. *Development.* If something now exists (the cosmos) then either it came from nothing or it came from something that must be eternal. The something eternal in the second option could either be the cosmos itself, which would have to be eternal, or chance as an eternal principle, or God the eternal Being.

To say that the cosmos came from nothing means it was self-created. This is a logical contradiction, because for something to be self-created it must exist and not exist at the same time in the same way. Furthermore, self-creation has never been scientifically demonstrated and observed.

A variation of the view that holds to the eternality of matter is the Steady State Theory, which suggests that matter is constantly created near the center of the universe and destroyed at the outer perimeter of space. However, there is no evidence to support this theory, and if it were true it would violate the law of the conservation of mass and energy.

Does not the matter of cause and effect also apply to God? Is He not also an effect that required a cause? The answer is no, because God is not an effect (an effect being something that requires a cause) because He is eternal.

If the cosmos did not generate itself, then there must be something eternal that caused it. One option is that the cosmic process itself is eternal, an option scarcely held. Rather almost all hold that the universe had a beginning, however long ago it may have been.

Another option is that there is some eternal principle of chance or blind intelligence. To believe this option requires a large measure of faith. It can be demonstrated mathematically that random chance could not have produced what we observe today in the universe. But even if it could produce molecules and atoms, the "stuff" of the universe, could such a nonliving principle also produce the soul and spirit facets of life?

The third option is the theistic one; that is, the eternal Being that caused the cosmos is God. This does not mean that the universe reveals all the details of the character of that eternal Being, but it does mean that there is a living, powerful, intelligent Being who caused the universe. Living, because nonlife cannot produce life. Powerful, because of the very nature of what was formed. Intelligent, because of the order and arrangement of the cosmos, things that chance could not generate.

4. *Scripture.* Two key passages of Scripture show creation to be a channel of revelation.

a. Ps 19:1-6. In this psalm David wrote of (1) the continuousness of the revelation through creation (Ps 19:1-2). The verbs express continuous action, indicating that the heavens, the

expanse, day, and night continually tell of God's glory. He also wrote that (2) the center or arena of this revelation is the universe, the heavens and the earth (Ps 19: 4), (3) the character of this revelation is quite clear though nonverbal (Ps 19:3), and (4) the coverage is everywhere and to everybody (Ps 19:4-6). It covers the entire earth, and every person can know it. Most can see the sun and the cycle of day and night, but even blind people can feel the heat of the sun (Ps 19:6). This revelation ought to raise questions in people's minds. Where does the heat come from? Who made the sun? (5) Also, the content of this revelation is twofold. It tells something about the glory of God and the greatness of God.

b. Rom 1:18-32. In this key passage the emphasis is on the revelation of the wrath of God because mankind rejects what can be known of Him through the avenue of creation.

(1) The revelation of His wrath (Rom 1:18). God's wrath is revealed against all who suppress truth and practice ungodliness. The particulars of how His wrath is revealed are listed in Rom 1:24-32.

(2) The reasons for His wrath (Rom 1:19-23). The reasons are two: something can be known about God, but rather than receiving that truth, people rejected the revelation and, indeed, perverted it. "What has been made" (Rom 1:20), the cosmos, clearly reveals (and has since the beginning of Creation) God's power and divine nature. In other words, all mankind should know from observing the universe around it that there exists a supreme Being. Instead mankind rejects that truth and makes idols over which people are supreme.

(3) The result of His wrath (Rom 1:24-32). Because man rejected general revelation, God gave him over (Rom 1:24, 26, 28). Some think this means a permissive giving over of people so that they suffer the retributive consequences of their sin. But the verb is active voice in Rom 1:24, 26, and 28. Others take the verb in a privative sense; that is, God deprived man of His work of common grace. Still others feel this is a positive and judicial act on God's part, giving people over to judgment. This includes the privative sense but is more active than the permissive viewpoint. It understands that at the same time people are responsible for their sinful actions (Eph 4:19 uses the same verb). Man is justly condemned because he does not receive what God does tell him about Himself through the Creation.

Norman Geisler has restated the cosmological argument as follows:

(a) Some limited, changing being(s) exist. To deny this requires an affirmation from an existing being, so it is self-defeating.

(b) The present existence of every limited, changing being is caused by another. The potentiality for existence can only be actualized by some existence beyond it.

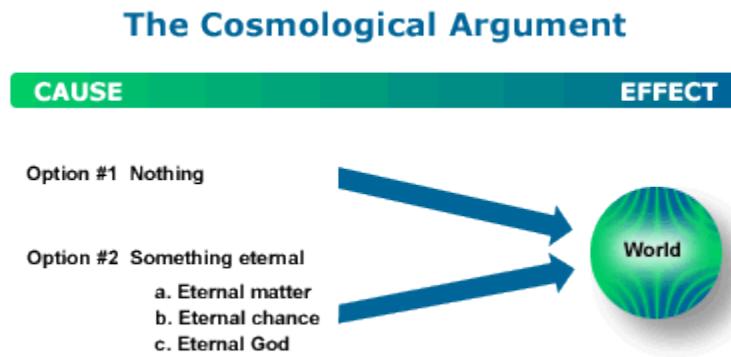
(c) There cannot be an infinite regress of causes of being.

(d) Therefore, there is a first Cause of the present existence of these beings.

(e) This first Cause must be infinite, necessary, eternal, simple, unchangeable, and one.

(f) By comparing the Being supported by this line of argumentation with the God of the Scriptures, we conclude they are identical.¹

THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT



B. Through Organization

1. *Statement.* The purpose, order, and design we observe in the world calls for a designer. The most popular presentation of this teleological argument was in William Paley's Natural Theology (1802), including his illustration of the organization of a watch demanding a watchmaker. Likewise, the organization of the world requires someone who planned it.

2. *Development.* To be most effective the teleological argument should focus on the broader aspects of design in nature rather than details. To use one of J. Oliver Buswell's illustrations, the fact that no two snowflakes are alike is much less evidential of God's purpose and design for the world than is the important place snow occupies in the cycle of seasons and provision of moisture for the earth.² Furthermore, some of the specifics in nature do not make sense to us, often because of the working of evil. But the overall picture is one of order and design. Random action could never have produced the highly integrated organization that we observe in the world.

3. *Scripture.* Ps 19:2 states that the world is evidence of the Creator's knowledge. When the people of Lystra were about to offer sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas because they thought the two were gods, Paul restrained them by using this teleological argument for the existence of the true God (Acts 14:15-18). The world shows the cycle of seasons and the gift of rain in order to give mankind food and gladness. This order in nature serves as a witness to the existence of the true and living God, Paul said.

C. Man

1. *Statement.* How can man, a moral, intelligent, and living being, be explained apart from a moral, intelligent, and living God?

2. *Development.* This so-called anthropological argument for the existence of God is sometimes split in several ways. Buswell, for example, separates the anthropological argument (God creating man in His image) and the moral argument (how did the ideas of right and wrong originate?).³ Dale Moody separates this basic argument into four: the moral argument, the presence of mind, the total self (that is, the soul), and religious consciousness.⁴ These divisions are, it seems to me, only aspects of the basic anthropological argument since they all focus on man. So whatever facet of man's being or experience is emphasized, whether morality, intelligence, emotions, or religious consciousness, it is still an aspect of man and properly belongs to the anthropological argument.

The several facets of man and all of them together demand some explanation as to their origin. They argue for the existence of a being who is moral and intelligent and living who could have produced man. Material, inanimate, or unconscious forces could hardly have produced man. Evolution cannot produce soul, conscience, or religious instincts. Lifeless idols do not generate living offspring.

3. *Scripture*. The psalmist declared: "He who planted the ear, does He not hear? He who formed the eye, does He not see?" (Ps 94:9). In other words, a living, intelligent creature argues for a living, intelligent Creator.

At the Areopagus Paul argued the same way. If we are the offspring of God, he argued, then God cannot be like a gold or silver idol that the offspring formed (Acts 17:28-29). He, like His offspring, must be living and intelligent.

D. Being

The ontological argument (that is, an argument based on the study of "being") has been presented in various forms by Anselm, Descartes, and others, and has been accepted by some (Hegel) and rejected by others (Kant).

1. *Statement*. The argument goes like this: (a) we have an idea of a Most Perfect Being; (b) the idea of a Most Perfect Being includes existence, since a Being, otherwise perfect, who did not exist would not be so perfect as a Being who did exist; (c) therefore, since the idea of existence is contained in the idea of the Most Perfect Being, that Most Perfect Being must exist.

2. *Discussion*. While the argument is deductive, there is an inductive aspect to it. Where does the idea of God come from? Not every idea that people have corresponds to an ontological reality. But ideas do have causes and need to be accounted for. The idea of a tooth fairy exists but its existence does not prove the reality of a tooth fairy. Nevertheless, the idea can be accounted for. Similarly the idea of God exists. How is it to be accounted for? That is the inductive aspect of the argument. And the point is that this idea is inexplicable from nontheistic data.

III. Content of General Revelation

The relevant biblical passages tell us authoritatively what can be learned from general revelation. This is not to say that everybody will understand all or even any of these things, but these are what God has communicated through the various avenues of general revelation.

- (1) His glory (Ps 19:1).
- (2) His power to work in creating the universe (Ps 19:1).
- (3) His supremacy (Rom 1:20).
- (4) His divine nature (Rom 1:20).
- (5) His providential control of nature (Acts 14:17).
- (6) His goodness (Mt 5:45).
- (7) His intelligence (Acts 17:29).
- (8) His living existence (Acts 17:28).

IV. The Value of General Revelation

In determining the value of general revelation, people run the risk of either overestimating it or underestimating it. Some give at least the impression that what is revealed through general revelation proves the existence of the true God of the Bible. This seems to overestimate its value. Others assign it no value, but this is wrong since the Bible does reflect the use of these arguments. What, then, is its proper value?

A. To Display God's Grace

That God did not withdraw His grace after the first or any subsequent rebellion is itself grace. That He did not cease to communicate with mankind after people turned away from Him is no small wonder. That He continued to provide the means through general revelation whereby people can know something about the true God displays His continuing grace. Some are affected positively by that common grace, showing evidence of morality and often of seeking more truth.

B. To Give Weight to the Case for Theism

It is an overstatement to say that these arguments for the existence of God prove the existence of the God of the Bible. Although a number of truths about God are revealed through general revelation, many important things will never be revealed through that means. But the questions general revelation raises and the answers it points to lend support for the claims of theism as opposed to, say, atheism, agnosticism, or evolutionism.

C. To Justly Condemn Rejecters

These lines of evidence do place unregenerate men and women under responsibility to give some response. God intends that people should be able to see that a mechanistic, atheistic, irrationalistic explanation is inadequate to account for the highly integrated world and the various facets of man. Mankind should respond by acknowledging that there has to be behind it all a living, powerful, intelligent, superhuman Being.

If men do not make that minimal but crucial acknowledgment, but rather turn away and offer some other explanation, then God is just if He rejects them and does not offer more truth. The rejection of what is revealed in general revelation is sufficient to condemn justly. But this does not imply that the acceptance of general revelation is sufficient to effect eternal salvation. It is not, simply because there is no revelation of the atoning death of God's Son.

If what I have said appears to erect a double standard, so be it. There is nothing inherently wrong with two standards as long as both are just. And in this case both are. It would not be just for general revelation to save if God provided before the foundation of the world a Lamb to be slain for sin. To give salvation apart from the Lamb would be an unjust provision. But not to condemn those who reject revelation at any point of their pilgrimage of rejection would also be unjust for a holy God. Thus the rejection of the truths of general revelation brings just condemnation at any and all times they are rejected.

If a concerned student goes to his fellow student who needs one thousand dollars for tuition and offers with genuine loving concern ten dollars (which is all he has), and if his ten dollar bill is thrown scornfully on the floor with a mocking "What good will that pittance do me?" what further obligation does the student have to provide additional help to his fellow student? If he should suddenly be able to give the entire one thousand dollars, would anyone charge him with injustice if he gave it to another needy student? Accepting a ten dollar gift will not "save" the person who needs one thousand dollars; but rejecting it will condemn him. We must not forget that the majority of people who have ever lived have rejected the revelation of God through nature, and that rejection has come with scorn and deliberate substitution of their own gods. They have condemned themselves, and when God rejects them, He does so justly.

NOTES

1. Norman Geisler, Philosophy of Religion (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 190-208.
2. J. Oswald Buswell, A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 87.
3. Ibid., 1:90-91.
4. Dale Moody, The Word of Truth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 83-84.

Chapter 6: The Perfections of God

If the question of chapter 4 was, Can God be known? the question of this chapter is, Can God be defined? If a definition consists of "a word or phrase expressing the essential nature of a person or thing," then God cannot be defined, for no word or even phrase could express His essential nature. No one could put together such a definition of God.

But if the definition were descriptive, then it is possible to define God, though not exhaustively. Indeed, most definitions are descriptive. One of the most famous, that in the Westminster Shorter Catechism, illustrates this kind of definition when it describes God as "Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth" (Question 4). The longer description in the Westminster Confession of Faith simply adds more attributes like love, mercy, and freedom. Thus those definitions simply list some of the attributes of God.

Attributes are qualities that are inherent to a subject. They identify, distinguish, or analyze the subject. Most theologies entitle this chapter "The Attributes of God." I prefer "Perfections" because all of the qualities or attributes of God are perfect. His attributes are His perfections.

I. Characteristics of the Perfections of God

The various perfections of God are not component parts of God. Each describes His total being. Love, for example, is not a part of God's nature; God in His total being is love. Although God may display one quality or another at a given time, no quality is independent of or preeminent over any of the others. Whenever God displays His wrath, He is still love. When He shows His love, He does not abandon His holiness.

God is more than the sum total of His perfections. When we have listed all the attributes we can glean from revelation, we have not fully described God. This stems from His incomprehensibility. Even if we could say we had a complete list of all God's perfections, we could not fathom their meaning, for finite man cannot comprehend the infinite God.

God's perfections are known to us through revelation. Man does not attribute them to God; God reveals them to man. To be sure, man can suggest attributes of God, but these cannot be assumed to be true unless they are revealed by God.

The perfections of God describe equally the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They describe the nature of the Triune God and therefore each person of the Trinity.

II. Categories of the Perfections of God

Most theologies offer some classification of God's attributes.

A. Nonmoral (Or Natural) and Moral Attributes

The former, like self-existence and infinity, belong to the constitution of God; the latter, like justice and holiness, to His will. But all of the so-called nonmoral qualities are qualities of the most moral Being in the universe, and all the moral attributes are from the nature of God.

B. Absolute and Relative Attributes

Absolute attributes include those that belong to the essence of God as considered in itself (eternity, infinity), and relative attributes belong to the essence of God as considered in relation to His Creation (like omniscience). Again, this is an artificial distinction, since we are unable to make such a determination when, in fact, all of His attributes relate to His Creation.

C. Incommunicable and Communicable Attributes

The former are those that belong only to God (eternity, infinity), whereas the latter are those that are found in a relative or limited degree in people (wisdom, justice). But the communicable attributes are found in people, albeit in a limited way, not because God somehow communicated them, but only because mankind was made in the image of God.

Categories may serve some purpose, but in my opinion, not much. Although some of the attributes may be classified into one or another of these suggested categories, some do not classify so easily. Although holiness is generally listed as communicable, God's holiness surely is not. Although omniscience is surely incommunicable, mankind does have limited knowledge. The classification often becomes more arbitrary than obvious. The important consideration is the study of the perfections themselves, not classifying them. And to that we now proceed.

III. Catalog of the Perfections of God

In alphabetical order, here are fourteen of the perfections of God considered under (a) meaning, (b) scriptural statement(s), and (c) application and/or any problem involved.

A. Eternity

1. Meaning. The attribute of eternity means that God exists endlessly. His existence extends endlessly backward and forward (from our viewpoint of time) without any interruption or limitation caused by succession of events. Putting these ideas together, Berkhof defines eternity as "that perfection of God whereby He is elevated above all temporal limits and all succession of moments, and possesses the whole of His existence in one indivisible present."¹

God's eternity and self-existence are interrelated concepts. Some theologies use the word aseity to denote self-existence; i.e., God depends a se, on Himself. If God exists endlessly, then He never came into existence nor was He ever caused to come into existence. He is endlessly self-existent.

2. Scripture. God's eternality is reflected in Ps 90:2, "from everlasting to everlasting," and in Gen 21:33, where El Olam, the Everlasting God, comes from an original form that means "the God of eternity."

3. Question. What is God's relation to the succession of events? As an eternal Being He sees the past and the future as clearly as the present; further, He must see them as including succession of events, and yet He is in no way bound by that succession. An illustration of this is found in the heavenly scene in Rev 6:9-11 where the Lord answered the question of the martyrs concerning how long it would be before they were avenged by telling them to wait until certain events had transpired on earth.

4. A ramification. A comforting ramification of God's eternity is the confidence that God has never, nor will He ever, cease to exist; therefore His sustaining, providential control of all things and events is assured.

B. Freedom

1. Meaning. Freedom in God means that He is independent of His creatures and His Creation.

2. Scripture. When Isaiah asked the people who had directed the Lord or taught Him anything or instructed Him, he expected the answer, "no one," because God is free, that is, independent of His creatures (Isa 40:13-14).

3. Question. Is God restricted in any way if He is free? Usually the answer states that God is restricted only by His own nature; e.g., His holiness restricts Him from ever sinning. But how can we even use the word restriction in connection with perfection? There can be no restrictions in perfection.

4. An application. Being free, God is not obligated to us in any way unless He chooses to initiate an obligation. He does not have to do anything for us unless He chooses to do so. Consequently, we cannot put Him in our debt.

C. Holiness

1. Meaning. Usually defined negatively and in relation to a relative, not absolute, standard, holiness in the Bible means separation from all that is common or unclean. In respect to God,

holiness means not only that He is separate from all that is unclean and evil but also that He is positively pure and thus distinct from all others.

An analogy may help in understanding this concept. What does it mean to be healthy? It is the absence of illness, but also a positive infusion of energy. Holiness is the absence of evil and the presence of positive right. In God, His holiness is a purity of being and nature as well as of will and act.

2. *Scripture.* Holiness is the attribute by which God wanted to be especially known in Old Testament times (Lev 11:44; Josh 24:19; Ps 99:3, 5, 9; Isa 40:25; Hab 1:12). In the New Testament it appears in direct statements (Jn 17:11; 1 Pet 1:15), in ascriptions of praise (Rev 4:8), and in the figure of God being light (1 Jn 1:5).

3. *Applications.* The absolute, innate holiness of God means that sinners have to be separated from Him unless a way can be found to constitute them holy. And that way has been provided in the merits of Jesus Christ.

A proper view of the holiness of God should make the believer sensitive to his own sin (Isa 6:3, 5; Lk 5:8).

The holiness of God becomes the standard for the believer's life and conduct (1 Jn 1:7). This should put to an end the often useless discussions over what is permitted and what is not in the Christian life. Proper conduct can be tested by the simple question, Is it holy? This is the believer's standard. Although he does not always measure up to it, he must never compromise it.

D. Immutability

1. *Meaning.* Immutability means that God is unchangeable and thus unchanging. This does not mean that He is immobile or inactive, but it does mean that He is never inconsistent or growing or developing.

2. *Scripture.* Mal 3:6 and Jas 1:17 speak of immutability. Notice in the former verse immutability guarantees the preservation of Israel.

3. *Problem.* If God is immutable, how can it be said that He repents? (Gen 6:6; Jon 3:10). If there actually was a change in God Himself, then either He is not immutable or not sovereign or both. Most understand these verses as employing anthropomorphism; i.e., interpreting what is not human in human terms. In the unfolding revelation of God's plan there seems to be change. However, this can be said to be so only from the human viewpoint, for His eternal plan is unchanging, as is He.

However, the expression may simply mean that God was sorry or grieved, which eliminates any concept of change.

4. *Ramifications in relation to God.* "If self-existence should change, it would become dependent existence; eternity would become time; perfection imperfection; and therefore God would become not-God."² Immutability assures us that none of God's perfections change.

5. Ramifications in relation to us. Immutability offers comfort and assurance that God's promises will not fail (Mal 3:6; 2 Tim 2:13). Immutability reminds us that God's attitudes toward sin, for example, do not change. Therefore, God can never be coaxed or compromised into changing.

E. Infinity

1. Meaning. Infinity means that God has no bounds or limits. He is in no way limited by the universe or by time-space boundaries. But it does not mean that He is somehow spread out through the universe, one part here and another there. "The infinity of God must be conceived as intensive rather than extensive . . ."³

2. Scripture. Solomon acknowledged God's infinity at the dedication of his temple (1 Kgs 8:27), and Paul used this attribute of God to argue against the false deities of the Athenians (Acts 17:24-28).

3. Observation. Sometimes this attribute is labeled immensity. It differs from omnipresence in that it emphasizes the transcendence of God (because He is not bound by space), while omnipresence focuses on the immanence of God (because He is everywhere present).

F. Love

1. Meaning. Like many Christian terms, love is more often discussed than defined. Even the dictionary offers little help. Love consists of affection and also of correction. Babies are cuddled and corrected, and both are true expressions of parental love. Furthermore, both are done by parents in the belief that they are doing the best thing for the child at the time. Love seeks good for the object loved. What is good? In God it is the perfection of holiness and all that that concept implies. Love in God is seeking the highest good and glory of His perfections. This implies no selfishness in God as it would in human beings.

2. Scripture. The Bible directly states that "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8). The absence of the article before "love" (the verse does not say, God is the love) indicates that this is the very nature of God. The presence of the article before "God" (literally, the God is love) shows that the statement is not reversible; it cannot read, "Love is God" (as Christian Science asserts).

3. Applications. Since all the attributes are possessed by each person of the Trinity, there must be some loving interaction (inconceivable to humans, to be sure) within the Trinity.

God who is love allows Himself to love sinful people. That is grace (Eph 2:4-8).

That love of God has been poured out into the believer's heart (Rom 5:5).

In trials God shows His love toward His children (Heb 12:6).

4. Some related words. Closely related to love are goodness, mercy, long-suffering, and grace. Although distinctions are made, they are not exact. Goodness may be defined as God's benevolent concern for His creatures (Acts 14:17). Mercy is that aspect of His goodness that causes God to show pity and compassion (Eph 2:4; Jas 5:11). Long- suffering speaks of self-restraint in the face of provocation (1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 3:15). Grace is the unmerited favor of God shown to man

primarily in the person and work of Jesus Christ. All of these concepts are related and stem from the love of God who is love.

5. *A heresy.* The heresy of universalism grows out of an unbalanced concept of the attributes of God. It teaches that since God is love He will ultimately save all people. But God's perfection of love does not operate apart from His other perfections, including holiness and justice. Therefore, love cannot overpower holiness and save those who reject Christ and die in their sins. Furthermore, universalism in reality does not have a proper definition of love, since it sees only the affection aspect of love and not the correcting aspect. Finally, universalism contradicts direct statements of Scripture (see Mk 9:45-48).

G. Omnipotence

1. *Meaning.* Omnipotence means that God is all-powerful and able to do anything consistent with His own nature. In actuality He has not chosen to do even all the things that would be consistent with Himself for reasons known ultimately only to Himself.

2. *Scripture.* The word "Almighty" is used only of God in the Bible, occurring fifty-six times, and is the basis for the concept of omnipotence. God revealed Himself as the Almighty One to Abraham (Gen 17:1), to Moses (Ex 6:3), to believers (2 Cor 6:18), and to John several times in the Revelation (Rev 1:8; 19:6).

3. *A question.* Does omnipotence have any limitations? The answer is yes, and in two areas: natural limitations and self-imposed limitations. The natural limitations include the things God cannot do because they are contrary to His nature. He cannot lie (Tit 1:2), He cannot be tempted to sin (Jas 1:13), He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim 2:13). Self-imposed limitations include those things He has not chosen to include in His plan that He might have included as long as they were not contrary to His nature. He did not choose to spare His Son; He did not choose to save all people; He did not choose all nations in Old Testament times; He did not choose Esau; He did not choose to spare James (Acts 12:2). Though He could have done any of these things without being inconsistent with omnipotence, He did not choose to do so in His plan.

Questions like "Can God make $2 + 2 = 6$?" do not imply any deficiency in His omnipotence. That particular question is in the realm of arithmetic, not power. One might as well ask if a nuclear explosion could make $2 + 2 = 6$. More important, God cannot ever make wrong right.

4. *Ramifications.* In the past, God's power was seen in Creation (Ps 33:9), in preserving all things (Heb 1:3), and in delivering Israel from Egypt (Ps 114). But the greatest display of His power was the resurrection of Christ from the dead (2 Cor 13:4). For the believer, God's power relates to the Gospel (Rom 1:16), to his security (1 Pet 1:5), to his hope of bodily resurrection (1 Cor 6:14), and to daily living (Eph 1:19).

H. Omnipresence

1. *Meaning.* Omnipresence means that God is everywhere present with His whole being at all times.

2. *Scripture.* In Ps 139:7-11 David asked the question if there is anyplace one can escape from the presence of God. His answer is no, for His omnipresence is unlimited by space (Ps 139:8), undaunted by speed (Ps 139:9), and unaffected by darkness (Ps 139:11-12).

3. *Some distinctions.* As stated in the definition, omnipresence does not mean that God's being is diffused throughout the universe as if part of Him is here and part of Him there. His whole being is in every place, and the presence of the Lord within every believer serves as a good illustration of this.

Omnipresence does not mean that the immediacy of His presence does not vary. It does. His presence on His throne (Rev 4:2), in Solomon's temple (2 Chr 7:2), or in the believer (Gal 2:20) certainly differs in its immediacy from His presence in the lake of fire (Rev 14:10). Though in the lake of fire people will be separated from the face-presence of God (2 Thess 1:9, *prosopon*), they will never be separated from Him who is omnipresent (Rev 14:10, *enopion*). There is obviously no presence of fellowship (for His face will be turned away from the wicked in the lake of fire) as exists when He indwells believers.

Omnipresence differs from pantheism, which identifies the universe with God. The term was first used by the English deist John Toland (1670-1722) in 1705 when he taught that "God is the mind or soul of the universe." This heresy fails to distinguish the Creator from the created, a distinction taught in the very first verse of the Bible.

Omnipresence also differs from pantheism as used by process theologians to mean that God's being penetrates the whole universe yet is not exhausted by the universe. Omnipresence does mean that God is everywhere present but not diffused throughout or penetrating the universe. Furthermore, God is not developing as process theology teaches.

4. *Some ramifications.* No person can escape the presence of God. This warns unbelievers and comforts believers who, because God is omnipresent, can practice the experience of His presence in every circumstance of life.

I. Omniscience

1. *Meaning.* Omniscience means that God knows everything, things actual and possible, effortlessly and equally well. A. W. Tozer wrote:

God knows instantly and effortlessly all matter and all matters, all mind and every mind, all spirit and all spirits, all being and every being, all creaturehood and all creatures, every plurality and all pluralities, all law and every law, all relations, all causes, all thoughts, all mysteries, all enigmas, all feeling, all desires, every unuttered secret, all thrones and dominions, all personalities, all things visible and invisible in heaven and in earth, motion, space, time, life, death, good, evil, heaven, and hell.

Because God knows all things perfectly, He knows no thing better than any other thing, but all things equally well. He never discovers anything, He is never surprised, never amazed. He never wonders about anything nor (except when drawing men out for their own good) does He seek information or ask questions.⁴

2. *Scripture.* God knows all His works from the beginning (Acts 15:18). He numbers and names the stars (Ps 147:4). Our Lord displayed omniscience when He declared what might have

happened in Tyre and Sidon (Mt 11:21). God knows everything about our lives before we are born (Ps 139:16).

3. Applications.

- a. Omniscience and security. Nothing can ever come to light in the believer's life that would surprise God and cause Him to cast him out. "No talebearer can inform on us; no enemy can make an accusation stick; no forgotten skeleton can come tumbling out of some hidden closet to abash us and expose our past; no unsuspected weakness in our characters can come to light to turn God away from us, since He knew us utterly before we knew Him and called us to Himself in the full knowledge of everything that was against us."⁵
- b. Omniscience and sensitivity. Every warning God gives comes from an omniscient Being, so we should be extremely sensitive to them. He does not warn us on the basis of only guessing what might happen. He knows.
- c. Omniscience and solace. When faced with inexplicable circumstances in life, we invariably take refuge and find solace in the omniscience of God. Not only does He know what actually happened, but He knows what might have happened. He always knows what ultimate good and glory will come from events we cannot understand.
- d. Omniscience and sobriety. Sobriety ought to characterize all when they realize that they must stand before an all-knowing God (Heb 4:13).

J. Righteousness

1. *Meaning.* Though related to holiness, righteousness is nevertheless a distinct attribute of God. Holiness relates to God's separateness; righteousness, to His justice. Righteousness has to do with law, morality, and justice. In relation to Himself, God is righteous; i.e., there is no law, either within His own being or of His own making, that is violated by anything in His nature. In relation to His creatures He is also righteous; i.e., there is no action He takes that violates any code of morality or justice. Sometimes these two aspects of righteousness are called absolute (in relation to Himself) and relative (in relation to His Creation).

2. *Scripture.* God's absolute righteousness is declared in Ps 11:7, "For the Lord is righteous" (see also Dan 9:7). David also declared His relative righteousness (Ps 19:9; see also Acts 17:31).

K. Simplicity

1. *Meaning.* The attribute of simplicity means that God is not a composite or compounded being. This has to do with His essence, so that it in no way contradicts the revelation of the Trinity. But this attribute also reminds us that when we consider God as a Triune Being He is not divisible or composed of parts or multiple substances.

2. *Scripture.* "God is spirit" (Jn 4:24). By contrast, for example, human beings are spirit and matter. In the Incarnation, of course, our Lord became flesh, but the deity of the God-man was always and only Spirit.

3. *Ramifications.* The simplicity of God underscores His self-existence (for there was no prior cause to form a composite being), assures us that God will never be anything other than Spirit, and enables us to worship in spirit; i.e., not in material ways.

L. Sovereignty

1. *Meaning.* The word means principal, chief, supreme. It speaks first of position (God is the chief Being in the universe), then of power (God is supreme in power in the universe). How He exercises that power is revealed in the Scriptures. A sovereign could be a dictator (God is not), or a sovereign could abdicate the use of his powers (God has not). Ultimately God is in complete control of all things, though He may choose to let certain events happen according to natural laws that He has ordained.

2. *Scripture.* God has a plan (Acts 15:18), which is all-inclusive (Eph 1:11), which He controls (Ps. 135:6), which includes but does not involve Him in evil (Prov 16:4), and which ultimately is for the praise of His glory (Eph 1:14).

3. *The problem.* The sovereignty of God seems to contradict the freedom or actual responsibility of man. But even though it may seem to do so, the perfection of sovereignty is clearly taught in the Scriptures, so it must not be denied because of our inability to reconcile it with freedom or responsibility.

Also, if God is sovereign, how can the creation be so filled with evil? Man was created with genuine freedom, but the exercise of that freedom in rebellion against God introduced sin into the human race. Though God was the Designer of the plan, He was in no way involved in the commission of evil either on the part of Satan originally or of Adam subsequently. Even though God hates sin, for reasons not revealed to us, sin is present by His permission. Sin must be within God's eternal plan (or God would not be sovereign) in some way in which He is not the author of it (or God could not be holy).

Sovereignty/freedom forms an antinomy ("a contradiction between two apparently equally valid principles or between inferences correctly drawn from such principles"). Antinomies in the Bible, however, consist only of apparent contradictions, not ultimate ones. One can accept the truths of an antinomy and live with them, accepting by faith what cannot be reconciled; or one can try to harmonize the apparent contradictions in an antinomy, which inevitably leads to overemphasizing one truth to the neglect or even denial of the other. Sovereignty must not obliterate free will, and free will must never dilute sovereignty.

M. Truth

1. *Meaning.* Truth means "agreement to that which is represented" and includes the ideas of veracity, faithfulness, and consistency. To say that God is true is to say, in the most comprehensive sense, that He is consistent with Himself, that He is all that He should be, that He has revealed Himself as He really is, and that He and His revelation are completely reliable.

2. *Scripture.* God is the only true God (Jn 17:3), and thus cannot lie (Tit 1:2) and is always reliable (Rom 3:4; Heb 6:18).

3. *Ramifications.* Because God is true, He can do nothing inconsistent with Himself. His promises can never be broken or unfulfilled (see 2 Tim 2:13), and the Bible, which is His Word, must also be inerrantly true.

N. Unity

1. *Meaning.* Unity means that there is but one God, who is indivisible.

2. *Scripture.* The unity of God was a major revelation in the Old Testament as epitomized in the celebrated Shema (from the first word, "Hear," in Deut 6:4). The verse may be translated in several ways, including these: "The Lord is our God, the Lord is One," which emphasizes the unity of God; or "The Lord is our God, the Lord alone," which stresses the uniqueness of God in contrast to the gods of the heathen. The New Testament, even with its clear revelation of the Trinity, affirms the unity of God (Eph 4:6; 1 Cor 8:6; 1 Tim 2:5). This means that the Persons of the Trinity are not separate essences within the one divine essence. God is One in number and uniqueness.

One important concluding thought about the perfections of God: they describe the only true God who exists. Man creates his own false gods whom he can manipulate and control. Christian people sometimes concoct a perverted or deficient concept of God for the same reason-to be able to manipulate Him or not to have to face up to the true and living God. But the only actual God who exists is the One who is revealed primarily in the Bible and revealed by these attributes or perfections of His being. To be able to know this living and true God requires a miracle of the gracious revelation of Himself. To walk in worship with that living and true God is the privilege of all who know Him.

NOTES

1. L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 60.
2. Gordon H. Clark, "Attributes, the Divine," in Baker's Dictionary of Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960), 78-79.
3. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, 59.
4. A. W. Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy (New York: Harper, 1978), 62-63.
5. Ibid., 63.

Chapter 7: The Names of God

The many names of God in the Scripture provide additional revelation of His character. These are not mere titles assigned by people but, for the most part, His own descriptions of Himself. As such they reveal aspects of His character.

Even when no particular name is used, the occurrence of the phrase "the name of the Lord" reveals something of His character. To call on the name of the Lord was to worship Him (Gen 21:33). To take His name in vain was to dishonor Him (Ex 20:7). Not to follow the requirements

of the Law involved profaning His name (Lev 22:2, 32). Priests performed their service in the name of the Lord (Deut 21:5). His name pledged the continuation of the nation (1 Sam 12:22).

I. Elohim

A. Usage

The term *elohim* occurs in the general sense of deity about 2,570 times in the Old Testament. About 2,310 times it is a name for the true God. The first occurrence is in the first verse of the Bible. It is used in reference to false deities in Gen 35:2, 4; Ex 12:12; 18:11; 23:24.

B. Meaning

The meaning of *elohim* depends on its derivation. Some understand that it comes from a root that means fear and indicates that the deity is to be feared, revered, or worshiped. Others trace it to a root that means strong, indicating a deity of great power. Though not conclusive, the evidence seems to point to the latter derivation signifying, in the case of the true God, that He is the strong One, the mighty Leader, the supreme deity.

C. The Plural Form

Elohim, a plural form, is peculiar to the Old Testament and appears in no other Semitic language. Generally speaking there are three views as to the significance of this plural form.

1. *It is a polytheistic plural*; i.e., the word originally had a polytheistic sense and only later acquired a singular sense. However, the monotheism of the Old Testament was revealed and not developed from polytheism.
2. *It is a trinitarian plural*; i.e., the Triune Godhead is seen, or at least intimated, in the use of this plural form. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, to conclude this necessitates reading New Testament revelation back into the Old Testament. The plural may allow for the subsequent revelation of the Trinity, but that is quite different from saying that the plural indicates Triunity.
3. *It is a majestic plural*. The fact that the noun is consistently used with singular verb forms and with adjectives and pronouns in the singular affirms this. This plural of majesty denotes God's unlimited greatness and supremacy.

D. Relationships of This Name

If this name of God means the Strong One and occurs in a majestic plural, one would expect that it would be used in relation to His greatness and mighty acts.

1. *In relation to His sovereignty*. *Elohim* is used to describe Him as the "God of all the earth" (Isa 54:5), the "God of all flesh" (Jer 32:27), the "God of heaven" (Neh 2:4), and the "God of gods and the Lord of lords" (Deut 10:17).

2. *In relation to His work of Creation.* He is the Elohim who created all things (Gen 1:1; Isa 45:18; Jon 1:9).

3. *In relation to His judging* (Ps 50:6; Ps 58:11).

4. *In relation to His mighty works on behalf of Israel* (Deut 5:23; Deut 8:15; Ps 68:7).

E. Compound Names

1. *El Shaddai.* Though the derivation of this word is uncertain, the most accepted one is that *shaddai* is connected with an Akkadian word that means "mountain." Thus this name of God pictures Him as the Almighty One standing on a mountain. It was the name by which God appeared to the patriarchs to give comfort and confirmation of the covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:1; Gen 28:3; Gen 35:11; Ex 6:3; see also Ps 91:1-2). This name is also often used in connection with the chastening of God's people (Ruth 1:20-21).

2. *El Elyon.* This name, "the Most High God" emphasized God's strength, sovereignty, and supremacy. It was first used by Melchizedek when he blessed Abraham (Gen 14:19), though if Isaiah 14:14 records Satan's attempt to usurp the supremacy of God, this would be a prior use. After these early occurrences, its use recedes until about 1000 B.C., where it appears again in poetic and exilic literature (Ps 9:2; Dan 7:18, 22, 25, 27).

3. *El Olam.* This name means "the Everlasting God," from an original form meaning "the God of eternity" (Gen 21:33). It emphasizes God's unchangeableness (Ps 100:5; Ps 103:17) and is connected with His inexhaustible strength (Isa 40:28).

4. *El Roi,* "God who sees" (Gen 16:13). Hagar gave this name to God when He spoke to her before Ishmael's birth.

II. Yahweh

The second basic name for God is the personal one, YHWH, the Lord, or Yahweh. It is the most frequently used name, occurring about 5,321 times in the Old Testament.

A. Origin of the Word

The name apparently comes from the root *hawa*, which signifies either existence (as of a tree trunk where it falls, Eccl 11:3) or development (as in Neh 6:6). Perhaps both ideas can be combined in the significance of God's name by saying that it denotes Him as the active, self-existent One.

B. Revelation of the Name

This name was used by Eve (Gen 4:1), people in the days of Seth (Gen 4:26), Noah (Gen 9:26), and Abraham (Gen 12:8; Gen 15:2, 8). But it was to Moses that the deep significance of the name was revealed. God said that even though He appeared to the patriarchs He was not known to them by His name Yahweh (Ex 6:3). The meaning of the name was not known in its fullest and deepest sense. This revelation came to Moses at the burning bush when God identified Himself as "I AM WHO I AM" (Ex 3:14), the principal idea being that God was present with the people of Israel.

C. Sacredness of the Name

Since Yahweh was God's personal name by which He was known to Israel, in post-exilic times it began to be considered so sacred that it was not pronounced. Instead the term *Adonai* was usually substituted, and by the sixth to seventh centuries A.D. the vowels of *Adonai* were combined with the consonants YHWH to remind the synagogue reader to pronounce the sacred name as *Adonai*. From this came the artificial word *Jehovah*. But all of this underscores the awe in which the name was held.

D. Significance of the Name

Several facets seem to be included in the significance of the name *Yahweh*.

1. *It emphasizes God's changeless self-existence.* This may be supported by the etymology and from the Lord's use of Ex 3:14 in Jn 8:58 to state His claim to absolute eternal existence.

2. *It assures God's presence with His people.* See Ex 3:12.

3. *It is connected with God's power to work on behalf of His people and to keep His covenant with them, which was illustrated and confirmed by His work in their deliverance from Egypt* (Ex 6:6).

E. Compounds with the Name

1. *Yahweh Jireh*, "the Lord Will Provide" (Gen 22:14). After the Angel of the Lord pointed to a ram to use as a substitute for Isaac, Abraham named the place "the Lord Will Provide."

2. *Yahweh Nissi*, "the Lord is My Banner" (Ex 17:15). After the defeat of the Amalekites, Moses erected an altar and called it *YahwehNissi*.

3. *Yahweh Shalom*, "the Lord is Peace" (Jud 6:24).

4. *Yahweh Sabbaoth*, "the Lord of hosts" (1 Sam 1:3). This is a military figure that pictures *Yahweh* as the Commander of the angelic armies of heaven as well as the armies of Israel (1 Sam 17:45). The title reveals the sovereignty and omnipotence of God and was used often by the prophets (Isaiah and Jeremiah) to remind the people during times of national crisis that God was their Leader and Protector.

5. *Yahweh Maccaddeshcem*, "the Lord who sanctifies you" (Ex 31:13).

6. *Yahweh Roi*, "the Lord is my shepherd" (Ps 23:1).

7. *Yahweh Tsidkenu*, "the Lord our righteousness" (Jer 23:6).

8. *Yahweh Shammah*, "the Lord is there" (Ezk 48:35).

9. *Yahweh Elohim Israel* "the Lord, the God of Israel" (Jud 5:3; Isa 17:6).

Strictly speaking, these compounds are not additional names of God, but designations or titles that often grew out of commemorative events. However, they do reveal additional facets of the character of God.

III. Adonai

Like *Elohim*, *Adonai* is a plural of majesty. The singular means lord, master, owner (Gen 19:2; Gen 40:1; 1 Sam 1:15). It is used, as might be expected, of the relationship between men (like master and slave, Ex 21:1-6). When used of God's relationship to men, it conveys the idea of His absolute authority. Joshua recognized the authority of the Captain of the Lord's hosts (Josh 5:14), and Isaiah submitted to the authority of the Lord, his Master (Isa 6:8-11). The New Testament equivalent is *kurios*, "lord."

IV. God (Theos)

A. Usage

Theos is the most frequent designation of God in the New Testament and the most common translation in the Septuagint for *Elohim*. It almost always refers to the one true God, though sometimes it is used of the gods of paganism in the reported words of pagans or by Christians repudiating these false gods (Acts 12:22; Acts 14:11; Acts 17:23; Acts 19:26-27; 1 Cor 8:5; 2 Thess 2:4). It also refers to the devil (2 Cor 4:4) and sensuality (Phil 3:19). Most importantly Jesus Christ is designated as *Theos* (though some of the passages are disputed). Notice Rom 9:5; Jn 1:1, Jn 18; 20:28; and Tit 2:13.

B. Teaching

The uses of the word reveal a number of important truths about the true God.

1. *He is the only one true God* (Mt 23:9; Rom 3:30; 1 Cor 8:4, 6; Gal 3:20; 1 Tim 2:5; Jas 2:19). This fundamental truth of Judaism, the unity of God, was affirmed by Christ and the early church.

2. *He is unique*. He is the only God (1 Tim 1:17), the only true God (Jn 17:3), the only holy One (Rev 15:4), and the only wise One (Rom 16:27). Therefore, believers can have no other gods beside the one true God (Mt 6:24).

3. *He is transcendent*. God is the Creator, Sustainer, and Lord of the universe and Planner of the ages (Acts 17:24; Heb 3:4; Rev 10:6).

4. *He is Savior* (1 Tim 1:1; 1 Tim 2:3; 1 Tim 4:10; Tit 1:3; Tit 2:13; Tit 3:4). He sent His Son to be the Redeemer (Jn 3:16) and delivered Him to death for us (Rom 8:32).

C. Christ as God

Christ, the Son of God, is called God in several New Testament texts.

1. *In John*. The Johannine teaching includes the following passages: Jn 1:1, 18, where some manuscripts read "the only begotten God," and that unusual reading may be regarded as grounds

for accepting its authenticity; Jn 20:28, where Thomas used both *kurios* and *theos* of Jesus; and 1 Jn 5:20.

2. *In Paul.* Tit 2:13 seems to be the clearest designation of Christ as God in Paul's writings since Rom 9:5 is questioned by some. However, it is linguistically proper and contextually preferable to ascribe the phrase "God blessed forever" to Christ.

V. Lord (*Kurios*)

A. Usage

The majority of the 717 occurrences of *kurios* in the New Testament are by Luke (210) and Paul (275) since they wrote to people of Greek culture and language.

B. Meaning

The word emphasizes authority and supremacy. It can mean sir (John 4:11), owner (Lk 19:33), or master (Col 3:22), or it can refer to idols (1 Cor 8:5) or husbands (1 Pet 3:6). When used of God as *kurios*, it "expresses particularly His creatorship, His power revealed in history, and His just dominion over the universe . . ."¹

C. Christ as *Kurios*

During His earthly life Jesus was addressed as Lord, meaning Rabbi or Sir (Mt 8:6). Thomas ascribed full deity to Him when he declared, "My Lord and my God" (Jn 20:28). Christ's resurrection and exaltation placed Him as Lord of the universe (Acts 2:36; Phil 2:11). But "to an early Christian accustomed to reading the OT, the word 'Lord,' when used of Jesus, would suggest His identification with the God of the OT."² This means, in relation to a verse like Rom 10:9, that "any Jew who publicly confessed that Jesus of Nazareth was 'Lord,' would be understood to ascribe the divine nature and attributes to Him."³ Thus the essence of the Christian faith was to acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as the *Yahweh* of the Old Testament.

VI. Master (*Despotes*)

A. Meaning

This word connotes the idea of ownership, whereas *kurios* emphasizes authority and supremacy.

B. Usage

God is addressed in prayer as *Despot* by Simeon (Lk 2:29), Peter and those with him (Acts 4:24), and the martyrs in heaven (Rev 6:10).

Twice Christ is called *Despot* (2 Pet 2:1; Jude 4).

VII. Father

One of the distinctive New Testament revelations is that of God as Father of individuals. Whereas the word "Father" is used of God only fifteen times in the Old Testament, it occurs 245 times of

God in the New. As Father, He gives His children grace and peace (a regular salutation in the Epistles; e.g., Eph 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1), good gifts (Jas 1:17), and even commandments (2 Jn 4). We also address Him as Father in prayer (Eph 2:18; 1 Thess 3:11).

To sum up: a name in Bible times was more than an identification; it was descriptive of its bearer, often revealing some characteristic of a person. "O Lord, our Lord, How majestic is Thy name in all the earth" (Ps 8:1, 9).

NOTES

1. -H. Bietenhard, "Lord," in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, ed. Cohn Brown, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 2:514.
2. -S. E. Johnson, "Lord (Christ)," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon, 1976), 3:151.
3. -William G. T. Shedd, Romans (New York: Scribner, 1879), 318.

Chapter 8: The Triunity of God

Trinity is, of course, not a biblical word. Neither are triunity, trine, trinal, subsistence, nor essence. Yet we employ them, and often helpfully, in trying to express this doctrine that is so fraught with difficulties. Furthermore, this is a doctrine that is not explicit in the New Testament even though it is often said that it is implicit in the Old and explicit in the New. But explicit means "characterized by full, clear expression," an adjective hard to apply to this doctrine. Nevertheless, the doctrine grows out of the Scriptures, so it is a biblical teaching.

I. The Contribution of the Old Testament

Unquestionably the Old Testament emphasizes the unity of God. However, there are clear suggestions that there are persons in the Godhead. Therefore, one might say that the Old Testament contains intimations that allow for the later revelation of the triunity of God. What are these intimations?

A. The Unity of God

The celebrated Shema in Deut 6:4, which became Judaism's basic confession of faith, teaches the unity of God. It may be translated "The Lord our God is one Lord," or "The Lord our God, the Lord is One," or "The Lord is our God, the Lord is One," or "the Lord is our God, the Lord alone." This last translation stresses the uniqueness of God more than unity, but it implies oneness by ruling out polytheism. Other passages like Ex 20:3; Deut 4:35; Deut 32:29; Isa 45:14; and Isa 46:9 insist on Israel's loyalty to the one God.

B. Plural Words

We have already suggested that the plural name for God, Elohim, denotes God's unlimited greatness and supremacy. To conclude plurality of persons from the name itself is dubious. However, when God speaks of Himself with plural pronouns (Gen 1:26; Gen 3:22; Gen 11:7; Isa

6:8) and plural verbs (Gen 1:26; Gen 11:7), it does seem to indicate distinctions of persons, though only plurality, not specifically Trinity.

C. The Angel of Yahweh

Though this designation may refer to any of God's angels (1 Kgs 19:7; cf. 1 Kgs 19:5), sometimes that Angel is referred to as God, yet distinguished from Him (Gen 16:7-13; Gen 18:1-21; Gen 19:1-28; Mal 3:1). This points to personal distinctions within the Godhead. Since the Angel is called God, He could hardly be only a prophet, functioning in pre-prophetic times as the prophets did in later times (as Edmond Jacob suggests in *Theology of the Old Testament*).¹

D. Distinction of Persons

Some passages apparently distinguish persons within the Godhead.

1. *The Lord is distinguished from the Lord* (Gen 19:24; Hos 1:7).
2. *The Redeemer (who must be divine) is distinguished from the Lord* (Isa 59:20)
3. *The Spirit is distinguished from the Lord* (Isa 48:16; Isa 59:21; Isa 63:9-10). In these verses the Spirit is personal and active.

E. The Wisdom of God (?)

Many theologies (Berkhof, Payne, Thiessen) see the personification of wisdom in Prov 8:12-31 as referring to Christ and thus an Old Testament indication of the existence of the Trinity. However, it seems better to understand the passage not as an adumbration of Christ but as describing the eternal character of wisdom as an attribute of God.²

How shall we evaluate the Old Testament contribution to this doctrine? Berkhof concludes that there is "clear anticipation"³ of the fuller revelation in the New Testament, but its use of the word "clear" may push this into an overstatement. More accurate is Payne's conclusion that the Old Testament contains "genuine suggestions of the Persons that make up the Godhead."⁴ We might also put it this way: the doctrine exists only in seminal form in the Old Testament. It is questionable whether, without the flowering of the doctrine in the New Testament, we would know solely from the Old Testament what those seeds were.

II. The Contribution of the New Testament

Though the New Testament contains no explicit statement of the doctrine of the triunity of God (since "these three are one" in 1 Jn 5:7 is apparently not a part of the genuine text of Scripture), it does contain a great deal of evidence. That evidence lies along two paths: One insists that there is only one true God, and the other presents a Man Jesus and the Holy Spirit who both claim to be God. To emphasize the oneness while disregarding the threeness ends in unitarianism. To emphasize the threeness while disregarding the oneness leads to tritheism (as in Mormonism). To accept both leads to the doctrine of the triunity of God.

A. Evidence for Oneness

Like the Old, the New Testament also insists that there is only one true God. Passages like 1 Cor 8:4-6; Eph 4:3-6; and Jas 2:19 are clear.

B. Evidence for Threeness

1. *The Father is recognized as God.* No debate exists here, and a number of passages teach this (Jn 6:27; 1 Pet 1:2).

2. *Jesus Christ is recognized as God.* He Himself claimed attributes that only God possesses, like omniscience (Mt 9:4), omnipotence (Mt 28:18), omnipresence (Mt 28:20). He did things that only God can do (and the people of His day acknowledged this, though sometimes reluctantly), like forgiving sins (Mk 2:1-12) and raising the dead (Jn 12:9). Further, the New Testament assigns other works that only God can perform to Christ, like upholding all things (Col 1:17), creation (Jn 1:3), and future judging of all (Jn 5:27).

The last phrase of Jn 1:1 correlates true and full deity with the Word (Christ). The phrase is best translated "the Word was God." Consistent exegesis forbids the Jehovah's Witnesses' translation "the Word was a god." The word "God" does not have an article, and if it is to be understood as indefinite ("a god") this would be the only time in John's Gospel that this form was used, making it highly improbable on grammatical grounds that it is indefinite here. John could not have chosen a more precise way of expressing the truths that the Word was God and yet was distinct from the Father.

3. *The Holy Spirit is recognized as God.* He is called God (Acts 5:3-4), He possesses attributes that only God has, like omniscience (1 Cor 2:10) and omnipresence (1 Cor 6:19), and He regenerates people (Jn 3:5-6, 8), an exclusive work of God.

C. Evidence for Triunity

Mt 28:19 best states both the oneness and threeness by associating equally the three Persons and uniting them in one singular name. Other passages like Mt 3:16-17 and 2 Cor 13:14 associate equally the three persons but do not contain the strong emphasis on unity as does Mt 28:19.

III. Some Considerations for a Definition

A definition of the Trinity is not easy to construct. Some are done by stating several propositions. Others err on the side either of oneness or threeness. One of the best is Warfield's: "There is one only and true God, but in the unity of the Godhead there are three coeternal and coequal Persons, the same in substance but distinct in subsistence."⁵ The word "Persons" might be misleading as if there were three individuals in the Godhead, but what other word would suffice? The word "substance" might be too materialistic; some would prefer to use the word "essence." Many will not know the meaning of subsistence, but a dictionary can remedy that ("necessary existence").

Positively, the definition clearly asserts both oneness and threeness and is careful to maintain the equality and eternality of the Three. Even if the word "person" is not the best, it does guard against modalism, and, of course, the phrase "the same in substance" (or perhaps better, essence)

protects against tritheism. The whole undivided essence of God belongs equally to each of the three persons.

Jn 10:30: "I and the Father are one," beautifully states this balance between the diversity of the persons and the unity of the essence. "I and the Father" clearly distinguishes two persons, and the verb, "We are," is also plural. "One" is neuter; that is, one in nature or essence, but not one person (which would require masculine form). Thus the Lord distinguished Himself from the Father and yet claimed unity and equality with the Father.

Traditionally the concept of the Trinity has been viewed from (a) an ontological perspective and (b) an economical or administrative one. The ontological Trinity focuses on the personal operations of the Persons or the *opera ad intra* (works within), or personal properties by which the Persons are distinguished. It has to do with generation (*filiation* or begetting) and procession, which attempts to indicate a logical order within the Trinity but does not imply in any way inequality, priority of time, or degrees of dignity. Generation and procession occur within the divine Being and carry with them no thought of subordination of essence. Thus, viewed ontologically, it may be said of the Persons of the Trinity: (1) The Father begets the Son and is He from whom the Holy Spirit proceeds, though the Father is neither begotten nor does He proceed. (2) The Son is begotten and is He from whom the Holy Spirit proceeds, but He neither begets nor proceeds. (3) The Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, but He neither begets nor is He the One from whom any proceed.

I agree with Buswell that generation is not an exegetically based doctrine.⁶ The concept it tries to convey, however, is not unscriptural, and certainly the doctrine of sonship is scriptural. The phrase "eternal generation" is simply an attempt to describe the Father-Son relationship in the Trinity and, by using the word "eternal," protect it from any idea of inequality or temporality. But whether or not one chooses to use the idea of eternal generation, the personal and eternal and coequal relation of the Father and Son must be affirmed. Eternal generation should not be based on Ps 2:7.

Procession seems to be more of a scriptural concept based on Jn 15:26. Berkhof defines it as "that eternal and necessary act of the First and Second Persons of the Trinity whereby They, within the divine Being, become the ground of the personal subsistence of the Holy Spirit, and put the Third Person in possession of the whole divine essence, without any division, alienation, or change."⁷ The idea of eternal procession has to lean hard on the present tense of the word "proceeds" in Jn 15:26, an emphasis that is in my judgment misplaced. The verse does not really seem to relate anything about the mutual eternal relationships within the Trinity but rather what the Spirit would do to continue the work of the Lord Jesus after Christ's ascension.

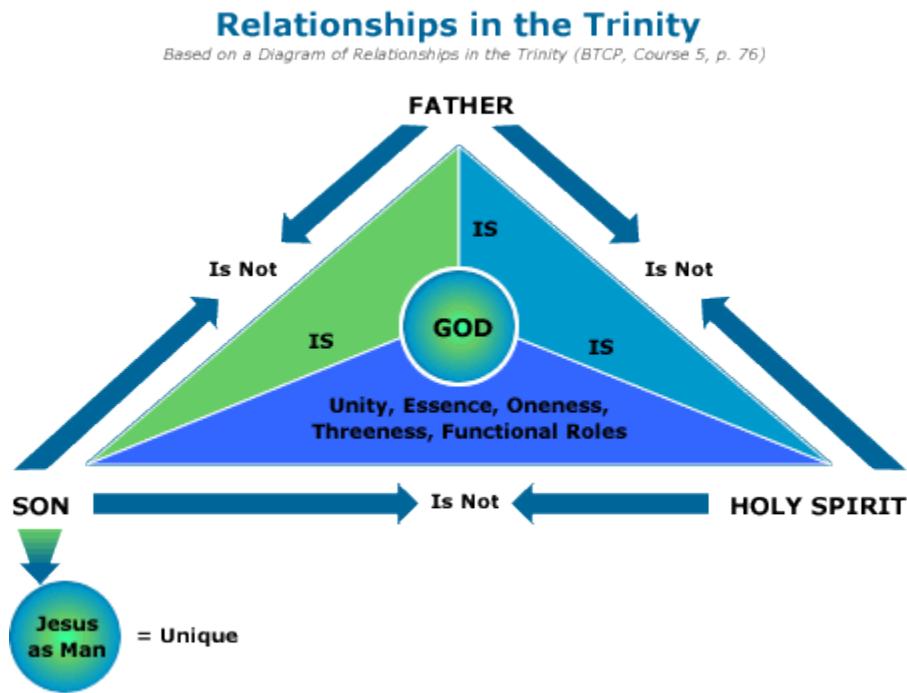
The concept of the economical Trinity concerns administration, management, actions of the persons, or the *opera ad extra* ("works outside," that is, on the creation and its creatures). For the Father this includes the works of electing (1 Pet 1:2), loving the world (Jn 3:16), and giving good gifts (Jas 1:17). For the Son it emphasizes His suffering (Mk 8:31), redeeming (1 Pet 1:18), and upholding all things (Heb 1:3). For the Spirit it focuses on His particular works of regenerating (Tit 3:5), energizing (Acts 1:8), and sanctifying (Gal 5:22-23).

Even with all the discussion and delineation that we attempt in relation to the Trinity, we must acknowledge that it is in the final analysis a mystery. We accept all the data as truth even though they go beyond our understanding.

IV. Illustration of the Trinity

No illustration can possibly capture all that is involved in the biblical revelation of the Trinity. Most are at best only parallels of a "three-in-one" idea.

A common diagram attempts to picture the Godhead as one, yet showing each Person as God and also distinct.



Water may serve as a "three-in-one" illustration since it retains its chemical activity whether in solid, gas, or liquid state. There is also a triple point for water, a condition under which ice, steam, and liquid water can coexist in equilibrium. All are water, yet distinct from each other.

The sun, its light, and its power may help illustrate the Trinity.⁸ No one has actually seen the sun, just as no one has seen the Father. Yet we learn a great deal about the sun by studying the sunlight, just as we learn about the Father through Jesus Christ the Son who is the radiance of His glory (Heb 1:3). We see the power of the sun as it is involved in the growth of seeds and trees and plants, and when asked what makes things grow, we say the sun does. The Holy Spirit is like the power of the sun, and He is God.

Whatever usefulness or limitations illustrations have, we say again that we are faced with a mystery.

V. A Survey of the History of the Doctrine

A. Monarchianism

The early church fathers did not formulate any clear statement concerning the Trinity. Some were unclear about the Logos, and most were unconcerned about giving attention to the Spirit except

for His work in the lives of believers. In answer to Praxeus, Tertullian (ca. 165-220) asserted the threeness aspect of God, being the first to use the word Trinity. However, he did not have a full and accurate understanding of the Trinity, his views being tinged with subordinationism.

Tertullian was battling Monarchians who opted for the unity of God and denied trinitarianism. Monarchianism existed in two forms.

1. *Dynamic Monarchianism* (or adoptionism). This was first expounded by Theodosius of Byzantium about 210, and it viewed Jesus as a man who was given special power by the Holy Spirit at His baptism.

2. *Modalistic Monarchianism*. This was more influential, attempting not only to maintain the unity of God but also the full deity of Christ by asserting that the Father became incarnated in the Son. In the West it was known as Patripassianism since the incarnated Father also suffered in the Son; and in the East as Sabellianism after its most famous representative who taught that the Persons in the Godhead were modes in which God manifested Himself. Though Sabellius used the word "Person" he meant it as a role or manifestation of the one divine essence.

B. Arianism

Arius (ca. 250-336), an antitrinitarian presbyter of Alexandria, distinguished the one eternal God from the Son who was generated by the Father and who thus had a beginning. He also taught that the Holy Spirit was the first thing created by the Son, since all things were made by the Son. He found scriptural support for his views in passages that seem to picture the Son as inferior to the Father (Mt 28:18; Mk 13:32; 1 Cor 15:28).

Arius was opposed by Athanasius (ca. 296-373) who, while maintaining the unity of God, distinguished three essential natures in God and insisted that the Son was of the same substance as the Father. He taught that the Son was generated, but that this was an eternal and internal act of God, in contrast to Arius who rejected eternal generation.

When the Council of Nicaea convened to attempt to settle the dispute, Athanasius and his followers wanted it stated that the Son was of the same substance (*homousios*) as the Father, while a large group of moderates suggested that the word *omoiosios* ("of similar substance") be substituted. Thorough-going Arians said that the Son was of a different substance (*heterousios*). Emperor Constantine finally sided with the Athanasian party, resulting in the clear and unequivocal statement of the Nicene Creed that Christ was of the same substance with the Father (*homousios*).

Concerning the Holy Spirit the Creed merely said, "I believe in the Holy Spirit." However, Athanasius in his own teaching maintained that the Spirit, like the Son, was of the same essence as the Father. In the aftermath of the Council of Nicaea, many documents were circulated in the fourth century, and the Arian party was popular partly because of the influence of Constantius, Constantine's successor, who was fond of Arius.

In the second half of the fourth century, three theologians from the province of Cappadocia in eastern Asia Minor gave definitive shape to the doctrine of the Trinity and defeated Arianism. They were Basil of Caesarea, his brother Gregory of Nyssa, and Basil's close friend Gregory of Nazianzus. They helped clarify the vocabulary concerning the Trinity by using *ousia* for the one essence of the Godhead and *hypostasis* for the Persons. Their emphasis on the three essential

natures in the one God freed the Nicene Creed from suspicions of Sabellianism in the eyes of the moderates. They also vigorously maintained the *homoousios* of the Holy Spirit.

C. The Council of Constantinople (381)

In 373 a group led by Eustath called the Pneumatomachians ("fighters against the Spirit") regarded both the Son and the Spirit merely of like substance with the Father (some moderates did affirm the consubstantiality of the Son). The controversy grew to such proportions that Emperor Theodosius called a council at Constantinople consisting of 150 orthodox bishops who represented the Eastern church. Under the guidance of Gregory of Nazianzus the council formulated this statement concerning the Holy Spirit: "And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Life-giving, who proceeds from the Father, who is to be glorified with the Father and the Son, and who speaks through the prophets." Though the creed avoided the term "of the same substance" that had been used of Christ in the Nicene Creed, it described the work of the Spirit in terms that could not be predicated of any created being. Thus it settled the question of the deity of the Spirit, though it was less than a fully satisfactory statement since it did not use *omoousios* of the Spirit and did not define the relationship of the Spirit to the other two Persons.

D. Augustine (354-430)

1. *De Trinitate*. The statement of the Trinity in the Western church reached a final formulation in this work by Augustine. In this treatise he stated that each of the three Persons of the Trinity possesses the entire essence and that all are interdependent on the others. Though he was dissatisfied with the word "persons" to denote the three essential natures, he used it "in order not to be silent." He also taught that the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son.

2. *The Pelagian controversy (431)*. Augustine also laid great stress on efficacious grace as the work of the Spirit. This profoundly influenced not only his doctrine of man and of sin but also his doctrine of the Spirit.

E. The Synod of Toledo (589)

Although Western theologians generally held to the procession of the Holy Spirit from both the Father and Son, this was not formalized until the *filioque* ("and Son") clause was added to the Constantinople Creed at the Synod of Toledo. The Eastern church never accepted this, declaring it to be heresy, splitting the two groups even to today.

Photius, patriarch of Constantinople and adversary of Pope Nicholas of Rome, used the *filioque* clause as part of his effort to discredit Nicholas's claims as universal bishop. He charged the Western church with introducing doctrinal innovations, claiming that *filioque* had falsified the holy creed of Constantinople.

F. Reformation Teaching on the Trinity

The reformers and all Reformation Confessions express the doctrine of the Trinity in the orthodox fashion formulated in the early church (see Calvin Institutes 1.13, for example). Calvin seemed to find the idea of the eternal generation of the Son difficult, if not useless, though he did not deny it.

Luther accepted the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity because he felt it was taught in the Scriptures though he felt that faith alone could comprehend it. The Augsburg Confession (1530) clearly declares "that there is one divine essence which is called and is God . . . yet there are three Persons of the same essence and power, who also are coeternal, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost" (111.7). Likewise the Westminster Confession (1647) states: "In the unity of the Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost: the Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son" (II. 3).

Socinianism in the sixteenth century denied the preexistence of the Son, considering Him only a man. It taught that there was only one divine essence containing only one Person. These views influenced English Unitarianism and English Deism. Many Unitarians were not Deists, but all Deists had a unitarian concept of God. The heretical lineage was Arianism to Socinianism to Unitarianism to Deism. American Unitarianism was a direct descendant of English Unitarianism.

G. Modern Views

The orthodox view of the Trinity was and is held by many in the modern period. However, there have been many impugners. Kant and Hegel opposed the orthodox teaching and held to adoptionism or impersonal pantheism. Swedenborg and Schleiermacher echoed Sabellianism. Many feel that Barth's concept was modalistic.⁹ Others defend him as orthodox because he rejected Sabellianism and used his concept of "modes of being" in God in place of the concept of persons. Paul Tillich felt that the doctrine of the Trinity was produced by man to meet his own needs. Tillich in reality did not believe there was even one person in the Godhead, let alone three.

Jehovah's Witnesses espouse an Arian-like Christology by denying the eternality of the Son and the doctrine of the Trinity. They, like Arius, see the Logos as an intermediate being between the Creator and creation.

VI. Some Practical Ramifications

The richness of the concept of the Trinity overflows into several areas of theology.

The doctrine of redemption is an obvious example, for all persons of the Godhead are involved in that great work (Jn 3:6, 16; Rev 13:8).

The doctrine of revelation serves as another example, the Son and Spirit both being involved in communicating God's truth (Jn 1:18; 16:13).

Fellowship and love within the Godhead is only possible in a trinitarian concept of God, and that fellowship is akin to the believer's fellowship with Christ (Jn 14:17).

Priority without inferiority as seen in the Trinity is the basis for proper relationships between men and women (1 Cor 11:3).

Prayer is practiced in a trinitarian way. Though we may address any Person of the Trinity, ordinarily, according to the biblical precedent, we address the Father in the name of Christ as the Spirit directs us (Jn 14:14; Eph 1:6; 2:18; 6:18).

NOTES

1. -Edmund Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 75-77.
2. -See Louis Goldberg, "Wisdom," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 1:283.
3. -L. Berkhof, *-Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 86.
4. -J. Barton Payne, in *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 166.
5. -B. B. Warfield, "Trinity," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1930), 5:3012.
6. -J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), I:105-12.
7. -Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 97.
8. -The Pilgrim Bible (New York: Oxford, 1948), ix-x.
9. -Leonard Hodgson, *The Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Nisbet, 1955), 229.

Section III—The Bible: God-Breathed

Chapter 9: Special Revelation

In the preceding section we examined the matter of general revelation—how God reveals Himself to all people in general. If the total revelation from God may be labeled The Book of Revelation, volume 1 contains general revelation. Volume 2, then, contains special revelation, which, by contrast, does not necessarily come to all people.

I. The Avenues of Special Revelation

A. The Lot

Although today we would not highly regard the use of the lot, it did serve sometimes to communicate the mind of God to man (Prov 16:33; Acts 1:21-26).

B. The Urim and Thummim

The breastplate that the high priest wore in the Old Testament was a square piece of beautiful material that was folded in half and open at the top like a pouch. It was adorned with twelve precious stones, on which were engraved the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Urim and Thummim possibly were two precious stones placed inside the pouch that were used, like the lot, to determine God's will (Ex 28:30; Num 27:21; Deut 33:8; 1 Sam 28:6; Ezra 2:63).

C. Dreams

God apparently used dreams to communicate many times during the Old Testament period, and He will do so again at the time of the second coming of Christ (Gen 20:3, 6; Gen 31:11-13, 24; 40-41; Joel 2:28). Nonbelievers as well as believers experienced God-given dreams (Gen 20:3; Gen 31:24). Though a common experience, dreams were used by God in this special way to reveal truth.

D. Visions

In a vision the emphasis seems to be on what is heard, whereas in a dream, it is on what is seen. Also the human being involved seems to be more active in receiving a vision (Isa 1:1; Isa 6:1; Ezk 1:3).

E. Theophanies

Before the Incarnation, theophanies were associated with the appearance of the Angel of the Lord, who communicated the divine message to people (Gen 16:7-14; Ex 3:2; 2 Sam 24:16; Zech 1:12).

F. Angels

God also uses created angels to carry His message to people (Dan 9:20-21; Lk 2:10-11; Rev 1:1). (Notice Rev 19:17 where God will use an angel to communicate to birds!)

G. The Prophets

Old Testament prophets brought God's message to mankind (2 Sam 23:2; Zech 1:1), as did New Testament prophets (Eph 3:5). They spoke with authority because they were communicating the Word of the Lord. A preacher or teacher today does not qualify as a prophet since he proclaims or explains God's Word, previously given and written.

H. Events

God's activity in history also constitutes a channel of revelation. Delivering the people of Israel from Egypt revealed the righteous acts of the Lord, according to Mic 6:5. Acts of judgment reveal who God is (Ezk 25:7). And, of course, the incarnation of Christ exegested God (Jn 1:14). It does not go without saying today that these events have to be historical and factual in order also to be communicative; for today some are putting existential faith before the historical. In other words, they are attempting to create revelation apart from historical facts, or finding meaning in historical facts while denying that the events actually happened. Such existential historiography was never a part of the framework of the biblical writers.

Not only must the events be historical, but they also need to be interpreted through divine inspiration if we are to understand accurately their meaning. For example, many people were crucified; how do we know that the crucifixion of one Jesus of Nazareth paid for the sins of the world? The Word of special revelation clarifies and correctly interprets the obscurity of the meaning of events.

I. Jesus Christ

Undebatably the incarnation of Jesus Christ was a major avenue of special revelation. He exegested the Father (Jn 1:14), revealing the nature of God (Jn 14:9), the power of God (Jn 3:2), the wisdom of God (Jn 7:46), the glory of God (Jn 1:14), the life of God (1 Jn 1:1-3), and the love of God (Rom 5:8). Our Lord did all this by both His acts (Jn 2:11) and His words (Mt 16:17).

J. The Bible

Actually the Bible serves as the most inclusive of all the avenues of special revelation, for it encompasses the record of many aspects of the other avenues. Though God undoubtedly gave other visions, dreams, and prophetic messages that were not recorded in the Bible, we know no details of them. Too, all that we know about the life of Christ appears in the Bible, though, of course, not all that He did or said was recorded in the Scriptures (Jn 21:25). But the Bible is not simply the record of these other revelations from God; it also contains additional truth not revealed, for example, through the prophets or even during the earthly life of Christ. So the Bible, then, is both the record of aspects of special revelation and revelation itself.

The revelation in the Bible is not only inclusive yet partial; it is also accurate (Jn 17:17), progressive (Heb 1:1), and purposeful (2 Tim 3:15-17).

Two approaches exist as to the credibility of the scriptural revelation. Fideists insist that the Scripture and the revelation it contains is self-authenticating, that is, autopistic. The infallibility of the Bible must be presupposed and can be because the Scripture says it is inspired and the Spirit accredits it. Empiricists, on the other hand, stress the intrinsic credibility of the revelation of the Bible as being worthy of belief, that is, axiopistic. The Bible's claim to authority is not in itself proof of its authority; rather there exist factual, historical evidences that constitute the Bible's credentials and validate the truth of its message. My feeling is that there is truth in both approaches; both can and should be used.

II. Some Contemporary Views of Revelation

All contemporary views concerning revelation hold several features in common. (1) They are subjective in orientation. Revelation is discovered in experience or in the interpreter's understanding of the experiences of others. (2) Without an objective standard or criteria they are unstable, for the understanding of revelation depends on the interpreter's concept. (3) Because of (1) and (2), contemporary views of revelation are sub-Christian, for they elevate the human mind over the material God has revealed.

A. Revelation as Divine Activity

This view maintains that revelation consists of the mighty acts of God in history. Of course, there is truth in this, for God did reveal Himself in historical acts. Conservatives believe that those acts were factual and, in some cases, miraculous. Liberals deny the actual historicity of those acts. However, both conservatives and liberals leave the interpretation of those acts to the genius of the interpreter. Those who deny the historical reality of these acts try to affirm that these were nevertheless the acts of God with significant meanings assigned to them by the interpreter. Revelation, then, may be little more than a psychological event in the mind of the interpreter.

B. Revelation as Personal Encounter

In this school of thought revelation does not consist of information that is communicated but in a person-to-person encounter. Therefore, God may only be known as subject, never as object, for the latter would necessitate propositions about Him. Revelation does not provide us with information about God, but with God Himself in a personal encounter. But revelation about God (propositions) are necessary for the revelation of God (encounter). Facts are essential to the encounter. Revelation as encounter cuts off revelation to some degree from history, and it certainly is existentially based. An example is this: "In the Bible, God's self-revelation is personal rather than propositional. That is to say, ultimately revelation is in relationship, 'confrontation,' communion, rather than by the communication of facts."¹

Traditionally, revelation and the Bible have been inseparable. Contemporary views have driven a wedge between the Bible and revelation with devastating results. Now revelation need no longer be found only in the Bible, but in the mighty acts of God and in personal encounter. The existential experience has replaced objective truth as the Word of God.

To sum up: Special revelation as now recorded in the Bible furnishes the content of God's message to the world. Inspiration concerns the method God employed to actually record that content in the Scriptures. Inerrancy relates to the accuracy of that recording.

To these matters we now turn.

NOTE

1. -C. F. D. Moule, "Revelation," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon, 1976), 4:55.

Chapter 10: The Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration

Although those holding many theological viewpoints would be willing to say the Bible is inspired, one finds little uniformity as to what is meant by inspiration. Some focus it on the writers; others, on the writings; still others, on the readers. Some relate it to the general message of the Bible; others, to the thoughts; still others, to the words. Some include inerrancy; many don't.

These differences call for precision in stating the biblical doctrine. Formerly all that was necessary to affirm one's belief in full inspiration was the statement, "I believe in the inspiration of the Bible." But when some did not extend inspiration to the words of the text it became necessary to say, "I believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible." To counter the teaching that not all parts of the Bible were inspired, one had to say, "I believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible." Then because some did not want to ascribe total accuracy to the Bible, it was necessary to say, "I believe in the verbal, plenary, infallible, inerrant inspiration of the Bible." But then "infallible" and "inerrant" began to be limited to matters of faith only rather than also embracing all that the Bible records (including historical facts, genealogies, accounts of Creation, etc.), so it became necessary to add the concept of "unlimited inerrancy." Each addition to the basic statement arose because of an erroneous teaching.

I. The Biblical Data Concerning Inspiration

The doctrine of inspiration is not something theologians have forced on the Bible. Rather it is a teaching of the Bible itself, a conclusion derived from the data contained in it. And, whatever one may think of the Bible, it, like any other witness, has the right to testify on its own behalf. Some take exception to the validity of such evidence on the grounds that it is self-testimony and therefore may not be true. Granted, self-testimony may or may not be true, but it needs to be heard.

Here is the relevant data the Bible presents and confronts us with.

A. 2 Tim 3:16

In this verse the apostle Paul declared that all Scripture is inspired of God and is profitable for a number of things. Notice three important claims in this statement.

1. All Scripture, the entire Bible, is inspired and profitable. This is the extent of inspiration. The New Testament uses this word "Scripture" fifty-one times and always in reference to some part of the Bible. Sometimes it refers to the entire Old Testament (Lk 24:45; Jn 10:35); sometimes, to a

particular Old Testament passage (Lk 4:21); sometimes, to a particular New Testament passage (1 Tim 5:18); and sometimes to a larger portion of the New Testament (2 Pet 3:16, referring to Paul's writings).

These last two references, 1 Tim 5:18 and 2 Pet 3:16, carry a great deal of importance. In 1 Timothy 5:18 Paul combined an Old and a New Testament reference and designated them both as Scripture. The Old Testament quotation is from Deut 25:4, and the New Testament one is Lk 10:7 (although that sentiment is found in Lev 19:13 and Deut 24:15, Luke was clearly not quoting either verse; indeed, the emphasis in Lev 19 and Deut 24 is on not withholding wages overnight). To join a quotation from Luke to a canonical Old Testament quote is highly significant. Remember too that probably only five or six years had elapsed between the writing of Luke and the writing of 1 Timothy.

In 2 Pet 3:16 Peter labeled Paul's writings as Scripture, showing their early acceptance and recognized authority. Though it is true that not all of the New Testament was written when Paul wrote 2 Tim 3:16 (2 Peter, Hebrews, Jude, and all of John's writings were not), nevertheless, because those books were eventually acknowledged as belonging to the canon of Scripture, we may conclude that 2 Tim 3:16 includes all the sixty-six books as we know them today. Not any book nor any part is excluded; all Scripture is inspired of God.

Most do not deny that 2 Tim 3:16 includes all of the canonical books. Those who wish to try to reduce the amount of Scripture included in the verse do so by translating it this way: "All Scripture inspired by God is also profitable" (instead of "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable"). In other words, whatever parts of Scripture that are inspired are profitable, but other uninspired parts are not profitable. That translation indicates that only part of the Bible is inspired.

Such a translation is possible, but not required. Actually either translation can claim to be accurate. Both translations have to supply the word *is* since it does not appear in the original. The matter becomes a question of whether to supply "*is*" only one time or two times ("Every Scripture inspired by God is also profitable" or "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable"). The preference goes to the latter translation for three reasons. First, by supplying "*is*" two times, both adjectives ("inspired" and "profitable") are understood the same way, as predicate adjectives, which is more natural. Second, the connective word, though it may be translated "also," much more frequently means "and." Third, a similar construction occurs in 1 Tim 4:4 where both adjectives are clearly predicate adjectives. Thus the preferred translation makes it quite clear that all the Bible is inspired.

2. The entire Bible is God breathed. This expresses the means of inspiration. The form is passive, meaning that the Bible is the result of the breath of God. If, by contrast, the form were active, then it would mean that the Bible exudes or speaks of God. Of course, that is true, but it is not what Paul said in this verse. Our English word "inspire" carries the idea of breathing into something. But this word tells us that God breathed out something, namely, the Scripture. To be sure, human authors wrote the texts, but the Bible originated as an action of God who breathed it out.

3. The entire Bible is profitable. This expresses the purpose of inspiration. Its profit consists in teaching, reproofing, correcting, restoring, and training in righteousness in order that the believer may be fitted, capable, or proficient, and furnished completely in every area of his being. The Bible is not to be put in a museum to be admired; rather, it is to be used in our lives.

To sum up: putting the three ideas of 2 Tim 3:16 together, the verse teaches that the entire Bible came from God in order to show us how to live.

B. 2 Pet 1:21

This verse tells us as much as any single verse how God used the human writers to produce the Bible. The Holy Spirit moved or bore them along. The use of the same verb in Acts 27:15 illuminates our understanding of what is meant by "bearing" or "moving" the human writers. Just before the ship that was taking Paul to Rome was wrecked on the Island of Malta, it ran into a fierce storm. Though experienced men, the sailors could not guide it, so they finally had to let the wind take the ship wherever it blew. In the same manner as that ship was driven, directed, or carried about by the wind, God directed and moved the human writers He used to produce the books of the Bible. Though the wind was the strong force that moved the ship along, the sailors were not asleep and inactive. Similarly, the Holy Spirit was the guiding force that directed the writers who, nevertheless, played their own active roles in writing the Scriptures.

But this verse also makes another important point. It declares that the wills of the human authors did not direct the writing of the Bible. The same verb, "moved" or "bore," appears in the latter part of the verse as well. Thus prophecy was not borne by the will of man. The Spirit did it, not the will of man. This statement bears in an important way on the question of the inerrancy of the Bible. Man's will, including his will to make mistakes, did not bring the Scriptures; rather, the Holy Spirit, who cannot err, brought us the Scriptures. To be sure, the writers were active in writing, but what they wrote was directed, not by their own wills with the possibility of error, but by the Spirit who is true and infallible.

B. B. Warfield, commenting on 2 Pet 1:21, emphasized this point well:

In this singularly precise and pregnant statement there are several things which require to be carefully observed. There is, first of all, the emphatic denial that prophecy—that is to say, on the hypothesis upon which we are working, Scripture—owes its origin to human initiative: "No prophecy ever was brought-'came' is the word used in the English Version text, with 'was brought' in the Revised Version margin—by the will of man." Then, there is the equally emphatic assertion that its source lies in God: It was spoken by men, indeed, but the men who spoke it "spake from God." And a remarkable clause is here inserted, and thrown forward in the sentence that stress may fall on it, which tells us how it could be that men, in speaking, should speak not from themselves, but from God: it was "as borne"—it is the same word which was rendered "was brought" above, and might possibly be rendered "brought" here—"by the Holy Spirit" that they spoke. Speaking thus under the determining influence of the Holy Spirit, the things they spoke were not from themselves, but from God.¹

To sum up: 2 Pet 1:21 states that God used men and gave us a completely truthful Bible.

C. 1 Cor 2:13

Here Paul made the point that God's revelation came to us in words. This counters the contention of some that inspiration only relates to the thoughts that God wanted us to know, but not to the words in which those thoughts were expressed. Holding such a view relieves one of holding to the inerrancy of the text, for one could supposedly have truthful thoughts (God's) conveyed in erroneous words (man's). But Paul insisted that God's message came in the words of the text.

The fact that Paul says he spoke in words does not mean that he is not referring to his writings. Notice that Peter said that Paul "spoke" in his writings (2 Pet 3:16). So "speaking in words" can certainly refer to Paul's written letters.

To sum up: this verse teaches that the actual words of the Bible are inspired.

D. A Group of Data

These data demonstrate some of the variety of material that God moved the human authors to include in the Bible.

1. *Material that came directly from God.* The two stones on which the Ten Commandments were written came directly from God (Deut 9:10).

2. *Researched material.* Though some parts of the Bible were written straight off (like some of Paul's letters), some were researched before they were written. The Gospel of Luke is an example of this (Lk 1:1-4). Luke was not an eyewitness of the events of the life of Christ. So either God would have had to give him direct revelation of those events in order for Luke to write his Gospel, or Luke would have had to discover them through research. In his prologue, Luke told us that (a) he consulted eyewitnesses of Christ's life and ministry; (b) he used available written accounts of parts of His ministry; (c) he carefully investigated and sifted through all those sources; (d) he planned out the orderly arrangement of his material; and (e) the Holy Spirit moved and bore him along in the actual writing so that all he wrote was accurate and truthful.

3. *Prophetic material.* Approximately one fourth of the Bible was prophecy when it was written (though, of course, some of that material has been fulfilled). True prophecy can come only from the true, all-knowing God. No human writer could devise 100 percent true prophecy.

4. *Historical material.* Much of the Bible records history and does so accurately. Most of the historical portions were written by those who had personally lived through the events (e.g., Luke who was Paul's traveling companion on many of his travels, Acts 16:10-13; Acts 20:5-21:18; Acts 27:1-28:6, or Joshua who experienced and then wrote about the Conquest of Canaan in the Book of Joshua). Something like the history of Creation, of course, had to be revealed by God to Moses, since no human being was an eyewitness and Moses wrote about it long after it occurred.

5. *Other material.* The Bible does record things that are untrue, like the lies of Satan (Gen 3:4-5), but it records them accurately. The Bible contains some quotations from the writings of unsaved people (Tit 1:12). It also has some passages that are strongly and vividly personal and emotional (Rom 9:1-3). But this variety of material is accurately recorded.

To sum up: God sometimes revealed things supernaturally and directly; sometimes He allowed the human writers to compose His message using their freedom of expression. But He breathed out the total product, carrying along the authors in various ways, to give us His message in the words of the Bible.

II. A Definition of Inspiration

A proper definition must, of course, be formed on the basis of the data of Scripture on the subject as examined above. The "bare bones" of a definition is this: God carried men along so that they wrote His message in the Bible.

Putting some meat on those bones leads to a definition like this: God superintended the human authors of the Bible so that they composed and recorded without error His message to mankind in the words of their original writings.

Notice carefully some of the key words in that definition.

- (1) The word "superintend" allows for the spectrum of relationships God had with the writers and the variety of material. His superintendence was sometimes very direct and sometimes less so, but always it included guarding the writers so that they wrote accurately.
- (2) The word "composed" shows that the writers were not passive stenographers to whom God dictated the material, but active writers.
- (3) "Without error" expresses the Bible's own claim to be truth (Jn 17:17).
- (4) Inspiration can only be predicated of the original writings, not to copies or translations, however accurate they may be.

Observe: The procedure used in this chapter has been to examine the biblical data concerning inspiration and then to formulate a definition that incorporates that data. The definition, then, attempts to be a statement of the Bible's own claims for itself. We did not start with a definition and then impose it on the data, and in the process, force or select only the data that would fit it.

Finally, we should never lose sight of the incredible claims the Bible makes for itself in this matter of inspiration. No other book can compare with it. God breathed it; men wrote it; we possess it.

NOTE

1. -B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948), 136.

Chapter 11: Defections From the Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration

Of course, not all understand the biblical doctrine of inspiration to be as expressed in the preceding chapter. Through the years, other understandings of the evidence have been proposed. Some are long-standing; others are newer. But all of them are, in my judgment, defective.

I. Natural Inspiration

This view understands the writers of the Bible to be men of great genius who did not need any supernatural help in writing the Bible. Some of the accompaniments of this view include the following: (1) The writers themselves conceived what they wrote; God did not breathe out the words. (2) This sort of inspiration can apply to books other than the Bible. "But the line of demarcation between it [the Bible] and other religious writings is not so sharp and final as to establish a qualitative difference between all other writings and every part of the canonical Scriptures."¹ (3) If this be the true view of inspiration, then why cannot geniuses today write books that would be just as inspired as the books of the Bible? (4) Such a view of inspiration does not, of course, include infallibility of the product.

II. Dynamic or Mystical Inspiration

This viewpoint goes a step farther than natural inspiration, for it conceives of the writers as more than natural geniuses in that they were also Spirit-filled and guided. "The inspiration of the books of the Bible does not imply for us the view that they were produced or written in any manner generically different from that of the writing of other great Christian books. There is a wide range of Christian literature from the fifth to the twentieth century which can with propriety be described as inspired by the Holy Spirit in precisely the same formal sense as were the books of the Bible."² Thus, (a) other Christian writings are as inspired as the Bible; (b) the Bible books are not infallible even though (c) they represent great religious literature that may even contain messages from God.

III. Degree Inspiration

Degree inspiration simply means that within the inspired Bible some parts are more inspired than other parts. All the Bible is inspired but not to the same degree. "Within this one great function of inspiration considerable variety exists. The inspiration of Isaiah or Paul is different from that of the compiler of Proverbs or the annalist who drew up Chronicles."³ I incline to think this view has been replaced today by the idea of partial inspiration. Actually, degree inspiration confuses the illegitimate idea that there exist degrees of inspiration with the legitimate recognition of the variety of relevance of different parts of the totally inspired Bible.

IV. Partial Inspiration

This concept teaches that while some parts of the Bible are inspired, other parts are not. Degree inspiration, by contrast, says that it is all inspired but some parts more so than others. Partial inspiration teaches that some portions are, in fact, not inspired at all. Usually the parts that are inspired are those that convey information otherwise unknowable (like the accounts of Creation

or prophecies). Historical portions, on the other hand, that could be known from contemporary documents do not need to be inspired.

The contemporary expression of this view of inspiration teaches that the Bible is inspired in its purpose. That means we can trust the Bible when it tells us about salvation, but we may expect that errors have crept into other parts. In its parts that purpose to make us wise unto salvation the Bible is inspired, but in other parts that is not necessarily so. Here is an example: "I confess the infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures in accomplishing God's purpose for them-to give man the revelation of God in His redemptive love through Jesus Christ."⁴ In other words, this view teaches that the Bible is inspired in its intent (to show men how to be saved) but not in its total content.

But is not the biblical teaching about salvation based on historical facts? Suppose those facts are inaccurate? Then our understanding about salvation might also be erroneous. You cannot separate history and doctrine, allow for errors (however few) in the historical records, and at the same time be certain that the doctrinal parts are true.

V. Concept Inspiration

Some are willing to acknowledge that the concepts of the Bible are inspired but not the words. Supposedly this allows for an authoritative conceptual message to have been given, but using words that can in some instances be erroneous. The obvious fallacy in this view is this: How are concepts expressed? Through words. Change the words and you have changed the concepts. You cannot separate the two. In order for concepts to be inspired, it is imperative that the words that express them be also. Some seem to embrace concept inspiration as a reaction against the dictation caricature of verbal inspiration. To them if inspiration extends to the words, then God must have dictated those words. In order to avoid that conclusion, they embrace the idea that God inspired only the concepts; the writers chose the words, and not necessarily always accurately. But God's intended concepts somehow came through to us unscathed.

VI. Barthian Inspiration

Karl Barth (1886-1968), though one of the most influential theologians in recent history, held a defective and dangerous view of inspiration, a view many continue to propagate. Barthians generally align themselves with the liberal school of biblical criticism. Yet they often preach like evangelicals. This makes Barthianism more dangerous than blatant liberalism.

For the Barthian, revelation centers in Jesus Christ. If He is the center of the circle of revelation, then the Bible stands on the periphery of that circle. Jesus Christ is the Word (and, of course, He is); but the Bible serves as a witness to the Word, Christ. The Bible's witness to the Word is uneven; that is, some parts of it are more important in their witness than other parts. The important parts are the ones that witness about Christ. Nevertheless, such parts, though important, are not necessarily accurate. Indeed, Barthians embrace the conclusions of liberalism regarding the Gospels, which teach that there are errors in those records.

Barthians charge evangelicals with holding a dictation view of inspiration. The biblical writers were typewriters on which God typed His message. Of course, this is not the orthodox view of inspiration.

In explaining the meaning of 2 Tim 3:14-17 and 2 Pet 1:21, Barth stresses that in neither passage is there any occasion to think that the authors had special experiences. Inspiration, he says, is to be understood as "the act of revelation in which the prophets and apostles in their humanity became what they were, and in which alone they in their humanity can also become for us what they are."⁵ Whatever such a statement means, clearly it does mean that the text is a human product full of errors, but which can become God's Word when it overpowers us.

That phrase "when it overpowers us" reminds us of the existential facet of the Barthian concept of inspiration. The Bible becomes God's Word when the Word of God, Christ, speaks to us through its pages. Inspiration, like revelation, emphasizes the subjective, existential encounter.⁶

Can such a Bible have any kind of authority? Yes, declares the Barthian. Its authority is in the encounter of faith with the Christ of Scripture. The Bible, because it points to Christ, has instrumental authority, not inherent authority. And those parts that do point to Christ have more authority than those that do not. Yet all the parts contain errors.

To sum up: Barthianism teaches that the Bible (B) points to Christ the Word (C). But in reality we do not know anything about C apart from B. It is not that we already have a clear concept of C by which we can test the accuracy of B, the pointer. Actually the Bible is the painter of C; that is, what we know about Christ comes from the Bible. So if the Bible has errors in it, the portrait of Christ is erroneous. And make no mistake about it, the Barthian Bible does have errors in it.

The subtleties of the various kinds of defections make it imperative to listen and read carefully to what people say and write about inspiration. The words may seem orthodox, but they may only be covering a very defective view of inspiration. The biblical data give us the correct doctrine. Everything must be tested against those data.

NOTES

1. -Cecil J. Cadoux, *A Pilgrim's Further Progress* (London: Religious Book Club, 1945), 11.
2. -Alan Richardson, *Christian Apologetics* (New York: Harper, 1948), 207.
3. -Marcus Dods, *The Bible* (New York: Scribners, 1905), 127.
4. -Ray Summers, "How God Said It," *The Baptist Standard*, 4 February 1970, 12.
5. -Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I, 2, 563.
6. -See Dewey M. Beegle, *The Inspiration of Scripture* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 126-31.

Chapter 12: The Inerrancy of the Bible

Attacks on the inerrancy of the Bible are not new and seem to be somewhat cyclical. However, the contemporary debate seems to be an intramural one; that is, it is among evangelicals, rather

than between liberals and conservatives. Perhaps this makes it even more significant, for the debate has drawn lines among evangelicals that needed to be drawn. It has also served to sharpen distinctions that surround the concept of inerrancy.

I. The Importance of Inerrancy

A. Its Importance Stated

Can one be an evangelical and deny the full concept of inerrancy? The answer is yes, simply because some evangelicals do. Strictly speaking, an evangelical is one who believes the Gospel. Can one be a Christian and not accept the concept of inerrancy? Of course, and undoubtedly many fall into that category. To be a Christian means being rightly related to Christ. Can one be a biblicist and deny inerrancy? Not if the Bible teaches its own inerrancy.

How important is this doctrine then? If it is a biblical teaching, then to deny it is to deny part of the truthfulness of the Bible. But consider this: If the Bible contains some errors, however few or many, how can one be sure that his understanding of Christ is correct? Perhaps one of those errors concerns something about the life of Christ. It would not be impossible that there might be an error about the crucial matter of His death and resurrection. What then would happen to one's Christology? It would be changed, perhaps even so drastically that there would be no Christian faith to embrace.

Or suppose the biblical teaching on the Holy Spirit were inaccurate. This could affect the cardinal doctrine of the Trinity, which in turn could also seriously affect Christology, soteriology, and sanctification. Even if the errors are supposedly in "minor" matters, any error opens the Bible to suspicion on other points that may not be so "minor." If inerrancy falls, other doctrines will fall too.

When inerrancy is denied one may expect some serious fallout in both doctrinal and practical areas.

Some doctrinal matters that may be affected by denying inerrancy include the following:

- (1) A denial of the historical fall of Adam.
- (2) A denial of the facts of the experiences of the prophet Jonah.
- (3) An explaining away of some of the miracles of both the Old and New Testaments.
- (4) A denial of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.
- (5) A belief in two or more authors of the Book of Isaiah.
- (6) A flirting with or embracing of liberation theology with its redefining of sin (as societal rather than individual) and salvation (as political and temporal rather than spiritual and eternal).

Some lifestyle errors that may follow a denial of inerrancy include the following:

- (1) A loose view of the seriousness of adultery.
- (2) A loose view of the seriousness of homosexuality.
- (3) A loose view of divorce and remarriage.
- (4) "Cultural" reinterpretation of some of the teachings of the Bible (e.g., teaching on women, teaching on civil obedience).
- (5) A tendency to view the Bible through a modern psychological grid.

Inerrancy is an important doctrine, the denial or even diluting of which may result in serious doctrinal and life errors.

B. Its Importance Diluted

Still many insist that inerrancy is either unimportant, irrelevant, or unnecessary to the faith. Therefore, all the furor being stirred up over it is merely a tempest in a teapot, and those who insist on it are disturbing the peace of the church.

But that simply is not so. Inerrancy is a crucial issue, for if the Bible is not completely without error then it must have at least one error in it. Now if we could all agree on where that one error is then the problem might conceivably be tolerated. But if the current literature is any guideline, then there are about twenty candidates for that one error, and that means there might be as many as twenty errors. And if there could be as many as twenty errors, then the question becomes, How can I trust the Bible at all? So inerrancy is not a tempest in a teapot.

Several reasons are commonly offered for concluding that inerrancy is a nonessential doctrine.

Those who oppose or who want to diminish the importance of inerrancy often make this statement: "Since the Bible does not clearly teach inerrancy, neither can we." At the very least this places those who insist on the importance of inerrancy in the position of insisting on more than the Bible does. At the most, it implies or asserts that inerrancy is not a biblical doctrine.

But for the statement to be true requires (a) that we can show that the Bible does not clearly teach inerrancy, and (b) that if it does not (in the sense of providing proof texts), we cannot assert inerrancy on the basis of an inductive study of the evidence. Let's examine these statements. Does the Bible clearly teach inerrancy? The answer will depend on what is meant by "clearly." If by clearly one means proof texts such as are present in the Bible for substitutionary atonement, for example (Mt 20:28), then admittedly there is not that type of "clear" evidence for inerrancy. But many doctrines are accepted by evangelicals as being clearly taught in the Scriptures for which there are no proof texts. The doctrine of the Trinity furnishes the best example of this. It is fair to say that the Bible does not clearly teach the doctrine of the Trinity, if by clearly one means there are proof texts for the doctrine. In fact, there is not even one proof text, if by proof text we mean a verse or passage that "clearly" states that there is one God who exists in three persons.

How then do we arrive at a clear doctrine of the Trinity? Simply by accepting two lines of evidence in the Bible: (a) clear statements that teach there is only one God; and (b) equally clear statements that there was Someone called Jesus and Someone designated the Holy Spirit who in

addition to God the Father claimed to be God. Such evidence permits only one of two conclusions: either Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not divine, or God exists as a Trinity. Orthodox Christians have never shied away from the second conclusion even though evidence is of a different kind of clarity than that which proof texts provide.

Or to take another example, many deny that Jesus is God, because, they say, there is no "clear" evidence that He ever claimed to be divine. Robert S. Alley, then of the University of Richmond, stirred up a furor among Southern Baptists when he asserted that Jesus "never really claimed to be God or to be related to Him."¹ Even though he possessed the same evidence from the Bible as those who conclude that Jesus did claim to be God, he arrived at a completely different conclusion. Such heresy outrages orthodox believers, and rightly so.

Though I have not yet discussed the evidence for the clear teaching of the Bible as to its own inerrancy, let us assume for the moment that it does teach it clearly, though not necessarily by proof texts. If so, are errantists demanding of the Bible a higher standard of clarity to prove inerrancy than they require to prove the deity of Christ or the Trinity? In other words, do they not have one set of criteria for clearly proving the doctrine of the Trinity and another for inerrancy?

The above illustrations prove the fallacy of concluding that if something is not proof texted in the Bible we cannot clearly teach the results of an inductive study or reach logical conclusions drawn from the evidence that is there. If that were so, I could never teach the doctrines of the Trinity or the deity of Christ or the deity of the Holy Spirit or even forms of church government. Often I hear people say, "I will go only as far as the Bible does." That can be a good standard because we do not ever want to add to what the Bible teaches. But neither do we want to omit anything it teaches clearly whether by proof texts, deduction, induction, implication, logic, or principles. The claim for not wanting to go beyond what the Bible teaches can be merely an excuse for not wanting to face the implications of what it does teach. And I fear that for some that has been their excuse for not wanting to face what the Bible does say about its own inerrancy.

The second excuse for diluting the importance of inerrancy is that since we do not possess any original manuscripts of the Bible, and since inerrancy is related to those originals only, the doctrine of inerrancy is only a theoretical one and therefore nonessential. It is true we do not possess any of the original manuscripts of the Bible, and the doctrine of inerrancy, like inspiration, is predicated only on the original manuscripts, not on any of the copies. The two premises in the statement are correct, but those particular premises do not prove at all that inerrancy is a nonessential doctrine.

Obviously, inerrancy can be asserted only in relation to the original manuscripts because only they came directly from God under inspiration. The very first copy of a letter of Paul, for instance, was in reality only a copy, and not the original that Paul himself wrote or dictated. Both inspiration and inerrancy are predicated only on the originals. But would an errantist claim that inspiration is a nonessential doctrine on the basis of not having the originals and not attributing inspiration to the copies? I think not. Then why does he say that about inerrancy?

Another argument is that inerrancy is a recent teaching that the church formerly was not concerned about; therefore, we need not be concerned about it today.

The argument from church history seems to rear its head almost every time any doctrine is discussed. If the doctrine was taught in ancient times this supposedly makes it more reliable. If, on the other hand, it has not been taught until more recent years, then it is suspect.

Of course, the argument itself is invalid. The truth or untruth of any doctrine does not depend on whether or not it was ever taught in church history. Its truthfulness depends solely on whether or not it is taught in the Bible. Now, admittedly, a teaching that no one has ever before heard about might be suspect, but the Bible, not church history, is the standard against which all teachings must be measured.

Nevertheless, the history excuse persists with the doctrine of inerrancy. It is recent, they say, and therefore the debate should cease.

Some say inerrancy originated with B. B. Warfield at Princeton in the late 1800s. Others claim that Turretin, a Lutheran theologian, started it all just after the Reformation.

Actually neither man did. We believe that Christ taught inerrancy, as did the apostle Paul. Furthermore, Augustine, Aquinas, the Reformers, and other great men held to it throughout church history. Granted, such evidence from history does not validate the doctrine (Christ's and Paul's teaching do, and we shall examine that later), but it invalidates the claim that inerrancy is a recent invention.

For example, Augustine (354-430) clearly stated that "most disastrous consequences must follow upon our believing that anything false is found in the sacred books. That is to say that the men by whom the Scripture has been given to us and committed to writing put down in these books anything false. If you once admit into such a high sanctuary of authority one false statement, there will not be left a single sentence of those books, which, if appearing to anyone difficult in practice or hard to believe, may not by the same fatal rule be explained away as a statement, in which intentionally, the author declared what was not true" (Epistula p. 28). Here in ancient terms is the domino theory.

Again, Thomas Aquinas (1224-74) plainly said that "nothing false can underlie the literal sense of Scripture" (Summa Theologica I.1, 10, ad 3). Also, Luther declared, "The Scriptures have never erred" (Works of Luther XV.1481). John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, wrote, "Nay, if there be any mistakes in the Bible there may well be a thousand. If there is one falsehood in that Book it did not come from the God of truth" (Journal VI.117).

How can anyone say, then, that inerrancy is a recent invention? Even if it were, it could still be a true doctrine. Only the Bible, not history, can tell us.

II. The Meaning of Inerrancy

Definitions of inerrancy are not plentiful. Errantists equate inerrancy with infallibility and then limit its scope to matters of faith and practice or to revelational matters or to the message of salvation. An example of this: "The Bible is infallible, as I define that term, but not inerrant. That is, there are historical and scientific errors in the Bible, but I have found none on matters of faith and practice."² At least this is an honest distinction between infallibility and inerrancy.

The Lausanne Covenant declared the Bible to be "inerrant in all that it affirms." The phrase is admittedly flexible, since it may allow for errors in areas like Creation where, according to some interpreters, the Bible is not affirming historical facts. Both inerrantists and errantists could subscribe to that statement.

The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy in its Chicago statement affirmed inerrancy in a brief statement that the "Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching." Then followed nineteen articles to further describe and explain inerrancy.

This brief statement would be unsatisfactory to errantists. If there were any doubt about that, certainly the nineteen-article elaboration would exclude errantists' agreeing with it.

The dictionary defines inerrancy as "being without error." Most definitions of inerrancy share this negative description. The question raised then by that definition is, what is error? Can the Bible use approximations and still be without error? Can a New Testament writer quote freely from the Old Testament and claim that the resultant quotation is without error? Can a biblical writer use the language of appearances without communicating error? Can there exist different accounts of the same event without involving error?

Admittedly, the data of Scripture often includes approximations, free quotations, language of appearances, different accounts of the same occurrence. Can that data support a definition of inerrancy as "being without error"? Obviously, the data and the definition must harmonize if that is a correct definition of what the Bible teaches about its own inerrancy.

Perhaps the tension would be erased if we defined inerrancy positively—the inerrancy of the Bible means simply that the Bible tells the truth. Truth can and does include approximations, free quotations, language of appearances, and different accounts of the same event as long as these do not contradict. For example, if you were to report to me that a mutual friend had a hundred-thousand dollar income last year, that would be an inerrant statement, even though his income for reporting to the IRS was \$100,537. That approximation would tell the truth. Or if I said, "Sunrise over the Grand Canyon is one of the most spectacular sights I have ever seen," my statement with its own use of language of appearance would tell the truth, though the sun does not literally rise over the Grand Canyon.

Does the Bible say not to lie? Yes, it says don't lie. Is that a true statement? Of course, though it is also true (not more true) to say that the Bible says, "Lie not one to another." The free quotation is also true.

Or again, my wife told me that when she saw the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace, a soldier fainted and fell on the ground. But the newspaper reported that on the same day three men fainted. That was also a true report. If my wife had said that only one man fainted, her report would have been wrong. Actually three did, but she focused only on the one nearest to where she was standing. She may even have noticed that the others also fainted, but she simply did not report that. Nevertheless, her statement was true.

If 1 Cor 10:8 says 23,000 died in one day and Num 25:9 records 24,000 but does not add the restriction "in one day," we understand both to be telling the truth (and probably both figures are approximations of the number that died in one day and the number of additional deaths later).

If a New Testament writer makes a free quotation from the Old Testament, since he was writing under the inspiration of the Spirit, that free quotation becomes part of the inspired, inerrant text. The Holy Spirit, the author of both Old and New Testaments, certainly has the right to quote Himself as He wishes and to use quotations with meanings we as uninspired interpreters might never have seen.

Using the language of appearances is a common way of communicating, sometimes even more vividly than scientific language could. We say that the sun rises and sets, which from the viewpoint of appearance is true. But if we were speaking scientifically we would have to explain that the earth moves, not the sun.

If Mark and Luke speak of one blind man given sight at Jericho, while Matthew reports two, both statements are true as long as Mark and Luke do not say only one man.

Most debates over truth and error get off track when they become philosophical and not down to earth. Most people understand clearly and easily that approximations, etc., tell the truth. The Bible is inerrant in that it tells the truth, and it does so without error in all parts and with all its words.

If it were not so, then how could the Lord affirm that man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Mt 4:4), especially if all Scripture is breathed out by God? (2 Tim 3:16).

III. The Incarnation and Inerrancy

The logic of some still insists that anything involving humanity has to allow for the possibility of sin. So as long as the Bible is both a divine and human Book the possibility and actuality of errors exist.

Let's examine that premise. Is it always inevitable that sin is involved where humanity is?

If you were tempted to respond affirmatively, an exception probably came to mind almost immediately. The title of this section could have put the clue in your mind. The exception is our Lord Jesus Christ. He was the God-man, and yet His humanity did not involve sin. So He serves as a clear example of an exception to the logic pressed by people who believe in errancy.

The true doctrine of the God-man states that He possessed the full and perfect divine nature and a perfect human nature and that these were united in one person forever. His deity was not in any detail diminished; His humanity was not in any way sinful or unreal, but sinless; and in His one Person His natures were without mixture, change, division, or separation.

Similarly, the Bible is a divine-human Book. Though it originated from God, it was actually written by man. It is God's Word, conveyed through the Holy Spirit. Sinful men wrote that Word but did so without error. Just as in the Incarnation, Christ took humanity but was not tainted in any way with sin, so the production of the Bible was not tainted with any errors.

Let me take the analogy further. In the humanity of Jesus Christ there were some features that were not optional. He had to be a Jew. He could not have been a Gentile. He had to be a man, not a woman. He had to be sinless, not sinful. But some features of sinless humanity might be termed optional. Jesus could have possessed perfect humanity within a variation of a few inches in height at maturity, though a dwarf or a giant would have been imperfect. He might have varied a little in weight at maturity and still have been perfect. Surely, within limits, the number of hairs on his scalp could have been a sinless option. However, the humanity He exhibited was, in fact, perfect humanity.

The writers of the Bible were not passive. They wrote as borne along by the Spirit, and in those writings some things could not have been said any other way. Paul insisted on the singular rather than the plural in Gal 3:16. But conceivably there were some sinless options as in Paul's emotional statement in Rom 9:1-3. Yet the Bible we have is in fact the perfect record of God's message to us.

Everybody wrestles with the relationship between the divine and the human authors of Scriptures. The divine must not be so emphasized as to obliterate for all practical purposes the human, and the human must not be allowed to be so human as to permit errors in the text.

A similar thing happened with regard to the person of Christ in the early centuries of church history. Docetism, a first-century heresy, taught that Christ did not actually become flesh but only appeared as a man, thus robbing Him of genuine humanity. Docetism was, of course, a Christological error, but you can see the analogy with the question of the dual authorship of the Bible. Those who hold to errors in the Bible say that inerrancy overemphasizes the divine authorship to the neglect of its "humanness." Thus God's superintendence of the Bible to the extent of producing an errorless Bible is said to be a Docetic view of inspiration. Karl Barth made this charge, and more recently, so have Dutch theologian Berkhouwer and Fuller professor Paul Jewett.

But if it were true (which it is not) that those who hold to the total inerrancy of the Bible are espousing a heresy akin to Docetism, then it would be equally true that those who hold to any kind of errancy support a doctrine analogous to Ebionitism.

In the second century, the Ebionites denied the deity of Christ by denying His virgin birth and His preexistence. They regarded Jesus as the natural son of Joseph and Mary who was elected Son of God at His baptism, but not as the eternal Son of God. They thought Jesus was a great prophet and higher than the archangels, but not Divine.

If inerrancy is supposed to be a Docetic-like heresy, then errancy, albeit limited, is obviously an Ebionite-like heresy, since the humanity of the Bible has to permit errors in the Bible. According to the errancy view, since real men were involved, their writings cannot be guaranteed to be without error even though the Holy Spirit directed and inspired them. That's an Ebionite-like error.

There is an orthodox doctrine of the person of Christ, and there is an orthodox doctrine of the Bible. Both involve God and man, and each results in a sinless product.

NOTES

1. -Robert S. Alley, "Some Theologians Question Factual Truth of Gospels," The Richmond News Leader, 17 July 1978, 1.
2. -Stephen T. Davis, The Debate About the Bible (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 115.

Chapter 13: Inerrancy and the Teaching of Christ

A deduction consists of a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion. The deductive evidence for inerrancy is this: God is true, God breathed out the Bible, therefore the Bible is true. Of course, any deduction is only as good as its premises. In this particular deduction, both premises are good and true simply because they are clearly stated in the Bible itself. So the deductive evidence for inerrancy is as strong and conclusive as the authority of the Bible itself.

But there is also another line of reasoning, the inductive. In an induction one reasons from parts to the whole, from particulars to the general. A conclusion is thus drawn from the evidence.

An induction is only as good as the completeness of the evidence studied. If the first five typewriters one saw were all electric, then one might conclude that all typewriters were electric. But, of course, the first nonelectric typewriter observed would invalidate the conclusion. Nevertheless, not all inductions run that high a risk of being invalid, for if one can examine as much evidence as possible, he can be assured of a very reliable conclusion.

We can examine all of the recorded teachings of Christ. We do not believe that there is any likelihood that some unrecorded teaching of Christ will turn up to invalidate the evidence we find from His teachings in the Gospels. If we can investigate all that He said concerning the reliability of the Bible, then we can draw a valid conclusion about Christ's view of the Bible.

I. The Evidence of Mt 4:1-11

The account of the temptation of our Lord reveals some important matters concerning His view of the Bible.

First, Jesus accepted the plenary inspiration of the Bible; when first approached by the devil to turn stones into bread, our Lord replied that man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Mt 4:4 quoting Deut 8:3). He did not say "some words" but "every word." If Scripture is breathed out from God (2 Tim 3:16), then Scripture must be included in what sustains man, not only parts of Scripture but all of it.

The second temptation also illustrates the importance of plenary inspiration. Satan tried to entice the Lord to throw Himself off the pinnacle of the temple by assuring Him that He could claim the promise of Ps 91:11-12 that God's angels would guard Him. But in quoting those verses Satan omitted part of verse 11: "To guard you in all your ways." The omission distorts the meaning of the promise, which is that God will keep the righteous on their journeys, not that He will preserve them when they take needless risks. Taking a needless risk is exactly what Satan proposed to Christ. The Lord replied that to bank on part of a verse would be to tempt God. Instead He would rely on every word that came from God, including every word of verses 11-12.

Second, Jesus accepted the truth of the propositions of the Bible. As has been said, a popular viewpoint today sees the Bible as containing only personal revelation, not propositional revelation. That is, the Bible reveals God and Christ accurately, but it does this in a person-to-person relationship rather than in statements. Therefore, although we can trust the message of the Bible, we really cannot (nor do we need to) trust the particular statements or propositions of the Bible. The Bible, they say, witnesses to the infallible truth, but it doesn't have to do so with inerrant statements. The pointer, the Bible, is fallible, but Christ, to whom it points, is infallible.

But Christ's response to Satan's attacks negates that viewpoint. He said, "It is written" (Mt 4:4, 7, 10). He did not say, "It witnesses." He relied on propositional statements to convey truth in and of themselves and to convey it accurately.

II. The Evidence From Christ's Use of the Old Testament

Our Lord used historical incidents in the Old Testament in a manner that showed His total confidence in their factual historicity.

He acknowledged that Adam and Eve were created by God, that they were two living human beings, not merely symbols of man and woman, and that they acted in specific ways (Mt 19:3-5; Mk 10:6-8).

He verified events connected with the flood of Noah's day; namely, that there was an ark and that the Flood destroyed everyone who was not in that ark (Mt 24:38-39; Lk 17:26-27).

On two different occasions, He authenticated God's destruction of Sodom and the historicity of Lot and his wife (Mt 10:15; Lk 17:28-29).

He accepted as true the story of Jonah and the great fish (Mt 12:40) and acknowledged the historicity of Isaiah (Mt 12:17), Elijah (Mt 17:11-12), Daniel (Mt 24:15), Abel (Mt 23:35), Zechariah (Mt 23:35), Abiathar (Mk 2:26), David (Mt 22:45), Moses and his writings (Mt 8:4; Jn 5:46), Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Mt 8:11; Jn 8:39).

Christ did not merely allude to these stories, but He authenticated the events in them as factual history to be completely trusted. These events include many of the controversial passages of the Old Testament, such as Creation, the Flood, and major miracles including Jonah and the fish.

Obviously, our Lord felt He had a reliable Bible, historically true, with every word trustworthy.

If we find that He only used or taught in a general way about the Bible, then we shall conclude that He believed in its reliability generally. If, on the other hand, we find that He relied on the minutiae of the Bible as accurate, then we must conclude that He believed it to be inerrant down to its details.

III. The Evidence of Mt 5:17-18

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. 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."

First, what is the promise? It is that the Law and the Prophets will not be abolished, but fulfilled. Abolish means not to accomplish something, and fulfill means to accomplish the promises. Christ is guaranteeing something about promises not failing.

Second, what is encompassed in this promise? The "Law and the Prophets" included all of the Old Testament, our Lord's Bible. "Law" in verse 18 means the same thing (compare the use of "Law" in Jn 10:34, where it includes more than the Mosaic Law).

Third, in what detail will all the promises of the Old Testament be fulfilled? The Lord said you can count on the Old Testament promises being fulfilled down to the very jots and tittles (KJV).

The jot is the Hebrew letter yodh. It is the smallest of all the letters in the Hebrew alphabet. It would occupy proportionately about the same amount of space that an English apostrophe takes up in a line of English type. Actually, the Hebrew letter looks very much like an English apostrophe. Though it is the smallest of the Hebrew letters it is as important as any other letter, for letters spell words, and words compose sentences, and sentences make promises. If you spell a word one way, it is that word; if you spell it another way, even only a single letter differently, it is a different word. Tough means strong. One letter changed spells touch. One letter added spells though. Single letters change words. Our Lord promised that not one jot would fail. Every promise will be fulfilled just as it was spelled out.

Observe that Christ does not start with concepts and then allow for optional words to be used to convey those concepts (as concept inspiration teaches). He begins the other way around. The promises are based on the words as spelled, and those words can be relied on fully and in detail.

Neither did our Lord say that the promises would be fulfilled provided they were culturally relevant at the time of fulfillment. In some circles today, promises are culturally reinterpreted, thereby actually invalidating the original promises. But Christ taught that we could count on plain fulfillment of the original promises as spelled out in the Old Testament.

A tittle is even more minute than a jot. Whereas a jot is a whole letter, a tittle is only a part of a letter. The presence of a tittle forms a certain letter, but its absence causes that letter to become a different one. For example, the Hebrew letter beth looks like this . The letter kaph looks like this . Obviously they appear to be very similar. The only difference between the two letters is that the bottom horizontal line on the beth extends slightly to the right of the vertical line, whereas no extension appears on the kaph. That extension-not the entire bottom horizontal line but only the part of it that extends to the right of the vertical line-is a tittle. If it is present then the letter is a beth; if it is absent, it is a kaph. And whether you use a beth or a kaph will result in spelling different words.

Another example: The Hebrew letter daleth looks like this . The resh looks like this . Again the tittle is only that part of the horizontal line that extends to the right of the vertical line. But a word spelled with a daleth is different from one spelled with a resh.

The Lord's promise was that all of the promises of the Old Testament will be fulfilled precisely as they were spelled out.

In English we might illustrate a tittle this way. Suppose I invite you to my house to have some "Fun." You might rightly wonder what I consider fun. If I put a tittle or small stroke on the F, then you might conclude that I like to "Pun." Punning is fun to me. But you may not enjoy making puns, so I'll put another tittle on the letter. Now I have spelled "Run." To run is fun for some, but not to me. So I'll add another tittle, and now I am inviting you over to have a "Bun." The difference between Fun, Pun, Run, and Bun is just the addition of a tittle in each case. But four entirely different words result, and with them, four different invitations!

IV. The Evidence of Jn 10:31-38

Minutiae do make a difference. Toward the end of His earthly ministry the Lord again affirmed His total confidence in the minute reliability of the Scripture. At the temple celebration of the Feast of Dedication, or Hanukkah (instituted in 165 B.C. to commemorate the cleansing and reopening of the temple after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes three years earlier), the Jews asked Jesus to tell them plainly if He is the Messiah (Jn 10:24). His answer was, "I and the Father are one" (Jn 10:30). The word "one" is neuter, "one thing," not "one person." In other words, He did not assert that He and the Father are identical but that He and the Father possess essential unity together, that He enjoys perfect unity of nature and of actions with His Father. The Jews had asked if He was the Messiah. His answer was more than they had bargained for, for in it He claimed also to be equal with God.

This was certainly the way they understood His claim, for immediately they prepared to stone the Lord for what they considered to be blasphemy. In order to restrain them the Lord appealed to Ps 82. He called this portion of the Old Testament "the Law" (Jn 10:34), as He did on two other occasions (Jn 12:34 and Jn 15:25). In that Law, He said, the judges of Israel, human beings, were called "gods" by virtue of their high and God-given office. Then, He concluded, if that psalm can apply the term "gods" to human beings, then certainly the term "Son of God" may be rightly applied to the One whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world. In other words, if elohim is applied to men, how much more appropriate it is to apply it to Himself, since He does possess essential unity with the Father.

Though the argument is highly sophisticated, certain claims Christ made about the Bible are crystal clear.

The Bible is verbally inspired. He pointed the Jews to what had been written. God's Word came in written propositional statements, not merely in concepts, thoughts, or oral tradition. It is the written record that was inspired and that can be relied on.

The Bible is minutely inspired. Psalm 82 is not what would be considered a major Old Testament passage. It is not a psalm of David or a messianic psalm. This is not said to demean the psalm in any way for, of course, it is equally inspired with all other parts of the Bible, but it is to emphasize that the Lord did not pick an outstanding passage on which to base His argument. Indeed one might say, without being disrespectful, that He chose a rather ordinary, run-of-the-mill passage. Of course, He would not have done so if He believed that such passages were not part of God's inerrant inspired Word. Furthermore, from that ordinary passage He focused on a single word, "gods." He could not have done so unless He believed in the minute inspiration of the Bible. He rightly assumed He could count on any part of the Bible and any word in any part.

The Bible is authoritatively inspired. In the midst of His sophisticated arguing the Lord threw in almost incidentally the statement: "and the Scripture cannot be broken." What does this mean? Simply that the Scripture cannot be emptied of its authority. The only way it could fail to have complete authority would be if it were erroneous, but Christ said here that it is both authoritative and inerrant. Some translations place this phrase in parentheses. It may be better to regard it as depending on the "if" that begins the sentence. That "if" introduces a first-class condition that means certainty, and is better translated "since." Thus the Lord was saying two things are certain: the psalm called them gods and the Scripture cannot be broken. Remember, Christ was here staking His life on the reliability, accuracy, and authority of just one word of Scripture, for His enemies were about to stone Him.

V. The Evidence of Mt 22:23-33

Picture the scene: The Lord on "Face the Jewish Nation" and "Meet the Pharisaic Press," all in the same day. The Herodians had tried to trap Him by asking if it was lawful to pay the poll tax to Caesar. Then the Sadducees took their turn (Mt 22:23-33). In that dialogue we have more clear evidence of our Lord's faith in an inerrant and therefore minutely authoritative Scripture.

The Sadducees believed in the authority of the Pentateuch. They denied, however, the existence of angels and other spirits and belief in the resurrection of the dead because they could not find them taught in the Pentateuch. They immediately demonstrated their disbelief by asking Jesus a question about the resurrection. In addition they dreamed up an illustration based on the Pentateuch, to reinforce their question. It was the law of levirate marriage (from the Latin meaning "husband's brother's marriage," found in Deut. 25). The law required the brother-in-law of a childless widow to marry her if he was able to do so. If not, then the responsibility fell on his next of kin as in the story of Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 4:6).

It was on this basis that the Sadducees concocted a story about seven brothers, the first of whom married a woman and died. Each of the other six married her in turn after all of his older brothers died. Finally, the seventh husband died, and last of all the wife.

Then the Sadducees confronted the Lord with their question: "In the resurrection therefore whose wife of the seven shall she be? For they all had her."

His answer was scathing. He charged them with error, with ignorance of the Scripture, and with ignorance of the power of God (Mt 22:29).

Then Christ evaluated the question and judged it irrelevant (Mt 22:30) because in the resurrection people do not marry. They are similar to angels who do not marry because there is no need to procreate baby angels. The number of the angels was fixed at the time they were created. Similarly, in the afterlife human beings will not marry because there will be no need for infants to be born. Christ was not saying that people become angels after they die, but only that like angels they will not procreate. Since that is so, there was no need to answer the Sadducees' question. It was entirely irrelevant. The levirate marriage law was designed to ensure that children would be born to bear the family name of the first-dead husband, but in heaven there will be no need for such a provision; hence the irrelevance of the question.

As if it were not sufficient to charge the Sadducees with error, ignorance, and irrelevance, the Lord proceeded to teach them some sound doctrine from an Old Testament passage (Ex 3:6) that they considered authoritative. The lesson was simply this: Contrary to your doctrine, your Bible teaches that there is life after death. Death does not end it all, as you teach.

Again our Lord used a very sophisticated argument. I expect that few of us would choose to use Ex 3 to attempt to teach the doctrine of life after death. But our Lord did.

Notice too, just as in Jn 10:34, He based His argument on the written Word, not general concepts, but specific written words. Specifically, He based His case on how God identified Himself to Moses at the burning bush: "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Mt 22:32). That proves, the Lord went on to say, that God is the God of the living, which means that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still alive though they had died long before.

How does that identification prove the doctrine of life after death? Simply by the use of the present tense, "I am." Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died several hundred years before God spoke this way to Moses. Yet God said that He was still their God at the time He was speaking to Moses. This would not have been possible if when Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob died they ceased to exist. It was only possible if, contrary to the Sadducees' doctrine, death does not end it all.

Of course, the difference between I am and I was is a matter of verb tense. This argument was based on a present tense rather than a past tense. Christ used the present tense to support the doctrine of resurrection.

The force of what Christ was saying can be illustrated this way. Often as a visiting preacher, I am invited home to dinner after the church service by one of the members. I have discovered that usually one of the appropriate topics of conversation is to inquire about the children in that family. Suppose I should ask, "How many children do you have in your family?" and the father or mother replies, "We had four, but one died, so now we only have three." Faced with that kind of response, I cannot be very sure about the spiritual condition or maturity of those parents. But if, on the other hand, to the same question a parent replies, "We have four; one is in heaven and three are here with us," then I have a good deal of confidence about that family's beliefs. I can be almost certain that they do not believe that death ends it all but that there is a resurrection coming.

The difference is only in the tense of the verb used: we had or we have in the illustration, and I was their God or I am their God in the biblical text.

Observe carefully the ramifications of Christ's statement here.

- (1) He assumed the historicity of God's appearance to Moses.
- (2) He assumed that God's revelation came in a propositional statement.
- (3) He assumed that every word of that statement could be trusted to be precisely accurate.
- (4) He assumed that doctrinal truth has to be based on historical accuracy. The Bible cannot be inaccurate in matters of history and accurate in doctrine.
- (5) He assumed that one could use even unlikely passages and trust their accuracy.

VI. The Evidence of Mt 22:41-46

Later that same day, when the Pharisees had joined the crowd of antagonists, the Lord became the aggressor, asking a straightforward question of them: "About the Christ, whose son is He?" (Mt 22:42). Theirs was an immediate answer: "The Son of David." It was correct but incomplete. Christ is the son of David as far as His humanity is concerned, but He also is the Son of God, and the Lord wanted the Pharisees to acknowledge this as well. So He asked them, "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord'?" To prove that David did, He quoted Ps 110:1. In that psalm "the Lord [that is, the Father] says to my Lord [the Messiah who was David's Lord]: 'Sit at My right hand [the Father's] until I [the Father] make Thine [the Messiah's] enemies a footstool for Thy feet.'"

How could David call Messiah his Lord if Messiah were only David's son? The only answer is that Messiah was also David's God. In other words the Messiah had to be both God and man. As man He was David's son; as God, David's Lord. The pronoun "my" links David to his Messiah-Lord.

Perhaps an illustration will help. When Queen Elizabeth II dies or abdicates, the Prince of Wales will presumably become King Charles. Assume that Prince Philip, his father, is still living. I ask someone, "King Charles, whose son is he?" The answer would come back: "Prince Philip's." "But," I might reply, "I saw the coronation of King Charles on TV, and I saw Prince Philip bowing and swearing allegiance to him. Why does Philip call Charles 'lord'?" The answer is simple: King Charles is Philip's sovereign-king even though he is also Philip's natural son. He is both Philip's son and Philip's lord. So also Messiah was David's son and, because Messiah is equal with God, David's Lord.

Natural procreation links Messiah to David as David's descendant. The pronoun "my" in Ps 110:1 links Messiah to David as David's Lord God. And the pronoun "my" is simply a yodh, that smallest of Hebrew letters, attached to the word Lord.

There is nothing more central to an orthodox Christology than the full deity and true humanity of Jesus Christ. If He were not the God-man then He could not have been an adequate Savior, High Priest, or Judge. Who of us would think of using Psalm 110 as our Lord did to emphasize the truth of who He is? But that is exactly what Jesus did, basing His argument with the Pharisees on the single Hebrew word "my." The seeming minutiae of Scripture can be trusted.

What have we learned from our Lord's attitude toward the Bible?

- (1) The spelling of words can be trusted completely, and not one promise will be fulfilled in any way different from how it was spelled out.
- (2) The only way the Scripture can lose its authority is if it contains errors, but Christ taught that the Scripture cannot be broken. Thus He must have believed it did not contain errors.
- (3) The Lord built sophisticated arguments on single words and even the tense of a verb.

Who can say he fully follows the Lord without accepting His teaching concerning the inerrancy of the Scriptures?

Chapter 14: Problem Passages

I. Some Problems in the Old Testament

No one denies that there are passages in the Bible that contain problems of one kind or another. The inerrancy question does not involve interpretive problems or debates concerning the best text type. But problems of apparent discrepancies, conflicting numbers, differences in parallel accounts, or allegedly unscientific statements do concern the question of inerrancy.

Errantists and inerrantists both have access to the same facts concerning each of these problems. Both have capable minds to use in interacting with those facts. Both can read the conclusions of others. But they do not come to these problems with the same basic outlook. The errantist's

outlook includes not only the possibility but the reality of errors in the Bible. Therefore, when he studies these problems one of his possible conclusions is that one or another of them is actually an error.

The inerrantist, on the other hand, has concluded that the Bible contains no errors. Therefore, he exercises no option to conclude that any of these same problems is an example of a genuine error in the Bible. His research may lead him to conclude that some problem is yet unexplainable. Nevertheless, he believes it is not an error and that either further research will demonstrate this, or he will understand the solution in heaven.

Consider this illustration: If a happily married man comes home unexpectedly one day to find his wife waving good-bye to a handsome man about to get into a car, what will he think? If his confidence and trust in his wife is total and unwavering because of their years of satisfying experiences together, he will assume she had a good reason for seeing that man. Though he may be curious, the husband will not doubt his wife's loyalty. Perhaps it will not be until later that he learns that the man he saw was delivering a special present his wife had ordered for him.

But if his confidence in his relationship with his wife is even a bit shaky, then his thoughts will wander into all kinds of paths including unfaithfulness on her part. Because of his insecurity, his wife will forever be branded an adulteress in his eyes.

The analogy is clear, isn't it? If I come to the Bible with confidence that its words were breathed out from God and are therefore without errors, and if that confidence has been buttressed by years of proving the Bible totally reliable, then I won't be shaken by a problem, and I certainly will not conclude that it is in error. But if I think there can be errors in the Bible, however few or many, then I will likely conclude that some of those problems are examples of errors. And even if there is only one, I have an errant Bible.

From the current literature on the inerrancy debate, it is difficult to present a definitive list of errors. It is probably not possible to list criteria by which to judge errors, only to list actual examples of errors. Though no two writers agree on a list of errors, when all the examples are put together there are about two dozen, more or less.

The lack of uniformity in these lists raises a serious question: Who and what determines the boundary line between the territory of permissible errancy and the territory of necessary inerrancy? If, for instance, some errancy can be expected and tolerated in historical matters, but not in doctrinal areas, how do I know which historical matters? After all, some important doctrines are built on historical matters. So where do I stop?

Admittedly, there are certain problem passages to examine. However, I maintain that reasonable suggestions can be found so that we need not conclude they are errors.

In a discussion like this I can only make suggestions, and there is not space to make those suggestions in great detail. Further information is readily available in other books and commentaries. But the point is that suggestions have been made that are compatible with the doctrine of inerrancy.

A. The "Two Accounts" of Creation

Although the allegation that there are two conflicting accounts of Creation has ramifications in a number of areas of interpretation, often in the inerrancy discussion the focus is on the supposed contradiction between Gen 1:11-12, which records vegetation appearing on the third day and Gen 2:5, which seems to say there was no vegetation until after Adam was created.

Two things are wrong about such a conclusion. First, chapter 2 adds details to the account of Creation in chapter 1, not in contradiction but in supplementation. For example, we are told that God created man (a generic term here) male and female (Gen 1:27), but this does not mean that the first creature was a male-female combination. The details of that creation of the male, Adam, and the female, Eve, are given in Gen 2:18-23. Likewise, verse 5 adds details about the creation of vegetation on the third day.

Second, the words used in verse 5 refer to the kind of plants that require cultivation, not to all kinds of green plants. Plants that required such cultivation either did not appear until Adam was created and could then cultivate them, or they appeared but did not grow until Adam was created.

Leupold has summed up the matter well.

Verse 4b takes us back into the time of the work of creation, more particularly to the time before the work of the third day began, and draws our attention to certain details, which, being details, could hardly have been inserted in chapter 1: The fact that certain forms of life, namely the kinds that require the attentive care of man in greater measure, had not sprung up. . . . When verdure covered the earth, the sprouting of these types of vegetation was retarded, so that they might appear after man was already in full possession of his domain and in a position to give them their needed care. . . . The fact that not the whole of vegetation is meant appears from the distinctive terms employed, neither of which had as yet appeared in the account. . . . From all this it appears sufficiently how absurd the claim is that in this account (2:4ff.) man is made first, then vegetation.¹

Thus a contradiction and therefore an error appears in this account only for those who want it. Good exegesis requires no error.

B. Cain's Wife

Though by many inerrantists the question of where Cain got his wife would not be considered a problem at all, this question is often used by those who try to demonstrate that the Bible is unreliable in what it claims. How could it claim that Adam and Eve were the first human beings who had two sons, one of whom murdered the other, and yet who produced a large race of people? Clearly, the Bible does teach that Adam and Eve were the first created human beings. The Lord affirmed this in Mt 19:3-9. The genealogy of Christ is traced back to Adam (Lk 3:38). Jude 14 identifies Enoch as the seventh from Adam. This could hardly mean the seventh from "mankind," an interpretation that would be necessary if Adam were not an individual as some claim. Clearly, Cain murdered Abel and yet many people were born. Where did Cain get his wife?

We know that Adam and Eve had other sons and daughters in addition to Abel, Cain, and Seth (Gen 5:4), and if there was only one original family, then the first marriages had to be between brothers and sisters. Such marriages in the beginning were not harmful. Incest is dangerous

because inherited mutant genes that produce deformed, sickly, or moronic children are more likely to find expression in children if those genes are carried by both parents. Certainly, Adam and Eve, coming from the creative hand of God, had no such mutant genes. Therefore, marriages between brothers and sisters, or cousins or other relatives, in the first and second generations following Adam and Eve would not have been dangerous.

C. Num 25:9

The plague that followed Israel's worship of Baal and Peor killed 24,000 people according to Moses. Yet Paul recorded only 23,000 deaths in 1 Cor 10:8. An obvious error? Not necessarily, for Paul limited his 23,000 figure to those killed on one day. The account in Numbers 25 records that the judges were involved in carrying out this judgment, and the number may include additional deaths that occurred on the following days. In other words, they may not have completed their awesome task in one day. The two accounts do not conflict because of Paul's additional phrase "in one day."

But no damage is done to inerrancy if we consider both numbers as round figures. If so, then the number killed was between 23,000 and 24,000. If either passage stated that "exactly" or "only" a certain number died and if they did not agree, this would constitute a clear error. But such is not the case.

D. Who Caused David to Number Israel? (2 Sam 24:1; 1 Chr 21:1)

One account says the Lord did, whereas the other says Satan did. But why does this have to be a conflict? Could not both the Lord and Satan have been involved? They have been in other matters. Paul said that the Lord sent a messenger from Satan to keep Paul from exalting himself (2 Cor 12:7). Certainly the Lord and Satan are involved in activities that lead to Armageddon. Why not here also? Such a simple solution makes even the suggestion of a contradiction seem incredible. Yet this is no straw man. One errantist emphatically stated that "both accounts cannot be accurate. But from the viewpoint of doctrinal integrity they both present exactly the same truth: What David did was wrong. . . ."²

E. Who Killed Goliath? (2 Sam 21:19; 1 Sam 17:50)

Did David kill Goliath or did someone else named Elhanan? Before assuming that the accounts are in conflict and therefore that one is in error, let's ask some other questions: (1) Could David have had two names, the other one being Elhanan? Solomon had two names (2 Sam 12:24-25). (2) Could there have been two Goliaths? In the immediate context (2 Sam 21:20), another giant is mentioned at Gath. (3) Could some words like "the brother of" have been omitted from verse 19? Any of these solutions is equally plausible rather than concluding the presence of an error. And all of them are more plausible in light of the proven accuracy of the Bible elsewhere.

F. Certain Numbers in 2 Sam 24 and 1 Chr 21

Other numbers in this parallel account seem not to harmonize, and errantists conclude that some things are in error. 2 Sam 24:9 reports 800,000 were numbered in Israel and 500,000 in Judah, whereas 1 Chr 21:5 gives a 1.1 million total for Israel and 470,000 for Judah. The difference in the total for Israel may be accounted for by assuming that the 800,000 figure did not include the 300,000 listed in 1 Chr 27, which if added would agree with the 1.1 million total in 1 Chr 21:5.

Perhaps the 30,000 difference in the other figures involves the 30,000 specially mentioned in 2 Sam 6:1.

When God gave David a choice of punishment, He offered as an option seven years of famine according to 2 Sam 24:13 and three years of famine according to 1 Chr 21:12. The Septuagint translation says three years in both places, so likely the figure in 2 Samuel is a scribal error. (It has been changed to say three years in some versions, including the NIV.) Though copies were very carefully made, errors inevitably crept in. This seems to be one, but it is not an error in the original—that was inerrant when it was written, but inerrancy cannot be extended to the copies.

Finally, in these chapters the question of how much David paid for the property he bought from Araunah seems to be in conflict in the two accounts. 2 Sam 24:24 says 50 shekels of silver while 1 Chr 21:25 records 600 shekels as the price. The difference is too great even allowing for inflation! But is it too great if the 50 shekels were paid for the threshing floor alone (2 Sam 24:24) while the larger amount included other property surrounding it?

G. The Laver in 2 Chr 4:2

In describing the measurements of this laver, the circumference is given as 30 cubits (or 540 inches if the cubit was 18 inches) while the diameter is 10 cubits. However, circumference is arrived at by multiplying the diameter by pi (3.14159), and that total is more than 565 inches, an apparent contradiction. One writer resolves it by saying that "in the culture of the day the measurement was not only accurate but also 'inerrant.'"³ However, there is a better solution that does not include sleight of hand. The 10-cubit measurement was from brim to brim; that is, from one outside edge to the other. But verse 5 states that the width of the edge was a handbreadth, or about 4 inches. So the inside diameter was 10 cubits (180 inches) minus two handbreadths (8 inches). Multiplying 172 inches by pi, the total is 540 inches, the same circumference as given in verse 2.

These represent passages being currently used as illustrations of errors in the Old Testament. Without going into great detail, all I have tried to do is show that reasonable explanations are at hand. We need not conclude that errors are present in the text (with the exception of occasional copyists' errors). How one views these suggestions will be a reflection of his underlying confidence, or lack of it, in the Bible itself.

II. Some Problems in the New Testament

Errantists also cite a number of passages from the New Testament that supposedly deny inerrancy or at least require a definition of inerrancy that contains so much latitude that it becomes errancy. One writer cited 2 Chr 4:2; Num 25:9; Mk 2:26; and Mt 22:42 as examples of "a kind of inerrancy that falls short of perfect conformity to what was actually said" and of problems to which only "highly fanciful" explanations could be given.⁴

Another is troubled by Mt 13:31-32 and problems in Acts 7 that he says cannot be solved compatibly with inerrancy.⁵ Still another cited Mt 27:9 as an error and said that there are "hundreds of examples like this one."⁶ We obviously cannot discuss "hundreds" of unnamed examples, but we will look at the ones named in the writings of those who hold to something less than total inerrancy.

A. Taking a Staff (Mt 10:9-10; Mk 6:8; Lk 9:3)

Mark records that Jesus allowed the disciples to take a staff while Matthew and Luke say He forbade it. This led an errantist to say: "I know of no way to reconcile this inconsistency. The proper conclusion, I think, is that the accounts are inconsistent and that at least one of the Gospels is in error."⁷

But resolution is not impossible. Putting the accounts together, the Lord permitted the disciples to take along any staffs they already had (Mark). However, they were not to take one if they did not have one or walked well without one (Luke). In no case were they to procure or buy a new staff (Matthew, who uses a different verb from Mark and Luke, one meaning to acquire or get). The principal idea of the Lord's instruction is clear: do not make any special provision for this mission.

B. The Mustard Seed (Mt 13:32)

In His Parable of the Mustard Seed, the Lord said that the mustard seed was the smallest of all the seeds. Is this plainly an erroneous statement since the mustard seed is not the smallest? Before jumping to that conclusion, remember that it was stated by Jesus Christ, and if He spoke a lie then how could He have been sinless? This is not simply a small factual discrepancy; if the statement is an error, then it proves something about the One who made it, and that becomes a serious doctrinal matter. You cannot separate this history from its doctrinal ramification.

But how are we to understand the Lord's words? One suggestion stated well by Trench years ago is this: "This seed, when cast into the ground, is 'the least of all seeds'-words which have often perplexed interpreters, many seeds, as of poppy or rue, being smaller. Yet difficulties of this kind are not worth making; it is sufficient to know that 'small as a grain of mustard seed' was a proverbial expression among the Jews for something exceedingly minute (see Lk 17:6). The Lord, in His popular teaching, adhered to the popular language."⁸

Another fact to note is that the word "smallest" is actually a comparative, not a superlative and should be translated (as in the NASB and NEB), "smaller" of all the seeds. In other words, the Lord did not state an absolute (the mustard seed is absolutely the smallest) but placed the mustard seed in the class of smallest seeds.

Perhaps the two suggestions should be combined. Technically, He placed the mustard seed among the smaller seeds and capitalized on the popular proverbial understanding of that seed as representing something exceedingly minute. But He did not make a technical or scientific error.

C. The Blind Men at Jericho (Mt 20:29-34; Mk 10:46-52; Lk 18:35-43)

The accounts of the healing of the blind men at Jericho (one of them being Bartimaeus) contain some different details, which some have interpreted as irresolvable, leading to the conclusion that one or another of the accounts must contain errors. Matthew wrote that the Lord healed two blind men as He left Jericho. The other accounts mention only one blind man and record the miracle being performed as they entered Jericho. As to the number of blind men, if Mark or Luke said only one blind man, then there would be an error. But if Bartimaeus was the more forward of the two, then it would be natural for one writer to focus on him while another might mention both of them. The statement that there were two includes the focus on one. A statement that there were

two would conflict if another Gospel contained a statement that there was only one. But such is not the case.

As to when the miracle happened, two plausible suggestions have been made. One is that the men pleaded with the Lord as He entered Jericho, but were not healed until He was leaving. The other is that since there were two Jerichos (old Jericho and the new city), the healing could have taken place after the group left old Jericho and as they were nearing new Jericho. Thus Matthew's "as they were going out" refers to old Jericho while Mark's and Luke's references to approaching Jericho refer to new Jericho.

Whichever suggestion is true it is clear that there is no need to see an insoluble contradiction in these accounts.

D. Zechariah's Father (Mt 23:35)

In this verse Zechariah (not the prophet by the same name but a priest) is said to be the son of Berechiah, while in 2 Chr 24:20 he is said to be the son of Jehoiada. But "son of" does not have to mean the next immediate generation (as in Gen 31:28 where Laban refers to his grandchildren as sons and daughters, or as in the case of Christ, the Son of David and Abraham, Mt 1:1). Most likely, Jehoiada was Zechariah's grandfather and is named in the Chronicles account because of his fame.

E. Zechariah vs. Jeremiah (Mt 27:9-10)

The main part of this quotation comes from Zech 11:12-13, whereas Matthew seems to ascribe it to Jeremiah. Is this not a clear mistake?

Before reaching such a conclusion, consider that Jeremiah was placed at the beginning of the Old Testament prophetic writings in the Babylonian Talmud. Matthew, then, may simply be using Jeremiah's name to designate the section of the Old Testament from which the Zechariah references come. It is much like saying, "In the book by Smith, Jones said. . ." Jones wrote a chapter in a book which Smith edited. (This is not to suggest, however, that Jeremiah edited Zechariah's prophecy.) Note this same prominence given to Jeremiah in Mt 16:14 where he is the only prophet named specifically though others are included in the statement.

Though this seems the most plausible explanation, some find a solution in the thought that Matthew had primarily in mind the events mentioned about the potter's house in Jer 18 and 19.

F. Isaiah vs. Malachi (Mk 1:2-3)

These verses raise a problem since immediately after the words "as it is written in Isaiah the prophet," there follows a quotation from Malachi, then a quotation from Isaiah. Many regard this as an obvious error, though a harmless one. However, the structure of the chapter introduces the "beginning of the gospel" by focusing on the ministry of John the Baptist in the wilderness. So the quotation from Isaiah was in Mark's mind the principal one, since it predicted the figure in the wilderness. His attention being on the Isaiah prophecy explains why he only mentioned Isaiah in verse 2.

G. Abiathar vs. Ahimelech (Mk 2:26)

Mark, in referring to David eating the tabernacle bread, said Abiathar was the high priest, whereas the Old Testament record of this event states that Ahimelech was (1 Sam 21:1-6). A solution recognizes that while the event actually happened during Ahimelech's priesthood, he soon was killed and Abiathar, who also would have been exercising priestly functions at that time, shortly became high priest and proved to be more prominent than Ahimelech. Mark was not saying that Abiathar was actually high priest when the event took place, but he was a ministering priest and soon became a very prominent high priest. Similarly one might speak of some event that occurred in the senatorial years of John F. Kennedy and refer to it as happening in the days of Kennedy, the president. He was not president when it happened, rather a senator, but he is identified as Kennedy the president because he (later) became president.

Again, these examples in Mark remind us that if one comes to the Bible expecting or allowing for error, he can make a case for an errant Scripture. But if he comes expecting the Bible to be inerrant, he can find plausible solutions, and even if he cannot honestly accept any of the suggested solutions, he still can believe that the Bible is inerrant and that we simply do not have enough facts to solve some of the seeming problems.

H. The Death of Judas

In Acts 1:18, Peter described Judas's death as "falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out." Matthew said that Judas hanged himself (Mt 27:5). Most likely both descriptions are true. He did hang himself, but something happened that caused his body to fall and break open. This is the simplest solution and has been suggested since the time of Augustine.

The same two accounts seem to contain another problem. Matthew stated that the priests bought the field of blood while Acts attributes it to Judas. Again the simple solution is that both accounts are correct. The priests could not take the money back, so they bought the field in Judas's name since they did not want to appear to have anything to do with his money.

I. Problems in Acts 7

Although it is well within the boundaries of the concept of inerrancy to permit Stephen in this speech to utter something erroneous and have Luke record it accurately, the serious interpreter will want to know as clearly as possible what Stephen was saying. One of the problems focuses on verse 6 where Stephen gives the length of the Egyptian captivity as 400 years whereas Exodus 12:40 says 430 years. Further, Paul in Gal 3:17 wrote that the Law came 430 years after the Abrahamic promise. The problems in these figures are two: (a) The difference between 400 and 430; and (b) the apparently large error of Paul because the time between Abraham and the giving of the Law was considerably longer than 430 years. Many simply acknowledge that the 400/430 difference involves an approximation. Four hundred is 430 rounded off. The 430 years in Galatians does not use the termini from Abraham to the Law (Gen. 12 to Exod. 20). Rather, it refers to the period from the end of the Patriarchal Age (Gen 35:11-12) to the giving of the Law in Exodus 20.

Others believe that 400 years was the duration of the Egyptian bondage and that both 430-year figures refer to the time between the last confirmation of the Abrahamic Covenant to Jacob and the giving of the Law. However, this illustrates a case where we simply do not have enough facts to be able to make a conclusive decision. So once again one's attitude comes into play: you can

believe there are errors, or you can believe that there would be perfect resolution if all the facts were known.

Sometimes the apparent problem in verse 14 poses a question. There Jacob's family is said to be seventy-five persons while in Gen 46:27 only seventy are included. Stephen in Acts follows the Septuagint number, which included five extra persons (the son and grandson of Manasseh and two sons and a grandson of Ephraim). Genesis does not include these. But in both numbers only a restricted group is included because the total number of the family of Jacob would have been much greater, including wives of Jacob's sons and grandsons and husbands of his daughters and granddaughters who are not listed. Anyone trying to list the number in an immediate family of this size would easily have come up with at least two ways of doing it and two different totals without contradiction.

These represent the New Testament problems being discussed. Some of them have been used throughout church history to try to prove that there are errors in the Bible. And reasonable solutions have been proposed throughout history to these problems. Some have come into focus more recently. Any of them might be used to conclude that the Bible contains errors, but all of them do have reasonable explanations.

It takes only one error to make an errant Bible. It may be a "small" error, an inconsequential one, a historical one, or a doctrinal one, but if there is one, then we do not have an inerrant Bible.

NOTES

1. -H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Columbus: Wartburg, 1942), 112-13.
2. -Ray Summers, "How God Said It," *The Baptist Standard*, 4 February 1970, 12.
3. -Robert Mounce, "Clues to Understanding Biblical Accuracy," *Eternity*, June 1966, 18.
4. -Ibid.
5. -Daniel P. Fuller, "Evangelicalism and Biblical Inerrancy" (unpublished material, 1966), 18-19.
6. -Berkeley Mickelsen, "The Bible's Own Approach to Authority," in *Biblical Authority*, ed. Jack B. Rogers (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1977), 86.
7. -Stephen T. Davis, *The Debate About the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 106.
8. -R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables of Our Lord* (New York: Revell, n.d.), 91.

Chapter 15: The Canon

The subject of the canon involves the question of how many books belong in the Bible. Canon then refers to the authoritative list of the books of the Bible. Of course, the individual books were

written over a long period of time by various writers. How then were they collected, and who decided which ones went into the canon of Scripture?

I. Some Basic Considerations

A. The Meaning of the Term Canon

1. *Its derivation.* The word comes from the Greek word kanon, which refers to a measuring instrument. It therefore came to mean a rule of action (Gal 6:16; Phil 3:16).

2. *History of the use of the word.* In the early church the word canon was used to refer to the creeds. In the middle of the fourth century it came to be used of the Bible; i.e., of the list of accepted books that were acknowledged to make up the Bible.

3. *Its meaning.* Actually the word canon has a twofold meaning. It refers to the list of books that met certain tests or rules and thus were considered authoritative and canonical. But it also means that the collection of canonical books becomes our rule of life.

B. Some Underlying Considerations in Investigating Canonicity

1. *Self-authentication.* It is essential to remember that the Bible is self-authenticating since its books were breathed out by God (2 Tim 3:16). In other words, the books were canonical the moment they were written. It was not necessary to wait until various councils could examine the books to determine if they were acceptable or not. Their canonicity was inherent within them, since they came from God. People and councils only recognized and acknowledged what is true because of the intrinsic inspiration of the books as they were written. No Bible book became canonical by action of some church council.

2. *Decisions of men.* Nevertheless, men and councils did have to consider which books should be recognized as part of the canon, for some candidates were not inspired. Some decisions and choices had to be made, and God guided groups of people to make correct choices (not without guidelines) and to collect the various writings into the canons of the Old and New Testaments.

3. *Debates over canonicity.* In the process of deciding and collecting, it would not be unexpected that some disputes would arise about some of the books. And such was the case. However, these debates in no way weaken the authenticity of the truly canonical books, nor do they give status to those that were not inspired by God.

4. *Completion of canon.* Since A.D. 397 the Christian church has considered the canon of the Bible to be complete; if it is complete, then it must be closed. Therefore, we cannot expect any more books to be discovered or written that would open the canon again and add to its sixty-six books. Even if a letter of Paul were discovered, it would not be canonical. After all, Paul must have written many letters during his lifetime in addition to the ones that are in the New Testament; yet the church did not include them in the canon. Not everything an apostle wrote was inspired, for it was not the writer who was inspired but his writings, and not necessarily all of them.

The more recent books of the cults that are placed alongside the Bible are not inspired and have no claim to be part of the canon of Scripture. Certainly so-called prophetic utterances or visions

that some claim to be from God today cannot be inspired and considered as part of God's revelation or as having any kind of authority like that of the canonical books.

II. The Canon of the Old Testament

A. The Evidence of the Old Testament Itself

1. *From the Law.* There are a number of references in the Old Testament to the Law of Moses as being authoritative. Here are some of those references: Josh 1:7-8; 23:6; 1 Kgs 2:3; 2 Kgs 14:6; 21:8; 23:25; Ezra 6:18; Neh 13:1; Dan 9:11; Mal 4:4. Such references validate the inspired nature of Moses' writings in the first five books of the Old Testament where he recorded the Law.

2. *From the Prophets.* The prophets claimed to be speaking the Word of God, and their prophecies were recognized as authoritative. Notice these references: Josh 6:26 compared with 1 Kgs 16:34; Josh 24:29-33 compared with Jud 2:8-9; 2 Chr 36:22-23 compared with Ezra 1:1-4; Dan 9:2 compared with Jer 25:11-12.

3. *From Malachi 4:5.* In Mal 4:5 there is an indication that the prophetic witness would end with Malachi and not begin again until the coming of an Elijah-type prophet in the person of John the Baptist (Mt 17:11-12).

B. The Evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls

1. *Their importance.* The scrolls show us what books of the Old Testament were recognized as sacred in the period between the Old and New Testaments.

2. *Their number.* About 175 of the 500 Dead Sea Scrolls are biblical. There are several copies of many of the books of the Old Testament, and all the Old Testament books are represented among the scrolls, except Esther.

3. *Their testimony.* The existence of biblical books among the scrolls does not in itself prove their canonicity since some of the noncanonical books are also present. However, many of the Dead Sea Scrolls are commentaries, and so far all of those commentaries deal only with canonical books. That seems to show that a distinction between canonical and noncanonical books was recognized. Also twenty of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament are quoted or referred to as Scripture. In summary, the scrolls give positive evidence for the canonicity of all but Chronicles, Esther, and the Song of Solomon.

C. Other Evidence

1. *Prologue to Ecclesiasticus.* This noncanonical book refers to a threefold division of books (namely, the Law, the Prophets, and hymns and precepts for human conduct), which was known by the writer's grandfather (which would be around 200 B.C.).

2. *Philo.* Philo (around A.D. 40) referred to the same threefold division.

3. *Josephus.* Josephus (A.D. 37-100) said that the Jews held as sacred only twenty-two books (which include exactly the same as our present thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. Josephus included five books for the Pentateuch, thirteen for the Prophets (Joshua, Judges with Ruth,

Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Isaiah, Jeremiah with Lamentations, Ezekiel, the 12 minor prophets, Daniel), and four for "hymns to God and practical precepts to men" (Psalms, Song of Solomon, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes).

4. *Jamnia*. Jamnia (A.D. 90), was a teaching house of rabbis who discussed canonicity. Some questioned whether it was right to accept (as was being done) Esther, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. These discussions concerned an existing canon.

5. *The church fathers*. The church fathers accepted the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. The only exception was Augustine (A.D. 400), who included the books of the Apocrypha (those "extra" books that some Bibles include between the books of the Old and New Testaments). However, he did acknowledge that they were not fully authoritative. The books of the Apocrypha were not officially recognized as part of the canon until the Council of Trent (A.D. 1546) and then only by the Roman Catholic Church.

D. The Evidence of the New Testament

1. *The quotations of the Old Testament in the New*. There are some 250 quotes from Old Testament books in the New Testament. None is from the Apocrypha. (Jude [v. 14] quotes from the noncanonical book of Enoch, but that book is classified as Pseudepigraphy, not Apocrypha.) All Old Testament books are quoted except Esther, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

2. *In Matthew*. Mt 5:17, here the Lord said that the Law and the Prophets were authoritative because they were sure to be fulfilled. This twofold division covers all of the Old Testament.

3. *In Luke*. Lk 11:51, here the Lord said something definitive about the extent of the canon of the Old Testament that He accepted. In condemning the leaders of the Jewish people for killing God's messengers throughout their history, He charged them with being guilty of shedding the blood of all the righteous from Abel to Zechariah. The murder of Abel is recorded in Gen 4, and the murder of Zechariah in 2 Chr 24, which in the arrangement of the Hebrew canon was the last book in order (as Malachi is in our arrangement). So the Lord was saying, "From the first to the last murder recorded in the Old Testament." Now, of course, there were other murders of God's messengers recorded in the Apocrypha, but the Lord does not include them. Evidently He did not consider the books of the Apocrypha to be of equal authority with the books from Genesis to 2 Chronicles.

III. The Canon of the New Testament

A. The Tests for Canonicity

1. *The test of authority*. In relation to Old Testament books, this meant having the authority of a lawgiver or a prophet or a leader in Israel behind them. In connection with New Testament books, this meant having the authority of an apostle behind the books that were accepted into the canon. This meant that the book either had to be written by an apostle or backed by one so that either way there was apostolic authority behind the book. For example, Peter was considered to be the apostle who stood behind the writings of Mark, and Paul the apostle behind the writings of Luke.

2. *The test of uniqueness*. To be taken into the canon a book had to show internal evidence of its uniqueness as an evidence of its inspiration.

3. The test of acceptance by the churches. As the books circulated they had to gain acceptance by the churches. Actually there was no book that was doubted by any large number of churches that eventually was accepted into the canon.

B. The Process of Acknowledgment of the New Testament Canon

Remember that the books were inspired when they were written and thus canonical. The church only attested to what was inherently true.

1. The witness of the apostolic period. The writers witnessed that their own writings were the Word of God (Col 4:16; 1 Thess 4:15). They also acknowledged that the writings of other New Testament books were Scripture. "Scripture" was a designation in Judaism for canonical books, so when it is used in the New Testament of other New Testament writings, it designates those writings as canonical. And it is so used in two significant places.

One is 1 Tim 5:18 where a quotation from Deut 25:4 is linked with one from Lk 10:7, and both are called Scripture. To be sure the sentiment of Lk 10:7 is found in the Old Testament, but the form of quotation is found only in the Gospels. The other is 2 Pet 3:16 where Peter referred to the writings of Paul as Scripture. This is a significant attestation because of the relatively short span of time that had elapsed between the time Paul wrote some of his letters and the time when Peter acknowledged them as Scripture.

2. The witness of the period A.D. 70-170. During this period all the New Testament books were cited in other writings, and the church Fathers recognized as canonical all twenty-seven books. However, each Father does not include all twenty-seven. In addition, Marcion, a heretic (140), included in his canon only Luke and ten of Paul's epistles, which shows, at least, that a collection was being made this early of Paul's writings.

3. The witness of the period A.D. 170-350. Three important pieces of evidence come from this period. First, the Muratorian canon (170) omitted Hebrews, James, and 1 and 2 Peter. However, there is a break in the manuscript, so we cannot be certain that these books were not included. This canon also rejects some other books like the Shepherd of Hermas, which did not become part of the canon.

Second, The Old Syriac Version (end of second century) lacked 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation. But no extra books were added to bring the total to twenty-seven.

Third, the Old Latin Version (200) lacked 2 Peter, James, and Hebrews, but added no extra books. So the unqualified candidates for books to be included in the canon were rejected during this period; most of the New Testament books were received; only a few were debated.

4. The Council of Carthage (397). It is generally agreed that this church council fixed the limits of the New Testament canon as including all twenty-seven books as we have them today.

5. A note on Luther's opinion of the Book of James. Sometimes it is claimed that Martin Luther rejected the book of James as being canonical. This is not so. Here's what he wrote in his preface to the New Testament in which he ascribes to the several books of the New Testament different degrees of doctrinal value. "St. John's Gospel and his first Epistle, St. Paul's Epistles, especially those to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and St. Peter's Epistle-these are the books which show

to thee Christ, and teach everything that is necessary and blessed for thee to know, even if you were never to see or hear any other book of doctrine. Therefore, St. James' Epistle is a perfect straw-epistle compared with them, for it has in it nothing of an evangelic kind." Thus Luther was comparing (in his opinion) doctrinal value, not canonical validity.

Chapter 16: The Interpretation of the Bible

I. The Principles of Hermeneutics

A. A Definition of Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the study of the principles of interpretation. Exegesis consists of the actual interpretation of the Bible, the bringing out of its meaning, whereas hermeneutics establishes the principles by which exegesis is practiced.

In actuality every interpreter of the Bible has a system of hermeneutics, whether consciously so or not. As one practices his exegesis, he reveals his hermeneutics, though probably most interpreters do not ever systematize their hermeneutics. Few, if any, interpreters begin by working out their hermeneutics before proceeding to exegesis. Most seem to think about hermeneutics after they have been interpreting for years. But thinking about the subject of hermeneutics serves an important purpose, for it forces one to examine the basis of exegesis and the consistency of his interpretive practices.

B. Some Hermeneutical Systems

I believe (for reasons yet to be stated) that the correct system of hermeneutics is that which may be labeled normal, plain, or literal. However, examples of other systems that do not promote normal or plain interpretation (at least not consistently) can serve to sharpen what is meant by the normal interpretation and the hermeneutical principles on which it is based. It should be said that hardly anyone has a "pure" system of hermeneutics. Most combine elements of several systems.

1. Allegorical hermeneutics. An allegory is a symbolic representation. Allegorical hermeneutics stands in contrast to literal hermeneutics and is usually resorted to when the literal sense seems unacceptable to the interpreter. The actual words, then, are not understood in their normal sense but in a symbolic sense, which results in a different meaning of the text, a meaning that, in the strictest sense, the text never intended to convey.

If used consistently, allegorical hermeneutics would reduce the Bible to near-fiction, for the normal meaning of words would be irrelevant and would be replaced by whatever meaning the interpreter gives to the symbols. However, for the most part, allegorical hermeneutics is not practiced consistently or thoroughly. Evangelicals who use this system do so usually in the area of prophecy, while using normal or literal hermeneutics in other areas of biblical interpretation.

F. W. Farrar tells where this allegorical method originated. He says:

Allegory by no means sprang from spontaneous piety, but was the child of rationalism which owed its birth to the heathen theories of Plato. It deserved its name, for it made Scripture say something else than it really meant. . . . Origen borrows from heathen Platonists and from Jewish philosophers a method which converts the whole of Scripture, alike the New and the Old

Testament, into a series of clumsy, varying, and incredible enigmas. Allegory helped him to get rid of chiliasm and superstitious literalism and the "antitheses" of the Gnostics, but it opened the door for deadlier evils.¹

2. *Literal interpretation.* At the opposite end of the spectrum from "pure" or consistent allegorical interpretation stands literal interpretation. Since the word "literal" has connotations that are either misunderstood or subjectively understood, labels like "plain" or "normal" serve more acceptably. "Literal" is assumed to preclude figures of speech, etc. (which is not the case).

Usually it is assumed that literal interpretation goes hand in hand with a belief in verbal, plenary inspiration. This is not necessarily so, for there are exegetes who practice literal hermeneutics but who do not hold to the highest view of inspiration.

More will be said about the principles of literal interpretation later. At this point I only want to present it as the opposite of allegorical interpretation.

3. *Semiallegorical or semiliteral interpretation.* Among evangelicals, at least, scarcely any are pure allegorists. Therefore, there exists a method of interpretation that may be labeled semiallegorical. Turning the coin over, it may also be called semiliteral, especially if there is a strong emphasis on literal interpretation in most of the areas of theology.

As I have said, usually literal interpretation is abandoned in the area of the interpretation of prophecy. Robert Mounce in his commentary *The Book of Revelation* exhibits a semiliteral exegesis. He states that Armageddon should be taken seriously but not literally. It "portrays the eschatological defeat of Antichrist . . . but does not require that we accept in a literal fashion the specific imagery with which the event is described."² Concerning the Millennium, he favors the idea that "John taught a literal millennium, but its essential meaning may be realized in something other than a temporal fulfillment."³ "The millennium is not, for John, the Messianic Age foretold by the prophets of the O.T."⁴

Oswald T. Allis tried to develop legitimate reasons for semiallegorical hermeneutics. Arguing that no literalist takes everything literally, he proceeds to try to demonstrate why limitations must necessarily be placed on literal interpretation. The reasons he advances are: (a) the presence of figures of speech mean that we cannot take all the Bible literally; (b) the fact that the main theme of the Bible is spiritual requires a spiritual hermeneutic (he prefers "spiritual" to "allegorical"); and (c) the fact that the Old Testament is preliminary and preparatory to the New Testament in which we find deeper meanings.⁵

Now, of course, no one denies that the Bible uses figures of speech, but they convey literal truths and often more vividly and literally than if the figures were not used. They enhance rather than change the plain meaning behind the figures. The main theme of the Bible is spiritual (redemption), but content does not determine hermeneutical principles. Hermeneutics provide the principles on which the content is understood. Of course the Old Testament is preparatory to the fuller revelation of the New Testament, but that does not mean that the New is to be understood allegorically or spiritually. God communicated plainly in both Testaments.

But, granting Allis's limitations on literal hermeneutics (which I do not), the important question still remains: How do you know when to use literal and when to use allegorical interpretation? To this question Allis offers these guidelines: (1) Whether you should interpret a passage figuratively or literally depends solely on which gives the true meaning.⁶ This, of course, is a circular

argument. (2) The only way prophecy can be understood literally is when its literal meaning is clear and obvious. But since for Allis prophecy may be "indefinite," "enigmatical," and "deceptive," there are very few occasions when it can be understood literally.⁷ (3) The interpretation of any prophecy hinges on the fulfillment of it. In other words, if it were clearly fulfilled literally (as the prophecies of the first advent of Christ), then of course those prophecies are interpreted literally. But Allis's theological system requires that prophecies about the Second Coming not be fulfilled literally, so on those he uses allegorical hermeneutics.

We must credit Allis with attempting to systematize his hermeneutics, though we may question with how much success. His discussion points out again that many evangelicals are consistent literalists in all areas of Bible doctrine except prophecy. To do so results in amillennialism; to be literalists in all areas results in premillennialism.

4. Theological interpretation. In a sense amillennialism, as illustrated by Allis's discussion, may be viewed not only as using semiallegorical hermeneutics but may also be viewed as an illustration of theological interpretation. The theological system does not permit an actual kingdom on this earth over which Christ reigns; therefore, certain passages cannot be interpreted literally.

Another illustration of theological interpretation is found in the writings of Daniel Fuller. In order to preserve the unity of the Bible, he says that we must use the principle of "theological interpretation," which means interpretation that does not result in two purposes of God in the Scripture (one for Israel and one for the church). The consistent use of the literal interpretation leads to a distinction between Israel and the church, while theological interpretation does not.⁸

C. Rationale for Literal Hermeneutics

1. The purpose of language. The purpose of language itself seems to require literal interpretation. That is, God gave man language for the purpose of being able to communicate with him. God created man in His image, which included the power of speech, in order that God might reveal His truth to man and that man might in turn offer worship and prayer to God.

Two ramifications flow from this idea. First, if God originated language for the purpose of communication, and if God is all-wise, then we may believe that He saw to it that the means (language) was sufficient to sustain the purpose (communication). Second, it follows that God would Himself use and expect man to use language in its normal sense. The Scriptures do not call for some special use of language, implying that they communicate on some "deeper" or special level unknown to other avenues of communication.

2. The need for objectivity. If one does not employ normal interpretation, then objectivity is lost to the extent that he does not use it consistently. Switching the hermeneutical base from literal to allegorical or to semiallegorical or to theological inevitably results in different, inconsistent, and often contradictory interpretations.

3. The example of the Bible. The prophecies of the first advent of Christ were all fulfilled literally. This obvious but extremely significant fact argues for the validity and use of the literal hermeneutics in all of biblical interpretation. It is said that more than three hundred such prophecies concerning the coming of Christ were literally fulfilled. Some examples include: Mic 5:2; Mal 3:1; Isa 9:1-2; 42:1; 53:5; 61:1; Ps 16:9-10; 22:1, 15-16, 18; 31:5; 34:20; 68:18; Zech 13:7. To be sure some prophecies of the Old Testament are given a typical fulfillment, but of the

approximately twenty-four such prophecies only seven are cited as examples of a nonliteral hermeneutic (and, of course, not all agree that these seven prove this). The seven are Mt 2:15, 18, 23; 11:10; Acts 2:17-21; Rom 9:24-26; and Gal 4:21-31. Remember, however, that we are not just comparing seven out of a total of twenty-four, but seven out of a total of hundreds, for almost all Old Testament prophecies are clearly fulfilled literally in the New Testament. To be sure, the New Testament may use the Old Testament in ways other than fulfillment, but I am here speaking of prophecies and their fulfillments. This is a strong support for literal hermeneutics.

D. Principles of Normal Hermeneutics

1. *Interpret grammatically.* Since words are the vehicles of thoughts, and since the meaning of any passage must be determined by a study of the words therein and their relationships in the sentences, determining the grammatical sense of the text must be the starting point of normal interpretation.

2. *Interpret contextually.* Words and sentences do not stand in isolation; therefore, the context must be studied in order to see the relation that each verse sustains to that which precedes and to that which follows. Involved are the immediate context and the theme and scope of the whole book.

3. *Compare Scripture with Scripture.* The dual authorship of the Bible makes it necessary not only to know the human author's meaning but also God's. God's meaning may not be fully revealed in the original human author's writing but is revealed when Scripture is compared with Scripture. We must allow for a sensus plenior, which allows for a fuller (though directly related) meaning in the mind of the divine Author of Scripture. We cannot say that the human authors of Scripture always understood the full implications of their own words. When we compare Scripture with Scripture, we can discover the fuller intention of the divine Author.

S. Lewis Johnson summarizes this well.

Thus the work of the biblical interpreter is not necessarily finished when he has come to the meaning intended by the original human author. . . . The total context of a passage is necessary for its correct understanding and, therefore, the intention of the secondary author must be subordinated to the intention of the primary Author, God Himself. The biblical principle of the analogia Scripturae should have taught us that *Scriptura ex Scriptura explicanda est*, or *Scriptura sui ipsius interpres*, traditional expressions of the sense of the analogy, teach that our first and final task is to discern God's intention in the text of Scripture. After all, is not the Bible God's Word?⁹

4. *Recognize the progressiveness of revelation.* To be able to consistently interpret plainly, it is imperative to recognize that revelation was given progressively. This means that in the process of revealing His message to man, God may add or even change in one era what He gave in another. Obviously the New Testament adds much that was not revealed in the Old. What God revealed as obligatory at one time may be rescinded at another (as the prohibition of eating pork and other unclean meats, once binding on God's people, now rescinded, 1 Tim 4:3).

To fail to recognize this progressiveness in revelation will raise unresolvable contradictions between passages if taken literally. Notice the following pairs of passages that will contradict if understood plainly unless one recognizes changes due to the progress of revelation: Mt 10:5-7; 28:18-20; Lk 9:3; 22:36; Gen 17:10 and Gal 5:2; Ex 20:8 and Acts 20:7. Notice too the crucial

changes indicated in Jn 1:17; 16:24; 2 Cor 3:7-11. Those who will not consistently apply this principle of progressive revelation in interpretation are forced to resort to figurative interpretation or sometimes simply to ignore the evidence.

E. An Objection to Normal Hermeneutics

The most frequent objection by evangelicals to normal interpretation points out that since the New Testament uses the Old Testament in a nonliteral sense we also may interpret Old Testament prophecies (about the Millennium, for example) in a nonliteral sense. Or to put it more simply: since the New Testament spiritualizes the Old Testament, so can we.

This might seem at first glance to be a strong objection to the consistent use of normal hermeneutics. However, we must remember that most often the New Testament uses the Old Testament prophecies literally and does not spiritualize them. Instances cited where the New Testament uses a nonliteral hermeneutic in relation to Old Testament prophecies number only seven at most. Other uses of the Old Testament include using it (a) illustratively (Rom 9:9-12); (b) analogically (1 Cor 1:19); (c) applicationally Rom 12:19); (d) rhetorically (Jas 4:6); but (e) usually as fulfilled directly, eschatologically, or typically (Acts 2:25-29; Jn 13:18).

Hardly ever do New Testament writers not use the Old Testament in a historical-grammatical sense (which, of course, includes the use of figures of speech). The rule is that they interpreted the Old Testament plainly; exceptions are rare and typological (but in a sense all of the Old Testament is typical in relation to the fuller revelation of the New Testament).

However, the crux of the matter is this: Can we as interpreters follow the example of the biblical writers in these rare exceptional uses of the Old Testament that seem to be nonliteral? Of course, the answer is yes, if we want to. But if we do it, we do so without apostolic authority, only with personal authority; comparatively, that is not much authority. Any and all uses of the Old Testament that the New Testament writers made were made under divine inspiration and were therefore done properly and authoritatively. If we depart from the plain sense of the text, we do so improperly without such authority. What the biblical writers wrote was infallible; the work of all interpreters is fallible.

To sum up: It is God who desired to give man His Word. It is God who also gave the gift of language so He could fulfill that desire. He gave us His Word in order to communicate, not confound. We should seek to understand that communication plainly, for that is the normal way beings communicate.

II. The Doctrines of Illumination

A. Its Meaning

The verb *ph̄otizo* is used of a general enlightening that Christ brings to all people, especially through the Gospel (Jn 1:9; 2 Tim 1:10); of the enlightening experience of conversion (Heb 6:4); of the understanding of Christian truth (Eph 1:18; 3:9); and of the searching character of future judgment (1 Cor 4:5).

Theologically the word has been applied to several concepts. In the early church baptism was frequently described as illumination (e.g., Justin, First Apology, chap. 61). The illumination

theory of inspiration regards inspiration as an intensifying and elevating of the perceptions of the biblical writers. But generally the concept of illumination relates to the ministry of the Holy Spirit helping the believer to understand the truth of the Bible.

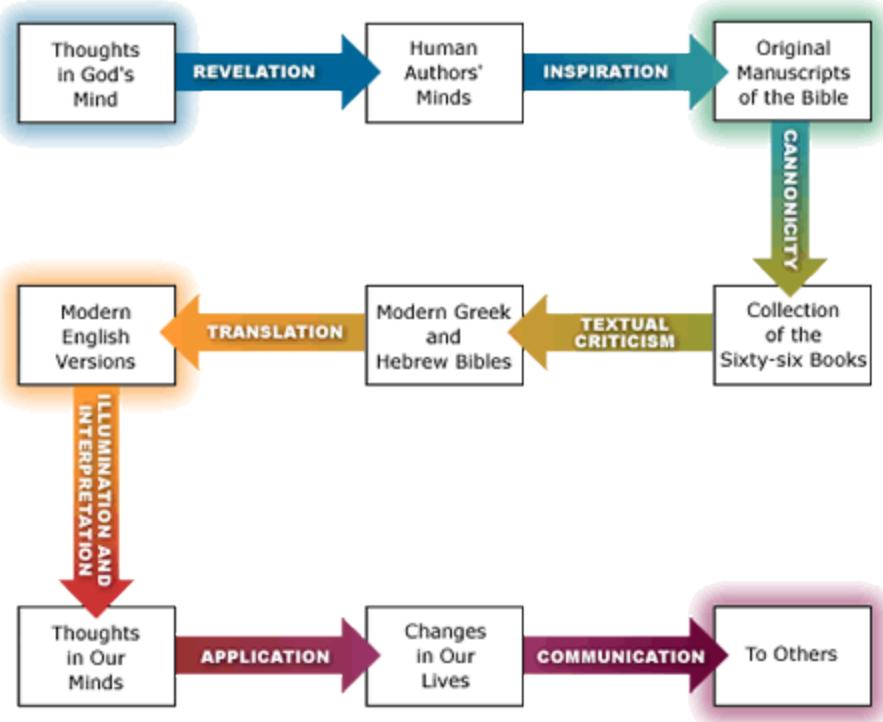
B. The Means

Two principal passages describe this ministry of the Spirit (Jn 16:12-15 and 1 Cor 2:9-3:2). They teach the following facts about illumination.

- (1) The Spirit is the Teacher, and His presence in the believer guarantees the availability of this ministry to all believers.
- (2) Unbelievers, therefore, cannot experience this ministry. Even though they may achieve a high level of understanding of the Bible, they consider what they know basically as foolishness.
- (3) The Spirit's teaching encompasses "all the truth," including that of "what is to come," i.e. Christian doctrine including prophecy.
- (4) Carnality in the believer can thwart this ministry.
- (5) The purpose of the Spirit's ministry is to glorify Christ.
- (6) The Spirit will use those who have the gift of teaching to carry out His ministry (Rom 12:7; 1 Jn 2:27). This includes the writings of those who, now dead, have left the results of the Spirit's work in their lives in that written form.

The experience of illumination is not by "direct revelation." The canon is closed. The Spirit illuminates the meaning of that closed canon, and He does so through study and meditation. Study employs all the proper tools for ascertaining the meaning of the text. Meditation thinks about the true facts of the text, putting them together into a harmonious whole and applying them to one's own life. The end result of the illumination ministry of the Spirit is to glorify Christ in the life, or to promote healthy doctrine-teaching that brings spiritual health and wholeness to the believer's life. Illumination is not concerned merely with understanding facts but with using those facts to promote Christlikeness.

How Our Bible Came to Us



NOTES

1. -F. W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation* (London: Macmillan, 1886), 193-94, 196.
2. -Robert Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 349.
3. -Ibid., 359.
4. -Ibid.
5. -Oswald_T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1945), 16-19.
6. -Ibid., 18.
7. -Ibid., 28-30.
8. -Daniel P. Fuller, "The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism," Th.D. dissertation, Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1957, especially 188; and *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).
9. -S. Lewis Johnson, *The Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 51.

Section IV—Angels: Ministering Spirits

Chapter 17: The Existence of Angels

When areas of theology are slighted, this will likely be one of them, at least in standard books of theology. One has only to note the amount of space devoted to angelology in standard theologies to demonstrate this. However, in the last years of the twentieth century there has been an increasing interest in the subject as well as in Satan and demons. Articles, books, and TV programs featuring angels, though more often "warm and fuzzy" than theologically accurate, have helped generate this interest in angelology. Nevertheless, only the Bible gives us totally accurate information about angels.

Even Calvin was cautious in discussing this subject.¹ Also, neo-orthodoxy's denial of the objective existence of angels has been countered by the widespread publicity given to demons and their activity. Although people may deny theologically the existence of an order of beings called angels (and demons), practically their reported activity seems to make it impossible to deny their existence. Thus on the one hand man's bias against anything supernatural rules out in his mind the existence of angels; while on the other hand activity that he cannot explain rationally makes their existence seem necessary.

I. Human Knowledge

Man does not have the knowledge to judge what the makeup of the universe is. He has no a priori way to know if that makeup would or would not include an order of creatures like angels. Further, he has no predisposition to assume that it does include angels, for his natural predisposition is antisupernatural. In addition, his experience would not incline him to consider the possibility of angels, and his faith in his own intellect would compel him to seek other explanations for phenomena he cannot readily understand.

Ramm has fingered the limitations of human knowledge in this very clever way. "Mankind has no handbook titled A Guide to All Possible Creations. It has no information about creation, apart from the data afforded by this creation."² In other words, man's limited knowledge does not permit him to conclude there are no such beings as angels.

II. Biblical Revelation

If one accepts the biblical revelation, then there can be no question about the existence of angels. There are three significant characteristics about that revelation. First, it is extensive. The Old Testament speaks about angels just over 100 times, while the New Testament mentions them about 165 times. Of course, any truth has to be stated only one time in the Bible for us to acknowledge it as truth, but when a subject is mentioned as often as angels are, then it becomes that much more difficult to deny it.

Second, angels are mentioned throughout the Bible. The truth about them is not confined to one period of history or one part of the Scriptures or a few writers. They do not belong to some

primitive era. Their existence is mentioned in thirty-four books of the Bible from the earliest (whether Genesis or Job) to the last.

Third, the teaching of our Lord includes a number of references to angels as real beings. So to deny their existence is to cast doubt on His veracity.

The actual details of the biblical revelation are, of course, important, but while surveying them, it is important to keep in mind these three characteristics of the nature of that revelation.

We shall examine first the amount and spread of the biblical facts, then the teachings of Christ.

A. In the Old Testament

The Old Testament always presents angels as real, objective, existing creatures. In no way are they considered illusions or figments of the imagination. In the thirty-four occurrences of the word in the Mosaic writings, angels always appear as real creatures who do specific things in character with their service as messengers (which is, of course, the meaning of both the Hebrew and Greek words for angels). For example, Abraham ate and conversed with angels (Gen. 18). Many of the references in the Pentateuch and in Judges are to the Angel of Yahweh, who seems to be Deity. An angel executed the judgment on Israel after David wrongly took a census of the people (2 Sam 24:16-hardly an illusion). Isaiah refers to seraphim (Isa 6:2) and Ezekiel, to cherubim (Ezk 10:1-3). Daniel mentions Gabriel (Dan 9:20-27) and Michael (Dan 10:13; 12:1). Zechariah mentions angels frequently as agents of God (Zech 1) and interpreters of visions (chaps. 1-6). In the Psalms angels are depicted as God's servants who worship Him and who deliver God's people from harm (Ps 34:7; 91:11; 103:20).

B. In the New Testament

In addition to what our Lord taught about angels, the writers of the New Testament also affirmed their real existence. The Gospel writers relate their ministry to Christ's birth, life, resurrection, and ascension (Mt 2:19; Mk 1:13; Lk 2:13; Jn 20:12; Acts 1:10-11).

In the record of the book of Acts angels were involved in helping God's servants, opening prison doors for the apostles (Acts 5:19; 12:5-11), directing Philip and Cornelius in ministry (Acts 8:26; 10:1-7), and encouraging Paul during the storm on his voyage to Rome (Acts 27:23-25).

Paul (Gal 3:19; 1 Tim 5:21), the writer of Hebrews (Heb 1:4), Peter (1 Pet 1:12), and Jude (Jude 6) all assumed the existence of angels in their writings. About sixty-five clear references to angels occur in the Revelation, more than in any other single book of the Bible. Clearly the New Testament furnishes clear, undebatable, and abundant evidence of the existence of angels.

C. In the Teachings of Christ

Angels ministered to Christ in the wilderness after His temptation by Satan (and, of course, no reporter was present at the Temptation, so His truthfulness is behind the account). He taught that the human state in the resurrection would be like the angels; i.e., non-procreative (Mt 22:30). Angels will separate the righteous from the wicked at the end of the age (Mt 13:39) and will accompany the Lord at His second coming (Mt 25:31). Even without adding the references to

Christ's activity in relation to demons, there is sufficient evidence that He believed in the reality of angels.

Usually the last thing critics of the Bible wish to abandon are the words of Christ. How, then, do they handle this evidence that Christ believed in the existence of angels?

Some say He was actually deceived. He believed they existed but actually they do not. Others affirm that He accommodated His teachings to the ignorant beliefs of the people of His day. In other words, since they believed in angels (and demons) He taught in that same vein, though actually He knew that angels did not really exist. But some of His references to angels cannot be explained in that way (see Mt 18:10; 26:53). Or it is sometimes claimed that the writers of the Gospels added these references to angels since they believed in them. There is nothing to prevent that sort of literary criticism from robbing us of other (perhaps even all) of the teachings of Christ.

Of course, there is another option, and it is the simplest and most obvious. Christ knew that angels exist and reflected that knowledge in His teaching.

NOTES

1. -Calvin Institutes Ixiv, 3.
2. -Bernard Ramm, "Angels," in Basic Christian Doctrines, ed. Carl F. H. Henry. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1962), 64.

Chapter 18: The Creation of Angels

I. The Fact of Their Creation

Angels are created beings (Ps 148:5). This means they did not evolve from some lower or less complex form of life. This is reinforced by the fact that angels do not procreate (Mt 22:30). When they were created, they were created as angels.

II. The Agent of Their Creation

All things were created by Christ (Jn 1:1-3). Specifically, angels were created by Him (Col 1:16).

III. The Time of Their Creation

The Bible does not undebatably state the time of their creation. They were present when the earth was created (Job 38:6-7), so their creation had to be prior to the Creation of the earth.

IV. The State of Their Creation

A. Holy

Originally all angelic creatures were created holy. God pronounced His Creation good (Gen 1:31), and, of course, He could not create sin. Even after sin entered the world, God's good angels, who did not rebel against Him, are called holy (Mk 8:38). These are the elect angels (1 Tim 5:21) in contrast to the evil angels who followed Satan in his rebellion against God (Mt 25:41).

In addition to being created holy, all the angels were surrounded by holiness. Their Creator was absolute holiness. The atmosphere in which they lived and served was, until the sin of Satan, without the imperfections and taint of sin.

B. Creaturely

Angels are creatures, not the Creator. Yet they are a separate order of creatures, distinct, for example, from human beings (1 Cor 6:3; Heb 1:14). As creatures they are limited in power, knowledge, and activity (1 Pet 1:11-12; Rev 7:1). Like all responsible creatures, angels will be subject to judgment (1 Cor 6:3; Mt 25:41).

Chapter 19: The Nature of Angels

I. They are Personalities

Personality means to have personal existence; thus we mean that angels have personal existence and possess the quality or state of being persons. Commonly, the essential facets of personality are considered to involve intelligence, emotions, and will.

Angels then qualify as personalities because they have these aspects of intelligence, emotions, and will. This is true of both the good and evil angels. Good angels, Satan, and demons possess intelligence (Mt 8:29; 2 Cor 11:3; 1 Pet 1:12). Good angels, Satan, and demons show emotions (Lk 2:13; Jas 2:19; Rev 12:17). Good angels, Satan, and demons demonstrate that they have wills (Lk 8:28-31; 2 Tim 2:26; Jude 6). Therefore, they can be said to be persons. The fact that they do not have human bodies does not affect their being personalities (any more than it does with God).

To be sure, the knowledge that angels possess is limited by their being creatures. This means they do not know all things as God does (Mt 24:36); yet they seem to have greater knowledge than humans. This may be due to three causes. (1) Angels were created as a higher order of creatures in the universe than humans are. Therefore, innately they possess greater knowledge. (2) Angels know more about God than humans do (Jas 2:19; Rev 12:12). (3) Angels gain knowledge through long observation of human activities. Unlike humans, angels do not have to study the past; they have experienced it. Therefore, they know how others have acted and reacted in situations and can predict with a greater degree of accuracy how we may act in similar circumstances. The experiences of longevity give them greater knowledge.

Though they have wills, the angels are, like all creatures, subject to the will of God. Good angels are sent by God to help believers (Heb 1:14). Satan, though most powerful and cunning in

carrying out his purposes in this world, is limited by the will of God (Job 2:6). Demons too have to be subject to the will of Christ (Lk 8:28-31).

The personality of angels means that they are not merely personifications of abstract good or evil, as some have considered them to be. This includes Satan, who also is a personality, not a personification of man's collective idea about evil.

II. They are Spirit Beings

Angels, demons (assuming they are fallen angels), and Satan belong to a class of beings that may be labeled spirit beings. Angels are said to be ministering spirits (Heb 1:14). Demons are called evil and unclean spirits (Lk 8:2; 11:24, 26), and Satan is the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience (Eph 2:2).

As spirit beings they are immaterial and incorporeal. People have long wrestled with the meaning and ramifications of such a concept. Some Jews and early church fathers understood angels as having some kind of airy or fiery bodies, though in the Middle Ages it was concluded they were pure spirit beings. The tendency to ascribe to angels some sort of body grows out of the supposed impossibility of conceiving of a true creature without a body. Also it seems clear that angels are not omnipresent but have spatial limitations. Sometimes they were even seen by human beings. All of this seems to press for a conclusion that angels must have bodies. However, the Scriptures explicitly call angels and demons spirits (*pneumata*) in Mt 8:16; Lk 7:21; 8:2; 11:26; Acts 19:12; Eph 6:12; and Heb 1:14. Though God is also a spirit Being, this does not mean that angels are infinite in nature as God is; rather they are finite spirit beings. Neither does their spirit nature forbid their appearing to human beings.

Usually they appear as males (though possibly the women of Zech 5:9 are angels). They have appeared in dreams and visions (Mt 1:20; Isa 6:1-8), in special unveiling of their presence (2 Kgs 6:17), and to people in a normal, conscious, waking state (Gen 19:1-8; Mk 16:5; Lk 2:13).

In heavenly visions they are described by superhuman characteristics that are quite different from other humanlike appearances (Dan 10:5-7; Rev 10:1-3; 15:6; 18:1). Some angels have wings (Isa 6:2, 6; Ezk 1:5-8).

III. They are Immortal and Do Not Propagate

The number of angels is and always will be the same. The Lord taught that angels do not propagate baby angels (Mt 22:30) and that they do not die (Lk 20:36). However, the wicked angels will be punished in a place of separation from God (Mt 25:41; Lk 8:31).

IV. They are Higher Creatures Than Men

The writer to the Hebrews said that when our Lord became incarnate He became for a little while lower than the angels (Heb 2:7-9). Although there are problems connected with the writer's use of Ps 8 in this passage, it does seem clear that Incarnation placed Christ in a position lower than the angels (though, of course, this was only temporarily true during the time of Christ's humiliation on earth). This is because man who was created in the image of God is lesser than God by nature. He is also lower than angels since they belong to a class of superhuman beings (*elohim*) who are stronger than man by nature and, unlike man, not subject to death.¹

V. They Were Originally Holy Beings

The Bible gives little specific evidence about the original state of the angels, though we know that when God finished His work of Creation He pronounced everything to be good (Gen 1:31). Jude 6 also indicates that originally all the angels were holy creatures. Some were elect (1 Tim 5:21) and others sinned (2 Pet 2:4). Presumably all might have remained in that original state of holiness, and those who did not rebel were confirmed forever in their holy state. In other words, those who successfully passed the probationary test will always stay in that original holy state. Those who failed are now confirmed in their evil, rebellious state.

To sum up: though there are similarities between angels and Deity and between angels and men, angels are a distinct class of beings. Like Deity, but unlike men, they do not die. Like Deity, they are superior in strength to men though they are not omnipotent as God is (2 Pet 2:11). Like both Deity and men, they have personalities. Like Deity they are spirit beings, though not omnipresent as God is. Men, by contrast, are both spirit and material beings (Jas 2:26). Angels do not procreate as men do (Mt 22:30). Man was made a little lower than the angels. And yet in his resurrected and glorified body, man will judge angels (1 Cor 6:3).

NOTES

1. -For a fuller discussion of the use of Ps 8 in Heb 2 see C. Fred Dickason, *Angels, Elect and Evil* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 55-57; and Donald R. Glenn, "Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2," in Walvoord: A Tribute, ed. by Donald K. Campbell (Chicago: Moody, 1982), 39-51.

Chapter 20: The Organization of the Angels

I. The Number of Angels

Angels constitute an exceedingly large number that cannot be counted. That's the sense of myriads, which is used to describe the number of angels in Heb 12:22 and Rev 5:11. Indeed that latter verse states that there are myriads of myriads of angels. How many this might be is left unspecified, though some have suggested that there are as many angels in the universe as the total number of all human beings throughout history (possibly implied in Mt 18:10). There is no increase or decrease in their number, whatever it is.

II. The Fact of Their Organization

The Scriptures speak of the "assembly" and "council" of the angels (Ps 89:5, 7), of their organization for battle (Rev 12:7), and of a king over the demon-locusts (Rev 9:11). They are also given governmental classifications, which indicate organization and ranking (Eph 3:10, good angels; and Eph 6:12, evil angels). Unquestionably God has organized the elect angels and Satan has organized the evil angels.

An important practical point emerges from this. Angels are organized; demons are organized; yet Christians, individually and in groups, often feel that it is unnecessary that they be organized. This is especially true when it comes to fighting evil. Believers sometimes feel that they can "go

it alone" or expect victory without any prior, organized preparation and discipline. It is also true when it comes to promoting good. Believers sometimes miss the best because they do not plan and organize their good works.

III. The Ranking of Angels

A. The Archangel

Only Michael is designated as the archangel or high ranking angel (Jude 9; 1 Thess 4:16). Although the Bible nowhere speaks of other archangels, there evidently are other high-ranking angels (Dan 10:13). When Paul says that the voice of the archangel will be heard at the translation of the church, he does not seem to feel the need to name that archangel, which supports the conclusion that there is only one.

In the Old Testament Michael appears as the guardian angel of Israel (Dan 10:21; 12:1), who will particularly help Israel during its time of great trouble yet to come. He leads the angelic armies of heaven against Satan and his hosts of evil ones (Rev 12:7). The reference in Jude 9 to Michael's disputing about the body of Moses indicates that Michael had something to do with the burial of Moses, that he had no power within himself to pronounce judgment on Satan, and that as a creature, even though a mighty one, he has to depend on the greater power of God.

B. Chief Princes

The phrase (Dan 10:13), referring to a group of superior angels, underscores the fact of ranking among the angels. Of this group of chief princes, Michael apparently is the foremost one because he is the archangel. The apocryphal book of Enoch names Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Jeremial and Uriel as the four principal angels who were privileged to stand around the throne of God (9:1; 40:9). It also numbers seven angels as archangels (20:1-7, cf. Tobit 12:15).

C. Governmental Rulers

1. *Rulers or principalities.* These words, used seven times by Paul, indicate an order of angels both good and evil involved in governing the universe (Rom 8:38; Eph 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:10, 15).

2. *Authorities or powers.* This likely emphasizes the superhuman authority of angels and demons exercised in relation to the affairs of the world (Eph 1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 6:12; col. 1:16).

3. *Powers.* This word underscores the fact that angels and demons have greater power than humans (2 Pet 2:11). See Eph 1:21 and 1 Pet 3:22.

4. *Place of rule.* In one place demons are designated as world rulers of this darkness (Eph 6:12).

5. *Thrones or dominions.* This designation emphasizes the dignity and authority of angelic rulers in God's use of them in His government (Eph 1:21; Col 1:16; 2 Pet 2:10; Jude 8).

D. Cherubim

Cherubim constitute another order of angels, evidently of high rank since Satan was a cherub (Ezk 28:14, 16). They seem to function as guardians of the holiness of God, having guarded the way to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:24). The use of cherubim in the decoration of the tabernacle and temple may also indicate their guarding function (Ex 26:1; 36:8; 1 Kgs 6:23-29). They also bore the throne-chariot that Ezekiel saw (Ezk 1:4-5; 10:15-20). Some identify the four living ones of Rev 4:6 as cherubim, though others feel these represent the attributes of God. Representations of the cherubim will also be a part of the millennial temple (Ezk 41:18-20).

E. Seraphim

All we know about this rank of angelic beings is found in Isa 6:2-7. Apparently the seraphim were an order similar to the cherubim. They acted as attendants at the throne of God and agents of cleansing. Their duty also was to praise God. Their description suggests a six-winged humanlike creature. The word may be derived from a root meaning "to burn" or possibly from a root which means "to be noble."

IV. Particular Angels

A. Gabriel

Mention has already been made of Michael because of his high rank. Gabriel also appears to be a high-ranking angel, though he is not designated as an archangel as Michael is. His name means "hero of God," and his function was to bring important messages from God to several individuals (Dan 8:16; 9:21, to Daniel; Lk 1:19, to Zacharias; Lk 1:26, to Mary). In the Aramaic Targum, he is the angel to whom was ascribed the finding of Joseph's brothers, the burial of Moses, and the slaying of the armies of Sennacherib.

B. Angels with Special Responsibilities

Certain angels are designated in connection with a particular function they perform (Rev 14:18, an angel who has power over fire; Rev 16:5, the angel of the waters; Rev 9:11, the angel of the abyss; Rev 20:1-2, the angel who binds Satan).

C. Angels Associated with Future Judgments

Two of the three series of judgments of the Revelation are announced by angels. When angels sound the trumpets, the judgments of Rev 8-9 begin, and the seven last plagues are poured out on the earth by angels (Rev 16).

D. Angels of the Seven Churches of Revelation 2-3

Each letter is addressed to the "angel" of the church, and those angels were seen in the right hand of the risen Christ in the vision of Rev 1:16, 20. It is uncertain whether these are angelic beings or the human leaders of those churches.

Though the word "angel" clearly means messenger, it can refer to a superhuman being, that is, to the guardian angel for each church. Or it may refer to a human messenger, that is, to the human

leader (pastor) of each church (see Mk 1:2; Lk 9:52; and Jas 2:25 for the use of "angel" as designating human beings).

E. Angel of Yahweh

As discussed in chapter 40, the Angel of Yahweh is a Christophany, a preincarnate appearance of Christ. The Angel spoke as God, identified Himself with God, and exercised the prerogatives of God (Gen 16:7-12; 21:17-18; 22:11-18; Ex 3:2; Jud 2:1-4; 5:23; 6:11-24; 13:3-22; 2 Sam 24:16; Zech 1:12; 3:1; 12:8). Appearances of the Angel ceased after the incarnation of Christ, which supports conclusions that He was the preincarnate Christ.

Chapter 21: The Ministry of Angels

Basically and essentially good angels are servants (Heb 1:14). God sends them for service or help (diakonian) of believers, and in so serving the angels function as priestly messengers (leitourgika pneumatata) in the temple-universe of God.

I. In Relation to God

In relation to God, angels' primary ministry is to worship and praise Him.

A. They Praise Him (Ps 148:1-2; Isa 6:3)

B. They Worship Him (Heb 1:6; Rev 5:8-13)

C. They Rejoice in What He Does (Job 38:6-7)

D. They Serve Him (Ps 103:20; Rev 22:9)

E. They Appear Before Him (Job 1:6; 2:1)

F. They are Instruments of God's Judgments (Rev 7:1; 8:2)

II. In Relation to New Epochs

Angels appear to be unusually active when God institutes a new epoch in the sweep of history.

- A. They Joined in Praise When the Earth was Created (Job 38:6-7)**
- B. They Were Involved in the Giving of the Mosaic Law (Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2)**
- C. They Were Active at the First Advent of Christ (Mt 1:20; 4:11)**
- D. They Were Active During the Early Years of the Church (Acts 8:26; 10:3, 7; 12:11)**
- E. They Will Be Involved in Events Surrounding the Second Advent of Christ (Mt 25:31; 1 Thess 4:16)**

III. In Relation to the Ministry of Christ

A. At His Birth

- 1. *Prediction.* Gabriel predicted His birth (Mt 1:20; Lk 1:26-28).
- 2. *Announcement.* An angel announced His birth to the shepherds and was then accompanied in praise by a multitude of angels (Lk 2:8-15).

B. During His Life

- 1. *Warning.* An angel warned Joseph and Mary to flee to Egypt to escape Herod's wrath (Mt 2:13-15).
- 2. *Direction.* An angel directed the family to return to Israel after Herod died (Mt 2:19-21).
- 3. *Ministration.* Angels ministered to Him after His temptation (Mt 4:11) and in His stress in Gethsemane (Lk 22:43).
- 4. *Defense.* He said that legions of angels stood ready to come to His defense if called on (Mt 26:53).

C. After His Resurrection

- 1. *Stone.* An angel rolled away the stone from the tomb (Mt 28:1-2).
- 2. *Announcement.* Angels announced His resurrection to the women on Easter morning (Mt 28:5-6; Lk 24:5-7).
- 3. *Ascension.* Angels were present at His ascension (Acts 1:10-11).

D. At His Second Coming

- 1. *Rapture.* The voice of the archangel will be heard at the translation of the church (1 Thess 4:16).

2. *Second Coming*. Angels will accompany Him at the Second Coming (Mt 25:31; 2 Thess 1:7).

3. *Judgment*. Angels will separate the wheat from the tares at His second coming (Mt 13:39-40).

IV. In Relation to Nations of the World

A. In Relation to the Nation Israel

Michael, the archangel, especially guards Israel (Dan 12:1).

B. In Relation to Other Nations

Angels watch over rulers and nations (Dan 4:17) and seek to influence their human leaders (Dan 10:21; 11:1).

During the coming Tribulation years, angels will be involved in the administration of God's judgments (Rev 8:9; 16).

V. In Relation to the Unrighteous

A. -Angels Announce Impending Judgments (Gen 19:13; Rev 14:6-7; 19:17-18)

B. -Angels Inflict Judgments on the Unrighteous (Acts 12:23; Rev 16:1)

C. -Angels Will Separate the Righteous From the Unrighteous (Mt 13:39-40)

VI. In Relation to the Church

A. Basic Ministry

Basically angels help believers (Heb 1:14).

B. Background Ministry

Angels have been involved in communicating and revealing the meaning of truth, which the church benefits from today (Dan 7:15-27; 8:13-26; 9:20-27; Rev 1:1; 22:6, 8).

C. Specific Ministries

1. *Prayer requests*. They bring answers to prayer (Acts 12:5-10).

2. *Salvation*. They aid in winning people to Christ (Acts 8:26; 10:3).

3. *Observing*. They observe Christian order, work, and suffering (1 Cor 4:9; 11:10; Eph 3:10; 1 Pet 1:12).

4. *Encouragement*. They encourage in times of danger (Acts 27:23-24).

5. Present at death. They care for the righteous at the time of death (Lk 16:22).

Whether angels continue to function in all these ways throughout the present age is uncertain. But they did perform these ministries and may well continue to do so even though we are not aware of them. Of course, God is not obliged to use angels; He can do all these things directly. But seemingly He chooses to employ the intermediate ministry of angels on many occasions. Nevertheless, the believer recognizes that it is the Lord who does these things, whether directly or through using angels (notice Peter's testimony that the Lord delivered him from the prison though God actually used an angel to accomplish it, Acts 12:7-10 compared with Acts 12:11 and 17).

Perhaps an inscription I once saw in an old church in Scotland states the balance well.

"Though God's Power Be Sufficient to Govern Us, Yet for Man's Infirmitiy He Appointed His Angels to Watch over Us."

Probably the statements about angels observing the conduct of redeemed people startle our thinking as much as any of these truths. The reason for their interest in us may stem from the fact that since angels do not personally experience salvation, the only way they can see the effects of salvation is to observe how it is manifest in saved human beings. We are indeed a theater in which the world, men, and angels make up the audience (1 Cor. 4:9). Let us put on a good performance for them as well as for the Lord before whom all things are naked and open.

Section V—Our Adversary the Devil

Chapter 22: The Reality of Satan

The denial of Satan's reality usually takes the form of considering the idea of a satan as the personification of evil but not actually a being who has his own separate existence. The idea of "Satan" as a person developed more in New Testament times, and this necessitated, we are told, reinterpretations of the "legends" of the Old Testament, since, it is claimed, they do not contain the idea of a distinctive demonic figure. In addition, Iranian dualism, it is said, contributed to the Jewish idea of a personal Satan during the Greco-Roman period.¹

I. Evidence From the Text

If one accepts the Scriptures as revelation from God, rather than merely a record of man's thoughts about God, then the reality of Satan cannot be denied. Satan did not evolve as a personal being; he existed and acted from the earliest to the last books of God's revelation. Seven books of the Old Testament teach his reality (Gen, 1, 1 Chr, Job, Ps, Isa, Ezk, Zech). Every writer of the New Testament affirmed his reality and activity. Christ's teaching also assumes and affirms Satan's existence and activity. In twenty-five of the twenty-nine passages in the Gospels that speak of Satan, our Lord is speaking. In some of those passages there can be no question of Christ's accommodating His teaching to the crowd's supposed ignorances or faulty concepts of Satan due to Persian dualism. Notice especially passages like Mt 13:39; Lk 10:18; and Lk 11:18.

II. Evidence of Personality

A. The Traits of Personality

Like the angels, Satan is said to possess the traits of personality. He shows intelligence (2 Cor 11:3); he exhibits emotions (Rev 12:17, anger; Lk 22:31, desire); he demonstrates that he has a will (Isa 14:12-14; 2 Tim 2:26).

B. The Pronouns of Personality

Satan is referred to as a person in both Old and New Testaments (Job 1; Mt 4:1-12). Notice that the information in this latter passage (the temptation of Christ) had to come from the Lord; thus He, by using personal pronouns, attributes personality to Satan.

C. The Moral Responsibility of Personality

If Satan were merely a personification that people have devised to express their ideas of evil, then such a personification could scarcely be held morally responsible for his actions, since, in reality, there is no being who can be held accountable. But Satan is held accountable by the Lord (Mt 25:41), and this passage reminds us that to deny the reality of Satan requires denying the veracity of Christ's words.

III. His Nature

A. He is a Creature

Assuming that Ezk 28:11-19 refers to Satan (to be discussed later), that passage clearly states that Satan was created (Ezk 28:15). This means that he does not possess attributes that belong to God alone, like omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience. Though a mighty being, he has creaturely limitations. And as a creature he must be accountable to his Creator.

B. He is a Spirit Being

Satan belongs to the order of angels called cherubim (Ezk 28:14). Apparently he was the highest created angel (Ezk 28:12). Evidently this was the reason Michael, the archangel, did not dispute with Satan about the body of Moses (Jude 9). Satan may be called the archangel of all the evil angels. Even in his present, fallen state, he retains a great deal of power (though under the permission of God). Thus he is called the god of this world and the prince of the power of the air (2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2).

IV. His Names

The number and variety of names given to Satan further support the reality of his existence.

Satan (used about fifty-two times) from the Hebrew, Satan, means adversary or opposer (Zech 3:1; Mt 4:10; Rev 12:9; 20:2).

Devil (used about thirty-five times) from the Greek, diabolos, means slanderer (Mt 4:1; Eph 4:27; Rev 12:9; 20:2).

John records him as the evil one (Jn 17:15; 1 Jn 5:18-19). His evil character, indicated in this title, pervades the entire world, which is under his control. Yet the believer cannot ultimately be possessed by Satan.

A serpent was the way Satan first appeared to mankind (Gen 3:1). This characterization sticks with Satan in the New Testament as well (2 Cor 11:3; Rev 12:9) and indicates his guile and craftiness.

Satan is also depicted as a great red dragon (Rev 12:3, 7, 9). This emphasizes his fierce nature, especially in conflict. Note that the dragon has a tail; thus our Halloween caricatures of Satan are not far off! An illustration: an older student, when asked by a younger student what kind of a teacher so-and-so is, might reply, "Oh, he's a bear!" The meaning is clear: that teacher is hard. Satan is a dragon. The meaning is clear: he is ferocious in his attacks against believers.

One of Satan's activities is to be the accuser of the brethren (Rev 12:10). He does this unceasingly-day and night. Of what does he accuse us? Of sins we commit. And, of course, he has an airtight case, for believers do sin, and any sin could undo our salvation. However, our Lord, our Advocate, defends us on the sole basis that all our sins were paid for by His death (1 Jn 2:1-2). Some, probably unconsciously, make a distinction between sins that could undo our salvation and those that would not do so—"little" sins. But any sin is enough to cause us to lose our

salvation were it not for the constant intercession of our Lord that thwarts the constant accusations of our adversary, Satan.

One of my teachers years ago was H. A. Ironside. He always addressed us as "young gentlemen." When he came to this verse he would inevitably say, "Young gentlemen, Satan is the accuser of the brethren. Let's leave the dirty work to him."

Satan is also the tempter (Mt 4:3; 1 Thess 3:5). This has been his work from his first encounter with human beings (Gen 3:1). His temptation to Eve was to accept the counterfeit plan he offered that did not involve the restriction of not eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. His temptation of Christ was to have the glory that was due Him without the suffering of the Cross. He tempted Ananias to lie in not disclosing the full amount of money his sale of land had brought (Acts 5:3). He tempts believers with immorality (1 Cor 7:5).

Satan's position over this world is seen in several titles given to him. He is the "ruler of this world" (Jn 12:31). He is the "god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4). He is the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph 2:2) and "the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience" (Eph 2:2). He also deceives the whole world (Rev 12:9; 20:3). He resides in the air (equivalent to "the heavenly places" in Eph 6:12) and rules this cosmos as well as this age. The cosmos is that organized framework of things in which mankind lives and moves and that opposes God by eliminating and counterfeiting Him. The age (of which Satan is god) means "all that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at anytime current in the world, which it may be impossible to seize and accurately define, but which constitute a most real and effective power, being the moral, or immoral, atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again inevitable to exhale-all this is included in the aion, which is . . . the subtle informing spirit of the kosmos, or world of men who are living alienated apart from God."² That kind of rule over the world and atmosphere in which we live is awesome and fearful. Thankfully, greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world (1 Jn 4:4).

The name Beelzebul designates Satan as the chief of the demons (Lk 11:15). When Jesus' enemies alleged that He was possessed by Beelzebul, they made themselves guilty of the worst kind of blasphemy.

Paul uses Belial as a name for Satan in 2 Cor 6:15. The word means worthlessness or wickedness and aptly describes Satan's character.

The various names and designations for Satan not only affirm the reality of his existence but also reveal his many-faceted character and aspects of his work. A name often reveals something about the person's background ("Scotty") or looks ("Red") or characteristics ("Lover") or activities ("Gopher"). So with Satan: his background (adversary, accuser, tempter), looks (dragon, serpent), characteristics (liar, murderer, ruler), and activities (accuser, tempter). He is a powerful, intelligent, clever creature, and we must never forget or underestimate the reality of our enemy.

NOTES

1. -See T. H. Gaster, "Satan," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1976), 4:224-28.

2. -R. C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (London: Kegan Paul, 1886), 218.

Chapter 23: The Creation and Sin of Satan

I. His Creation

A. The Time of It

If Satan were not a created being then he must be eternal or self-existent, a dualism that is incompatible with monotheism. The Scriptures declare that all things were created by God through Christ, and there is nothing that was not made by Him (Jn 1:3; Col 1:16-17). The time of his creation is not specified. If Ezk 28:13 refers to Satan and to the earthly garden in Eden, then, of course, he had to have been created before God planted the Garden in Eden (Gen 2:8).

B. The Characteristics of It

Many debate whether or not Ezk 28:11-19 has Satan in view, but if it does, then it provides us with a number of descriptive details as to the characteristics of Satan's original condition at his creation. All agree that the subject of verses 1-19 is judgment on Tyre and its leader. But the question is, do verses 11-19 go beyond the human leader to reveal things about something or someone else? The candidates for that something or someone else called the king of Tyre are: (a) a symbol drawn from pagan mythology; (b) a primal being who lived in the Garden of Eden and was driven out through pride; (c) a mythological, unreal being presented in Phoenician mythology and incorporated and applied in this story to the king of Tyre; (d) an "ideal," though unreal, person; (e) the ideal man, the same as the historical first man, Adam, whose histories (initial privileges and subsequent sin) are analogous; (f) the sinister being Satan; (g) Satan's masterpiece, Antichrist.

Views (a) through (d) are incompatible with the principles of normal interpretation, for there is no justification for introducing such mythology into the text. View (e), though possible, seems to fall short of fulfilling the totality of the sinister nature of the figure behind the king of Tyre. Views (f) and (g) can be combined; i.e., Satan is the one behind it all, including being behind Antichrist who will be the climax of all people whom Satan has indwelt throughout history. The king of Tyre was one he indwelt in the past, as Antichrist will be the final one he will indwell in the future.

To understand the prophecy as including references to Satan does not mean that Ezekiel did not also have a historical leader of Tyre in mind in his denunciations. The question is, did he only have the historical human leader in view, or did he also have a greater being, Satan, in mind? The flowery and highly figurative language can argue for either conclusion. Those who feel that only the human leader is in view understand the language as a typical, exaggerated way an oriental ruler might be referred to. Those who also see Satan in the passage argue that such language includes too many superlatives and figures to be true of only an earthly king no matter how great he was. It would seem difficult to apply verses 14 and 15, for example, to any earthly king.¹

It would, of course, not be unusual for a prophetic passage to refer both to a local personage and also to someone else who fully fulfills it. This is true of many passages that relate both to King David and Jesus Christ. It is also true of the reference to the prince of the kingdom of Persia in Dan 10:13, a reference that must include a superhuman being related to the kingdom of Persia. So for Ezk 28 to refer both to the then-reigning king of Tyre as well as to Satan would not be a unique interpretive conclusion. Indeed, it seems the right conclusion: The historic king of Tyre

was simply a tool of Satan, possibly indwelt by him. And in describing this king, Ezekiel also gives us glimpses of the superhuman creature, Satan, who was using, if not indwelling, him.

Assuming, then, that Satan is in the picture in these verses, what do we learn about his original characteristics at his creation? Whatever specifics these verses teach, they convey the clear idea that Satan was highly privileged, the epitome of God's Creation, who had an unparalleled position in the universe.

1. *Satan had unparalleled wisdom and beauty.* Ezk 28:12. Satan stood at the zenith of God's creatures, filled with wisdom and perfect in beauty.
2. *Satan had an unparalleled habitation.* Ezk 28:13. This may refer to a heavenly Eden or to the earthly Eden. In either case, it was, before sin entered, a unique place.
3. *Satan had an unparalleled covering.* Ezk 28:13. The dazzling description of his dress or robe indicates something of the glory bestowed on him.
4. *Satan had an unparalleled function.* Ezk 28:14. He belonged to the order of angelic creature designated cherubim. They are associated with guarding the holiness of God Gen 3:24, with the throne of God Ezk 1:5, and here apparently with the actual presence of God. Satan was on the holy mountain of God, and he walked in the midst of the stones of fire, likely references to the presence of God Himself. Apparently Satan was the chief guardian of God's holiness and majesty.
5. *Satan had unparalleled perfection.* Ezk 28:15. He was perfect in the sense of being completely sound and of having total moral integrity. Here, as well as in verse 13, we are reminded that Satan was created, and as a creature, he must someday answer to his Creator.

In every way Satan was the epitome of God's Creation.

He awoke in the first moment of his existence in the full-orbed beauty and power of his exalted position; surrounded by all the magnificence which God gave him. He saw himself as above all the hosts in power, wisdom, and beauty. Only at the throne of God itself did he see more than he himself possessed, and it is possible that even that was in some sense not fully visible to the eyes of the creature. . . . Before his fall he may be said to have occupied the role of prime minister for God, ruling possibly over the universe but certainly over this world.²

II. His Sin

A. The Origin of Satan's Sin

Sin was found in him (Ezk 28:15). This is really the only verse in the Bible that states exactly the origin of sin. The details of Satan's sin are specified elsewhere, but the origin is only expressed here. Barnhouse terms it as "spontaneous generation in the heart of this being in whom such magnificence of power and beauty had been combined and to whom such authority and privilege had been given."³

This sin must have been included in the eternal plan of God. Yet God never assumes the responsibility for the commission of any sin, including Satan's. J. O. Buswell steers a careful course in this matter.

According to the Bible, then, sin originated in an act of free will in which the creature deliberately, responsibly, and with adequate understanding of the issues chose to corrupt the holy character of godliness with which God had endowed His creation. Satan sinned necessarily. God is rightly angry with all sin. The denial of free will seems to be purely arbitrary philosophical dogmatism, contrary to the biblical view. If God is rightly angry with sin, then it follows that the sinner is blameworthy-cosmically, ultimately, absolutely. Sin must be within God's eternal decrees in some sense in which He is not the author of it. Within the decrees of God, there are decrees of the permission of those things of which God Himself is not the author. This is not mere permission of the unavoidable.⁴

Sin was found in Satan; yet he was created perfect. God is not the blameworthy cause of Satan's sin; yet it was included in His plan.

B. The Nature of Satan's Sin

The New Testament pinpoints Satan's particular sin as arrogance, conceit, or being puffed up (1 Tim 3:6). It is likened to the conceit a new convert may have when he is either pushed forward or asserts himself too quickly and begins to take to himself the glory that belongs to God. Ezk 28:16 assigns the cause of Satan's downfall to the abundance of his trade. In other words, Satan used his position for personal profit-to traffic in his own self-promotion.

Isaiah gives more detail of Satan's sin (Isa 14:12-17). Like the Ezk 28:11-19 passage there is a question as to whether or not this refers at all to Satan. (1) Some regard the Isaiah passage as referring only to the fall of the king of Babylon mentioned in verse 4. (2) Others understand the passage to relate only to the fall of Satan. (3) Those who hold views (1) or (2) may also see the king of Babylon or Satan as prefiguring the fall of the coming Antichrist. (4) Likely the truth includes all of these references; i.e., the fall of the king of Babylon is an antitype of the previous fall of Satan and a type of the future fall of Antichrist. Delitzsch says it concisely: "A retrospective glance is now cast at the self-deification of the king of Babylon, in which he was the antitype of the devil and the type of Antichrist."⁵ The passage transcends anything that can be said of an earthly king and has been understood from earliest times to also refer to Satan's fall as described in Lk 10:18.

Satan is called the morning star in Isa 14:12. The Latin equivalent is Lucifer, which, on the basis of this passage, became a name for Satan. However, the use of morning star with reference to Satan gives us an indication of the basic character of his plot against God. Since the same title is used in Rev 22:16 of Christ, we are alerted to the fact that Satan's plan was to counterfeit the plan of God, and indeed it was and is. How he initiated that plan is detailed in the five "I will" phrases in Isa 14:13-14.

1. *I will ascend to heaven.* As guardian of God's holiness Satan had access to heaven, but this expresses his desire to occupy and settle in heaven on an equality with God.

2. *I will raise my throne above the stars of God.* The meaning of this depends on the understanding of "stars." If they refer to angels (Job 38:7; Jude 13; Rev 12:3-4), then Satan wished to rule over all the angels. If they refer to the luminous heavenly bodies, then he wished to rule in the heavens.

3. *I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north.* This bespeaks Satan's ambition to govern the universe as the assembly of Babylonian gods supposedly did.

4. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. He wanted the glory that belonged to God (clouds are often associated with God's presence, see Ex 16:10; Isa 19:1).

5. I will make myself like the Most High. Here his counterfeit is crystal clear. Satan wanted to be like, not unlike, God. The name Elyon for God stresses God's strength and sovereignty (Gen 14:18). Satan wanted to be as powerful as God. He wanted to exercise the authority and control in this world that rightfully belongs only to God. His sin was a direct challenge to the power and authority of God.

Satan's sin was all the more heinous because of the great privileges, intelligence, and position he had. His sin was also more damaging because of the widespread effects of it. It affected other angels (Rev 12:7); it affects all people (Eph 2:2); it positioned him as the ruler of this world, which he uses to promote his kingdom and to counterfeit God's (Jn 16:11); it affects all the nations of the world, for he works to deceive them (Rev 20:3).

All sin is serious, and all sin affects others. But sin in high places is more serious and its ramifications more widespread. The sin of Satan should serve as a constant reminder and warning to us.

NOTES

1. -See a full discussion in Charles L. Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel* (Chicago: Moody, 1969), 158-63.
2. -Donald Grey Barnhouse, *The Invisible War* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965), 26-27.
3. -Ibid., 30.
4. -J. Oliver Buswell, "The Origin and Nature of Sin," *Basic Christian Doctrines*, Carl F. H. Henry, ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), 107-9.
5. -Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1875), 1:312.

Chapter 24: The Activities of Satan

The variety of names that Satan has alerts us to the fact that he can attack his opponents in a variety of ways. From the fierceness of a dragon (Rev 12:3) to the attractiveness of an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14), Satan can adapt himself and his tactics to suit the person and the occasion. Although he may prefer to operate in a certain manner, he will meet people where they are and use whatever might defeat them in particular circumstances. Though not all-knowing, Satan has observed many others in situations in which we may find ourselves, and he can predict with a high degree of accuracy what will best defeat us.

I. In Relation to Christ

The animosity between Satan and Christ was first predicted after the sin of Adam and Eve (Gen 3:15). The enmity between spiritual descendants of Satan and the family of God was predicted here. Also an individual (Christ) from among the woman's seed would deal a fatal blow to Satan's head, while Satan would bruise Christ's heel (a nonfatal blow, but one that caused Him great suffering). This exchange of blows took place at the cross.

When our Lord did actually appear on this earth, Satan made concerted attempts to thwart His mission to die for the sins of the world. Undoubtedly Herod's killing of the children under two was Satan-inspired (Mt 2:16). Christ clearly said that Peter aligned himself with Satan's plan when Peter wanted to dismiss the idea that Christ would have to die in Jerusalem (Mt 16:21-23). The sharpness of Christ's rebuke underscores the fact that His central purpose in coming to earth was to die. When Judas was about to betray the Lord, Satan entered into him (Jn 13:27).

But the principal and most direct attack of Satan on our Lord was at His temptation (Mt 4:1-11). The word "test" or "tempt" includes two ideas: proving and soliciting to evil. Satan's testing of Christ involved both facets. In the process of Satan's soliciting Him to commit evil, God would prove through the test that Christ was sinless. God and Satan were both involved in His test. The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness place in order that He might be tempted by the devil. For forty days Satan tempted Him with many temptations (Lk 4:2), and during that period our Lord fasted. This served to sensitize Him against all the tests, but especially against the three attacks that came at the end of those forty days. These three were the epitome of the areas in which a person can be tested: the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life (1 Jn 2:16).

These were tests particularly suited to the God-man. Only He (not we) could turn stones to bread. Only He (not we) could jump off the pinnacle of the temple and land unharmed in the area below. Only He (not we) could expect to have all the kingdoms of this world.

The basic purpose of Christ's temptation was to prove His competence to be the sinless Savior. Satan was trying to cause our Lord to deviate from the path and purpose for which He came into the world and to make Himself independent from God and His plan by offering Him glory without suffering. This, then, would have made His substitutionary death unnecessary. Specifically, Satan tempted Christ to independence (Mt 4:3-4), to indulgence (Mt 4:5-7), and to idolatry (Mt 4:8-10).

There was no doubt in Satan's mind that Christ was the promised Deliverer. But he wanted the Lord to assert His independence from the Father by turning the stones to bread. Just as the manna given to Israel in the wilderness came from God, so Christ's food should come in the Father's time and way. To turn stones to bread would be to assert His independence of the will of the Father. "Though He was hungry, and it was right to eat, yet He would not eat independently of the Father's will. Satan had tempted Him not away from spiritual bread but away from the Father and toward literal bread, gained independently of the Father's will."¹ Satan still tempts Christ's followers to take things into their own hands rather than yielding to the Father's will.

To have cast Himself off the pinnacle or wing or projection of the temple to the valley 450 to 600 feet below and to have landed unharmed would certainly have been a spectacular sign of the Messiah. But to have done so would have been to take a shortcut and show a lack of faith. Rashness, signs, or presumption never substitute for the constancy of faith, though Satan still tempts us to indulge in these.

Satan has temporarily been given authority over this world (cosmos), but ultimately Christ will rule it. Thus Satan had the right to offer the Lord the kingdoms of this world, but had Christ taken them He would have shortcut the plan of God and bypassed the atoning work of His death. Satan still tempts us with the immediate and visible.

Since Satan was unsuccessful in preventing the Cross, he attacks the Gospel, the followers of Christ, and what yet remains of the plan of God for this world.

II. In Relation to God

The principal tactic Satan uses to attack God and His program in general is to offer a counterfeit kingdom and program. This was evident when he originally sinned by wanting to be like, not unlike, God. The counterfeit was first attempted on mankind when Satan offered Eve the chance to be like God, knowing good and evil (Gen 3:5).

The temptation of Christ was also an attempt at counterfeit. A counterfeit is as like the genuine as possible, only without some vital feature. Satan's offer to our Lord was to have the glory due Him without the essential feature of His death.

Today Satan promotes a form of godliness while denying its power (2 Tim 3:5). To do this, Satan disguises his servants as servants of righteousness (2 Cor 11:15). He promotes a doctrinal system through the demons who in turn use people who advocate a false asceticism or unbridled license (1 Tim 4:1-3; Rev 2:24). The ultimate counterfeit will be the coming Antichrist, whose activities will be in accord with Satan and who will pawn off on mankind "the lie" (2 Thess 2:9-11).

III. In Relation to Nations

His principal activity in this arena is to deceive the nations (Rev 20:3). Deceive them how? Apparently into thinking they can govern righteously and bring peace in the world apart from the presence and rule of Christ. Again, his tactic is to counterfeit.

He apparently employs demons in carrying out his deception (Dan 10:13, 20), and he uses governments to hinder the progress of the Gospel (1 Thess 2:18).

During the coming days of Great Tribulation Satan will deceive the nations into receiving the Antichrist as their savior. Satan, the dragon, will give Antichrist his power, and the world will give allegiance to him (Rev 13:2-4). At the conclusion of the Tribulation Satan and his demons will influence the armies of the nations to march to their doom at the war of Armageddon (Rev 16:13-16).

During the millennial kingdom Satan will be bound, but at the close of that period he will be released and will attempt to lead the world in a final revolt against Christ's kingdom. After this unsuccessful attempt, Satan will be cast forever into the lake of fire (Rev 20:7-10).

IV. In Relation to Unbelievers

In relation to unbelievers Satan blinds their minds so that they will not accept the Gospel (2 Cor 4:4). He often does this by making them think that any way to heaven is as acceptable as the only way. Again, a counterfeit. This blindness attacks the minds of people, and while unbelievers may

think and reason, a power greater than Satan must remove that blindness. Human reasoning and convincing arguments have a ministry, but only the power of God can remove satanic blindness. Sometimes the devil comes and takes away the Word that people have heard in order to prevent their believing (Lk 8:12).

In promoting blindness Satan uses counterfeit religion as detailed in the preceding section. This may include everything from asceticism to license, from theism (for being a theist does not necessarily mean being saved) to occultism. In other words, Satan will use any aspect of the world system that he heads in order to keep people from thinking about or doing that which will bring them into the kingdom of God (Col 1:13; 1 Jn 2:15-17).

V. In Relation to Believers

A. Satan, the Tempter

Just as Satan tried the Lord, he also tries believers. His aim is to get us to commit evil. God may sometimes use Satan in testing us to prove us in resisting his tests. Tests can have three beneficial purposes in the life of the believer: (1) to prove us (1 Pet 1:6-7); (2) to teach us (1 Pet 4:12-13; see also Heb 5:8); and (3) to increase our love for God (Jas 1:12). But Satan's only purpose is to tempt the believer to commit evil.

There are at least three areas in which Satan tempts believers. The first is in the area of conforming to the pressures and structures of society (1 Thess 3:5). Paul, you remember, had been forced to leave Thessalonica after probably only one month's ministry in that city (Acts 17:5-10). Further, Satan had used some governmental ban to keep him from returning (1 Thess 2:18). So he sent Timothy, who was not under that ban, back to Thessalonica to see if they had succumbed to Satan's temptations. What temptations? It was too early in the first century for Paul to be referring to official persecution from the Roman Empire. These temptations must have been more of an unofficial, societal, personal nature. Perhaps Satan tempted them to continue to conform to the lifestyles they experienced before they were saved. Also many of the converts were Gentiles, and Satan may have tempted them with the pride of intellect.

Second, Satan tempts believers to cover up selfishness. The story of Ananias and Sapphira serves as the classic illustration. This couple wanted to retain some of the money they received from the sale of their property, while at the same time receiving praise for their contribution. Peter discerned that it was Satan who had filled their hearts to lie (Acts 5:1-11). They had the right to own and sell property. They had no necessary obligation to give all the proceeds to the church. But they were obliged not to feign generosity and at the same time cater to their selfishness by keeping part of the money received.

Third, Satan tempts believers to immorality (1 Cor 7:5). God provided marriage for proper expression of physical needs and relationships, and He expects husbands and wives to assume their respective and mutual responsibilities. When this is not done, Satan has opportunity to tempt believers to illicit or perverted sexual sins.

B. Satan, the Adversary

As adversary, Satan accuses and opposes believers in various areas of their lives. First, he opposes our witness to the Gospel. He does this by confusing us when he plants tares among the wheat (Mt 13:38-39), by snatching away the Word that has been sown (Mk 4:15), by aligning

governmental authorities against believers (1 Thess 2:18), or by imprisoning believers, believing this will keep their testimony from spreading or make them fearful of witnessing (Rev 2:10).

Second, Satan spotlights our sins (Rev 12:10). He accuses us before God when we sin, thinking he can cause us to lose our salvation. But Christ, our Advocate, takes our case and reminds the Father again and again that He paid for all our sins when He died on the cross (1 Jn 2:1-2).

Third, Satan opposes the believer by bringing pressure on him that he may not be able to bear. There are two examples of this in the New Testament. One concerned the man disciplined in 1 Cor 5. Apparently the discipline had had its desired effect, and he had confessed his sin of incest. Now the church should have received him back into fellowship. Seemingly, some wanted to do this and some did not. So Paul urged them to do so, not only to heal any division that might develop but also lest the brother involved be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. He needed to know the forgiveness of his brothers and sisters (2 Cor 2:5-11). Not to restore him would give Satan an advantage.

The second example concerns women who are widowed at a young age (1 Tim 5:14-15). Paul urged them to marry again and bear children and lead useful lives. Some, idle and gossiping, were following Satan.

In general we may say that Satan the adversary wants passionately to squelch the believer's testimony. To accomplish this he prowls the earth like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour (1 Pet 5:8). The word "devour" is the same word used to describe the way the Red Sea swallowed up the Egyptians when they were pursuing the Hebrews (Heb 11:29). It paints a vivid picture of Satan's ultimate goal-to completely drown the believer's testimony and usefulness.

As I mentioned earlier, Satan may prefer to do some things over others. But he will do whatever he has to in order to promote his plans and programs successfully. Remember too that he is powerful, he is experienced, and he has a host of demons to help him. Therefore, the believer can successfully fight him only in the strength and power of God who dwells within him. Other aspects of the believer's defense will be discussed in another chapter.

NOTE

1. -S. Craig Glickman, *Knowing Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 41.

Chapter 25: Satan's World

We have already noticed that Satan is called both "the god of this age" (aion, 2 Cor 4:4) and "the prince of this world" (cosmos, Jn 12:31). It is the relation of Satan and the Christian to the cosmos that is the subject of this chapter.

I. The Meaning of the Cosmos

The word cosmos is used 185 times in the New Testament, 105 of which occur in the writings of John. Basically the word denotes an ornament or order, cosmos being the opposite of chaos. That

concept is found in its use in 1 Pet 3:3 and in our modern word "cosmetic." The universe (that is, heaven and earth) is called the cosmos because it is an ornament of harmonious relationships (Acts 17:24). The inhabited earth is also designated by the word cosmos (Rom 1:8), as are the people who live on the earth (Jn 3:16; 12:19). It is the people of the world whom God loves and for whom Christ died (Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 2:2).

But usually the New Testament views the cosmos as an orderly system that functions apart from God. This concept of the world as opposed to Christ is a new use that the word acquires in the New Testament in contrast to its usual use in Greek writings as referring to something attractive. B. F. Westcott summed it up this way: "It is easy to see how the thought of an ordered whole relative to man and considered apart from man passes into that of the ordered whole separated from God. Man fallen impresses his character on the order which is the sphere of his activity. The world, instead of remaining the true expression of God's will under the conditions of its creation, becomes His rival."¹ The only feature missing from Westcott's statement is the position of Satan as the head of the world system. Thus there must be three facets to any definition of the world: the idea of an ordered system, the relation of Satan to it, and the concept of its hostility to God. Here is a suggested definition: the cosmos world is that system organized by Satan, headed by Satan, and run by Satan, which leaves God out and is a rival to Him.

II. Satan and the Cosmos

A. His Authority Over the Cosmos

Clearly the Scriptures teach that Satan does have supreme authority over the cosmos. Of course, this is within the sovereign purpose of God and with His permission. Nevertheless, Satan's usurped authority over the cosmos is supreme. Our Lord recognized this when He called him the ruler of the world (Jn 12:31; 16:11) and when He did not dispute Satan's prerogative in offering Him the kingdoms of the world in the temptation (Mt 4:8-9). The apostle John acknowledged the same truth when he wrote that the whole cosmos lies in the power of the evil one (1 Jn 5:19).

B. His Aim in the Cosmos

Satan's aim is to create a system that rivals God's kingdom but that leaves Him out. It is to promote a counterfeit order. Basically, the cosmos is evil because it is independent of God. It may contain good aspects as well as overtly evil aspects, but its inherent evil lies in its being independent of God and a rival to Him. This sharp rivalry surfaces in such verses as Jas 1:27, where the believer is told to keep himself unstained from the world; in Jas 4:4, where friendship with the world is said to be hostility toward God; and in 1 Jn 2:16, where John declares that all that is in the world is not from the Father.

To achieve his aim, Satan must try to make the values of his godless system seem attractive. Thus he works to make people give top priority to self as number one and to the here and now as most important. When John wrote that all that is in the world is not of the Father, he explained what he meant by "all" by three epexegetical statements that follow in 1 Jn 2:16. All of them emphasize self as number one. Satisfy the lusts of the flesh, Satan counsels. Try to get what the inordinate desires of the eyes make you covet. And build a self-sufficient, arrogant attitude that arises from boasting about the possessions one has in life. This selfishness is, of course, the prevailing philosophy of the world, and it comes from Satan who promoted himself from the beginning.

Satan also seeks to focus people's attention on the present rather than on eternity. That is why John reminds us in 1 Jn 2:17 that the world passes away but the one that does the will of God abides forever. Thus Satan seeks to achieve his purposes by trying to change our priorities (self first) and our perspective (here and now more important). In reality the truth is that God is first and eternity most important.

III. God and the Cosmos

A. Planned Termination

God has already announced that the cosmos will be judged and terminated. Satan's rebellious system will come to an end. Nebuchadnezzar saw it in the dream Daniel interpreted when the stone (Christ's kingdom) struck the statue and filled the whole earth (Dan 2:34-35, 44). That event is described in Rev 17-19 and summarized in 1 Jn 2:17.

When our Lord returns, the cosmos kingdom of Satan will be replaced by the kingdom of Christ who will rule on this earth. It is important to observe that the arena of Christ's victory will be the same as that of Satan's kingdom, the earth. In the same arena where Satan has reigned, Christ will be victorious.

B. Permissive Toleration

In the meantime God permits the rebellion to continue and the cosmos to flourish. His plan permits evil to run its course, and His long-suffering permits many to come to the truth (Rom 2:4).

IV. The Christian and the Cosmos

A. Separated From It

Pure religion, James wrote, is to keep oneself unstained from the cosmos (Jas 1:2; 7). The same word "unstained" or "unspotted" is used of Christ in 1 Pet 1:19. Thus the believer's separation from the cosmos means Christlikeness in this cosmos. This includes having His perspectives, His standards, His goal (to do the will of the Father), His activities while living here. It means being able to say that we always do those things that are pleasing to the Father (Jn 8:29). This is true biblical separation.

B. Situated in It

But, of course, the believer, though separated from the cosmos, has to live his life in the cosmos. Thus we have to have contact with evil things and evil people. The only way to avoid such contact would be to "go out of the world" (1 Cor 5:10). Such "separation by suicide" Paul did not recommend!

How, then, can we be properly related to the cosmos in which we are situated? Here are two guidelines.

(1) Use it but do not abuse it (1 Cor 7:31). This summary statement is in a context where Paul mentioned marriage and singleness, weeping and rejoicing, having and not having things. It is

proper to use all of these but not to abuse or overuse them. Do not let marriage have top priority; do not weep too long; do not be so happy you cannot be serious; do not put your trust in things you may properly buy. To do so is to abuse the cosmos. To have a "take-it-or-leave it" attitude while using these things is proper use.

(2) Enjoy but do not love the things of this cosmos (1 Tim 6:17; 1 Jn 2:15). Though these may seem to be opposing principles, they cannot be, since both are clearly stated. What God gives us in this world we can legitimately enjoy, as long as we realize that all things are uncertain and that our dependence is on God whether He gives us little or much (Phil 4:12; 1 Tim 6:17).

When does proper enjoyment become improper loving? That is impossible to say in generalities. Each believer will have to examine his or her own particular circumstances. Undoubtedly if we make an idol of something we are loving it improperly. And an idol is anything at any time that comes between a believer and his love for God.

C. Sufficient for It

The believer can live victoriously in Satan's world through faith in Christ who Himself has become the victor over Satan (1 Jn 5:4-5). No contingency is attached to the promise in these verses. Every believer, whether new or mature, has victory simply because he is a believer.

John's terminology guards against several errors. The initial clause in 1 Jn 5:4 shows that this overcoming is not something that is subsequent to salvation, for it is "everyone who is begotten [gegennemenon, a perfect form indicating an existing condition based on a completed act] of God" who "is overcoming [nikā, a present form referring to an ongoing pattern of life] the world" (author's translation). The second clause, by the use of the aorist form nikēsasa (has overcome), shows that today's victory is based on yesterday's; that is, our victory is based on His. Finally, John counters the error that abstract faith (i.e., faith without the appropriate object) is efficacious. . . . Faith that overcomes involves trust in Jesus (the man), who is God's Son.²

Effecting that victory will involve habits, defenses, activities, but it is our faith in Jesus that makes us believers and thus overcomers, sufficient to live Christlike lives in the satanic cosmos.

NOTES

1. -B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: John Murray, 1908), 1:64-65.
2. -W. Robert Cook, *The Theology of John* (Chicago: Moody, 1979), 115n.

Section VI—Demons: Unclean Spirits

Chapter 26: The Reality of Demons

The twentieth century has witnessed an almost complete turnaround in attitudes toward the reality of demons. In the first part of the century their reality was commonly denied; in the latter part, it is much more readily and universally affirmed. Undoubtedly the increase in the number of witches and astrologers as well as booming sales of accompanying paraphernalia (including trade journals) has contributed to this change. Movies and books on the extraterrestrial have created a more favorable climate for the acceptance of demons.

I. The Testimony of Scripture

Scripture unequivocally affirms the reality of demons, though not all who profess Christianity admit the validity of this evidence. Note this way of evading the force of some of the scriptural teaching: "Demons often survive as figures of speech (e.g., 'gremlins') long after they have ceased to be figures of belief. Accordingly, the mention of a demon's name in a scriptural text is no automatic testimony to living belief in him."¹

A. The Testimony of Christ

A number of times during His earthly ministry our Lord cast out demons from various people. These instances, of course, affirmed His belief in their real existence (Mt 12:22-29; 15:22-28; 17:14-20; Mk 5:1-16). He also gave the disciples authority to cast out demons in a context that did not require, as some allege, accommodation to their ignorant belief in demons (Mt 10:1). Never did our Lord correct anyone for their acceptance of the reality of demons (Lk 10:17), yet He was willing on many other points to correct false theology.

If we cannot accept the Lord's testimony, then we would have to conclude that either (a) He was lying, or (b) He was accommodating His teaching to the ignorances of His audience (which in effect makes Him guilty of propagating falsehood), or (c) the early church redactors of the text added the parts about His teachings on demons.

B. The Testimony of Other Parts of the New Testament

All the writers of the New Testament (except the writer of Hebrews) mention demons for a total of more than 100 references. See, for example, 1 Cor 10:20-21; Jas 2:19; Rev 9:20. These references all use the word daimonion. Other references to demons use the words "angel" and "spirit." Note too that demons are mentioned in the first (James) and last (Revelation) books written.

C. The Testimony of the Old Testament

Much less frequently does the Old Testament refer to demons. The shedhim of Deut 32:17 and Ps 106:37 were lord-idols whom the Hebrews regarded as visible symbols of demons. The seirim of Lev 17:7; 2 Chr 11:15; Isa 13:21; and Isa 34:14 were also demonic conceptions.

To deny the reality of demons requires ignoring or denying the truth of many passages in Scripture.

II. The Origin of Demons

Various suggestions have been made as to the origin of demons.

A. They are the Spirits of Wicked, Deceased People

This view seems to come from the ancient Greek belief about demons as being the disembodied spirits of deceased people, especially those who were evil in life. It has no support whatsoever in Scripture, since the Bible always places the unsaved dead as confined in a place of torment, unable to return to roam on the earth (Ps 9:17; Lk 16:23; Rev 20:13).

B. They are the Disembodied Spirits of a Pre-Adamic Race

This view understands Satan as originally ruling over a perfect earth and a pre-Adamic race of people. When Satan sinned against God, this race of people were somehow involved in his rebellion. They lost their bodies and became disembodied spirits or demons.² This concept distinguishes between all angels, both good and bad, and demons. It offers as support the idea that demons seek embodiment, thus indicating that they are disembodied spirits. But against the view is the plain fact that nowhere does the Bible even hint at the existence of a pre-Adamic race. Indeed, the Lord declared that Adam was the first man (Mt 19:4). Also, the Scriptures nowhere indicate that deceased people are free to return to earth.

C. They are the Offspring of the Union Described in Gen 6:1-4

To validate this suggestion requires at least two assumptions: (a) the sons of God are angels, and (b) the offspring were not human. That the sons of God were angels is a possible view, but that the offspring were demons is most unlikely. This would have to mean that the offspring were mongrels, part human and part angelic (either the Nephilim or the mighty men of renown of Gen 6:4), who were destroyed in the Flood and whose disembodied spirits then became the demons.

D. They are Fallen Angels

This view states that the demons are the angels who rebelled with Satan. In support of this are the following considerations.

Satan is designated the prince of the demons (Mt 12:24), indicating that since their leader, Satan, is an angel, the demons must also be angels, but fallen as Satan is.

We know that Satan has well-organized ranks of angels who further his purposes. Two of these ranks are labeled rulers and authorities, which are the same designations for two of the ranks of good angels (Eph 3:10; 6:12). This seems to indicate that the same kinds of beings make up the personnel of these ranks, and therefore that the evil beings are fallen angels.

In several places demons are called spirits (though unclean spirits), which associates them with the spirit world of angels, not humans. For example, the demon referred to in Mt 17:18 is called an unclean spirit in the parallel account in Mk 9:25. The same equation of demons and spirits is found in Lk 10:17-20. Also, according to Mt 8:16, the Lord healed many demon-possessed people by casting out the unclean spirits from them.

We must acknowledge that nowhere in the Scriptures are demons directly said to be fallen angels, but the evidence just cited seems to point to the conclusion that they are.

III. The Confinement of Some Fallen Angels

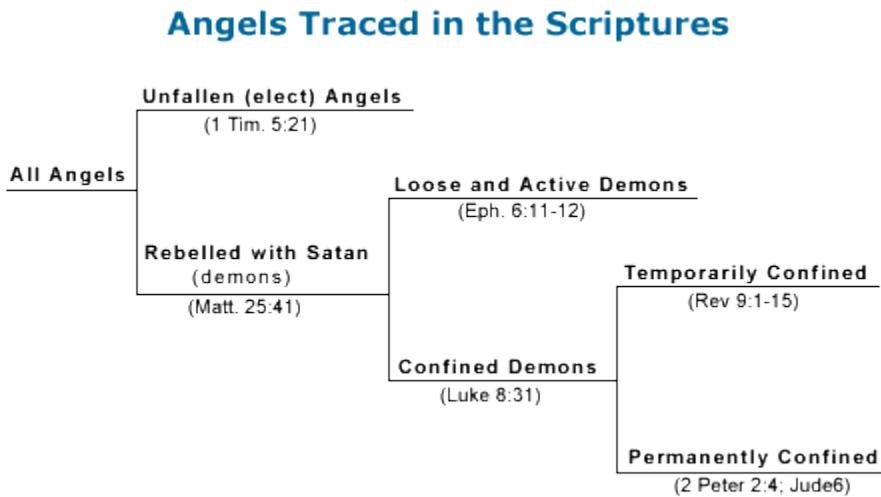
The Scriptures clearly indicate two groups of fallen angels, one consisting of those who have some freedom to carry out Satan's plans and the other who are confined. Of those who are confined, some are temporarily so, while others are permanently confined in Tartarus (2 Pet 2:4 and Jude 6). The Greeks thought of Tartarus as a place of punishment lower than hades. Those temporarily confined are in the abyss (Lk 8:31; Rev 9:1-3, 11), some apparently consigned there to await final judgment while others will be loosed to be active on the earth (Rev 9:1-3, 11, 14; 16:14).

Why are some in Tartarus? If it is a result of their original sin of rebellion with Satan, then why are not all fallen angels there? And why not Satan himself as well? Confinement in Tartarus for some of the fallen angels must be punishment for some sin other than the original one, and a unique sin at that. Some suggest the unnatural sin of Gen 6:2-4 committed by some of the fallen angels (called "sons of God" in the passage) caused their confinement in Tartarus.

Though angels do not reproduce after their kind (that is, do not produce baby angels), they may have been permitted to cohabit with human women on this one occasion to produce human offspring. However, the exceptional nature of this permission, which is contrary to all we know about angels and marriage, constitutes the weakness in this view. But if it was permitted on this single occasion, it only emphasizes the uniqueness of this incredibly monstrous sin that resulted in the permanent confinement of the angel participants in the prison of Tartarus. The human partners in the sin, of course, perished in the Flood. Other views of the "sons of God" in this passage include (a) the godly line of Seth, which cohabited with the ungodly women of the line of Cain, and (b) rulers from the line of Cain. The weakness of (a) lies in the need to believe that the godly and ungodly lines were kept distinct through all the years before the event of Genesis 6 occurred. The weakness in (b) (a view suggested in the Aramaic Targums) is the lack of evidence that a monarchical system of rulers had been established in the line of Cain by this time. Though I personally incline to the fallen-angel view, this is an interpretive problem we cannot solve.

What was the specific sin involved by whomever committed it? Three answers are possible. (1) If angels were involved then the sin was angelic cohabitation with human beings. (2) If the sons of God were humans, it was the sin of marrying indiscriminately without regard to spiritual condition (if Sethites) or royal status (if kings were involved). (3) It was the sin of polygamy because verse 2 may be understood to mean that they (whoever they were) took all the wives they chose (cf. 4:19). The offspring were men of strength and military prowess (the Nephilim probably lived on the earth before these marriages and were not the result of them).

To sum up these matters of the existence, origin, and confinement of some of the fallen angels, one might chart the concepts like this:



NOTES

1. -T. H. Gaster, "Demon," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon, 1976), 1:818.
2. -G. H. Pember, Earth's Earliest Ages (New York: Revell, ca. 1900), 72-73.

Since demons belong to the same class of beings as angels and Satan, all these creatures have much in common.

Chapter 27: What are Demons Like?

Since Demons belong to the same class of beings as angels and Satan, all these creatures have much in common.

I. Their Personal Nature

A. They are Genuine Persons

Demons are not forces or concepts that merely exist in our minds. Demons exist; their reality does not depend on the existence and ability of human beings to conceive of them.

1. *Intelligence.* They possess intelligence, knowing who the Lord was while He was on earth (Mk 1:24) and knowing their own eventual doom (Mt 8:29). They also believe in monotheism (Jas 2:19).

2. *Emotions.* They can exhibit emotion, especially when confronted with judgment (Lk 8:28; Jas 2:19).

3. *Wills.* They can give expression to their wills (Lk 8:32).

4. *Personality.* They are described by personal pronouns (Lk 8:27-30).

B. They are Spirit Beings

In contrast to flesh and blood beings, demons are spirit beings (Eph 6:12). Nevertheless, they are localized, since, as creatures, they are limited and not infinite as God is. Generally they are invisible to human beings, though on occasion their presence is apparent through various means (Acts 19:15; Rev 9:1-12; 16:13).

II. Their Intellectual Nature

Demons show great intelligence, as would be expected from such a high order of beings. They knew who Jesus is (Mk 1:24). They realized their own eventual doom (Mt 8:29). They know there is only one God (Jas 2:19). They develop and promote systems of doctrine (1 Tim 4:1-3), an activity that will apparently increase as the end of the age approaches.

Intelligence can be enhanced by experience. Every demon, of course, has existed throughout all the span of human history. Though each one has not observed everything that has transpired throughout history, their longevity gives an added dimension to their native intelligence. They have observed human beings in almost every conceivable situation; therefore, they can accurately predict what individuals will do in most circumstances.

III. Their Immoral Nature

A. In Their Beings

Demons are designated as "unclean spirits" (Mt 10:1), as "evil spirits" (Lk 7:21), as "the spirit of an unclean demon" (Lk 4:33), and "spiritual forces of wickedness" (Eph 6:12). All of these terms clearly indicate the immoral nature of demons.

B. In Their Goals

Immorality is whatever is inconsistent with good, but good must ultimately be defined in relation to the will of God. Therefore, the immoral activities of demons may include anything that opposes the will of God.

Here are some observations of one who was deeply involved in spiritism.

The spirits I encountered at seances were, for the most part, very moralistic. They encouraged us not to smoke or drink or do anything else that would harm our minds and bodies. Ministers were told to preach morality, good manners, and civic pride. I knew ministers who actually had spirit messages taken down by their secretaries and then used them from the pulpit! The spirits often talked about an ethical Jesus, but never about the Savior who died a sacrificial death for sin.

In contrast to the high moral and ethical tone of the seances in our home, I attended some where the spirits were blasphemous and sensual.¹

The immoral goals of demons must include both the promotion of evil immorality and good immorality. This is completely in line with Satan's goals and his desire to counterfeit what is right.

IV. Their Powers

A. Their Strength

At times demons can exhibit superhuman strength as they work through human beings. The demon-possessed maniac of the Gerasenes was able to break all shackles and chains (Mk 5:3). The sons of Sceva were overpowered by the demon-possessed man in Acts 19:16.

B. Their Intelligence

I have already mentioned their superior intelligence. But the question always arises, do demons know the future? Certainly they can understand the plan of God for the future as they find it in the Bible. Does Acts 16:16 indicate they can predict the future? Evidently not, for the word "fortunetelling," used only here in the New Testament, must be understood in a bad sense; that is, "pretending to foretell the future." When it is used in the Septuagint, it invariably refers to the words of lying prophets or those who practiced evil arts that were forbidden by the Law.

C. Their Presence

Demons are not infinite; they are limited and they are creatures, albeit superhuman ones. Apparently they are not present everywhere; yet they are not so restricted as humans are by the normal barriers of space (Lk 8:30-a legion of demons dwelt in one man). The very fact that demons can enter human or animal bodies shows they can pass through barriers that would restrict human beings.

The very large number of demons may make them seem to be everywhere present, though that is not so. Yet Satan working with them can use their number to attempt to promote his plans everywhere.

To sum up: Demons are not humans; neither are they God. But they are superhuman with superior intelligence and experience and powers. To deny the existence of demons is not skepticism; it only displays ignorance. To be unrealistic about their power is foolhardy.

NOTE

1. -Victor H. Ernest, *I Talked with Spirits* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1970), 38.

Chapter 28: What Do Demons Do?

I. In Relation to Satan

In general demons act as Satan's emissaries to promote his purpose to thwart the plan of God. Though Satan experiences creaturely limitations, demons extend his power and activities greatly. In fact, at times it may seem that Satan enjoys omniscience and omnipresence, though in actuality he does not. It is just that the demons extend Satan's activities so much that one might think Satan himself is doing it all (Eph 6:11-12).

II. In Relation to God

A. They Oppose the Plan of God

Having chosen to rebel against God and side with Satan, demons continue to oppose the purposes of God in this world (Dan 10:10-14; Rev 16:13-16).

B. They May Be Used by God to Carry Out His Purposes

On occasion God may use demons to further His purposes. He sent an evil spirit to stir up the people of Shechem against Abimelech (Jud 9:23). He used an evil spirit to punish Saul with a mental disturbance that bordered on madness (1 Sam 16:14). He sent a deceiving spirit to control the prophets and to give Ahab the wrong advice (1 Kgs 22:22). He used one to afflict Paul so that he would not become overly proud (2 Cor 12:7). Because they are creatures, demons are accountable to God and thus can be used by Him as He may desire.

III. In Relation to Religion

A. They Promote Idolatry

In carrying out their opposition to God, demons actively try to turn men to the worship of idols. This was true in Old Testament times (Lev 17:7; Deut 32:17; Ps 106:36-38). It is true now (1 Cor 10:20), and demon worship will apparently be widespread during the coming Tribulation days (Rev 9:20).

B. They Promote False Religion

1. They teach a worthless savior. John warned his readers to test the spirits, for demons influence false (human) prophets (1 Jn 4:1-4). A major test of orthodoxy (though not the only one) was the affirmation of the reality of the Incarnation; for if Christ had not taken on Himself a human body He could not have died and been our Savior.

Paul also warned of this attack on the Incarnation in the teachings of demons (1 Tim 3:16-4:3). If 1 Tim 3:16 is a summary of truth contained in what was likely part of an early Christian hymn, then we may assume that demons attack not only the Incarnation, but also the historical resurrection and ascension of the Lord.

2. They teach a works salvation. This seems to be the point of 1 Tim 4:3-4 By promoting asceticism as a good work, they replace the grace of God with a works program for salvation.

3. *They teach a libertine ethic.* The "deep things of Satan," undoubtedly promoted by his demons, attempt to teach people that wrong is right (Rev 2:20-24).

IV. In Relation to Nations

Dan 10:13 relates that the prince of the kingdom of Persia resisted the coming of a good angel to bring Daniel a message. That prince was in turn resisted by Michael the archangel, indicating that the prince must have been a powerful demon. Just before Armageddon demons will be involved in moving the leaders of the nations to prepare for that military campaign (Rev 16:13-16). Apparently there is warfare between the angels and demons that involves the affairs of nations of this earth. To deceive the nations is part of Satan's master plan, and he uses demons in carrying it out. What this may mean in international politics staggers the imagination, for there is no reason not to believe that it is still going on today.

V. In Relation to People

A. Affliction

Demons are able to inflict physical diseases (Mt 9:33, muteness; Mt 12:22, blindness and muteness; Mt 17:15-18, seizures). They can also cause mental disorders (Mk 5:4-5; 9:22; Lk 8:27-29; 9:37-42). They can be involved in bringing death to people (Rev 9:14-19). Of course, not all physical or mental problems result from demonic activity; actually the Bible distinguishes natural illnesses from demonic ones (Mt 4:24; Mk 1:32, 34; Lk 7:21; 9:1).

B. Perversion

The fact that demons are also called unclean spirits shows that whatever they do perverts what is clean, noble, and right. Demons want to pervert people by having them turn aside from the plan of God to Satan's plan. Sometimes they do this by promoting a perverted system of doctrine and lifestyle that may seem good to human beings (1 Tim 4:1-3). Sometimes they do this by promoting evil and unclean activities (Deut 32:17; Ps 106:37-39). The immorality of the Canaanites seems to be traceable to demon activity (Lev 18:6-30; Deut 18:9-14).

C. Possession

1. *Definition.* Demon possession is the direct control by demon(s) of an individual by residing in him. All people, believers and unbelievers, are influenced and affected by demon activity, but not all are possessed. To draw an analogy, demon influence is to demon possession as general providence is to special miracles. Possessed individuals are not capable of severing themselves from the control of the demon(s).

The term "to be possessed by a demon" or "to be demonized" occurs thirteen times in the New Testament, all in the Gospels (e.g., Mt 4:24; 12:22; Mk 5:15-18; Lk 8:36; Jn 10:21). The same phenomenon is described by terms like "cast out" or "come out" (Mk 1:25-26; 9:25). After the Day of Pentecost demon possession and exorcism are mentioned only in Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:16-18; 19:12. The spiritual gift of discerning spirits (1 Cor 12:10) most likely refers to the ability to distinguish between true and false sources of supernatural revelation when that revelation was being given in oral form, and not to the ability to cast out demons from people.

2. Characteristics. The characteristics of demon possession can be as varied as the activities of demons, ranging from mild to severe and even bizarre. Not too many specific symptoms of demon possession are described in the accounts, but they include the following: physical abnormalities like muteness, blindness, and convulsions (Mt 9:32; 12:22; Lk 9:39); tendencies to self-destruction (Mk 5:5; Luke 9:42); insanity (at least the people believed demons could produce this, Jn 10:20); superhuman strength (Mk 5:3-4); and occult powers (Acts 16:16-18). Though demons can do these things in people, this does not mean that all illness, for example, comes from demon activity. Dr. Luke clearly distinguished demon-induced diseases from illnesses due to other, more natural, causes (Acts 5:16).

Here is a description of voodoo possession in the country of Haiti:

The subject enters a trancelike state (usually after undergoing convulsions), during which one of the loas enters his or her body and "rides" it. The human personality is displaced by the superhuman, the human features take on the characteristics of the spirit's (masculine or feminine, good or evil, old or young, crafty or honest), and the human throat utters the loa's words, some of them in wholly unintelligible "tongues." The possession may last minutes or hours or sometimes days, during which time the person invaded by the spirit is fed the spirit's favorite food and drink (often quite impossible for unpossessed humans to consume) and offered his favorite diversions. Afterward, the human remembers nothing of his behavior as a god.¹

3. Responsibility. The Scripture says very little explicitly on this point. The warnings to be on guard against and to resist the attacks of the devil imply that failure to do so exposes one to the possibility of control by Satan and his demons. Thus an individual may bear the responsibility for what eventuates in demon possession by giving in to preceding satanic attacks.

Yet the case of the lad who was demonized from childhood seems to indicate this was a condition over which he had no control (Mk 9:21). And certainly Paul's thorn in the flesh was not something he brought on himself, but was God using a demon to inflict the problem (2 Cor 12:7).

4. Extent. Is demon possession restricted to unbelievers, or can it extend also to believers? In other words, can a Christian be demon possessed today? The argument against a believer's being able to be demon possessed is often based on the fact of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer's heart. In other words, since the Spirit indwells the believer, it is impossible for Satan or demons also to indwell and thus possess the believer at the same time. But do not the Spirit and the flesh war within the believer? (Gal 5:16-17). If it be argued that the old man has been judged (Rom 6:6), it may also be pointed out that Satan has been judged too (Jn 12:31). So if Spirit and flesh, the new and the old, can be present within the believer at the same time, why cannot the Spirit and Satan (or demons)?

Verses cited to support the view that believers can be possessed by demons are usually these: 1 Sam 16:14; Lk 13:11-16; Acts 5:3; 1 Cor 5:5; 2 Cor 11:4; and 2 Cor 12:7. But when these verses are examined, they do not prove that believers can be demon possessed. Perhaps the question should be restated. Instead of asking whether a believer can be demon possessed, we should ask whether or not Satan or demons can work from within a believer as well as from outside. In other words, can the base of operation for Satan or demons be inside as well as outside a believer?

The reference in 1 Samuel says that an evil spirit tormented Saul, but the base of operation is not stated. Nor do we know definitely Saul's spiritual condition before God. Luke attributes the woman's deformity to a demon, and the Lord calls her "a daughter of Abraham." Some

understand this to be a clear case of a demon working within a believer. However, it is unclear whether "daughter of Abraham" indicated a believer or only that she was one of God's chosen people, Israel. Clearly she was not a Christian in the post-Pentecost sense of the word.

The punishment on the sinning brother in 1 Cor 5 involved delivering him over to Satan (see also 1 Tim 1:20). But whether this meant that Satan and/or demons would work from within his life or simply that he was now being put out of the fellowship and protection of the church into the domain of Satan, the world, is debatable. The "different spirit" of 2 Cor 11:4 is not a demon any more than "another Jesus" in the verse is. It is another gospel that brings bondage. The base of operation of the messenger of Satan (a demon) that God sent to afflict Paul is unstated in 2 Cor 12:7. Though the result was a thorn in the flesh, this did not mean that the demon had to reside in Paul.

Acts 5:3 clearly states that Satan filled the heart of Ananias to cause him to lie to the Spirit. The word "fill" is the same as used in Eph 5:18 of the filling of the Spirit. Since there is no reason not to believe that Ananias was a believer, here is a clear statement that Satan did fill the heart of a believer. Nothing is said about demons here, though presumably if Satan filled his heart, demons could have also.

How can this evidence be evaluated? Here are two suggestions. First, we should discard phrases like "demon possession" and "demon indwelling" when referring these concepts to believers, because we tend to read into these terms the same idea we have about Spirit indwelling (i.e., a permanent residence in the believer). Neither Satan nor demons can permanently indwell a believer or ultimately have victory over him, even though they may dominate or control a believer's life for some time. A believer may be delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, but the spirit will be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor 5:5). Whatever Satan or demons can do to a believer, and whether from without or within as their base of operation, their control cannot be permanent and eternal. John clearly declares that the evil one cannot "touch" the one who is born of God (1 Jn 5:18). The word "touch" here involves the purpose of harming—Satan cannot harm the believer. John uses the word in only one other place, Jn 20:17, and it means not a superficial touching but a grasping, clinging to, or holding on to someone. Satan can never hang on to the believer with the purpose of harming him, for that believer belongs eternally and irrevocably to God. Satan (or demons) may afflict and even control for a time, but never permanently or eternally.

Second, the indefiniteness of the New Testament concerning the base of operation of demons in relation to Christians coupled with the lack of direct commands (after Pentecost) to exorcise demons may give us a clue as to how to fight the enemy. Normally one should not look to exorcism as the way to attack demons, but rather one must use the normal weapons of our warfare against Satan and his demons. The Christian should treat demon molestation as he would resist temptation or fight against the activities of his flesh. He should examine himself to see if there are any areas of rebellion against the law or will of God, confess any and all known sin, rely on the power of the indwelling Spirit who is greater than Satan (1 Jn 4:4), and use all the armor of God (Eph 6:13-18).

Even if exorcism may be called for in some extreme instances, the exorcist cannot prevent demons from attacking the same person again, for no human being can guarantee to bind demons or send them into the abyss. Paul reminds us that we struggle against the powers of darkness all our lives. Therefore, the Christian must be alert (1 Pet 5:8), be clothed in God's armor, and use all the things that contribute to healthy spirituality (Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 10:5; Phil 4:8). A note of

caution: Not all problems are initiated by demons, not all physical illnesses, not all emotional problems, not all sins. Some arise from natural causes, some from the flesh. Casting out demons would do no good in such instances, but fighting the good fight of faith will benefit in all things.

NOTE

1. -Carter Harman, "The West Indies," Life World Library (New York: Time, Inc., 1963), 53-54.

Section VII—Man: The Image of God

Chapter 29: Evolution and Origins

Possibly no subject is more widely debated in various forums today than this question of how man originated. The night before I wrote these words our local TV news gave several minutes of coverage to two creationists who were seeking to show that the discovery of some human bones made naturalistic evolution impossible. Court cases concerning the teaching of "scientific creationism" in the public schools have given nationwide publicity to this subject. The debate over inerrancy has rightly included discussion concerning the historicity of the Genesis account of Creation. A number of views vie for acceptance even among evangelicals.

I. Views Concerning Origins

A. Evolution

Evolution simply means change in any direction. There is, of course, a completely legitimate use of the word, as, for example, in the sentence, "There has been considerable evolution in the field of communications in this century." But when the word evolution is used in relation to origins it means much more than change or development. It includes the idea of origin by natural processes, both the origin of the first living substance and the origin of new species. It theorizes that several billion years ago chemicals in the sea, acted on by sunlight and cosmic energy, formed themselves by chance into one or more single-celled organisms, which have since developed through beneficial mutations and natural selection into all living plants, animals, and people.

That there has been change and development in many areas of creation no one denies. However, for the evolutionist this development has also included the production of new species of more complex and intricate forms from less complicated substances. None of this requires the idea or activity of God. Charles Darwin said, "I will give absolutely nothing for the theory of natural selection if it requires miraculous additions at any one stage of descent."¹ Julian Huxley also affirmed that "to postulate a Divine interference with these exchanges of matter and energy at a particular moment in the earth's history is both unnecessary and illogical."²

In relation to the origin of man, evolution teaches that he evolved over long periods of time through the action of mutations and natural selection from simpler, brute forms, which in turn had evolved from other forms, which ultimately came from an original single-celled creature.

Obviously the bases of naturalistic evolution are science and faith.

B. Theistic Evolution

Theistic evolution holds that God directed, used, and controlled the processes of naturalistic evolution to "create" the world and all that is in it. Usually this view includes the idea that the days of Genesis 1 were ages, that evolutionary processes were involved in the "creation" of Adam, and that the earth and prehuman forms are of great antiquity.

Darwin declared that the supernatural was unnecessary in his theory. The creationist insists that naturalistic evolution is excluded in this view. Thus theistic evolution tries to ride two horses (evolution and Creation), which are going in opposite directions.

The creation of Eve poses a special problem for some who teach theistic evolution. Adam, it is claimed, emerged from a preexisting form into which God breathed the breath of life, but Eve did not come from some preexisting form of life. She was a special act of creation. And if she was, why not Adam also?

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), a Roman Catholic Jesuit priest and paleontologist, advocated a synthesis between evolution and traditional Christian theology. Evolution stands as his central theme, though his ideas also resemble aspects of process philosophy.

Strictly speaking, all that theistic evolution needs to postulate to be theistic is that there was a supernatural Being who was the invisible force that started the long process of evolution. Typically one would find this position among Roman Catholic, liberal Christian, and neo-orthodox thinkers. But many who fall into the general category of theistic evolutionists perceive God as being involved not only at the beginning of the process but at various points along the way. God stepped in to create at the major stages of life throughout geologic history (e.g., the vertebrates, the birds, the mammals, and man). But He also permitted and used naturalistic evolution processes throughout the long periods of geologic time. This view is known as progressive creationism or threshold evolution and often is linked with the day-age view of Genesis 1. Although I would place progressive creationism under the general category of theistic evolution, some evangelicals who favor progressive creationism would object, claiming that it really belongs under creationism. However, the kind of evolution involved in progressive creationism is naturalistic, and the extent to which it occurred was large; so the view is in my judgment misnamed, and it is a form of theistic evolution.

The bases on which theistic evolution rest are the Bible and science.

C. Creation

Though there are variations within the broad category of creationism, the principal characteristic of this view is that the Bible is its sole basis. Science may contribute to our understanding, but it must never control or change our interpretation of the Scriptures in order to accommodate its findings. As far as man is concerned, Creation teaches that God created the first man in His image from the dust of the ground and His own breath of life (Gen 1:27; 2:7). No subhuman creature was involved, nor was any process of evolution.

Creationists hold to different views regarding the days of Creation, but to be a creationist one must believe that the biblical record is factually historical and that Adam was the first man.

One view teaches that the biblical account of the creation of Adam and Eve relates only to what occurred in the Garden of Eden rather recently and does not tell us anything about what was happening in the rest of the earth. Therefore, while Adam was the result of special creation by God, in other parts of the earth creatures were evolving over long periods of time. In other words, Adam was an island of creation in the midst of a sea of evolution. I would not consider this view as belonging under the general category of creationism, for Adam is not understood to be the first man from whom all mankind descended.

II. The Proposal of Evolution

We need to consider in more detail evolution's proposal to answer the question of origins and some of the problems of that proposal. Many good books have been written on this subject to which one may refer for greater detail. Some I would recommend include the writings of Henry M. Morris, Bolton Davidheiser, and A. E. Wilder Smith, and recent books by Phillip E. Johnson and Michael J. Behe.³

A. The Principles of Evolution

Evolution rests on several basic principles. Theories vary, but these are some common premises.

- (1) The planets and stars resulted from a big-bang explosion of compressed, rotating protons and neutrons. This dense, compressed mass continues to expand away from the original nucleus at fantastic speeds. An alternate to this principle is the so-called steady-state theory that teaches that matter is continually being created in outer space and that this process has been going on for an infinite period of time.
- (2) Life began completely by chance when a single cell appeared from nonliving matter.
- (3) Having thus begun by chance, all other living organisms have developed from that first and subsequent simpler forms of life, which gradually increased in complexity. This development also produced man.

B. The Process of Evolution

If one were to reduce the process to a formula it would look like this: M(utations) + N(atural) S(election) x T(ime) = Evolution. This formula expresses the mechanism of evolution.

Mutations constitute the explanation for evolution. Mutations are sudden, small changes in the DNA code of the genes, which are passed on to the offspring, causing them to differ from their parents in well-marked characteristics. In other words a small change in an organism is passed on to the offspring. Eventually another small change appears by chance, etc. If enough of these occur and are preserved, then the organism will become more complex and evolve into a different organism, etc. This is the way all existing forms of life were produced from the simple, single-cell original. The importance of mutations as the explanation for how evolution occurred cannot be overemphasized. Julian Huxley wrote: "Not only is it an effective agency of evolution, but it is the only effective agency of evolution."⁴

Natural selection is the mechanism that preserves the changes caused by mutations. When a change occurs that is beneficial to the organism, then natural selection will preserve that change simply because it is beneficial. Any harmful changes would not be preserved because natural selection would breed them out of the line as useless. (A beneficial mutation is one that increases the complexity of the organism.) It is important to remember that natural selection is just that-natural. It is not laboratory selection or hothouse selection; it means that selection process in raw nature that allegedly eliminates harmful mutations and keeps helpful ones. By this process the strain of organisms is gradually improved, given enough time.

Time, and long periods of it, are therefore necessary to evolution. Since mutations do not occur frequently, there will have to be a lot of time in order for enough of the beneficial mutations to occur, then to be preserved by natural selection, thereby effectively changing the organisms to increasingly complex ones. In order to decrease the time required, some evolutionists posit "bursts" of mutations having occurred at about the same time, which effected a number of beneficial changes in an organism almost immediately, thus foreshortening the time required for the necessary changes to take place.

III. Problems of Evolution

A. Problems in Mutations

Can mutations really do all they are alleged to do? Consider the following.

1. *Mutations are rare and almost always harmful.* In the fruit fly experiment where mutations were produced by artificial means, it is estimated that only one fruit fly out of one million will develop a mutation. Furthermore, Theodosius Dobzhansky, who conducted many fruit fly experiments, acknowledged that "most mutants . . . are more or less disadvantageous" and that "the deleterious character of most mutations seems to be a very serious difficulty."⁵

2. *Where do new genes come from?* No mutation has ever produced a new species or even a new organ or system in an existing species. Yet this had to occur if evolution is valid. Protozoa, for instance, do not have teeth. Where, then, did the genes come from that produced teeth if we have evolved from protozoa? Mutations concern changes in existing organisms; they do not produce new ones. Yet somewhere and somehow along the line new species had to be produced, and even new systems (like the circulatory system or the hearing system) had to be produced within existing species.

Here is a sample of how evolution wrestles with this question.

If mutation, which is the only form of hereditary change of which we have definite evidence is always change in genes already present, it would at first sight seem that we have here no basis at all for understanding the evolution of novelties in the organization of the body. For their evolution we surely need new hereditary factors, not change in those already present. But we must remember that conditions in the body and in the hereditary material are extremely complex. Possibly changes in the distribution of enzymes in the body, if they were somehow brought about, might cause new differences in rate of growth of parts, as for instance, in a part of the frontal bones of the skull resulting in the early evolution of horns. It is hard to see how redistribution of its enzyme could be brought about by mutation of a gene, but, in view of the complexity of the conditions in the body, it may perhaps be possible. Also, it is not impossible that new genes may be evolved. We know that genes may be reduplicated within the chromosomes and when that has happened, one member of such a pair might become so altered by mutation as to give us what is functionally a new gene.

These suggestions are purely hypothetical. For the present we cannot say more than that novelties of organization undoubtedly occur in evolution; that they are essential to the increase in complexity which is associated with progress in evolution; that we have no accurate knowledge of the details of their evolution.⁶

This appears to be more an exercise in faith than fact!

B. Problems in Natural Selection

1. *Does natural selection really guarantee improvement?* Of course it must do so; otherwise, if a weak substrain developed, it would soon die out and there could be no evolution at all. But the problem is, will natural selection bring improvements? Laboratory selection may, but will natural? An evolutionist acknowledges this problem: "In fact, natural selection with evolutionary consequences has only been observed where men have created drastically new conditions which impose a heavy selection pressure."⁷

2. *Single mutations.* Would natural selection recognize the worth of a single mutation while waiting for other mutations to happen that would be necessary for the production of a new system in the organism? In the evolution of the eye, for example, if the mutation that made the tear duct occurred first, would natural selection keep it in the organism until other mutations happened that produced the lashes, slit, cornea, lens, etc.? Or would natural selection breed out the organism that had a tear duct but no other components of a seeing system simply because it was not useful alone?

3. *Circular argument.* The interreaction of mutations and natural selection to explain evolution is a circular argument. Julian Huxley admitted it clearly: "On the basis of our present knowledge, natural selection is bound to produce genetic adaptations; and genetic adaptations are thus presumptive evidence for the efficacy of natural selection."⁸

C. Problems in the Length of Time Required

Even though mutations are rare and usually harmful, and even though natural selection would most likely breed out a mutant from the strain, it seems quite plausible to laymen that given enough time anything, even evolution, can happen. Huxley explains: "All living things are equally old—they can all trace their ancestry back some 2,000 million years. With that length of time available, little adjustments can easily be made to add up to miraculous adaptations; and the slight shifts of gene frequency between one generation and the next can be multiplied to produce radical improvements and totally new kinds of creatures."⁹

But such a claim can be challenged by putting it to the test.

The odds are 10¹⁶¹ to 1 that not one usable protein would have been produced by chance in all the history of the earth, using all the appropriate atoms on earth at the fantastic rate described. This is a figure containing 161 zeroes. It might be well to recall that even if one molecule were obtained, it would not help at all in arranging the second protein molecule unless there existed an accurate duplication process. Even if there were such a process, there are many other kinds of proteins needed before there can be a living organism. In Morowitz's minimal cell, the 239 protein molecules required include at least 124 different protein species. (italics in original).¹⁰

Others have arrived at similar conclusions about the probability of forming one protein molecule by chance. French scientist Lecomte du Nouy said it is 1 chance out of 10²⁴³. Swiss mathematician Charles E. Guye calculated it as 1 chance out of 10¹⁶⁰. Murray Eden of MIT and Marcel Schutzenberger of the University of Paris both concluded that their digital computers showed that evolution was impossible.¹¹

While probability is expressed by a fraction (e.g., one in five million times), and when the fraction is as small as these are for the chance production of a protein molecule, then the

mathematician would declare the probability of its happening as zero. The evolutionist would likely point out that there still exists a chance, however infinitesimal, of evolution happening because of the billions of years involved. However, even billions of years will not reduce the probability enough to put it in the range of reasonable possibility. Davidheiser tested the well-known statement that if a million monkeys were permitted to strike the keys of a million typewriters for a million years, they might by chance type a copy of a Shakespearean play. Setting up a controlled experiment with only capital letters, continuous typing at a uniform rate of speed, and requiring only the first verse of Genesis, he shows that a million monkeys would never type Gen 1:1, let alone a Shakespearean play in billions of years.¹² Even to type the first line of Hamlet ("Ber: Who's There?") would require on the average of a number of repeated experiments 284 trillion years, a period considerably longer than it took evolution to do all it supposedly did.

The obvious conclusion of this is simply that it requires an incredible amount of faith to believe that evolution could have caused by chance all life that ever did or does now exist.

Could life have evolved by chance? The probability of forming one protein molecule by chance is one in 10²⁴³, which is a figure of 1 followed by 243 zeros. This fraction is so small that one may say that the probability is zero.

1 Chance out of 1,-
000,
_000,000
,_000,000
0,_000,000
0,_000,000.

D. Problem with the Second Law of Thermodynamics

This second law of thermodynamics states that though energy in the cosmos remains constant, the amount available to do useful work is always decreasing (and entropy, the measure of unavailable energy, is increasing). Everything, then, is moving toward less orderliness or greater chaos. This, of course, runs directly contrary to what evolution teaches. In fact, in a debate in which I was participating, I heard an evolutionist glibly remark that evolution was "the grand exception to the second law."

How do evolutionists react to the seemingly insoluble problem the second law poses?

Some say the long time since Creation allows for anything, particularly evolution, to happen. But remember, during those billions of years entropy was increasing; the law was not suspended.

Some point out that there seem to be exceptions to the law. This may be true, but they can only be temporary and at the expense of an increase in entropy somewhere else in the environment.

Some claim the earth is an open system and draws energy from the sun. But the infusion of solar energy is useless unless there exists some sort of motor within the elements on which it shines that can convert that energy to reverse the second law. For example, the sun may beat on concrete blocks for thousands of years without ever producing additional or mutated concrete blocks because there is no mechanism within concrete blocks to convert that energy. There must be an appropriate energy conversion process along with a preprogrammed template to work from before solar energy can reverse the second law. Or as one evolutionist asked: "How, when no life

existed, did substances come into being, which today are absolutely essential to living systems, yet which can only be formed by those systems?"¹³

IV. The Picture of Evolution

The fossil record, it is claimed, provides evidence of the process of evolution. Fossils do not explain how it occurred; they picture what did occur through mutations and natural selection over long periods of time. Evolutionists claim that because the simpler forms of life are found in lower layers of rocks and more complex forms in upper layers, this proves that the more complex forms arose from the simpler ones.

Strictly speaking, the fossil argument is a circular one. The strata are dated by the fossils they contain and the fossils are dated by the strata in which they are found. The evolutionist states that this circle is broken by outside dating methods. However, dating methods are predicated on a uniform rate of decay of the element. A candle will burn at a uniform rate unless a window is open and a breeze causes it to burn more rapidly for a time. The disappearance of a vapor canopy over the earth or the extreme pressures of a flood could have been like an open window to change that rate during the earth's history. If so, then the dates arrived at would be very wrong. Carbon-14 dating would be significantly affected by those events. The potassium-argon method of dating assumes that rock samples tested contained no argon-40 when they were formed, which is a questionable assumption. Some submarine pillow basalt from Kilauea volcano in Hawaii that is known to be only a few thousand years old at most was dated by this method as from 100,000 to 40 million years old, indicating that age may be simulated by hydrostatic pressure among other factors.¹⁴

A major problem in the fossil picture is the lack of transitional forms, none of which have ever been found among the millions of fossils that exist. Surely there would be one discovered somewhere. Actually the earliest fossils of each group exhibit all the features of that group without any suggestion of graduation from one form to another. Some evolutionists claim that the Archaeornis (or Archaeopteryx) is an example of a missing link because it looks like part bird and part reptile. But it may be considered all bird, albeit unusual. In any case it appeared suddenly and therefore without any transitional ancestry.

Another problem is that many simple forms of life are found in strata of rocks above the more complex forms. Hundreds of such cases are known, and of course they all are contrary to the picture evolution should give.

Obviously much more could be written on this subject. I have tried only to focus on the principal arguments of evolution and suggest their main weaknesses. No one can keep all the arguments in mind. So I suggest knowing and exposing the gaps in the theory-rare and harmful mutations, natural selection that will eliminate those harmful changes, not nearly enough time for everything to happen by chance, opposition to the second law of thermodynamics, embarrassing gaps in the fossil record.

Finally, we need to underscore the bottom line of evolution, namely faith. In the final analysis one must believe evolution, just as one must believe Creation. Two scientists stated this fairly when they wrote:

Actually biologists are still as far away as they ever were in their attempts to explain how the first protoplasm originated. The evidence of those who would explain life's origin on the basis of the

accidental combination of suitable chemical elements is no more tangible than that of those people who place their faith in Divine Creation as the explanation of the development of life. Obviously, the latter have as much justification for their belief as do the former.¹⁵

NOTES

1. -R. E. D. Clark, *Darwin: Before and After* (London: Paternoster Press, 1948), 86.
2. -Julian Huxley, *Evolution in Action* (New York: New American Library, 1964), 20.
3. -Henry M. Morris (several books); Bolton Davidheiser, *Evolution and Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969); A. E. Wilder Smith, *Man's Origin, Man's Destiny* (Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw, 1968); Phillip E. Johnson (e.g., *Darwin on Trial and Reason in the Balance* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1991 and 1995]); and Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box* (New York: Free Press, 1996).
4. -Huxley, *Evolution in Action*, 35.
5. -Theodosius Dobzhansky, *Evolution, Genetics, and Man* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1955), 150.
6. -G. S. Carter, *A Hundred Years of Evolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1958), 184-85.
7. -J. B. S. Haldane, *Nature*, 14 March 1959, 51.
8. -Huxley, *Evolution in Action*, 43.
9. -Ibid., 41.
10. -James F. Coppedge, *Evolution: Possible or Impossible?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 109-10.
11. -Mathematical Challenges to the Neo-Darwinian Interpretation of Evolution, eds. P. S. Moorhead and M. M. Kaplan (Philadelphia: Wistar Institute Press, 1967); and Lecomte du Nouy, *Human Destiny* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1947), 34.
12. -Davidheiser, *Evolution and Christian Faith*, 362-63.
13. -Harold F. Blum, *Time's Arrow and Evolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 170.
14. -Science, 1968, 161:1132, cf. *Journal of Geophysical Research*, 1968, 73:4603.
15. -Harry J. Fuller and Oswald Tippo, *College Botany* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961), 25.

Chapter 30: The Bible and Origins

Although it is true that the Bible is not a textbook on science, this does not mean it is inaccurate when it reveals truths that belong to the arena of science. Indeed, whatever it reveals in whatever area of knowledge is true, accurate, and reliable. The Bible does not answer every question we might like to have answered in the area of origins, but what it does reveal must be acknowledged as truth. And it says more on this subject than some may realize.

I. Some Necessary Presuppositions

A. Faith

The writer to the Hebrews reminds us that it is by faith that we understand that the ages were framed by the Word of God and that what is seen was not made out of visible things (Heb 11:3). The ages refers to all the periods of time as well as all that they contain. Since obviously there were no human spectators to Creation, and since the first man was placed in an already existing universe, we must accept by faith whatever God has revealed about Creation. Otherwise we will know nothing with certainty about Creation.

By contrast evolutionists would have to change Heb 11:3 to this: "By faith, we evolutionists understand that the worlds were not framed by the word of any god, so that what is seen has indeed been made out of previously existing and less complex visible things, by purely natural processes, through billions of years."¹

B. Facts

Truth about Creation is found only in the Bible. Whatever truths science may uncover can never be accepted as absolute truth. The facts God has revealed in the Bible are reliable facts, including those in the opening chapters of Genesis. That means the events actually took place in time and space once they had been created. In other words, the sequential acts of Creation and the events of the temptation and sin of Adam and Eve transpired in time and space; that is, they could have been marked on a calendar and a map. Genesis records facts, not myths or legends. Other biblical passages confirm this (e.g., Ex 20:9-11; Mt 19:4-6).

These facts were written by Moses. Whatever sources he may have used in connection with the superintending work and revelatory power of God in his writing, he was a man trained and educated. Some imply that revelation of events in an early period cannot be factual because they come through "savages." This makes primitive and savage synonymous and deprecates the operative power of inspiration. If Moses' words do not mean what they say, even though they speak of an early period of history, then how may we trust Christ's words (Jn 5:47)?²

II. The God of Creation

Gen 1:1 identifies Elohim as the Creator. Elohim is a generic word for Deity as well as a proper name for the true God. It means the strong One, mighty Leader, supreme Deity. The plural form of the word indicates His plenitude of power and majesty. This identification of Elohim as Creator refutes several serious heresies. (1) It refutes atheism. (2) It refutes polytheism, for the verb that follows is singular. (3) It denies pantheism, for God is presented as separate from His creation.

III. Creatio Ex Nihilo

This phrase means that God did not use any preexisting materials in creating. Heb 11:3 indicates this, as does the thrust of the record in Genesis 1. Prior to the creative fiat, there was no other kind of phenomenological existence. This rules out the idea that matter is eternal, and it counters the concept of dualism.

The verb bara used in Gen 1:1; 21; 27 does not in itself preclude the use of preexisting material (see Isa. 65:18), though none is stated or implied in the account. It means essentially the same as asa, "to do or make" (Gen 1:25; Ex 20:11; Neh 9:6). A third word for God's creative activity, yatsar, formed, occurs in Gen 2:7.

Creatio ex nihilo is a helpful concept "if we understand it to mean that physical entities were created out of the nonphysical resources of God's omnipotence. Technically, the expression is applicable only to the creation of inorganic substances, for God did employ previously created inorganic materials in forming the bodies of living things."³

IV. The Time of Creation

The "beginning" of Gen 1:1 apparently refers to the beginning of the Creation of the world. The first verse is an absolute statement, not a dependent clause related to verse 2.⁴ Even so the statement does not set the time of God's creative activity. Ussher fixed the time as 4004 B.C., while evolutionists suggest 4,500,000,000 B.C.

- (1) Some creationists hold to a recent Creation, both of the earth and of man.
- (2) Some agree that man was a recent creation but the earth is not. The gap theory and the day-age idea often go along with this view.
- (3) Some make a distinction between men represented by the fossils who were very old and lived and died before Adam, and Adam himself who was a recent creation.
- (4) Some understand Adam to be an island of creation in the sea of contemporary evolution including subhuman forms.
- (5) Theistic evolutionists regard man as ancient and the result of evolutionary processes by which the pre- and subhuman eventually produced humans.
- (6) A few understand Gen 1:1 not as describing "the primeval Creation ex nihilo, celebrated by the angels (Job. 38:7; Isa 45:18), but the much later refashioning of a judgment-ridden earth in preparation for a new order of creation-man."⁵ The original Creation took place, according to this view, before Gen 1:1.

Obviously there is no agreement as to the time of Creation. However, it seems clear that the recent appearance of man is well established in the scriptural account. Even assuming day-ages, Adam was created on the sixth day-age, which would be relatively recent. The genealogical tables in Gen 5 and Gen 11 (even with some gaps within them) also argue for the recent creation of Adam. In order to come to some decisions about the scriptural evidence, we need to consider some relevant interpretations and considerations.

V. The Gap Concept

A. Its Description

The gap concept (also called the ruin-reconstruction theory and the restitution theory) proposes a way to harmonize the Genesis record with the long periods of time seemingly demanded by geology (which as a science came into being at the first of the nineteenth century). First popularized by Thomas Chalmers of Scotland in 1814, it was elaborated by George H. Pember,⁶ incorporated in the notes of the Scofield Reference Bible (1909), and defended by, among others, Eric Sauer⁷ and Arthur C. Custance.⁸

According to this concept the original Creation of Genesis 1:1 was not only perfect and beautiful but was populated with plants and animals (some also say perhaps with pre-Adamic men). Then in the gap between verses 1 and 2 Satan rebelled against God, thus bringing sin into the universe. God's judgment involved a global flood followed by darkness and an Ice Age in which all plant, animal, and human (if it existed) life was destroyed. Thus the fossils found today came from this judgment on the original Creation because of the sin of Satan. Verse 2 pictures the state of things that resulted from this judgment. The six days of Creation, then, describe a re-creation, restoration, or restitution, not the original Creation.

B. Its Support

- (1) The phrase in Gen 1:2 should be translated "the earth became without form and void." That is, it became that way because of the catastrophic judgment on Satan.
- (2) "Without form, and void," (KJV), describe an evil condition that could not have been part of the original Creation by God because He did not make the earth without form (Isa. 45:18).
- (3) Darkness cannot be good; therefore, Gen 1:2 cannot describe the original Creation by God.
- (4) God's command to Adam to "replenish the earth" (Gen 1:28) indicates the earth must have been previously inhabited.
- (5) The use of bara in verse 1 indicates a different creation from what follows.

C. Its Weaknesses

- (1) Verse 2 begins with what is technically called a disjunctive waw ("now" rather than "and") and which introduces a circumstantial clause, with the imperfect sense of the verb, translated "now the earth was." To translate "the earth had become formless and void," a waw consecutive (which would indicate a sequential clause and be translated "and") with the pluperfect sense of the verb would be expected. To be sure, grammar allows the pluperfect sense "had become" and usage shows that the verb "to be" can be understood as "to become" (as in Gen 19:26; Jud 11:39; 2 Kgs 17:3). But the verb normally serves as a linking verb ("to be" not "to become"), as in Gen 2:25 and Gen 3:1 where it could not be understood as "to become." Also the disjunctive use of the waw seems required because the author apparently is calling the reader's attention to something about the earth—"now as to the earth it was." Furthermore, parallel constructions to Gen 1:2 are

found in Jon 3:3 and Zech 3:1-3 where the waw is disjunctive (translated "now") and the verb cannot be translated "to become."⁹

Actually this grammatical and translation choice is the principal support for the gap concept; and since it is at best weak, we must conclude that the theory lacks solid exegetical basis in the text.

A logical problem also exists with the construction the gap theory places on this verse. If the verb means "had become" (a pluperfect sense), then Gen 1:2 is saying that the earth had become formless and void prior to the Creation of verse 1. But the gap concept requires the becoming to happen after the creating.

(2) "Formless and void" do not necessarily imply judgment and an evil condition. Tohu (formless) appears in the Old Testament referring to space (Job 26:7) and the wilderness (Deut 32:10) without any evil connotations. However, according to the gap proponents, the formless condition of the earth could not have been its original state, since Isa 45:18 says God did not create it formless. Therefore, they conclude, the earth became that way after the original Creation. But this argument is not at all conclusive, for Isa 45:18 says that it was not God's ultimate intention that the earth be formless and void. In other words, God did originally create the world formless and void, but since this was not His ultimate wish for it, He proceeded to fill it with living things, including man.

(3) Although it is true that darkness is used as a symbol of judgment and evil, does it follow that darkness is inherently evil? I think not. It was made for creation's good just as light was (Ps 104:19-24). Although it is true that God called the light good but does not say anything about the darkness (Gen 1:4), does it follow that the darkness was not good? I think not. If so, then we would have to conclude that the expanse that He created but did not specifically call good was not good (Gen 1:6-8).

(4) God's command to Adam to replenish the earth (Gen 1:28), implying that it had previously been inhabited in the original Creation was literally a command to fill, not refill, the earth. Replenish and refill are faulty translations of the Hebrew word.

(5) No argument can be built on the use of bara in verse 1, as previously discussed under III.

(6) One additional weakness should be mentioned. There exists no biblical proof that Satan's fall resulted in judgment on the earth. Adam's fall did (Gen 3:17-19).

To sum up: The gap concept does not rest on solid exegetical grounds. The fact that it became popular about the same time as geology came on the scene makes one suspect that it gained acceptance because it easily accommodates the findings of uniformitarian geology.

VI. Solar Days or Ages?

Actually there are four views that fall within this discussion. (1) The literal solar-day view in which the days of Creation are understood to be solar days (which we now calibrate as twenty-four hours). (2) The day-age view that understands the days to be long ages. This view, of course, accommodates the geologic ages easily. (3) Solar days with long gaps between. The days in Gen 1 are solar days, but they did not follow each other immediately; rather they were separated by long periods of time. This view, too, will accommodate uniformitarian geology. (4) The

revelatory-day view says that the days have nothing to do with God's work of creating but with His revealing these matters to Moses. In other words, they were the days on which certain things were revealed, not performed.¹⁰

Even though there are these various views, the principal discussion centers on whether the days are solar or age-long.

A. Arguments for Solar Days

(1) The word "day" when used with a numerical adjective in the Pentateuch always indicates a solar day. Why would Gen 1 be an exception? Indeed this is true for all the uses of "day" with a numeral or ordinal in the entire Old Testament. The only possible exceptions to this might be 2 Chr 21:19 and Hos 6:2, though both passages may well be interpreted as understanding solar days. To be sure, the word "day" is used in several senses, but with the numeral or ordinal it only means a solar day (Gen 1:5; 8; 13; 19; 23; 31). In Gen 1:5; 14; 16; 18, it refers to the period of daylight as contrasted with night. Of course, this latter usage of day as the time of daylight relates to a solar day. It makes no sense to talk about the day of an age as contrasted with the night of an age.

(2) The qualifying phrase "evening and morning" attached to each of the six days of Creation supports the meaning of the days as twenty-four-hour periods. Proponents of the day-age idea reply that evening and morning is a figure of speech for beginning and ending. Each "evening" saw the completion of the work of that age, which was followed by the "morning" of renewed activity. But evening and morning, each occurring more than 100 times in the Old Testament, are never used to mean anything other than a literal evening and literal morning, ending or beginning a solar day. Notice the phrase in Daniel 8:26 referring to solar days.

(3) Ex 20:11 and Ex 31:17 state that God made everything in six days, that He rested on the seventh, and this pattern serves as the basis for man's weekly cycle. In both these passages, these are the words God spoke directly to Moses. If God meant ages instead of days, why did He not use dor or olam, which mean age, or attach an adjective like rab, which means "long," to the word "day"?

B. Arguments for Age-Days

(1) The word "day" sometimes refers to a longer, indefinite period of time. In Gen 2:4 it refers to the entire creative period, in Job 20:28 to the time of God's wrath, and in Ps 20:1 to a day or time of trouble. The plural is sometimes used in the sense of "the time of" (Gen 26:18). The argument focuses especially on Gen 2:4, which seems to indicate that God did His work of creating in an unspecified but long period of time, certainly longer than six solar days. "Since the previous chapter has indicated that there were at least six days involved in creating the heavens and the earth, it is abundantly evident that yom in verse 4 cannot possibly be meant as a twenty-four-hour day-unless perchance the Scripture contradicts itself!"¹¹ But this fails to recognize that "in the day that" is simply a vivid Hebrew idiom for "at the time when." There is no article before the word day-in a day, at the time.

(2) Since the sun was not created till the fourth day, we may assume that the first three days were of indefinite length of time. Is this an admission that the last four were solar days? Solar-day advocates reply that God must have created some source of light on the first day simply because

the text says there was light; and the rotation of the earth in relation to that light source brought the day/night, evening/ morning cycle mentioned in relation to those first three days.

(3) The seventh day on which God rested was longer than twenty-four hours; therefore, the first six days were also. The use of God's rest in Heb 4 reinforces this conclusion. Also, Peter says that with the Lord a day is as a thousand years (2 Pet 3:8).

Before accepting the conclusion, observe the following. Though the rest of the Christian life in Heb 4 is likened to the satisfying rest God enjoyed on the seventh day of the Creation week, nowhere does the writer of Hebrews suggest that that seventh day for God was other than the same length of day as the other six days of the Creation week. If they were ages, they were all ages; if days, all were days. But strictly speaking, Hebrews does not say other than God rested on the seventh day. It does say He rested, not He rests. Of course, Peter does not say that a day is a thousand years any more than he says that a thousand years is a day.

To sum up: Exegetically, the burden of proof rests on those who want to understand the days of Gen 1 as ages. Normal interpretation of that passage, the use of the word day with numbers, the accompanying phrase "evening and morning," and the two passages in Exodus constitute strong evidence from the biblical text itself that the days were solar days. If God wished to convey the idea of solar days, how could He have said it more clearly?

VII. Appearance of History

Any act of creation will of necessity carry with it the appearance of history. Even if God originally created only the simplest forms they would have necessarily had the appearance of some history. The first light source, the waters, the first vegetation (even if only the seeds), the sun and moon, the creatures, and Adam and Eve all had the appearance of history when they first appeared.

Indeed, this is normal for miracles. Several of our Lord's miracles involved apparent history. The wine made from water at Cana had the appearance of having gone through the natural processes involved in making wine, but, in fact, it had not (Jn 2:1-11). The food that fed five thousand men on one occasion as well as that which fed four thousand later had the appearance of having been grown and harvested, whereas in actuality it had no such chronological history.

That God has created with the appearance of history in the past seems irrefutable. The only question is, how much of this did He do? No more than was necessary and not anything that would tend to deceive us. God's own evaluation of His creative work was that it was good. Christ's miracles were done to show forth His glory (Jn 2:11). Goodness and glory leave no room for deception.

VIII. Some Concluding Observations

(1) There was an actual, factual, historical, supernatural Creation of the heavens, earth, and man by God. To deny, adjust, or compromise this by casting doubt on the reliability of Genesis does not do away with this truth, for the original creative activity of God is mentioned elsewhere in the Bible (Ex 20:11; 31:17; 1 Chr 1:1; Job 38:4-7; Mt 19:4-5; 1 Cor 11:7-8). If Genesis is untrustworthy, so must other parts of the Bible be.

(2) A worldwide flood in the time of Noah did actually occur. That it was worldwide is attested to about a dozen times in Gen 6-11 as well as in 2 Pet 2:5 and 2 Pet 3:6. The Lord confirmed the actuality of the Flood in Mt 24:38-39 and Lk 17:26-27. So again, if the truth of the Flood is rejected or the extent of it shrunk to something local, then one will also have to reject the Lord's testimony and Peter's (see also Heb 11:7). The record of the Flood, like that of Creation, cannot be said to be an exaggeration or falsification due to the "primitive" revelation of Genesis.

Ramifications of the truth of a universal Flood include these. The water involved may indicate the existence of a vapor canopy that condensed at the time of the Flood, producing the forty days of heavy rainfall (Gen 1:6-8; cf. Gen 7:11-12). This would have caused a drastic change in the climate of the world after the Flood and certain other results.¹² Of course, the uniformitarianism on which dating methods are based would have been affected by this.

The Flood destroyed all life that was not in the ark Noah built, accounting for the fossil remains in the earth.

(3) An original Creation prior to Gen 1:1 may be possible, but to me seems unlikely. If there were such, and if it contained plant and animal life, then fossils may have come from that period.

(4) The gap concept between verses 1 and 2 does not have good exegetical support.

(5) Neither do age-days in chapter 1 have sufficient evidence to be accepted. Solar days are indicated. Verse 3 records the beginning of events on day one (because of the phrase "Then God said, 'Let . .'" which also appears at the beginning of the succeeding days). This means that we do not know how long the unformed and unfilled condition of the earth of verse 2 lasted before the days began. But, however long or short, that condition did not involve plant, animal, or pre-Adamic human life (Mt 19:4; 1 Cor 15:45). Thus the original unfashioned earth might have been old, but the fashioned earth, vegetation, animals, and man, all of which were created during the six days of Creation, cannot be older than solar days and genealogical tables allow.

To sum up: Ultimately we have to believe what God has revealed about Creation. No human being was present when it happened. But the revelation of it was given by God, who is true, to Moses, who was an educated and reliable writer. Though not all details are included in the record, many facts are, and they should be exegeted in the same way as other Scriptures are. Furthermore, the truths revealed in Genesis are attested to in other parts of the Bible and by our Lord.

NOTES

1. -John C. Whitcomb, *The Early Earth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972), 42.
2. -See W. H. Griffith Thomas, *The Principles of Theology* (London: Church Book Room Press, 1945), xix.
3. -Whitcomb, *The Early Earth*, 21.
4. -See discussion in John J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), 39-40.

5. -Merrill F. Unger, "Rethinking the Genesis Account of Creation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (January 1958) :28.
6. -George H. Pember, *Earth's Earliest Ages* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1975).
7. -Eric Sauer, *The King of the Earth* (London: Paternoster Press, 1962).
8. -Arthur C. Custance, *Without Form and Void* (Brockville, Canada: Author, 1970).
9. -For detailed support of this see Weston W. Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976), 81-86.
10. -See Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 214ff.
11. -Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 63.
12. -See Joseph C. Dillow, *The Waters Above* (Chicago: Moody, 1980).

Chapter 31: The Creation of Man

I. The Characteristics of Man's Creation

The biblical record alone gives us accurate information about the origin of mankind. Certain characteristics of this act stand out in the text.

A. It was Planned by God (Gen 1:26)

The act of creating man was based on the deliberate counsel of God. Though all that God had done in Creation up to that point He pronounced as good, Creation was incomplete without man. Man was no afterthought, but the result of deliberate forethought on the part of the Godhead. And after God created man, He then said that everything He had made was "very good" (Gen 1:31).

B. It was Direct, Special, and Immediate (Gen 1:27; 2:7)

It did not involve any evolutionary processes that relate man to some sub-, non-, or prehuman brute forms.¹ That would mean that as far as his physical nature was concerned man was derived from some nonhuman animal form into which God breathed the breath of life. Gen 2:7 does not support this theory at all. Indeed, it reinforces the fact of special creation from materials that were inorganic; it does not lend support to the idea of a derived creation from some previously living form.

If one could sustain the theory that Adam was created from some preorganic form, Eve certainly was not. Her body was clearly a direct, special, and immediate act of creation. To acknowledge this in the case of Eve while denying it in the case of Adam is, to say the least, illogical.

Furthermore, the dust of the ground out of which man's body was made cannot be an allegorical reference to some animal form because God said man will return to dust when he dies, and man does not return to an animal state at death (Gen 3:19).

C. It Involved Two Facets

God used the dust from the ground into which He breathed the breath of life. This caused man to become animate. The same phrase ("a living creature") is also used of animals (Gen 1:21, 24; 2:19), but since animals were not created in the image of God, as was man, there exists a clear distinction between animals and man.

In the case of Eve, God first took a rib with its surrounding flesh from Adam's side and then fashioned or built it into a woman (Gen 2:21-23). God constructed Eve after taking the parts from Adam's side. "Build applies to the fashioning of a structure of some importance; it involves constructive effort."²

II. The Pattern for Man's Creation

God created man in His image and according to His likeness (Gen 1:26-27). Other relevant Scriptures to this doctrine include Gen 5:1, 3, which speak of the transmission of the image from Adam to his descendants; Gen 9:6, which relates the concept to capital punishment; 1 Cor 11:7, which correlates the doctrine to headship; Col 3:10, which exhorts the believer to put on the new man that is according to the image of his Creator; and Jas 3:9, which relates the concept to proper speech. Ps 8, though not containing the phrase "image of God," deals in poetic form with the creation of man and his dominion.

A. The Meaning of the Words "Image" and "Likeness"

The Hebrew words in Gen 1:26-27 are tselem and demuth (translated in the Vulgate by *imago* and *similitudo*). The equivalent New Testament words are eikon and homoiosis. Though some have attempted to make a distinction between the two words to teach two aspects of the image of God, no sharp distinction between them can be sustained linguistically. Tselem means a fashioned image, a shaped and representative figure, an image in some concrete sense (2 Kgs 11:18; Ezk 23:14; Amos 5:26). Demuth refers also to the idea of similarity, but more in the abstract or ideal. By using the two words together, the biblical author "seems to be attempting to express a very difficult idea in which he wants to make clear that man is in some way the concrete reflection of God, but at the same time he wants to spiritualize this toward abstraction."³

The Greek and Latin fathers distinguished between image and likeness, referring the former to the physical and the latter to the ethical part of God's image. Irenaeus understood the image to refer to man's freedom and reason and likeness to the gift of supernatural communion with God that was lost in the Fall. But such distinctions cannot be substantiated on the basis of the words. Note also that the prepositions are used interchangeably in Gen 1:26-27 and Gen 5:1-3.

B. The Meaning of the Concept

Much has been written attempting to explain what is meant by man's being created in the image of God. Here are some of the explanations.

1. The corporeal view. This relates the image of God to man's total being, including his corporeality. Strictly speaking, it includes both the material and immaterial aspects of man. But since it includes the material body of man as part of the image of God, it may be labeled the corporeal view.

Man is a representative by his entire being, for Israelite thought always views man in his totality, by his physical being as well as by his spiritual functions, and if choice had to be made between the two we would say that the external appearance is perhaps even more important than spiritual resemblance. According to L. Koehler the image of God could consist in man's upright position . . . [but] the solemnity with which the priestly writer speaks of the *imago Dei* seems to prove that he did not restrict it to this single aspect. . . . It is also to a rather physical sense that we are directed by the passage in Genesis which refers to the image of God over the matter of blood vengeance (9:6).4

Two obstacles appear to stand in the way of accepting this view._(1) Since God is spirit and has no body, how could the image of God in which man was created be corporeal? (2) Animals have bodies but are not said to have been created in the image of God, so corporeality does not necessarily have to be related to the image of God.

2. The noncorporeal view. This view connects the image of God to facets of personality. Many writers emphasize moral likeness, dominion, the exercise of will, and intellectual faculties (ability to speak, organize, etc.) as specifics of the noncorporeal image of God.

3. A combination view. I would suggest a combination of the two previous views, as follows. Gen 1:27 states that mankind, male and female, was created in the image of God. No one attributes gender to God because of this statement; yet male and female indicate gender. Similarly, just because man, created in the image of God, has a body, does not necessitate attributing a body to God. But obviously man was created a total being, material and immaterial, and that total being was created in the image of God.

Therefore, (1) man's body is included in the image of God.

While God is not physical in any way, there is a sense in which even a man's body is included in the image of God, for man is a unitary being composed of both body and soul. His body is a fit instrument for the self-expression of a soul made for fellowship with the Creator and is suited eschatologically to become a "spiritual body" (1 Cor 15:44). . . . [His body] was not something apart from the real self of Adam, but was essentially one with it.5

(2) To be created in the image of God also means to be a living being. This was Paul's emphasis on Areopagus (Acts 17:28-29). Refuting the belief that inanimate idols could represent the living God, he argues that since mankind is the offspring of God, and since human beings are living beings, God must also be a living Being.

(3) Man is not only a living being, but a being like God with both intelligence and will that give him the ability to make decisions that enable him to have dominion over the world (Gen 1:28).

(4) Adam was not only a unitary, living, intelligent, determining being, but also one who was able to have unhindered fellowship with God. How can we express Adam's original condition? Some use the word innocent, but Adam was more than innocent, which seems to connote only the absence of wrong. Adam's original holiness was positive; yet it was not equal with God's-it was

creaturely. Because it was subject to testing, it was unconfirmed. It provided immortality, for until Adam failed the test, he was not subject to the inevitable law of death due to sin.

To sum up: the image of God in which man was created included the totality of his being as living, intelligent, determining, and moral.

4. The Roman Catholic view. This distinguishes image and likeness. Image is the natural image that belongs to man as created and includes spirituality, freedom, and immortality. Likeness indicates that moral image that did not belong to man as originally created but was rapidly and very early superadded to him. It needed to be added because of concupiscence, which is a natural bent toward the lower appetites, though not in and of itself sinful. Likeness adds original righteousness and holiness.

When man sinned he lost the likeness but kept the image. That original righteousness that was lost in the Fall can be added through the sacraments of the Roman church.

5. The neo-orthodox view. Among neo-orthodox writers Brunner's concept is somewhat similar to that of the Roman Catholic church. He taught that there was a formal image that could not be lost in the Fall because it constituted man as man. He also saw a material image that was lost through the Fall.

Barth rejected the idea of a formal image because of his belief that man was utterly corrupted by sin.

C. Ramifications of the Concept

When sin entered the human race, the image of God in which man was created was not lost. One may say it was defaced though not erased. If the image concept was described correctly, then if man lost it he would no longer be a living, rational being.

Further evidence that the image was not lost is found in the use the Scripture makes of it after the Fall. The fact that man was created in the image of God is the basis for the institution of capital punishment (Gen 9:6). Headship of the man is also based on his being in the image of God (1 Cor 11:7). James cautions us about cursing a fellow human being on the ground that mankind was made in the likeness of God (Jas 3:9). These passages would have no basis if the image had been erased in the Fall.

Regeneration and sanctification serve to renew the believer according to the image of Christ, to whose image we shall someday be perfectly conformed (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18). Only grace can do this.

III. The Transmission of Man's Being

When Adam begat Seth, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image (Gen 5:3). Though Adam was made directly in the image of God, his children were generated in Adam's image, which, of course, still bore God's image even after the Fall (cf. 1 Cor 11:7). Thus the transmission of man's being was and is through natural generation.

No one questions this as far as the material aspect of man's being is concerned. Our bodies come from our parents, and theirs from theirs, etc. But how is the immaterial aspect of man passed from generation to generation? To this question several answers have traditionally been proposed.

A. Preexistence

This view states that at the beginning God created all human souls, which were confined in physical bodies as punishment. Souls go through various incarnations throughout history and in the process incur sinfulness. Plato and the Greeks taught this transmigration of souls, and in the early church Origen held a similar view (ca. 185-ca. 254). In modern times it is taught by theosophy, Hinduism, and philosopher F. R. Tennant. Orthodox Christianity has never held this view, for it has no biblical basis. Furthermore, the reincarnation aspect of the teaching stands in direct conflict with the biblical teaching on eternal life or eternal punishment for every individual born into this world.

B. Creationism

As defended by Charles Hodge, creationism teaches that God creates the soul at the moment of conception or birth and immediately unites it with the body.⁶ The soul is sinful not because its creation was somehow defective, but because of its contact with inherited guilt through the body. Hodge offers three arguments in support of creationism. (1) It is more in accord with Scriptures like Num 16:22 and Heb 12:9, which say the soul comes from God (while, in contrast, the body comes from earthly parents). (2) Since the nature of the soul is immaterial it could not be transmitted by natural generation. (3) Christ's sinlessness could only be true if His soul were created (and of course it would not have been united with a sinful body-hence His Person would be sinless). Roman Catholics and many Reformed theologians prefer creationism.

C. Traducianism

This view holds that the soul is transmitted along with the body through the processes of natural generation. William G. T. Shedd cited three kinds of support for this view.⁷ (1) Scriptural: Heb 7:10 indicates a rational and moral act on the part of unborn Levi; Gen 2:1-3 states that God rested on the seventh day of Creation because His work of Creation was finished. No fresh acts, like creating new souls, are indicated; and verse 7 does not allow for the breath of life to be breathed into anyone else other than Adam. (2) Theological: creationism places God in the position of creating a perfect soul (He could not create a sinful one), then having it fall in the case of each newborn infant. The case of the sinless Christ is in every respect an exception and not the pattern for deciding this question. (3) Physiological: man is always seen as a union of soul and body; therefore, it is more natural to consider both the psychical and physical as developing together.

It seems to me that traducianism provides a more natural explanation than creationism does. I agree with J. O. Buswell's observation:

As between these two views, it does seem to me that there is a certain obvious fact which has been neglected in the historical discussion, and that is the perfect uniformity and regularity of the arrival of a soul whenever a human life begins to be. In our ordinary thinking when we observe such perfect uniformity and regularity in other matters, we usually ascribe the results to the

secondary forces which God has created and which He maintains by His divine providence. For this reason, and for this reason only, I am inclined toward the traducian view, but I do not feel that it can be firmly established on the grounds of any explicit scriptural teaching.⁸

NOTES

1. -Contrast A. H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Philadelphia: Judson, 1907), 465-76.
2. -H. C. Leupold, Exposition of Genesis (Columbus: Wartburg, 1942), 135.
3. -Addison H. Leitch, "Image of God," in The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 3:256.
4. -Edmond Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 168-69.
5. -Ralph E. Powell, "Image of God," in Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia (Chicago: Moody, 1975), 1:832.
6. -Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1940), 2:70ff.
7. -William G. T. Shedd, Dogmatic Theology (New York: Scribner, 1891), 2:7ff.
8. -J. Oliver Buswell, A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962) :252.

Chapter 32: The Facets of Man

I. The Nature of Man

A. Bipartite Unity

When God created Adam, He took the dust of the earth and breathed into it the breath of life to make a living person (Gen 2:7). Although there were two steps to the act of creating, the result was a single, unitary living person. To be sure, the particles of the earth provided the material, while God's breath effected life. Material and immaterial combined to produce a single entity. Within the material exists a variety of features-arteries, brain, muscles, hair, etc., and within the immaterial we also find a variety-soul, spirit, heart, will, conscience, etc. But without the unity of man's being, this diversity could not function. "The biblical view of man shows him to us in an impressive diversity, but it never loses sight of the unity of the whole man, but rather brings it out and accentuates it."¹

That man is bipartite in nature is undebatable. Man is a material and nonmaterial entity, the two aspects being distinguishable. Physical death is described as the separation of body and spirit (Jas 2:26). Biblical dichotomy differs from Plato's teaching that the body was perishable but the soul existed in the heavenly world of pure form or idea before its incarnation in the human body and was therefore uncreated and immortal, a part of Deity. Biblical dichotomy certainly does not teach that the body is the prison house of the soul, which is released at death to return to the

heavenly world or to be reincarnated in another body. Biblical dichotomy is radically different from Platonic dualism.

B. Not Trichotomy ("Cut in Three Parts")

Aristotle further developed Plato's twofold division by dividing the soul into (a) an animal soul (the breathing aspect) and (b) the rational soul (the intellectual aspect). This distinction was further developed in Roman Catholic doctrine through Thomas Aquinas. Early Christian writers, influenced by the Greeks, thought they found support for trichotomy in certain New Testament passages, as do some modern writers.

Popular trichotomy (man is composed of body, soul, and spirit) makes the spirit superior to the soul, and the spirit and soul superior to the body. Body relates to self, soul to the world, but spirit to God. Spirit and the spiritual are to be cultivated, while soulishness and body are deprecated. This prioritizing is incompatible with popular trichotomy's attempt to draw an analogy between the tripartite nature of God and man. Certainly the persons of the Trinity are equal, though the parts of man are not. To which person of the Trinity would the body correspond? Trichotomy, popular or formal, cannot be substantiated logically, analogically, or scripturally.

But what about the passages commonly cited to support trichotomy?

Heb 4:12 seems to separate soul from spirit, thus supporting the trichotomy view. However, the verse does not say that the Word severs soul from spirit but that it pierces through to divide soul and spirit, thus exposing the innermost aspects of man. The point is simply that the Word of God leaves nothing hidden.

1 Thess 5:23 seems to indicate that the immaterial aspect of man is composed of soul and spirit. Trichotomists understand spirit, soul, and body in this verse as defining the parts of man; dichotomists say they represent the whole man. If these three terms are inclusive of all the aspects of man, then what place do heart, mind, will, and conscience have? Why did not Paul also include them in the list? The emphasis of the verse is on the completeness of sanctification.

1 Cor 15:44 appears to teach a difference between the present body (a soul body) and the resurrection body (a spiritual body). But that does not mean that the spirit is superior to the soul. Also John saw people in heaven as "souls" (Rev 6:9; 20:4).

The spirit can partake of pollution along with the flesh (2 Cor 7:1). Trichotomy ought to have pollution affecting the flesh and soul, not the spirit. Fleshly lusts war against the soul (1 Pet 2:11). Trichotomy ought to have flesh warring against the spirit, or soul against spirit. How can the Lord command us to love Him with all our souls if the soul is world-conscious, not God-conscious? (Mk 12:30). Trichotomy ought to have the command read "with all your spirit," but spirit is not mentioned at all in the command. In Heb 10:38 soul is used of God.

Man is made up of two substances, material and immaterial. Each consists of a variety within. The many facets of the material and the many facets of the immaterial join together to make up the whole of each person. Man is rich diversity in unity.

II. The Facets of the Immortal Aspect of Man

Man is like a diamond with its many facets. Those facets are not separate entities, yet they reflect various aspects of the whole. They may serve similar or overlapping functions, yet they are distinguishable. They are not parts; they are aspects, facets, faces of the whole.

A. Soul

In its most basic sense, the Hebrew word, nephesh, means "life." It designates man originally created as a living being (soul) (Gen 2:7) as well as other forms of life (Gen 1:20-21; 24; 30; Lev 17:11). Notice also Ex 21:23 and Joshua 2:13. This is the sense in which English would speak of an individual as a soul.

That life principle departs at the time of physical death (Gen 35:18; Jer 15:2). Yet the corpse is called soul (Lev 21:1-3; Num 6:6; 9:6). In the Old Testament "soul" does not exist apart from the body, emphasizing again the unity of man's being. "Rich and abundant though this use of n. (nephesh, soul) for life is, we must not fail to observe that the n. is never given the meaning of an indestructible core of being, in contradistinction to the physical life, and even capable of living when cut off from that life."²

Soul also is the center of various spiritual and emotional experiences of mankind. These include sympathy (Job 30:25), despair (Ps 43:5), bitterness (2 Kgs 4:27), hate (2 Sam 5:8), love (Song of Sol. 1:7; 3:1-4), and grief (Jer 13:17).

The New Testament reveals some similarities and differences in its use of the word "soul" (psyche). It denotes the whole individual person (Acts 2:41; 27:37). But it can refer to the immaterial part of man only (Mt 10:28). It also designates people in the intermediate state between death and the resurrection of the body (Rev 6:9).

Soul seems to be a principal focus of redemption (though of course, the physical body also experiences the effects of redemption). Notice passages like Heb 10:39; 13:17; Jas 1:21; 1 Pet 1:9, 22; 2:11, 25.

To sum up: soul can mean the whole person, alive or after death; it can designate the immaterial part of a person with its many feelings and emotions; and it is an important focus of spiritual redemption and growth.

B. Spirit

Spirit (ruach and pneuma) refers only to the immaterial part of man, unlike soul, which can denote the whole man, material and immaterial. Man is a soul, but man is not said to be a spirit-he has a spirit.

The spirit originates from God, and all people have spirits (Num. 16:22; Heb. 12:9). It is simply not biblical to talk of man not having a spirit until he receives the Holy Spirit at salvation (cf. 1 Cor 2:11; Heb 4:12; Jas 2:26).

As a facet of the immaterial part of man, one's spirit is the center of various traits, emotions, and activities. Some of these include thinking (Isa 29:24), remembering (Ps 77:6), humility (Mt 5:3),

grief (Gen 26:35), vexation (Jn 13:21), jealousy (Num 5:14), haughtiness (Prov 16:18), and contriteness (Ps 34:18). Because it may evince undesirable emotions, the spirit needs attention in the spiritual life (Ps 51:10; 2 Cor 7:1).

Though soul and spirit can relate to the same activities or emotions, there does seem to be a distinction and contrast between soul and spirit in Pauline thought. This accounts for his emphasis on the spiritual (1 Cor 2:14; 3:1; 15:45; Eph 1:3; 5:19; Col 1:9; 3:16). Why?

When Paul became a Christian, the experience of God in Christ became the determining factor, not only in his view of God, but in everything. Because Paul was a Jew, his attitude to God affected and determined all his thoughts. In Christian experience, psyche, the term for purely human vitality, became unimportant. Pneuma, the term that began with God but proceeded into man, became central. The infrequency of the use of psyche in Paul is the key to the understanding of it. . . Paul's knowledge of the Holy Spirit set the basis of his anthropology and pneuma took the leading role.³

To sum up: spirit does not indicate the whole person, but the immaterial part with its various functions and feelings. In Pauline thought it assumes prominence in relation to the spiritual life.

C. Heart

Heart is a very comprehensive concept in both Old and New Testaments. Used about 955 times it stands for the center and seat of life, both physical and psychical. Only a relatively few occurrences refer to the physical organ (2 Sam 18:14; 2 Kgs 9:24). The greater number use heart to denote the inner man, the essence of the many facets of his personality. Some of these include the following.

1. Heart is the seat of intellectual life. It considers (Deut 8:5); it obtains a knowledge of the Word (Ps 119:11); it is the source of evil thoughts and actions (Mt 15:19-20); it has thoughts and intentions (Heb 4:12); it can be deceitful (Jer 17:9).
 2. Heart is the seat of the emotional life. It loves (Deut 6:5); it produces self-reproach (Job 27:6); it rejoices and is glad (Ps 104:15; Isa 30:29); it can be sorrowful (Neh 2:2; Rom 9:2); it has desires (Ps 37:4); it can be bitter (Ps 73:21).
 3. It is the seat of the volitional life. It seeks (Deut 4:29); it can be turned aside (Ex 14:5); it can be hardened (Ex 8:15; Heb 4:7); it is capable of choice (Ex 7:22-23); it can be uncircumcised (Jer 9:26; Acts 7:51).
- 4}}. It is the seat of spiritual life. With the heart man believes resulting in righteousness (Rom 10:9-10). For the believer the heart is the abode of the Father (1 Pet 3:15), the Son (Eph 3:17), and the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 1:22). The believer's heart should be pure (1 Tim 1:5; Heb 10:22) and circumcised (Rom 2:29).

D. Conscience

The conscience is a witness within man that tells him he ought to do what he believes to be right and not to do what he believes to be wrong. Conscience does not teach us what is right or wrong

but prods us to do what we have been taught to be right. One can do what is wrong in good conscience because he has been misinformed as to what is right and wrong (Acts 23:1).

Conscience appears only in the New Testament. Those functions of conscience are assigned to the heart in the Old Testament (e.g., 1 Sam 24:5; Job 27:6). In the New Testament conscience occurs most often in Paul's writings (John used the word heart, as in 1 Jn 3:19-21). The unsaved person's conscience may be a good guide (Jn 8:9; Rom 2:15), or it may not be even though it may seem to guide correctly (Acts 23:1; 1 Tim 4:2; Tit 1:15; Heb 10:22). Conscience may be likened to unreliable brakes on an automobile. They may do their job at times, but they cannot be counted on. The Christian's conscience operates to prod him to do what is right in various relationships of life. (1) It prods him to obey the government under which he lives (Rom 13:5). (2) It tells him to bear up under an unjust employer (1 Pet 2:18-19). (3) The conscience of a weaker brother that does not permit him to eat meat sacrificed to idols should be respected by the stronger brother (1 Cor 8:7, 10, 12). (4) Conscience may be called to witness to the depth and reality of a spiritual commitment (Rom 9:2; 2 Cor 1:12; 4:2).

E. Mind

Like conscience, mind is more specifically a New Testament concept. In the Old Testament heart is usually the word behind the translation mind. Mind includes both the faculties of perceiving and understanding as well as those of feeling, judging, and determining. Phroneo, nous, and sunesis are the principal New Testament words for this concept.

The unsaved man's mind is said to be reprobate (Rom 1:28), vain (Eph 4:17), defiled (Tit 1:15), blinded (2 Cor 4:4), and darkened (Eph 4:18). Further, he is without that critical faculty represented by sunesis (Rom 3:11).

The believer's mind occupies a central place in his spiritual development. God uses it in his understanding of truth (Lk 24:45; 1 Cor 14:14-15). The dedicated life must include a renewed mind (Rom 12:2). The mind is involved in deciding doubtful things (Rom 14:5), in pursuing holiness (1 Pet 1:13), in understanding the Lord's will (Eph 5:17), and in loving the Lord (Mt 22:37). Every thought must be captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor 10:5).

F. Flesh

Though flesh sometimes refers to tissue (Lk 24:39) or to the whole material part of man (1 Cor 15:39; Heb 5:7), when used of a facet of the immaterial nature it refers to that disposition to sin and to oppose God (Rom 7:18; 1 Cor 3:3; 2 Cor 1:12; Gal 5:17; Col 2:18; 2 Pet 2:10; 1 Jn 2:16). Both the believer and unbeliever possess this capacity.

G. Will

Actually the Bible says much more about the will of God than man's will, and what it does say is unsystematic. A believer can will to do what is right or what is wrong (Rom 7:15-25; 1 Tim 6:9; Jas 4:4). Will may be more of an expression of oneself through the other facets of his personality, rather than a distinct faculty in and of itself. These are the facets of the immaterial part of man through which he may glorify himself or glorify and serve his Lord.

NOTES

1. -G. C. Berkouwer, *Man-The Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 200.
2. -Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 20.
3. -W. David Stacey, *The Pauline View of Man* (London: Macmillan, 1956), 126-27.

Chapter 33: The Fall of Man

Views concerning the validity of the account of the Fall of man in Gen 3 may be classified into three categories.

(1) Some say it is legend, which means that the facts are not true. "That such sketches cannot possess the value of historical accounts is evident from the whole style of the narrative. It is a general picture of religion and morals in the light of a later period. But for giving a knowledge of those primitive days it is not by any means, on that account, wholly valueless."¹

(2) Others want to preserve the "truth" of the story without having to accept its historical trustworthiness. Thus A. M. Hunter calls it a "true myth." "Unless we are invincible fundamentalists we know that Gen 3 is properly to be regarded as 'a true myth'-that, though Eden is on no map and Adam's fall fits no historical calendar, that chapter witnesses to a dimension of human experience as present now as at the dawn of history-in plain terms, we are fallen creatures, and the story of Adam and Eve is the story of you and me."²

(3) Many regard the account as factual, historical truth. "The account of the creation, its commencement, progress, and completion, bears the marks, both in form and substance, of a historical document in which it is intended that we should accept as actual truth, not only the assertion that God created the heavens and the earth, and all that lives and moves in the world, but also the description of the Creation itself in all its stages."³

Other Scriptures validate the historicity of the Fall. Notice 1 Cor 15:21-22 and 1 Tim 2:14. But especially observe how Paul pressed the historicity of Adam's sin in Rom 5:12-21. He repeatedly compared it with what Christ did on the cross. Many who understand Gen 3 to be legend, poem, true myth, or whatever, do not deny the factuality of Christ's death (though they may not agree on its significance). But Paul's comparison and contrast in the passage demands either that both Adam's and Christ's actions be true or that both be legend or myth. To accept Christ's death as factual and Adam's sin as not is, to say the least, straining the passage to the breaking point. This is exactly what Barthians try to do. They not only accept the historicity of Christ's death but for them it is the highest point of revelation. Yet they do not accept the account of Gen 3 as factual, though they acknowledge the truth and reality of sin. But if, according to that passage, Christ and what He did stand in the realm of fact, then also do Adam and his actions.

I. The Tempted

What was Adam's nature and his relation to God before he sinned?

A. His Endowments

We know that Adam possessed powers of understanding and reason that enabled him to name the animals and to reason about the relationship of Eve to himself (Gen 2:19-23). God also endowed him with the ability to use language so that communication was possible between God and himself (Gen 16, 20, 23).

B. His Moral Nature

However we describe Adam's moral nature before the Fall, it is clear that he was without sin. Some say this means a kind of passive holiness in that Adam was innocent of wrong. His holiness was such as to enable him to enjoy complete fellowship with God. Perhaps it is too strong to speak of a positive holiness since Adam was able to choose to sin. I prefer a description like this: Adam possessed unconfirmed (because he had neither passed nor failed the test) creature (because his holiness was not the same as the Creator's) holiness (because he was more than "innocent").

Adam had a free will and a mind capable of weighing choices.

Adam, therefore, could have stood if he would, since he fell merely by his own will; but because his will was flexible to either side, and he was not endued with constancy to persevere, therefore he so easily fell. Yet his choice of good and evil was free; and not only so, but his mind and will were possessed of consummate rectitude, and all his organic parts were rightly disposed to obedience, till, destroying himself, he corrupted all his excellencies.⁴

C. His Responsibilities

1. *To exercise dominion over the earth*, (Gen 1:26, 28). Theonomists understand this so-called "cultural mandate" as authorizing man to bring all the world's structures under the lordship of Christ, demolishing every kind of opposition to God. Reformed writers understand it similarly except that they do not emphasize the establishment of Old Testament law in all its aspects on society today. However, observe that the phrase "subdue the earth" is not part of the mandate given to Noah and his descendants (including us) after the Flood (Gen 9:1). Further observe that the word "subdue" in Gen 1:28 comes from a root that means "to knead" or "to tread" and refers to bringing the earth under cultivation so that the race could multiply. Adam was to administer the earth and its creatures so that it would sustain the people who would fill it. This was the context in which Adam was commanded to cultivate and keep the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:15). Presumably it could have grown in exuberant disorder if Adam had not attended to it.

2. *To enjoy the fruits of his care of the Garden*. (Gen 2:16-17).

II. The Test

Ultimately the test was whether Adam and Eve would obey God or not. The particular way they could prove that was by not eating the fruit of one of the trees in the Garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In one sense it was a minor prohibition in comparison with the many trees in the Garden from which they could eat the fruits. In another sense it was a major matter, since this was the specific way they could show their obedience or disobedience to God. By way

of contrast, how many ways can we show our obedience or disobedience to God in the course of a single day?

In setting a test at all, God showed that He wanted men to voluntarily choose to obey Him and to serve Him. He did not want automatons.

III. The Tempter

Satan wisely used a creature Eve was acquainted with instead of appearing himself, something that would likely have alerted her to the unusual and put her on guard. Satan used an actual serpent, since the serpent as well as Satan were cursed after the Fall. For some reason, Eve was not alarmed that the serpent spoke with her. "The tempter addresses himself to the woman, probably [because] . the woman had not personally received the prohibition from God, as Adam had; cf. Gen 2:16-17."⁵

IV. The Temptation

A. Satan's Counterfeit

A counterfeit, of course, attempts to come as close to the genuine article as possible, while leaving something costly out. A master counterfeiter, Satan had previously aspired to be like God, not unlike God (Isa 14:14). Now he approached Eve with the suggestion that his plan was like God's but without the restriction of total obedience. When approached with the question whether God had placed any tree in the Garden off limits, Eve quickly affirmed that she and Adam could eat of all the trees of the Garden except one. And that exception seemed to come to her mind almost as an afterthought. Satan had hinted at the possibility that God had placed too-sweeping restrictions on them, and Eve began to entertain that thought.

Then Satan proceeded to offer his own plan, which did not have that restriction. "The woman acts on the supposition that God's intent is unfriendly, whilst Satan is animated with the desire to promote her well-being."⁶ Satan was attempting to counterfeit the goodness of God.

Satan's temptation may be viewed in the form of a syllogism. The major premise was that restrictions were not good. The minor premise was that God's plan included a restriction. The conclusion then was that God's plan was not good. On the other hand, Satan's plan did not include any restrictions; therefore, it was good. The validity of the conclusion depends on the truth of the major premise, which in this case is not true. Restrictions are not necessarily wrong or undesirable. Indeed, the restriction placed on Adam and Eve in the Garden was good in that it provided the principal way they could show their obedience to the will of God. Satan's counterfeit plan did away with that restriction and offered the false hope that if Eve ate the forbidden fruit she could be like God.

B. Eve's Rationalizations

Eve's rationalization of what she was about to do may have been along these lines. As she examined Satan's proposition, she reasoned that the fruit would be good to eat, and providing good things for Adam was one of her wifely responsibilities. Further, why would God withhold the fruit that was beautiful to the eyes, since He made so many other beautiful things for them to enjoy? And, of course, God would certainly want them to be wise. Therefore, it would be

desirable, even necessary, to eat this fruit. Gone from her mind was God's express command not to eat it. Quickly forgotten were all the blessings He had provided. Eve's mind seemed only to be filled with her rationalizations-the fruit would give physical sustenance, it would cultivate their aesthetic tastes, and it would add to their wisdom. Having justified what she was about to do, she took fruit from the tree and ate it.

V. The Penalties

A. On the Race (Gen 3:7-13)

1. *A sense of guilt as evidenced by making a covering.* (Gen 3:7).
2. *A loss of fellowship as evidenced by hiding from God.* (Gen 3:8). This also brought both spiritual and physical death to the race. Death is always separation; immediately Adam and Eve experienced spiritual separation, and immediately they began to experience the decaying process in their bodies, which ultimately resulted in physical death (Rom 5:12).

B. On the Serpent (Gen 3:14)

The serpent was condemned to crawl, perhaps as a sign of degradation and/or perhaps indicating that it was an upright creature before this penalty was imposed. Even in the Millennium this posture will continue (Isa 65:25). Actually the entire animal kingdom was affected by the Fall in order that man in his fallen condition could still exercise a measure of dominion over it (Rom 8:20).

C. On Satan (Gen 3:15)

1. *Satan's seed and woman's seed.* Enmity will exist between Satan's seed (all the lost, Jn 8:44; Eph 2:2) and the woman's seed (all the family of God).
2. *Death for Satan; bruise for Christ.* An individual from the woman's seed (Jesus Christ) will deal a death blow to Satan's head at the cross (Heb 2:14; 1 Jn 3:8) while Satan will cause Christ to suffer ("bruise his heel" KJV). Pre-Christian Jews showed a "veiled acceptance of messianic idea in Gen 3:15."⁷

D. On Eve and Women (Gen 3:16)

1. *Conception.* God would multiply women's sorrow in conception (not "thy sorrow and thy conception" KJV-two things). Childbirth would now be accompanied by pain.
2. *Woman's desire would be to her husband.* Some understand this to indicate a compensating factor to the sorrow and pain of childbirth; i.e., in spite of the pain, she would experience a deep, sexual attraction to her husband and thus desire to bear children. Others understand it to mean she shall have a desire to rule her husband contrary to God's established order. The same word for desire is used with this sense in Gen 4:7.⁸
3. *Hierarchy of rule.* Women will be ruled by men, a necessary hierarchical arrangement for a sinful world. The New Testament does not abrogate this arrangement (1 Cor 11:3; 14:34; Eph 5:24-25; Tit 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1, 5-6).

E. On Adam and Men (Gen 3:17-24)

1. *Curse on ground.* The ground was cursed because of Adam's sin so that it would grow thorns and thistles, increasing his work to make it produce. Before this, Adam's labor was enjoyable and satisfying; now it would be difficult and empty.

2. *Death.* Adam and mankind would return to the dust of the ground at death.

3. *Expulsion.* Adam was driven from the Garden, which was both a geographic and spiritual act symbolizing the break in fellowship.

VI. The Ramifications

In addition to these specific penalties, two important ramifications of Adam's and Eve's sin must be pointed out.

First, all sin affects others. Eve's sin affected Adam, and Adam's sin affects the entire race. No one sins totally in private without ramifications in relation to others. All that we do or fail to do affects few or many in one way or another.

Second, sin, once committed, can never be undone. Forgiveness can be experienced and fellowship restored, but history cannot be changed or erased. Adam and Eve, once expelled, could not return to the Garden of Eden. Esau could not retrieve the birthright he sold (Heb 12:16-17). Moses could not personally enter the Promised Land but could only see it from a distance because of his sin (Num 20:12; Deut 3:27). The kingdom was taken from Saul and his descendants because he did not wait for Samuel to come and offer the sacrifices (1 Sam 13:13-14). These are sobering examples of the ramifications of sin.

Yet there is another side to both ramifications. Sin affects others, but so do grace and goodness. History cannot be erased, but the future can be different (better) because we learn the lessons of history. Paul thought John Mark's conduct on the first missionary journey disqualified him from going with him on the second trip (Acts 15:38). But Mark must have learned some lesson from this, for later Paul wanted the ministry of Mark (2 Tim 4:11). The Fall affected all human beings, bringing depravity and death, and it will always be the darkest hour of all human history; yet where sin abounded, grace superabounds, and the one who does the will of God abides forever (Rom 5:20; 1 Jn 2:17).

NOTES

1. -Hermann Schultz, Old Testament Theology (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895), 1:89.

2. -A. M. Hunter, Interpreting Paul's Gospel (London: SCM, 1954), 77.

3. -C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, The Pentateuch (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, n.d.), 1:137.

4. -John Calvin, Institutes, I, XV, 215.

5. -Geerhardus Vos, Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 45.

6. -Ibid., 47.

7. -David Baron, *Rays of Messiah's Glory* (Winona Lake, Ind.: BMH Books, 1979), 44-45.

8. -See Susan T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God* (Nutley, N.J. : Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980),
67-69.

Section VIII-Sin

Chapter 34: The Biblical Concept of Sin

The biblical concept of sin comes from a study of words used in both Testaments for sin. The terms are numerous, compared to the words for grace in the Bible. Only three words are needed to express grace (*chen* and *chesed* in the Old Testament and *charis* in the New). By contrast, there are at least eight basic words for sin in the Old Testament and a dozen in the New. Together they furnish the basic concepts involved in the doctrine.

I. In the Old Testament

A. Chata

In all of its forms this basic word for sin occurs about 522 times in the Old Testament. Its basic meaning is to miss the mark. It is equivalent to the Greek word *hamartano*. But missing the mark also involves hitting some other mark; i.e., when one misses the right mark and thus sins, he also hits the wrong mark. The idea is not merely a passive one of missing, but also an active one of hitting. It is used of moral evil, idolatry, and ceremonial sins. Some important references include Ex 20:20; Jud 20:16; Prov 8:36; 19:2.

B. Ra

Used about 444 times in the Old Testament, this word, equivalent to *kakos* or *poneros*, carries the basic meaning of breaking up or ruin. It often means calamities and is translated by the word "wicked" many times. It may indicate something injurious as well as something morally wrong (Gen 3:5; 38:7; Jud 11:27). In Isa 45:7 God is said to create light and darkness, well-being and *ra*. Some understand this to mean calamities and others, evil. If the latter, then it can only indicate that all things, including evil, are included in the plan of God, though the responsibility for committing sin rests on the creature, not the Creator.

C. Pasha

The basic idea in this word is to rebel, though it is usually translated by the word transgression. Notice 1 Kgs 12:19; 2 Kgs 3:5; Prov 28:21; and Isa 1:2.

D. Awon

The word includes both the ideas of iniquity and guilt, which in Hebrew thought were closely allied (1 Sam 3:13). Note its use in connection with the Suffering Servant (Isa 53:6), and in connection with a defiant sin (Num 15:30-31).

E. Shagag

The word means to err or go astray as a sheep or a drunkard might do (Isa 28:7). It refers to error for which the one committing it was responsible. Thus in the Law it implies that the one who goes astray was responsible for knowing what the Law commanded (Lev 4:2; Num 15:22).

F. *Asham*

Almost all the uses of this word are found in connection with the ritual of the tabernacle and the temple in Leviticus, Numbers, and Ezekiel. Guilt before God is its principal idea. It designates the guilt and sin offerings and therefore includes both intentional and unintentional guilt (Lev 4:13; 5:2-3).

G. *Rasha*

Rarely used before the Exile, it occurs frequently in the Psalms, Ezekiel, and the Wisdom literature. It means wicked, the opposite of righteous (Ex 2:13; Ps 9:16; Prov 15:9; Ezk 18:23).

H. *Taah*

This word means to wander away, to go astray. The sin is deliberate, not accidental, even though the person may not realize the scope of his sin. Notice Num 15:22; Ps 58:3; 119:21; Isa 53:6; and Ezk 44:10, 15.

From the word study we may draw certain conclusions about the Old Testament teaching on sin.

- (1) Sin may take many forms, and because of the variety of words used, an Israelite could be aware of the particular form his sin took.
- (2) Sin is that which is contrary to a norm, and ultimately it is disobedience to God.
- (3) Although disobedience involved both positive and negative ideas, the emphasis is on the positive commission of wrong and not merely on the negative omission of good. Sin was not only missing the mark, but hitting the wrong mark.

II. In the New Testament

The New Testament employs at least a dozen basic words to describe sin.

A. *Kakos*

Meaning bad, the adverb is sometimes used of physical badness, that is, disease (Mk 1:32), but the adjective usually indicates moral badness (Mt 21:41; 24:48; Mk 7:21; Acts 9:13; Rom 12:17; 13:3-4, 10; 16:19; 1 Tim 6:10).

B. *Poneros*

This is a basic term for evil and almost always indicates moral evil (Mt 7:11; 12:39; 15:19; Acts 17:5; Rom 12:9; 1 Thess 5:22; Heb 3:12; 2 Jn 11). It also is used of Satan (Mt 13:19, 38; 1 Jn 2:13-14; 5:18; and possibly Mt 6:13 and Jn 17:15) and of demons who are called evil spirits (Lk 11:26; Acts 19:12).

C. *Asebes*

Meaning godless, this word appears mostly in 2 Peter and Jude, meaning godless apostates. The unsaved are designated as ungodly (Rom 4:5; 5:6). Occasionally it appears with other words for sin (Rom 1:18; 1 Tim 1:9; 1 Pet 4:18).

D. *Enochos*

The word means guilty and usually denotes someone whose crime is worthy of death (Mt 5:21-22; Mk 14:64; 1 Cor 11:27; Jas 2:10).

E. *Hamartia*

This is the most frequently used word for sin, occurring in its various forms about 227 times. When a writer wanted one inclusive word for sin, he used this one. The metaphor behind the word is missing the mark, but, as in the Old Testament, this is not only a negative idea but includes the positive idea of hitting some wrong mark. When it is used in the Gospels, it almost always occurs in a context that speaks of forgiveness or salvation (Mt 1:21; Jn 1:29). Other instructive references include Acts 2:38; Rom 5:12; 6:1; 1 Cor 15:3; 2 Cor 5:21; Jas 1:15; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 Jn 1:7; 2:2; and Rev 1:5.

F. *Adikia*

This refers to any unrighteous conduct in the broadest sense. It is used of unsaved people (Rom 1:18), of money (Lk 16:9), of parts of the human body (Rom 6:13; Jas 3:6), and of actions (2 Thess 2:10).

G. *Anomos*

Often translated "iniquity," the word means lawless. It concerns breaking the law in the broadest sense (Mt 13:41; 24:12; 1 Tim 1:9). Eschatologically, it refers to the Antichrist, the lawless one (2 Thess 2:8).

H. *Parabates*

Meaning transgressor, this word usually relates to specific violations of law (Rom 2:23; 5:14; Gal 3:19; Heb 9:15).

I. *Agnoein*

This may refer to the ignorant worship of other than the true God (Acts 17:23; Rom 2:4), but such ignorance makes one guilty and in need of atonement (Heb 9:7).

J. *Planao*

To go astray in a culpable sense is the meaning of this word (1 Pet 2:25). People can deceive others (lead them astray) (Mt 24:5-6); people can deceive themselves (1 Jn 1:8); and Satan leads the whole world astray (Rev 12:9; 20:3, 8).

K. *Paraptōma*

The idea in this word is falling away, and in most occurrences it is deliberate. Paul uses the word six times in Rom 5:15-20. See also Mt 6:14; 2 Cor 5:19; Gal 6:1; Eph 2:1; and Jas 5:16.

L. *Hypocrisy*

The word incorporates three ideas: to interpret falsely as an oracle might do, to pretend as an actor does, and to follow an interpretation known to be false. These ideas seem to blend in the account of Peter's defection in Gal 2:11-21. False teachers of the end times will interpret falsely and pretend to be what they are not, and many will follow their teaching (1 Tim. 4:2). Hypocrites first deceive themselves into making wrong right; then they deceive others. This is the terrible nature of this sin.

Several conclusions may be drawn from the New Testament word study.

- (1) There is always a clear standard against which sin is committed.
- (2) Ultimately all sin is a positive rebellion against God and a transgression of His standards.
- (3) Evil may assume a variety of forms.
- (4) Man's responsibility is definite and clearly understood.

II. In a Definition

Sin may properly be defined by using all these descriptive words for its various forms as recorded in the Old and New Testaments. Such a definition would be accurate though lengthy. Indeed, it might be a good idea to define it thus: sin is missing the mark, badness, rebellion, iniquity, going astray, wickedness, wandering, ungodliness, crime, lawlessness, transgression, ignorance, and a falling away.

More briefly sin has generally been defined as lawlessness (from 1 Jn 3:4). This is an accurate definition as long as law is conceived of in its broadest sense, that is, defection from any of God's standards. Strong furnishes an example when he defines sin as "lack of conformity to the moral law of God, either in act, disposition, or state."¹

Sin may also be defined as against the character of God (from Rom 3:23, where the glory of God is the reflection of His character). Buswell defines sin in this way: "Sin may be defined ultimately as anything in the creature which does not express, or which is contrary to, the holy character of the Creator."²

Certainly the chief characteristic of sin is that it is directed against God. (This may be expressed in relation to God's Law as well.) Any definition that fails to reflect this is not a biblical one. The cliché that categorizes sins as against self, against others, or against God fails to emphasize the truth that all sin is ultimately against God (Ps 51:4; Rom 8:7).

Let not our word and definition study sidetrack us from remembering how terrible sin is in the sight of a holy God. Habakkuk said it succinctly: "Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil, and Thou canst not look on wickedness with favor" (Hab 1:13). And sin is so damaging that only the death of God's Son can take it away (Jn 1:29).

Chapter 35: Christ's Teaching Concerning Sin

When one surveys the teaching of our Lord concerning sin, at least two things stand out. One is the sheer number of references He made to the subject, both in His direct teaching as well as in His parables. In spite of this, we usually do not think of sin as one of Christ's principal emphases. Yet it was. Second, His teaching on sin was very specific, as will be seen as the teaching is developed. In other words, on this subject of sin Christ had a lot to say, and He said it in specific detail.

I. Some Specific Sins

Our Lord used all the major words for sin, and in so doing He specified a number of sins. The following is a list of the individual sins He mentioned in His teaching.

A. Sacrilege (Mk 11:15-18)

In cleansing the temple of the money changers, He condemned their sin of sacrilege (that is, violating the temple that was consecrated to God and showing irreverence toward hallowed things). Christ cleansed the temple at the beginning and end of His ministry (see also Jn 2:12-16).

B. Hypocrisy (Mt 23:1-36)

In His scathing condemnation of the hypocrisy of the Sadducees, scribes, and Pharisees, our Lord pointed out several specific ways they showed that hypocrisy.

- (1) They did not practice what they preached (Mt 23:1-4).
- (2) They sought to exalt themselves by encouraging the adulations of the people (Mt 23:5-12).
- (3) They escaped performing their oaths by trying to make a difference between swearing by the temple and swearing by the gold of the temple (Mt 23:16-22).
- (4) They scrupulously tithed but neglected to promote justice (Mt 23:23).
- (5) Outwardly they appeared to be righteous, but inwardly they were hypocrites (Mt 23:25).

C. Covetousness (Lk 12:15)

Sensing this was the root problem of the man who wanted the Lord to settle a dispute he had with his brother, the Lord warned the crowd against the sin of greed.

D. Blasphemy (Mt 12:22-37)

By ascribing the miracles of Christ to the power of Satan, the Pharisees were blaspheming. However, they could right the situation by a correct confession of Christ (Mt 12:33-37; see pp. 405-7 for a fuller discussion of this).

E. Transgressing the Law (Mt 15:3-6)

To avoid having to care for aged parents, the scribes devised a way to dedicate the money that would have been used for that purpose to the temple, eventually to receive it back. This, the Lord said, was a direct violation of the commandment to honor parents.

F. Pride (Mt 20:20-28; Lk 14:7-11)

Pride of position or seeking places of honor has no place in the life of the true servant.

G. Being a Stumbling Block (Mt 18:6)

Doing something that might cause others to sin is itself a sin.

H. Disloyalty (Mt 8:19-22)

Putting comforts or even proper duties before loyalty to Christ is sin.

I. Immorality (Mt 5:27-32)

This sin can be committed in the body, in the heart, or in marriage.

J. Fruitlessness (Jn 15:16)

Because believers have been chosen to bear fruit, not to do so would be contrary to God's purpose.

K. Anger (Mt 5:22)

Anger, the Lord cautioned, can lead to murder.

L. Sins of Speech (Mt 5:33-37; 12:36)

The Lord warned against perjuring oneself by failing to keep a promise made under oath. He also said that we shall be accountable for all our useless words.

M. Showing Off (Mt 6:1-18)

Parading one's supposed piety is sin. This may be done in doing good things like almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, but doing them with a view to attracting praise from men rather than approval from God.

N. Lack of Faith (Mt 6:25)

Having anxiety concerning one's needs shows lack of faith in God's provision.

O. Irresponsible Stewardship (Mt 25:14-30; Lk 19:11-27)

Both parables illustrate the need for responsible stewardship on the part of Christ's followers. The talents represent different abilities given to different people, whereas the minas that were distributed equally represent the equal opportunity of life itself. The servants who did not use their abilities and opportunities were condemned for their irresponsible conduct.

P. Prayerlessness (Lk 18:1-8)

We ought to pray at all times and never lose heart.

I am sure this list could be lengthened, but it certainly demonstrates how many particular sins the Lord spoke of.

II. Some Categories of Sin

These many specific sins may be grouped under certain categories.

A. Violations of the Mosaic Law

"Corban" illustrates this category well (Mk 7:9-13). Corban is the transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning a "gift." If a son declared that the amount needed to support his parents was Corban, the scribes said he was exempt from his duty to care for his parents, a duty that the Law commanded. Apparently he was not really obligated to devote that sum to the temple but could use it himself.

B. Open Sins

Although all sins are sinful, not all sins are of equal magnitude. Some sins are truly more sinful than others. The Lord affirmed this in His teaching on the speck and log (Mt 7:1-5) and when He said that Caiaphas's sin of delivering Christ to the authorities was greater than Pilate's (Jn 19:11).

Some examples of open sins that are often of greater magnitude include sins of speech, especially those that show defiance of Christ's claims (Mt 12:22-37) and open opposition and rejection of God's messengers (Mt 21:33-46).

C. Wrong Inward Attitudes

Outward actions bespeak inner attitudes and character, and the Lord often put His finger on the inward root of sin. Notice Lk 12:13-15 and Mt 20:20-22.

D. Leaven

Everywhere in the Bible, leaven typifies the presence of impurity or evil (though some understand Mt 13:33 to be an exception, where leaven indicates the growth of the kingdom through the power of the Gospel). However, unquestionably when Christ warned of the leaven of the Pharisees or Sadducees or Herodians, He was referring to something sinful.

1. Of the Pharisees. The leaven of the Pharisees was externalism. Though outwardly they were righteous (Matt. 5:20), knowledgeable about the Scriptures (Mt 23:2), tithers (Lk 18:12), those who fasted (Mt 9:14) and prayed (Lk 18:11), inwardly they were unclean, and our Lord denounced their leaven of hypocrisy (Mt 23:14, 26, 29; Mk 8:15; Lk 12:1).

2. Of the Sadducees. Their leaven was spreading false doctrine. Their beliefs were rooted in the senses; therefore, they did not believe in the existence of angels or in resurrection. Our Lord did not denounce this as often, for false teaching is in itself something more apparent because it is more difficult to hide (Mt 16:6).

3. Of the Herodians. Their leaven was secularism and worldliness. As a party they supported Herod and the Roman rule that gave him his power. Thus they sought to use worldly power to promote "spiritual" ends, and Christ warned against this (Mk 8:15).

These same sins-externalism, false doctrine, and worldly methods -are all too apparent in some groups today. And our Lord's warning against them is relevant.

III. Some Sources of Sin

A. Satan

Christ was acutely aware of the power, program, and procedures of Satan. Some have tried to suggest that the Lord really did not believe in the reality of Satan but was accommodating the ignorances of the people when He taught about Satan. However, He spoke of Satan on occasions when there was no need to do so unless He believed Satan actually existed (e.g., Lk 10:18). Our Lord acknowledged Satan as the ruler of this world (Jn 12:31), the head of his own kingdom (Mt 12:26), the father of rebellious people (Jn 8:44), the father of lies (v. 44), the evil one who opposes the reception of the Gospel (Mt 13:19), the enemy who sows tares among the good seed (Mt 13:39), and thus the one who causes people to do these things he promotes.

B. The World

Satan's world stands in opposition to God's people and promotes Satan's purposes. So the world system is a source of sin when anyone conforms to it (Jn 15:18-19).

C. The Heart

Often the Lord emphasized that what a person does externally is a reflection of what is in his heart (Mt 15:19).

IV. The Universality of Sin

In a direct statement the Lord said that only God is good and no human is (Mt 19:17). He stated that His chosen disciples were evil (Lk 11:13), even though He recognized that they could do good things. Sin alienates people from God, and all are sinners.

V. Some Consequences of Sin

A. It Affects Destiny

Sin causes people to be lost (Mt 18:11; Lk 15:4, 8, 24). If unforgiven it causes them to perish (John 3:16). It brings people into judgment (Lk 12:20).

B. It Affects the Will

The Lord made it clear that the Pharisees were slaves to the desires of the devil (Jn 8:44). When He announced His mission in the synagogue in Nazareth, He indicated that one thing He came to do was to free the captives (Lk 4:18), apparently a reference to those who were spiritually captive, since the Lord did not effect the release of those who were jailed. (He could have done so with John the Baptist.)

C. It Affects the Body

Of course not all sickness is the result of sin (Jn 9:3), but some evidently is. The Lord indicates this in the case of the man who was healed at the Pool of Bethesda (Jn 5:14). Notice also Mt 8:17.

D. It Affects Others

The sins of the scribes affected widows and others who followed their traditions (Lk 20:46-47). Clearly the sin of the prodigal son affected his father (Lk 15:20). Additionally, the sins warned against in the Sermon on the Mount all have their effect on others. No one can sin in total isolation.

VI. The Forgiveness of Sin

A. The Basis for Forgiveness

At the beginning of Christ's ministry John the Baptist announced the purpose of it when he pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29). The Lord Himself made it clear that His death was the basis for forgiveness (Mt 20:28; 26:28).

B. The Ramification of Forgiveness

Forgiven people should forgive others. This is a recurring theme in the Lord's teaching (Mt 6:14-15; 18:21-35; Lk 17:3-4).

VII. The Eschatology of Sin

In His great eschatological discourse, the Lord detailed the future outworking of sin in the coming period of Tribulation on this earth (Mt 24:1-28).

A. In International Affairs

Sin will be the cause of wars during the Tribulation days (Mt 24:6-7).

B. In Personal Affairs

Sin will cause people to betray one another and to hate one another (Mt 24:10, 12).

C. In Spiritual Affairs

The Tribulation period will be a time of intense spiritual deception. Many false religious leaders will deceive people with miraculous signs that they will be empowered to perform (Mt 24:5, 11, 24), and the Antichrist will bring false religion to its zenith when he sits in the temple in Jerusalem demanding to be worshiped (Mt 24:15-21). During this time, evil will be more open and more damaging than at any other time in history.

To sum up: Our Lord's teaching covered many aspects of sin emphasizing both the variety and specifics of sin. He always underscored man's personal responsibility for sin, and His teaching was laced with the practical ramifications of sin.

NOTES

1. -A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1907), 269.
2. -J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 1:264.

Chapter 36: The Inheritance of Sin

I. A Definition

Inherited sin is that sinful state into which all people are born.

Theologians have used several labels to describe this concept. (1) Some call it, as the title of this chapter, inherited sin. This emphasizes the truth that all people inherit this sinful state from their parents, and their parents from their parents, all the way back to Adam and Eve. (2) Others call it the sin nature, which focuses on the fact that sin has corrupted our entire nature. The term "sin nature" provides a clear contrast between that root nature and its fruits (which are particular acts of sin). (3) Still others prefer the term "original sin" because Adam's original sin produced that moral corruption of nature that was transmitted by inheritance to each succeeding generation.

II. Scriptural Evidence

The Bible clearly states that all aspects of man's being are corrupt. "By nature" we are children of wrath—that is, objects of wrath (Eph 2:3). By actions we are also objects of God's wrath, but this verse refers to something innate. Ps 51:5 indicates that this is something we have from conception, not something acquired by actions during our lifetimes.

Every facet of man's being is affected by this sin nature. (1) His intellect is blinded (2 Cor 4:4). His mind is reprobate or disapproved (Rom 1:28). His understanding is darkened, separated from the life of God (Eph 4:18). (2) His emotions are degraded and defiled (Rom 1:21, 24, 26; Tit 1:15). (3) His will is enslaved to sin and therefore stands in opposition to God (Rom 6:20; 7:20).

III. Total Depravity

The scriptural evidence provides the basis for what has been commonly called total depravity. The English word "depravity" means perverted or crooked. It is not used in the translation of the King James Version, but some modern translations do use it to translate adokimos in Rom 1:28. This word means "not standing the test" and gives us a clue as to how to define the concept of depravity. Depravity means that man fails the test of pleasing God. He denotes his unmeritoriousness in God's sight. This failure is total in that (a) it affects all aspects of man's being and (b) it affects all people.

Negatively, the concept of total depravity does not mean (a) that every person has exhibited his depravity as thoroughly as he or she could; (b) that sinners do not have a conscience or a "native induction" concerning God; (c) that sinners will indulge in every form of sin; or (d) that depraved people do not perform actions that are good in the sight of others and even in the sight of God.

Positively, total depravity means (a) that corruption extends to every facet of man's nature and faculties; and (b) that there is nothing in anyone that can commend him to a righteous God.

Total depravity must always be measured against God's holiness. Relative goodness exists in people. They can do good works, which are appreciated by others. But nothing that anyone can do will gain salvational merit or favor in the sight of a holy God.

IV. The Penalty Connected with Inherited Sin

The penalty that is particularly related to inherited sin is spiritual death. Death always indicates a separation of some kind, so spiritual death means a separation from the life of God in this present life (Eph 2:1-3). If this condition continues unchanged throughout life, then eternal death or the second death follows (Rev 20:11-15).

Cut flowers well illustrate living human beings who do good things but who nevertheless are spiritually dead. Is the blossom that has been cut from the plant alive or dead? At first it is beautiful and fragrant, and in combination with other cut flowers, it may grace the finest home, church, or occasion. It looks alive; it is useful; but it is in reality dead, for it has been severed from the life of the plant that produced it. At this point the illustration breaks down, for it is not possible to give the flower new and eternal life, something God can do for the one who believes in the Lord Jesus.

V. The Transmission of Inherited Sin

The label itself indicates how original sin is transmitted from one generation to the next and the next and the next. We inherit it from our parents as they did from theirs, and so on back to the first parents, Adam and Eve. After they sinned they could only propagate after their kind; that is, their children were sinners by birth (Gen 4:1; Ps 51:5; Rom 5:12). This means that everyone born into this world is a sinner. No one is born good, nor is anyone born partly good and partly sinful. All are equally sinful in God's sight. If this were not so, then those who were, say, only 50 percent sinful would need only 50 percent of God's salvation.

VI. The Remedy for Inherited Sin

The remedy is twofold. (1) Redemption includes a judgment on the sin nature so that the believer is no longer bound to serve sin (Rom 6:18; 8:1; Gal 5:24). All that which belongs to the old life has been crucified with Christ. Death always means separation; therefore, His death separated us from the dominion of original sin. (2) However, the old is not eradicated until the resurrection; therefore, God has given us His Holy Spirit to give us victory over sin in daily life.

We are separated from the dominion of sin by Christ's death, and we are free from its domination by the power of the Spirit.

VII. Some Attacks Against This Doctrine

A. Pelagianism

Pelagius, a monk from Britain who preached in Rome around A.D. 400, believed that since God would not command anything that was not possible, and that since He has commanded men to be holy, everyone therefore can live a life that is free from sin. He taught that man was created neutral—neither sinful nor holy—and with the capacity and will to choose freely either to sin or to do good. Everyone is born in the same condition as Adam before the Fall; only now man has before him Adam's bad example. But Adam in no way transmitted a sin nature or the guilt of his sin to his posterity. Man has a will that is free, and sin comes from the separate acts of man's will. Man is also free to do good works, and all of his good deeds come from the unassisted

capabilities of his human nature. Thus Pelagianism exaggerates the merit of works and their efficacy in salvation.

B. Semi-Pelagianism

Pelagius's teaching was opposed by his contemporary, Augustine, who emphasized man's total inability to achieve righteousness and therefore his need for sovereign grace alone. Semi-Pelagianism is a mediating position between Augustinianism (with its strong emphasis on predestination and man's inability) and Pelagianism (with its insistence on man's complete ability). Semi-Pelagians teach that man retains a measure of freedom by which he can cooperate with the grace of God. Man's will has been weakened and his nature affected by the Fall, but he is not totally depraved. In regeneration man chooses God, who then adds His grace. Semi-Pelagianism is the teaching of the Roman Catholic church as well as some Protestant groups. Original sin is eliminated in water baptism.

C. Socinianism

This movement, named after Lelio Socinus (1525-62) and his nephew Faustus (1539-1604), was the forerunner of Unitarianism. Its teachings include a denial of the deity of Christ, a denial of predestination, original sin, total inability, and penal substitution.

D. Arminianism

Though the views of Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) were not so divergent from traditional Reformed theology, those of his successors were increasingly so. Arminianism teaches that Adam was created in innocence, not holiness, that sin consists in acts of the will, that we inherit pollution from Adam but not guilt or a sin nature, that man is not totally depraved, that man has the ability to will to do good and to conform to God's will in this life so as to be perfect, and that the human will is one of the causes of regeneration. Wesleyan theology, sometimes called evangelical Arminianism, holds similar views on the subjects of Adam's sin and man's ability, though it differs in other points.

E. Neo-Orthodoxy

In general, neo-orthodoxy takes sin very seriously. It is defined as self-centeredness, rather than God-centeredness. However, the account of Adam's sin in Genesis 3 is not seen as historical in that it was an actual event that happened at a certain time and in a particular place. Adam was not a real individual who actually lived on this earth, yet Adam represents man at every stage of his development. The story of Adam's fall is the story of all of us. With such a view of biblical history, there can be no connection between the sin of Adam and his posterity.

Chapter 37: The Imputation of Sin

I. The Meaning of Imputation

To impute means to attribute or reckon or ascribe something to someone. It is not mere influence but involvement that is at the heart of the concept.

The Old Testament provides several examples of imputation. Lev 7:18 and Lev 17:4 indicate that lack of blessing and guilt were ascribed to the Israelite who did not follow the prescribed ritual in the offerings. In 1 Sam 22:15 and 2 Sam 19:19, are pleas not to impute something to certain individuals. In Ps 32:2 David expresses the happiness of the person to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity. In all these cases imputation includes some kind of involvement, not mere influencing.

The New Testament refers several times to imputation in the Old Testament. Paul stated that sin is not imputed as a specific violation of a legal code when there is no law (Rom 5:13). He referred to the righteousness God imputed to Abraham when he believed and to the righteousness David knew when he confessed his sin (Rom. 4). James also referred to Abraham's imputed righteousness (Jas 2:23). The death of Christ enabled God not to impute man's sins against him (2 Cor 5:19).

The letter to Philemon contains what is probably the most beautiful illustration of imputation. Paul told Philemon that if his slave Onesimus owed anything to reckon it to Paul's account. In other words, any debt Onesimus might have incurred would be charged against Paul's account and Paul would pay it. Similarly, our sins were attributed, ascribed, reckoned to Christ, and He paid our debt fully.

II. Three Basic Imputations

Theologians have generally recognized three basic imputations.

A. The Imputation of Adam's Sin to the Race (Rom 5:12-21)

This is the one that concerns us in this section on sin, and we shall return to a full discussion of it.

B. The Imputation of Man's Sin to Christ (2 Cor 5:19; 1 Pet 2:24)

C. The Imputation of Christ's Righteousness to Believers (2 Cor. 5:21})}

III. The Imputation of Adam's Sin

A. The Central Passage (Rom 5:12)

The concept of imputed sin arises from interpreting the meaning of "all sinned" at the end of verse 12.

Some understand it to mean that each individual sins personally, and because of these sins people die. "Sinned refers to actual sins (cf. Rom 3:23) viewed as an individual expression and endorsement of Adam's representative act."¹ However, babies die even though they have not committed sins personally. Also, "all sinned" is connected with the one man, Adam, through whom sin entered the world. The verse does not say that Adam sinned and others sin also. Five times in Rom 5:15-19 Paul stated that condemnation and death reign over all because of the one sin of Adam, not because of the various sins of all of us.

Some understand the meaning as "all are sinners" or "all are sinful." However, the word is an active voice verb (all did something), not a noun or adjective (all are something). Of course, it is

true that all are sinners, but that is not the meaning of "all sinned" in this verse. Shedd's objections to the meaning "all are sinful" are much to the point. He observes that such an interpretation would be contrary to the invariable usage of the active voice of the verb, and it would require the addition of the verb "to be."²

Barthians understand this to mean that sin is part of the experience of all people, but since they do not believe Adam was an actual person or that his sin was an actual time-space event, there can be no connection between Adam and the race. To them, this verse says nothing about original sin or about imputed sin.

Another interpretation is that all sinned when Adam sinned. This seems to be the only meaning that does justice to the verb and its relationship to the preceding part of the verse. "The tense of the verb indicates a distinct historic entrance. . . . Physical death came to all men but not because they were all in the process of individually sinning. All men did sin (except for infants dying in infancy) experientially. But Paul is not talking about that here. The sin of all is centered in that of the one man Adam."³

B. The Relation Between Adam and the Race

Though Paul clearly states the fact that all men sinned when Adam sinned, the question remains, how did they do so? What is the relation between Adam and the race?

Historically, two answers have been given. They are commonly labeled as (a) the federal or representative view and (b) the seminal or realistic or Augustinian view.

1. The representative view. This views Adam as the representative of the whole human race so that when Adam sinned his sin became the ground of condemnation of his race. No one but Adam actually committed that first sin, but since Adam represented all people, God viewed all as involved and thus condemned. The word "federal" means covenant and indicates that Adam was appointed to represent the race in the so-called Covenant of Works. Because the covenant head sinned, the guilt of his sin was imputed to each of his posterity. Hos 6:7 is cited as a reference to this covenant.

2. The seminal view. The seminal, realistic, or Augustinian view sees Adam as containing the seed of all his posterity so that when he sinned, all actually sinned. Mankind was not merely represented by Adam but was actually organically joined to Adam. "Paul's concept of racial solidarity seems to be a universalizing of the Hebrew concept of family solidarity. A tragic picture of family solidarity is seen in Josh 7:16-26, where Achan is discovered as the cause of Israel's defeat at Ai. . . . Achan blamed no one else. . . . But in the administration of the punishment . . . everything connected with Achan was blotted out of Israel."⁴ Heb 7:9-10 furnishes another example of the seminal or germinal concept in the human race. The writer plainly stated that Levi, though not born until almost two hundred years later, actually paid tithes in his great-grandfather Abraham. The ancestor, Abraham, contained his descendant, Levi. Similarly, our ancestor, Adam, contained all of us, his descendants. Therefore, just as Levi did something in paying the tithe, so we did something in sinning in Adam.

Thus Adam's sin was imputed to each member of the human race because each member of the human race actually sinned in Adam when Adam sinned.

I came across an illustration of imputation in a sad experience a former student had. This man, Bill, shared the expenses of a ride home at Christmastime in Joe's car. On the way another car went through a stop sign and hit Joe's car broadside. At the time of the accident, Joe was driving and Bill was asleep in the car. Because Bill was seriously and permanently injured, he sued to collect damages from the owner of the other car. But that owner (or his insurance company) tried to prove negligence on Joe's part. Bill's attorney wrote to him in part as follows: ". . . and if the jury finds that he [Joe] was negligent, it will undoubtedly be imputed to you, and you cannot recover. I don't think that there is anything that we can do to change that situation now."

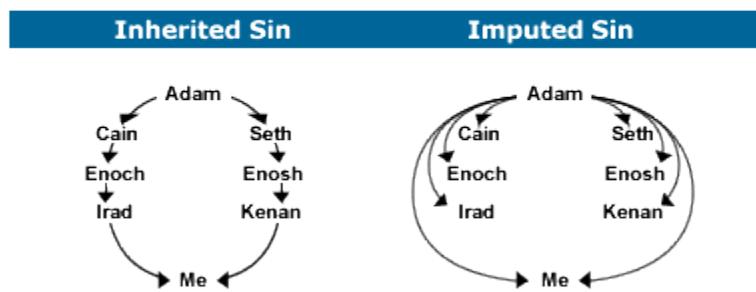
What linked Bill to Joe and to Joe's possible negligence? It was the fact that Bill had shared expenses. Money joined Bill to Joe and to Joe's actions. Humanity joined all of us to Adam and to Adam's sin. We all share in Adam's sin and Adam's guilt. We are all equally guilty and in need of a remedy for our sin.

IV. The Transmission of Imputed Sin

Imputed sin is transmitted directly from Adam to each individual in every generation. Since I was in Adam, Adam's sin was imputed to me directly, not through my parents and their parents. Imputed sin is an immediate imputation (that is, directly, not through mediators between Adam and me).

This contrasts with how the inherited sin nature is transmitted. It comes to me from my parents, and theirs from their parents, and so on back to Adam. Inherited sin is a mediate transmission since it comes through all the mediators of generations between Adam and me. Charted, the contrast looks like this:

A Comparison of How Inherited and Imputed Sin are Transmitted



V. The Penalty of Imputed Sin

Physical death is the particular penalty connected with imputed sin (Rom 5:13-14). The particular penalty connected with inherited sin, you remember, is spiritual death.

VI. The Remedy for Imputed Sin

The remedy for imputed sin is the imputed righteousness of Christ. The moment anyone believes, Christ's righteousness is reckoned or imputed to that individual. As all are in Adam, so all believers are in Christ, and being in Him means that His righteousness is ours.

A vivid illustration of this came to me in my student days. A criminal in the state penitentiary was soon to be executed for murder. His story received an uncommon amount of publicity because he had willed that the cornea of one of his eyes should be used in what was then the very new procedure of corneal transplant. Further, the recipient was designated prior to the criminal's execution, and indeed the two men met before the execution was carried out. This made great human interest copy for the media.

In due time the murderer was put to death. His cornea was taken from his body, and by the miracle of medicine it was transplanted into the eye of a blind man who then could see. Now suppose some policeman should have tried to arrest that man who received the cornea and have him executed because he had the cornea of a murderer. Any judge would say, "But that cornea that formerly was in the body of a murderer is now in the body of a man who is righteous before the law. Therefore, the cornea is as righteous as the man is." And that illustrates my point. I was in Adam and justly condemned to die because I sinned when he sinned. But by a miracle greater than any surgical procedure, I was placed in Jesus Christ. And now I am righteous because He is righteous and can stand before a holy God uncondemned. From being in Adam to being in Christ—that's my story by the miracle of His grace.

NOTES

1. -Leslie C. Allen, "Romans," in A New Testament Commentary, ed. Howley, Bruce, and Ellison (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), 352.
2. -William G. T. Shedd, Dogmatic Theology (New York: Scribner, 1891), 2:183-85.
3. -A. Berkeley Mickelsen, "Romans," in The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, ed. Pfeiffer and Harrison (Chicago: Moody, 1962), 1197.
4. -Ibid., 1197-98.

Chapter 38: Personal Sins

The area of personal sin is likely the first one most people would think about when they think about sin. Of course, they say, sin is real because people sin. But sin is also a reality because we have inherited a sin nature and Adam's sin was imputed to us. Yet it is true that our personal sins bring home the reality of sin.

I. Some Scriptural Evidences

In Rom 3:9-18 Paul demonstrated the condemnation of all people on the basis of their committing sins personally. The condemnation is universal and based on evil acts of both word and deed.

People are corrupting, deceitful, uncharitable, blasphemous, murderous, oppressive, quarrelsome, and impious.

Many passages name specific sins. Notice lying in 1 Jn 1:6, partiality in James 2:4, carnality in 1 Cor 3:1-4, and the list in Gal 5:19-21 that includes sorcery, immorality, factions, and envy.

II. Some Characteristics of Personal Sins

A. Their Universality

All commit sins personally except infants. James makes that very clear when he states that we all stumble in many ways (Jas 3:2). Before Paul lists those sins in Romans 3 he says that all, both Jews and Gentiles, are under sin (Rom 3:9). After the list he repeats that fact, declaring that all are coming short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23).

B. Their Overtness

Personal sins are not only those that are committed overtly but also those that are committed in our thoughts. Immorality, envy, greed, and idolatry are examples of sins that occur in our thought lives (and also may erupt in specific actions). See Mt 5:27-28; 2 Cor 10:5; and Col 3:5-6.

Furthermore, sins of omission, which are not overt, are as sinful as sins that are actually committed (Jas 4:17).

C. Their Classification

The Lord ranked Caiaphas's sin in delivering Him to Pilate as greater than Pilate's sin. But this did not excuse Pilate, for if there is greater sin (Caiaphas's) there must also be lesser sin (Pilate's). As a governmental agent, Pilate could only do what God allowed his government to do. Caiaphas as high priest had greater light and thus greater responsibility.

The Old Testament distinguished sins of ignorance from defiant sins. Defiant sins were, literally, sins with a high hand; that is, sins with a raised, clenched fist in defiance of God and His commands. For such sins there was no acceptable offering (Num 15:30-31). An example of a defiant sin follows in the account of a man gathering wood on the Sabbath in defiance of God's clear command. By contrast, the sin offering atoned for sins of ignorance; that is, sins done unintentionally out of weakness or waywardness (Lev 4:2). Some examples included withholding evidence when called on to testify, accidental ceremonial defilement because of contact with an unclean animal or person, and inability to fulfill a rash vow (Lev 5:1-4).

The New Testament counterpart to this Old Testament classification contrasts sins committed against much light as compared to sins against little light (Lk 12:47-48).

Other classifications include the unpardonable sin (Mt 12:31-32) and a sin unto death (1 Jn 5:16).

The Roman Catholic church distinguishes venial sins (pardonable sins) and mortal sins (death-bringing sins). A person commits a venial sin when he transgresses the law of God in an unimportant matter. Such a sin is forgiven easily, even without confession. Only the sacrament of penance can forgive a mortal sin. This teaching is not a scriptural one.

In an analogous fashion, those who believe that a child of God can lose his salvation also make distinctions between sins that are not so bad and that most believers commit sometime but that do not cause the loss of salvation and sins that are bad enough to cause the loss of salvation. What sins belong to each of those categories is usually determined very subjectively.

III. The Transmission of Personal Sins

Strictly speaking, personal sins are not transmitted from one individual or generation to another. Each person commits his own sins. Affects of personal sins are transmitted in the sense that our sins do affect others, but each must suffer consequences for his own sins.

IV. The Result of Personal Sins

If we need one idea to describe the result of all personal sins, it would be the loss of fellowship. The unbeliever has no fellowship with God because of his sins, and the believer who has been brought into the fellowship of God's family loses the enjoyment of that fellowship when he sins. He is not expelled from the family, though he may lose some of the privileges of being in the family. When he confesses and is forgiven, he is restored to fellowship.

V. The Remedy for Personal Sins

The remedy is forgiveness. For the unbeliever who receives Christ, that forgiveness covers all the guilt of his sins (Eph 1:7). For the believer, that forgiveness restores the enjoyment of fellowship in the family of God (1 Jn 1:9). Or to put it another way, judicial forgiveness brings the unbeliever into the family of God, while family forgiveness restores the temporarily broken relationship within the family.

A Comparison of the Several Aspects of Sin

Aspect	Scripture	Transmission	Principal Consequence	Remedy
Inherited sin	Ephesians 2:3	Generation to generation	Spiritual death	Redemption and the gift of the Holy Spirit
Imputed sin	Romans 5:12	Direct from Adam to me	Physical death	Imputed righteousness
Personal sins	Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:9	None	Loss of fellowship	Forgiveness

Chapter 39: The Christian and Sin

I. The Standard for the Believer

Becoming a Christian does not exempt one from sinning or free him from obedience to the law of Christ. To say it does is to fall into one or both of the common errors concerning the Christian and sin. The one is a false perfectionism and the other antinomianism.

Unbiblical perfectionism teaches that the believer does not sin at all because he has rooted out the principle of sin. No believer can experience this kind of sinless perfection until the resurrection when he will be free from the sin principle within. A modified form of sinless perfection does not include eradication of the sin nature but teaches that a Christian can live without practicing sin for some period of time. But not practicing sin not only means not committing sin but also practicing and conforming to the will of God. Sinless perfection involves more than the absence of sin. In reality, the biblical doctrine of perfection means ripeness, maturity, fullness, completeness. Biblical perfection does not stand in contrast with sinfulness but with immaturity, and biblical perfection is something expected of a believer here on earth.¹

Antinomianism teaches that the Christian is not bound by the law. Antinomianism's concept of freedom from law often leads to license. Antinomianism is sometimes equated with Christian liberty, a wrong equation. The opposite of liberty is slavery, and the believer has been brought from slavery to sin to a position of freedom in Christ. The opposite of antinomianism is obedience to law. Which law, for there have been several throughout biblical history? For the believer today it is the law of Christ (Gal 6:2).

What is the biblical standard for the Christian? It is neither sinless perfection nor antinomianism. It is to walk in the light (1 Jn 1:7). God is light or holy. This absolute standard is always before the believer. Yet no believer can be without sin, as God is, in this life. Does God then mock us? Not at all. Rather, He tailors His requirement for each of us to our stage of spiritual development. And that tailored requirement is to walk in the light of His holiness. If we say we have no sin principle (as sinless perfectionism claims), we lie (1 Jn 1:8). Likewise, if we say we have not sinned for whatever period of time (as modified perfectionism teaches), we make God a liar (1 Jn 1:10). If we walk in the light, we will not fall into the error of antinomianism, for we will keep His commandments (1 Jn 2:4, 6; 3:24).

Each believer can meet the requirement to walk in the light. The amount of light each has will be different, but the requirement to respond to that amount is the same for all. As we grow, the circle of light will expand. And as we respond to increasing light, we will receive more light, and so on. But at each stage the requirement is the same—walk in the light.

To sum up: The standard is God's holiness. The requirement is to walk in the light. Our experience should always be a growing one, growing to maturity. That is true biblical perfectionism.

II. The Enemies of the Believer

The believer is continually opposed by the world, the flesh, and the devil.

A. The World

We have already discussed in detail the concept of this world system under satanology. Suffice it to review and add only a few details at this point.

1. Its description. Satan stands as its head and controlling force. Its chief characteristic is counterfeiting, though Satan will use any tactic he can in order to defeat the believer. Often borderline issues are the most difficult to discern and decide.

2. *Our defense.* A number of things serve as the believer's defense against the counterfeit of the world—the armor (Eph 6:13-18), knowledge of Satan's strategies (2 Cor 2:11), sobriety, vigilance (1 Pet 5:8). Perhaps faith should be placed at or near the top of the list. Our faith is the victory that overcomes the world (1 Jn 5:4-5), the faith that identified us with Christ's work on the cross. Since every believer has such faith, he has an adequate defense against the world. Yet such faith needs to be constantly exercised to realize victory (1 Tim 6:12).

B. The Flesh

1. *The concept.* The flesh is that principle of sin within all of us. Some equate the sin nature and flesh. The flesh produces works (Gal 5:19), is characterized by lusts and passions (Gal 5:24; 1 Jn 2:16), and can enslave the believer (Rom 7:25). In it is nothing good (Rom 7:18), for the presence of the new life in Christ makes all that is associated with the flesh old and useless. This includes blatantly evil things as well as amoral things and sometimes things that might be good in themselves but that bring no pleasure to God because they are works of the flesh.

2. *The control.* The flesh can only be controlled by actualizing our co-crucifixion with Christ. We have crucified the flesh; that is, we have been separated from its domination by our association with Christ's dying unto sin (Gal 5:24). We can experience victory not by eradication of the flesh but by walking in dependence on the Spirit to control it (Gal 5:16).

C. The Devil

Having already discussed Satan, we mention here only a few reminders of his work in attacking believers.

1. *His strategy is planned.* Satan devises methods, uses strategies, and employs all the craftiness of a superhuman creature to trap the believer (2 Cor 2:11; Eph 6:11).

2. *His strategy is persistent.* He continually stalks the believer, waiting for the right moment to attack (1 Pet 5:8).

3. *His strategy is powerful.* The believer must wrestle in hand-to-hand combat against Satan, never underestimating his power (Eph 6:12; 1 Jn 4:4; Jude 9).

III. The Penalties for Sins

A. For the Unbeliever

The unbeliever who dies without the forgiveness of his sins must suffer eternal torment in the lake of fire (Rev 20:15).

B. For the Sinning Believer

1. *Loss of fellowship.* Sin brings an interruption of fellowship in the area of the sin (1 Jn 1:3, 6-7).

2. *Loss of joy.* Sin causes a loss of joy (Jn 15:11; Gal 5:22).

3. *Darkened walk.* Sin causes the believer to walk in darkness (1 Jn 1:6; 2:10).

4. *Weak prayer.* Sin brings a lack of confidence in prayer (1 Jn 3:19-22).

C. For the Persistently Sinning Believer

If a believer persists in some sin, then other consequences may follow.

1. *Punishment.* Chastisement of some form may come (Heb 12:5-11). Sickness may be one form of punishment (1 Cor 11:30).

2. *Excommunication.* Excommunication from the local church may be necessary (Mt 18:17; 1 Cor 5).

3. *Physical death.* In some cases physical death may be a punishment for persistent sin (1 Cor 11:30; 1 Jn 5:16).

Our merciful heavenly Father is often very patient with our sinning, not bringing severe penalties on us. But we must never forget that sin does take its toll in many ways, internal and external, even if no obvious punishment comes. And at the Judgment Seat of Christ, all our deeds will be examined by our Lord (2 Cor 5:10).

IV. The Preventives for Sin

Always it is better to prevent than to cure, and God has provided for us ways to prevent sin in our lives. These serve like vaccinations to prevent our succumbing to the disease.

A. The Word of God

God's Word in our hearts will serve to prevent sin, for it will warn, remind, encourage, strengthen, and guide us when we are tempted to sin (Ps 119:11).

B. The Intercession of Christ

Our Lord ever lives to pray for us (Heb 7:25). One thing He prays for is that we might not sin. See the illustration of this in Peter's case in Lk 22:32 as well as the direct statement in Jn 17:15. Doubtless we will never know what this has involved until we arrive in heaven, and even then we might not be told all.

C. The Indwelling of the Spirit

Many of the ministries of the Spirit in the believer today relate to preventing sin in our lives, but several seem to stand out.

1. *Actualizing aspects of our position in Christ.* For example, we have put to death the flesh with its affections and lusts, yet we need to walk in the Spirit to actualize this in our experience (Gal 5:16-24).

2. *Teaching.* Teaching us the deep things of the Word helps us to discern good and evil (1 Cor 2:10; Heb 5:14). Superficial knowledge may prevent obvious sins, but deeper knowledge can prevent more sins.

3. *Leading in prayer.* Leading us in our prayers, the Spirit can guide us to think about ways sin can be prevented in our lives (Mt 6:13; Rom 8:34; Eph 6:18).

4. *Enabling for service.* Enabling us to serve (Jn 7:37-39) may keep us from using the time, money, and energies to sin (Rev 12:11).

V. The Remedy for Sins

The remedy for believers' sins may be stated in one word: confess (1 Jn 1:9). This does not mean to merely mouth or recite the sins. It means to see those sins as God sees them. That will surely bring repentance and the earnest desire to change. But if the same sins reoccur, the remedy remains the same.

VI. A Concluding Thought

When we contemplate sins of unbelievers, it does not seem so difficult to comprehend the enormity of sin, for we know the punishment will be eternal separation from God. But somehow when we consider sins in believers, we lighten their seriousness. But make no mistake about it. All sin grieves God. Christ had to die for the sins we committed before and after we were saved. His death was the punishment for all sins. The fact that we are members of the family of God may bring more sorrow to our heavenly Father when we sin. We ought to know better. We ought to use the power He has provided. We ought to want to please Him. We ought to struggle and fight harder and use every weapon He has given us. But above all, we ought to be making progress and showing growth in our lives.

We may take comfort about our souls if we know anything of an inward fight and conflict. It is the invariable companion of genuine Christian holiness. Do we find in our heart of hearts a spiritual struggle? Do we feel anything of the flesh lusting against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, so that we cannot do the things that we would? Are we conscious of two principles within us, contending for the master? Do we feel anything of war in our inward man? Well, let us thank God for it! It is a good sign. It is strongly probable evidence of the great work of sanctification. Anything is better than apathy, stagnation, deadness, and indifference.²

Fellow members of God's family: press on to maturity (Heb 6:1).

NOTES

1. -An excellent discussion of the biblical doctrine was written by W. H. Griffith Thomas, "The Biblical Teaching Concerning Perfection," The Sunday School Times, 22 July 1944, 515-16.

2. -J. C. Ryle, Holiness (London: Hunt, 1839), 82.